



ESTIMATING THE MESL COSTS FOR FAMILIES IN DIRECT PROVISION

WORKING PAPER

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Introduction and Approach

MESL Research

Working with members of the public to identify the cost of a socially acceptable **Minimum Essential Standard of Living**.

- Minimum required for people to live with dignity and participate in day-to-day life
- Meets physical, psychological & social needs
- A level no-one should be expected to live below
- Consensual Budget Standards method
 - Academically rigorous approach used internationally
 - Deliberative focus groups
 - Negotiated social consensus
- Counts the actual average weekly cost of the 2,000+ essential goods and services
- Reflects concepts which underpin:
 - Human Right to adequate standard of living
 - European Pillar of Social Rights
 - Irish Government definition of poverty
- Evidence based benchmark to assess the income required to enable people to live with dignity, at a minimum but acceptable level

This Working Paper

The first, desk-based stage of a project to establish the MESL needs for families with children living in the Irish Direct Provision system

Working Paper – Outline

- Reviewed relevant literature and documentation on the Direct Provision system
- Consulted with Expert Group of representatives that work with and advocate for those living in Direct Provision
- Adjusted the contents of the existing MESL baskets to remove goods and services not applicable and to add additional goods and services required when living in Direct Provision
- Estimated the MESL need for families living in Direct Provision, based on these adjustments
- Examined the adequacy of Income Supports provided to these families, in comparison to their estimated MESL need

Approach - Scenario and Assumptions

- Large variation in the standard and type of service provided to those living in Direct Provision accommodation across the country became clear
- Made the adaptation of the existing MESL baskets complicated, as depending on the level of service being provided, the contents of the baskets could vary.
- In order to address this, it was necessary to create a specific scenario that the family being considered were in, with a number of associated assumptions:

- This study will examine the MESL need of families made up of both one and two parents, with two children, one of primary school age and one of secondary school age.
- It is assumed that the families in question are within their first six months of living within the Direct Provision system, and rely solely on income provided by the state.
- It is assumed that the family in question are living in an International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) Accommodation Centre, rather than the other forms of accommodation provided to those in the Direct Provision system.
- It is assumed that the IPAS Accommodation Centre in which the family are living has shared self-catering facilities, with access to an in-centre shop and kitchen facilities for residents to choose, prepare and cook their own food.
- It is assumed that the family in question rely on the transport service provided by their accommodation provider, as well as some use of public transport.

Key Documents

- National Standards for Direct Provision
- IPAS House Rules and Procedures
- White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service

Findings - Expenditure

FOOD

- All food costs removed from budget
- Excluding cost of food purchased outside of accommodation

PERSONAL CARE

- Cost of soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush and period products removed.
- Cost of all remaining personal care items retained

CLOTHING

- All clothing costs retained in clothing budget

HEALTH

- Cost of Healthcare services and prescriptions removed
- Cost of over the counter Health items retained

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

- Majority of Household Goods costs removed from budget
- Cost of some miscellaneous items and cleaning products retained in budget

PERSONAL COSTS

- Cost of Passport and Trade Union subscription removed.
- Cost of Bank Account fees retained
- Legal Aid Contribution fee added to budget

COMMUNICATIONS

- Cost of Mobile Phone and Stamps retained
- Cost of Broadband removed from budget

SAVINGS & CONTINGENCIES

- Weekly savings cost retained in budget.

EDUCATION

- All education costs retained in budget

SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Cost of self-catering holiday and TV license removed from budget
- All remaining Social Inclusion costs retained in budget

TRANSPORT

- Parental public transport allowance retained in budget
- Children's public transport allowance increased from 1 to 3 return journeys per week

Findings – Income Adequacy

Current Income Supports

- Daily Expenses Allowance - €38.80 per week for an adult and €29.80 per week for a child
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance – annual payment of €260 for a child aged 4-11 years, and €385 for a child aged 12-22 years in full-time second-level education
- Medical Card and Prescription Fee exemption
- Additional Needs Payment - not included in the income of the family living in Direct Provision accommodation being considered in this Working Paper

