



SUPPORTING **WORKERS** **AND FAMILIES** THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION



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GIVING **WORKERS** **& FAMILIES** A BREAK

A BUDGET TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

SUPPORTING WORKERS AND FAMILIES THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION

The cost of living crisis has placed many workers and families under significant financial pressure over the past year. With household energy costs continuing to soar and increases to everyday items such as groceries and fuel prices, it is clear that households need urgent and meaningful assistance from Government.

Over the course of the past year, we have listened to countless personal stories of people across our society struggling to make ends meet. We have also heard the stark reality from organisations on the ground working to support families in financial difficulty.

Sinn Féin have repeatedly put forward costed and sector-backed proposals to the Government, which would ease the pressures workers and families are facing. To date, the government has largely chosen to ignore these calls, despite reports on the growing threat of energy poverty and household debt as a result of the crisis.

We know that Government cannot protect households from every price and that some circumstances are out of our control. However, more can and must be done to support households.

Sinn Féin are putting forward Social Protection measures as part of our Alternative Budget for 2023 which are intended to provide targeted supports to those who need them across our society.

This year's Alternative Budget has been particularly difficult given the many crises facing society – the cost of living crisis, the housing crisis, the crisis in health. We are also mindful that poverty is growing, and this is one of the greatest challenges we face as a State. Social Protection is key to tackling and ending poverty. Of course, no one Budget will achieve all that we need to achieve, but we can take important steps to building a better system of social welfare in the State.

We are proposing Social Protection measures which are targeted to support families and children, people with disabilities and Family Carers, who are often faced with additional costs and are not adequately assisted by our social protection system.

As well as this, social welfare rates have long been set below the poverty line and have now been significantly outstripped by recent rises in inflation. As part of a longer-term aim of bringing social welfare rates in line with a minimum essential standard of living (MESL), we are proposing increases to core rates across two phases in 2023.

Finally, in addition to our proposed measures for 2023, we are putting forward a cost of living package which would take effect from Budget day, and which would provide a range of immediate supports for households across the State. Many of these are measures we have called for since February of this year.

People cannot wait any longer for supports which assist with the rising cost of living. As we face into an uncertain period and into the winter months, we must use the available resources of the State to support workers and families through what will continue to be a very difficult period.

SINN FéIN'S PRIORITY SOCIAL PROTECTION COST OF LIVING MEASURES FOR 2022

	Measure	Cost
1	Cost of Living payment of €500 for social welfare recipients with income of less than €21,300 ¹	€1.5bn
2	Increase weekly Fuel Allowance payment rate by €5	€54.7m
3	Expand Fuel Allowance eligibility to Working Family Payment recipients	€25.6m
4	Establish a Discretionary Debt Utility Fund to provide financial support to households locked out of the Fuel Allowance	€15m
5	Double Child Benefit payment, paid on 4th October 2022	€170.4m
6	Christmas bonus for social welfare recipients	€333m

Further details on our full emergency Cost of Living Package are included in Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget 2023

SINN FéIN'S ADDITIONAL ALLOCATIONS FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION IN 2023

BUILDING A BETTER SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

	Measure	Cost
1	Increase weekly rates of working-age social welfare payments by €17.50 - €15 increase from 3 October 2022, increasing to €17.50 from 3 July 2023	€631.5m
2	Increase weekly rates of disability-related payments by €20 - €17.50 increase from 3 October 2022, increasing to €20 from 3 July 2023	€37.7m
3	Increase weekly rate of Jobseeker's Allowance for 18-25 year olds to €228, as a step towards parity with standard Jobseeker's rates	€7m
4	Resource the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to recruit 10 Public Insolvency Practitioners	€0.83m
5	Establish a Social Welfare Adequacy Commission	€0.3m

¹ The payment would range from €500 to €100, based on individual income (whether this comes from work or social welfare).

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

	Measure	Cost
1	Increase the Qualified Child Increase for over-12s by €5	€29m
2	Increase the Qualified Child Increase for under-12s by €3	€31.3m
3	Increase child age-limit for receipt of One Parent Family Payment to 12	€36.5m
4	Establish a Child Maintenance Service	€2.3m
5	Introduce Parental Bereavement Leave & Benefit to provide a statutory support for parents who suffer the loss of a child	€0.7m
6	Introduce legislative change to enable parents and guardians of children who were in receipt of Disability Allowance and who passes away to continue receiving the payment for 12 weeks	€0

CARING FOR CARERS

	Measure	Cost
1	Increase the annual Carer's Support Grant payment to €2,000	€21m
2	Increase weekly rates of Carer's Allowance & Carer's Benefit by €17.50 ² - €15 increase from 3 October 2022, increased to €17.50 from 3rd July 2023	
3	Introduce a Long-Term Carer's Pension	€3m

PROTECTING STATE PENSIONERS

	Measure	Cost
1	Increase weekly State Pension rates by €15 per week from 3 October 2022	€528.7m
2	Increase weekly rate of Living Alone Allowance by €2.50	€30m
3	Ensuring the Right to Retire on a State Pension at 65 by restoring State Pension (Transition) Scheme	€129.5m

² The cost for this measure is included under increases to core social protection payments.

