Election 2016

In the summer of 2015 the South Dublin Community Platform undertook a project to capture the experiences and impacts of poverty on families in the county. While poverty and deprivation is well documented in the EU SILC data which is published by the Central Statistics Office in November of each year, the human impact - the misery, deprivation and hopelessness - is less easily captured.

This project interviewed a range of individuals experiencing poverty in Tallaght and Clondalkin, gathering their stories, their experiences, their frustrations and hopes. The information was subsequently processed and presented as a short video (**www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5pCuSuvg-M**) at a seminar *'Hanging out the Washing on the Poverty Line'* in the Louis Fitzgerald Hotel in December 2015.

What emerged from the project is a story of extreme deprivation, loss of personal dignity and an assumption of guilt by being unable to provide for children. It is both horrific, in terms of the risk to the health and life of families in this constituency, and intolerable that such deprivation continues to be accepted in a relatively wealthy and developed country.

What can be done about it? Plenty. We have both the resources and the mechanisms to enact measures to alter the situation. But it does require political commitment. What we have outlined below are a number of core measures to turn that situation around.

We call on election candidates to end poverty and deprivation by taking these 5 options to address poverty.

Company Directors: *Doris Abuchi-Ogbonda, Gráinne Begley, Doreen Carpenter, Linda Greene, Michelle Kearns, Gillian McWilliams, Patrick Nevin, Maria O'Donoghue,, Maurice Walsh, Betty Whelan.*

1. **Strengthening economic, social and cultural rights protection in our constitution**

By implementing the recommendations of the Constitutional Convention and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural in the Irish constitution.

Why: This would place a legal responsibility on the state as a duty bearer to deliver on the articles outlined in the UN Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, such as housing, healthcare, education and a living income - i.e. those needs which have not been met through the political/legislative process.

2. **End homelessness, overcrowding and lack of appropriate accommodation for Travellers**

By introducing rent control legislation, increasing housing support payments, implementing a programme of local authority house building and creating a central agency to implement the Traveller Accommodation Strategy.

Why: This would immediately address homelessness and soaring, unaffordable rents, address the intransigency of local authorities in providing Traveller accommodation while putting in place a publically provided social housing strategy to meet future housing needs.

3. **Bring an end to poverty and deprivation by guaranteeing a basic income for everyone and addressing regressive taxation**

By introducing living wage legislation, an enhanced Family Income Supplement regime and reordering our taxation regime towards progressive taxation on income, wealth and profits and by applying affirmative action such as waivers for refuse and water services to reduce the burden on low income households..

Why: This would address the poverty that leaves one third of our population unable to afford basic items such as food, heat and adequate clothing. It would end child poverty and address growing inequality which is exacerbated by an unfair, regressive tax regime.

4. **Create a universal, publically funded healthcare system**

By introducing a universal health insurance scheme, increasing the number of hospital beds in top class teaching hospitals, focusing health strategies towards community care and free GP service for all. An immediate need is to provide for the weakest members of society by raising the income threshold for medical cards and removing prescription charges.

Why: This would immediately impact on the huge inequalities in health outcomes that have resulted from the development of a two tier health system and the tolerance of an inadequate system of public hospital provision.

5. **Invest in areas of disadvantage**

By increasing the number of regeneration initiatives to build social capital, develop economic opportunities, enhance the physical environment and improve services such as affordable childcare and early childhood education initiatives to address unequal outcomes in education.

Why: This will improve the physical environment, increase safety, reduce crime and create the conditions for social and economic activity. It will also help to equalise opportunities for families, improve education outcomes and life chances for children while reducing the inevitable social and economic costs of poverty and inequality.

5 pointers for Election Candidates 2016

Candidates for the election calling to your door, not sure what to ask them? Here are some pointers:

Would your party, if elected:

1. **Guarantee the right** to an adequate income, accessible health care, equality in education and a right to accommodation? Would your party actively implement **poverty impact assessment** to all policy?

2. Introduce measures to address the housing crisis i.e. **rent controls**, **remove rent caps** for rent supplement, **build** the required **local authority homes** and create a **central agency** to implement the **Traveller Accommodation Strategy**, independent from the local authorities?

3. Introduce a **living wage**, **enhance Family Income Supplement**, introduce legislation to **prevent zero hour and exploitative contracts** and introduce a system for **Community Employment** employees that is **equal to FIS**?

4. I**ncrease the income threshold** for medical card applications and **remove prescription charges for medical card holders.**

5. **Clondalkin and Tallaght are disadvantaged areas**, what would your party do **to improve services** e.g. transport, childcare, health care, education, children's services, community development and resource centres?