Income Adequacy - Individual

ONE PARENT

Estimated weekly MESL need: €88.06

Weekly Income: €38.80

% of MESL covered by Income: 44%

TWO PARENT

Estimated weekly MESL need: €149.73

Weekly Income: €77.60

% of MESL covered by Income: 52%

SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILD

Estimated weekly MESL need: €87.52

Weekly Income: €37.20

% of MESL covered by Income: 43%

PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

Estimated weekly MESL need: €52.72

Weekly Income: €34.80

% of MESL covered by Income: 66%

Income Adequacy Household

ONE PARENT, TWO CHILDREN

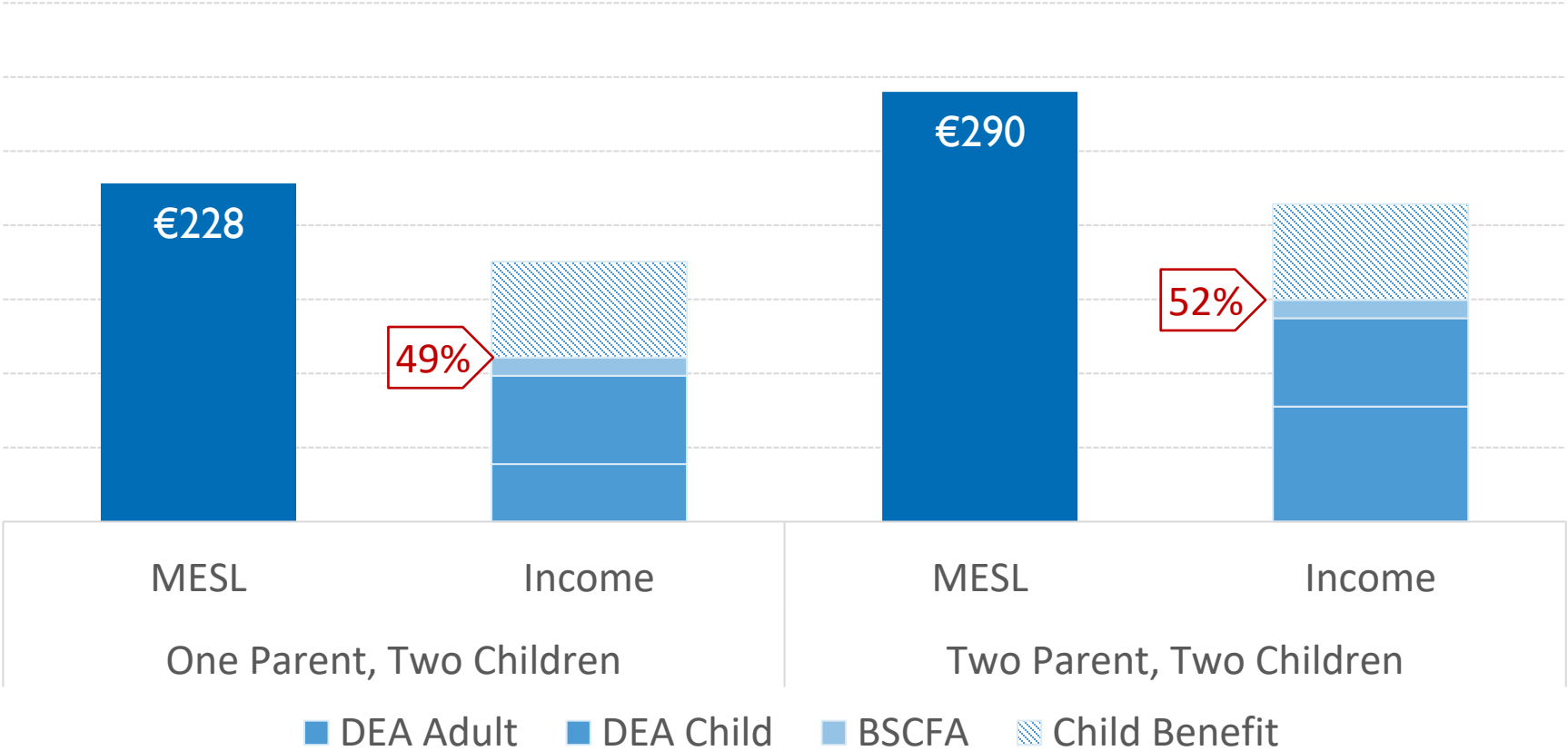
- Estimated weekly MESL need: €228.30
- Weekly Income: €110.80
- % of MESL covered by Income: 49%
- Weekly Shortfall: €117.50

TWO PARENT, TWO CHILDREN

- Estimated weekly MESL need: €289.98
- Weekly Income: €149.60
- % of MESL covered by Income: 52%
- Weekly Shortfall: €140.37

Impact of Child Benefit

Household MESL, estimated, and Household Income, average per week



Conclusion

- For each individual family member living in Direct Provision accommodation, the income supports provided are inadequate to meet their MESL need.
- This inadequacy is compounded at household level.
- Inevitable that families living in Direct Provision are going without goods and services that people need to live and participate in Irish society, at a standard of living which no one should be expected to live.
- If accommodation providers are providing a lower standard of service than that outlined in the scenario and assumptions of this paper, a greater income shortfall is experienced.
- Introduction of a Child Benefit-like payment would improve the level of both household type's income, however it would not be enough to provide them with an adequate income which would meet their estimated MESL need.

Thank you!

Full Working Paper available at www.budgeting.ie