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HIGHER OPTIONS 2026
EIGHT-PAGE GUIDE + EVENT MAP

"Before we face into the 25th anniversary of the al-Qaeda atrocities of September 11th, it is worth asking where they came from. And answering: from the manosphere

Fintan O'Toole
Opinion&Analysis

SCÉAL
IRISH LANGUAGE SUPPLEMENT
Inside today

Budget will benefit those 'who get up early', Harris says

Tánaiste echoes Leo Varadkar's pledge to people who get up early to go to work

Minister for Public Expenditure Jack Chambers signals only modest tax cuts

PAT LEAHY
Political Editor

There were mixed signals from Government on the forthcoming budget yesterday, as Fianna Fáil Ministers and TDs gathered in Tullamore, Co Offaly, for the party's think-in ahead of the resumption of the Dáil next week.

Fine Gael leader and Tánaiste Simon Harris promised that tax cuts in the budget would support people "who get up early every morning and go to work", reprising a line used by Leo Varadkar during his campaign for the party leadership in 2017.

In an address to the Mullingar Chamber of Commerce yesterday morning, Harris – who as Minister for Finance has responsibility for tax policy – promised that the Government's commitment to support people who work hard would be reflected in a personal income tax package in the budget.

He said cutting business taxes and cutting income tax "are the priorities" for the budget, which is set to be delivered in four weeks' time on October 6th.

However, a few hours later, speaking at the Fianna Fáil event, Minister for Public Expenditure Jack Chambers played down expectations of a major tax giveaway.

'Modest' tax cuts

Chambers said cuts to income tax would be "modest", benefiting most people by only a few hundred euro a year.

Chambers echoed Harris's language, saying the Government wanted to help those who get up early "but also get up and work nights too, so it's about all workers across the economy".

However, he cautioned against unrealistic expectations about the scale of the tax package.

"I'm honest about what I believe it will achieve. It will be a modest income tax package, one that amounts to €1.5 billion in total," he said.

"I'm very clear that it is modest and the adjustments will amount to, you know, it could be a few hundred euro, depending on your income, which I know on an annualised basis would be perceived as modest among the public."

Also speaking at the Fianna Fáil event, Taoiseach Micheál Martin indicated that the return of energy credits was unlikely, though he did not want to completely rule out some one-off payments in the budget to help with the cost of living.

However, he said any such measures would reduce the capacity of the Government to fund other areas, citing childcare and the cost of disability.

"We want to reduce the cost of childcare. The more you put into one-off payments, the less you have to reduce childcare costs," he said.

"Every time you do a one-off payment by say €1 billion or €2 billion, you reduce your capacity to deal more substantively with issues that matter to people on an ongoing basis ... so energy credits for everybody – I can't see the capacity being there to do that."

Favourable disposition

However, the Taoiseach said he had a "favourable disposition" to a suggestion from one of his backbenchers, Cork TD Seamus McGrath, to scrap stamp duty for first-time buyers, indicating that it was an issue that could be discussed.

Later, in a statement, McGrath said: "I very much welcome the Taoiseach's comments today. I have been making the case for the removal of stamp duty for first-time buyers and I believe there is an undeniable argument in favour of providing this relief."

But the idea was categorically ruled out by Harris during the summer when he told The Journal that there would be no changes to stamp duty in the budget, saying it was "not a lever I intend to pull".

Later, Minister for Children Norma Foley signalled that she expected to be able to announce significant reductions in the cost of childcare.

"This must be a breakthrough budget in terms of early years and childcare costs for parents," she said.

Gallagher brothers united
Oasis film premieres
Noel and Liam Gallagher at the Oasis: Don't Look Back In Anger UK premiere in London's Leicester Square last night. Yesterday, the Irish consumer watchdog began legal action against Ticketmaster over prices for the band's 2025 Croke Park gigs.
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Photograph: Joe Maher/Getty Images

Rise in number of children living below poverty line

ESRI says means-tested second tier of child benefit would target those in need

SARAH BURNS

The number of children in households below the poverty line grew by almost a fifth in 2024, according to fresh research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

That was despite strong growth in average household income, which – when adjusted for inflation, household size and composition – rose by 4 per cent between 2023 and 2024.

Being below the poverty line is defined as having less than 60 per cent of median household income.

The ESRI said additional policy measures will be needed for the Government to meet its official child poverty target.

It said a means-tested second tier of child benefit would "reduce child poverty more effectively, per euro spent, than increasing existing supports.

"This is because many low-income families with children are not eligible for – or do not take up – existing means-tested supports and so do not benefit from increases to these supports."

The Government ran a public consultation on a targeted child payment and working-age payment earlier this year.

Deprivation

The ESRI report, published today, is in partnership with Community Foundation Ireland and uses data from the Central Statistics Office survey of incomes and living conditions.

The increase in child poverty was larger after housing costs were accounted for, rising by 23 per cent to 260,000 children.

The analysis also found that the Coalition was "very far" from meeting its target to reduce child poverty to 3 per cent by 2030. This target is defined as the share of children who are below both the poverty line, before housing costs are accounted for, and experiencing material deprivation, defined as an inability to afford two or more essential goods and services.

Using that definition, child poverty stands at 8 per cent, according to the ESRI. "Additionally, this measure fails to capture a large number of children who experience material deprivation but [whose families] have incomes just above the poverty line, meaning it fails to capture many of those facing high housing costs," it noted.

The rise in child poverty was particularly pronounced for families with young children, increasing from 21 per cent to 27 per cent for families with children up to age five when housing costs were accounted for but falling from 12 per cent to 10 per cent for those whose youngest child was above 11 years old.

Barra Roantree, assistant professor at Trinity College Dublin and a co-author of the report, said: "Our findings suggest that it is important to account for housing costs in the measurement of child poverty, something the Government's official 2030 target does not do."

Community Foundation Ireland chief executive Denise Charlton said the findings "provide the evidence that many children and families continue to face enormous challenges, even in times when, on paper, our country is rich".

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Rathwood ends its 'working relationship' with Keogh brothers

CONOR POPE

The company that bought troubled homes and garden retailer Rathwood after it entered examinership have announced that the "working relationship" between it and the two brothers who ran it before the insolvency process began has come to an end.

Evergreen Home & Garden Holdings issued a statement yesterday afternoon saying its relationship with James and Thomas Keogh was now over.

The move comes just days after The Irish Times revealed how the two brothers remained heavily involved in the company and were in regular communication with the new owners about the day-to-day running of the business until late last week.

In July, the High Court approved a €750,000 rescue scheme which saw Kevin Nolan and a consortium he called Evergreen buying the operation. Customers and other creditors owed money by Rathwood were promised refunds of just 0.25 per cent.

'Clever move'

Confirming the scheme, Judge Rory Mulcahy said the manner in which the business had been managed before its examinership remained of "significant concern" and he noted liabilities of more than €21 million when it entered examinership.

Legal representatives of the Keogh family directors of Rathwood told the court James and Thomas Keogh were undertaking not to act as directors of the company for five years.

However, a series of internal messages highlighted how the brothers were involved in discussions about which employees should be kept on or let go and how certain creditors and the business should be managed.

In one exchange between James Keogh and Nolan, Keogh suggested that a €5,000 redundancy package for some staff was a "clever" move.

"Give them no hope, only 3 days a week or €5,000," Keogh wrote, and suggested staff might choose to leave "if they know there is NO hope of the big pay-off".

Weather

Blustery conditions with showers heaviest in northern half. Highs of 14-17 degrees.

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