

# Tackling Child Poverty Approach and Impact



Caption: Denise Charlton (Right), Chief Executive, Community Foundation Ireland with Tanya Ward (centre), Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance at the launch of the child poverty monitor at Rutland national school.



## Why This Matters?

Child poverty remains one of the most pressing social issues in Ireland. Despite strong economic growth, over 250,000 children continue to experience consistent poverty and material deprivation. These children face barriers in education, health, and opportunities that shape their entire future.

The scale and momentum of Community Foundation Ireland's work on child poverty is both significant and accelerating. To date, we have invested over €13.45 million in initiatives aimed at tackling child poverty across Ireland, with an extraordinary €10 million of that awarded in just the past five years.

This funding reflects not only the urgency of the issue but also the growing commitment of our donor community. Each donor plays a vital role in supporting innovative, community-based responses to child poverty. These represent thousands of children whose lives have been improved, families who have found stability, and communities that are stronger and more resilient as a result.

With your support, Community Foundation Ireland has taken a leadership role in bringing evidence, advocacy, and practical support together to change this picture. Our mission of Equality For All in Thriving Communities cannot be achieved without ending child poverty.

Our distinctive model integrates evidence, narrative, advocacy, and frontline delivery under one strategy, maximising donor impact.



Caption: Dr Gráinne Collins, Policy Analyst of the National Economic and Social Council, Fintan O'Toole, Columnist with The Irish Times, Denise Charlton, Chief Executive Community Foundation Ireland and Professor Alan Barrett, Director of the Economic and Social Research Institute attend Invest Now For Future Generations gathering organised by Community Foundation Ireland

## Some investment examples:

### Building the Evidence Base

Community Foundation Ireland donors are investing in a multi-annual Child Poverty Benchmark, developed in partnership with a leading academic research institution, the ESRI (Economic & Social Research Institute). This benchmark provides robust, longitudinal data to track progress and identify the most effective policy levers for reducing child poverty. This research complements the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) Child Poverty Monitor, which offers an annual snapshot of government performance, another donor investment. Together, these tools form a powerful evidence base, combining depth and timeliness, that informs policy, drives accountability, and shapes public discourse. This dual approach has led to wide media coverage and public debate, high-level stakeholder engagement resulting in concrete political action.

In 2025, the launch of the benchmark during Child Poverty Week catalysed a significant government response. A new cross-departmental committee was established, tasked with delivering specific poverty-reduction measures. These include a second tier targeted child benefit payment by 2026, and government commitment to reduce child poverty to 3% or less by the end of 2030. This is evidence in action, turning data into decisions that change lives.

### Shaping Narrative and Policy, Shaping the Future

At the heart of systemic change is the ability to shift how society understands and responds to child poverty. That's why Community Foundation Ireland and our donors have invested in narrative change research, work that goes beyond data to influence hearts, minds, and ultimately, policy.

This research has helped build both public understanding and political will, equipping advocates and policymakers with the tools to communicate more effectively about poverty and its solutions. It has also supported key leaders and campaigns that have driven forward some of the most impactful anti-poverty measures in recent years.

The results speak for themselves. This work has contributed to a series of landmark policy wins, including the introduction of hot school meals, free schoolbooks, and universal access to GP care for children. Perhaps most significantly, it laid the groundwork for a targeted child benefit, a measure first proposed in our 2024 research on [\*Poverty, Income Inequality and Living Standards\*](#), and now a formal commitment in the Programme for Government.

These achievements are not just policy milestones; they are lifelines for families. They mean children going to school with full stomachs, parents no longer choosing between medicine and groceries, and a social safety net that is more responsive to those who need it most. This is the power of narrative change: when evidence is paired with empathy, and when donors invest not just in services, but in the stories and strategies that make lasting change possible.

## Real Lives, Real Change: Stories from the Frontline of Child Poverty

Behind every grant is a story of a child who feels safe for the first time, a parent who finds hope, or a community that begins to heal. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Community Foundation Ireland is able to support frontline partners who deliver not only essential services but also dignity, opportunity, and long-term change. These organisations (including Barnardos, DePaul, First Fortnight, Citywise, and the Katharine Howard Foundation) are the lifeblood of our mission. Their work informs our advocacy support, strengthens our evidence base, and most importantly, transforms lives.

