



*“Our first priority as a Government is to ensure that the poor and the vulnerable within our society are protected”
Minister Brian Cowen: Budget 2008 Speech*

Budget 2008 – €5.69 per week for children in one-parent families – some priority

OPEN, the national network of one-parent families, has assessed that taking into account all of the social welfare changes announced in today's Budget, including increases in school supports and fuel allowances, lone parents and their children will be just €18.04 per week better off. “Increases in income specifically targeted at children living in poverty mean that those under 6 years will rise by just €5.69 per week, while those of secondary school age will get a measly increase of €3.77”, stated Camille Loftus, Head of Policy & Research at OPEN.

“Against a backdrop of recently published poverty figures, today's Budget will do little to improve things for 87,400 one-parent families who survive on social welfare payments. The poverty rate for one-parent families stands at 32.5% and means that children in these families are four and half times more likely to live in poverty than anyone else”, continued Loftus, “Budget 2008 has done little to address this – we estimate that the poverty line in 2008 will be €290.99 per week. Today's increases mean that a lone parent with one child will receive €274.34 per week when all of the increases are taken into account, which is € 16.65 below what they need to stay out of poverty”. “The failure to address this gap seriously questions the government's commitment to the poorest families”, added Ms. Loftus.

“An additional issue arises”, she explained, “despite the fact that government has stated that it wants more lone parents to go back to work, this Budget was clearly not ‘welfare-to-work’ proofed. For example, part-time workers will stand to lose €2.40 from their Family Income Supplement (FIS) payment; For example, while a lone parent with a child under 6 will gain a total of €18.04 per week from Budget 2008, a part-time worker on the National Minimum Wage will only gain €14.91. This will not give lone parents struggling to move from welfare to work any hope that they can achieve economic independence”, Loftus concluded.

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Note to Editors:

OPEN is Ireland's largest lone parent organisation, supporting between 10,000-15,000 one-parent families across Ireland.

OPEN's initial analysis of Budget 2008 is available on www.oneparent.ie

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