

Key Points

Estimating the MESL costs for Families living in Direct Provision



This Working Paper presents the estimated MESL costs, based on an examination of the MESL baskets for families, and adjusting the contents to reflect living within the Direct Provision system.

The paper outlines the findings of the first, desk-based, stage of a project to establish the MESL needs for families with children living in the Irish Direct Provision system. This paper will inform a subsequent stage of the project which will include focus groups of people with experience of living within Direct Provision.

The paper models a scenario based on how the Direct Provision system “should” work, informed by a review of official key documents including the National Standards for Direct Provision. It is important to acknowledge that due to the large variation in the standard and type of service being provided across the country, this scenario may portray a “best case” situation that many people living in Direct Provision accommodation may not receive.

One and Two Parent families are examined, using the examples of families with two children, one of primary school age and one of secondary school age. It is assumed that they:

- are within their first six months of living within the Direct Provision system,
- are living in an International Protection Accommodation Services accommodation centre,
- have use of shared self-catering facilities,
- use the transport service provided by their accommodation provider, with some use of public transport.

Following a review of documentation and consultation with an Expert Group, adjustments were made to the MESL baskets to remove items not applicable and to add additional goods and services required when living in Direct Provision.

The paper details these deliberations and adjustments to the MESL baskets, and discusses the total estimated MESL need of these families and examines the adequacy of income supports provided by the State to families living in Direct Provision accommodation, when in this scenario.

Detailed discussion of the each MESL Budget area and the adjustments made is included in the full paper.

The analysis finds that for each individual family member living in Direct Provision accommodation, the income supports provided are *inadequate* to meet their estimated MESL need, and that this inadequacy is compounded at household level.

- A One Parent, Two Child household living in Direct Provision accommodation
 - Weekly MESL need is estimated to be €228.30
 - Average weekly income amounts to €110.80
 - Income covers 49% of estimated MESL need; shortfall of €117.50 per week
- A Two Parent, Two Children household living in Direct Provision accommodation
 - Weekly MESL need is estimated to be €289.98
 - Average weekly income amounts to €149.60
 - Income covers 52% of estimated MESL need; shortfall of €140.37 per week.

The Working Paper also examines how the introduction of a Child Benefit-like payment would impact the income adequacy of the families being considered. It finds that such a payment would improve the level of both household type’s income, however it would not be enough to provide an adequate income to meet the estimated MESL need.