### ***Barnardos: Building Resilience from the Earliest Years***

Barnardos has delivered a suite of integrated supports that reach children at every stage of vulnerability. In schools across Dublin, Tipperary, and Westmeath, their Community Wellbeing Programme has helped over 2,600 children and adults build emotional literacy and resilience. Their Family Support and Bereavement Services have dramatically reduced waiting times, ensuring that children and parents in crisis receive timely, trauma-informed care. Thanks to donor support, in 44 centres nationwide, Barnardos has created therapeutic spaces that offer children a sense of calm and safety, essential conditions for healing. Meanwhile, their Early Intervention Centres, support children, helping them overcome developmental delays and prepare for school. The impact is profound, children are thriving socially and emotionally, parents are more confident and connected, and families are breaking free from cycles of trauma and poverty.

### ***Katharine Howard Foundation: Protecting Potential from the Start***

Through the Children's Promise Grant Round, the Katharine Howard Foundation, in partnership with Community Foundation Ireland, is investing in the earliest years of life, where the grounds for future wellbeing are laid. These grants support community-based organisations working with babies, toddlers, and their families, often beginning during pregnancy. The focus is on strengthening parent-child relationships, reducing stress in the home, and building nurturing environments that allow children to flourish. These projects are not only changing lives in the present, but they are also being evaluated as models of best practice, with the potential to influence national policy and secure long-term state funding. This is early intervention at its most strategic and compassionate.

### ***First Fortnight: Healing Through Creativity***

For children experiencing homelessness, traditional therapy can feel out of reach. That's where First Fortnight steps in. With support, they offer creative therapies, art, music, and drama, that help children express themselves, process trauma, and build resilience. In the past year alone, 79 children received 563 therapy sessions. The results are striking as children who once struggled with emotional regulation are now engaging in school, forming friendships, and finding joy in self-expression. For many, these sessions are the first time they've felt truly seen and heard. It's a powerful reminder that healing doesn't always begin with words, sometimes, it begins with a paintbrush or a song.



### ***DePaul: Safety and Support for Families in Crisis***

In DePaul's family services, a Child Support Worker, funded by the Toy Show Appeal, plays a vital role in supporting children living in emergency accommodation. One powerful story illustrates the impact: a mother and her infant, fleeing domestic violence, arrived traumatised and isolated. With the support of DePaul's team, the baby received developmental care, and the mother accessed mental health services and parenting support. Though their journey included setbacks, the family eventually rebuilt their lives. Today, the mother is working part-time, the child is thriving in creche, and they have a safe home of their own. This is what timely, compassionate intervention can achieve — not just survival, but recovery and renewal.

### ***Citywise: Education as a Pathway Out of Poverty***

In Jobstown, where fewer than 7% of residents hold a college degree, Citywise is rewriting the future. With funding, they run education and leadership programmes that help young people stay in school, build confidence, and become role models in their communities. The impact is generational. Young people who once felt excluded are now leading youth groups, volunteering, and planning for university. Their success inspires others, creating a ripple effect that challenges stereotypes and empowers entire communities. Citywise is not just preparing young people for education, it's preparing them to lead.



Above: Students and teachers in action in a Citywise school in Jobstown

# Why Donor Support is Crucial – Driving Change, Together

None of this progress would be possible without the generosity and vision of our donors. Your support is not just funding programmes; it is powering a movement to end child poverty in Ireland.

Thanks to you, Community Foundation Ireland is delivering independent, accurate measurement of child poverty through groundbreaking research and benchmarking. This evidence is shaping national conversations, ensuring that public and political debates are grounded not only in data, but in compassion and lived experience.

Your investment is also securing targeted budget measures that directly benefit children, from hot meals and free schoolbooks to expanded healthcare and income supports. These are not abstract policy wins; they are real, tangible changes in the lives of children who might otherwise be left behind.

And while we respond to urgent needs today — supporting families with food, education, and mental health care — we are also working to change the systems that create and sustain poverty. Together, we are building a future where every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to thrive.

This is the impact of your generosity. This is the power of collective action. Your partnership places this Foundation at the forefront of a coordinated, multi-layered effort to end child poverty in Ireland.

## Get in Touch

If you believe in creating a better and more equal society for all, our team would be delighted to start a conversation about your philanthropy and legacy wishes. Contact us to learn more about how your legacy can make a meaningful difference in communities all over Ireland, for many years to come. You can call us on +353 (0)1 8747354 or email us in the Development Team ([giving@foundation.ie](mailto:giving@foundation.ie)). We commit to stewarding the legacy gifts gifted by our donors and to celebrate and honour them for generations to come.



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# Appendix

[ESRI Report Launch 2025 - Event Report](#)

[Government Summit on Child Poverty - Event Report](#)

[Poverty, Income Inequality and Living Standards in Ireland: 5th Report](#)