

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
BY DEPUTY K.M. WILSON OF ST. CLEMENT
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 29th APRIL 2024
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 7th MAY 2024**

Question

“Will the Minister advise what assistance, if any, his department offers families who are experiencing difficulties in staying together, and state the costs to provide this support?”

Answer

The Minister offers a wide range of support services for families in need of support. Dependent on the needs of the children and family, support may address relationship difficulties, housing matters, poverty, parental or child mental health concerns and caring responsibilities with engagement with key partners from other Government Departments and the community and voluntary sector to address challenges faced and to prevent them escalating.

The Children and Families Hub Service and Early Help

The Children and Families Hub Service provides an integrated single front door for requests for support for children and their families. It receives requests for support from both professionals and families. Families can call for support, advice and guidance. The team signpost to relevant Government Services and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations for support around the issues the family are facing.

When children’s wellbeing is being affected, an early help wellbeing assessment may be recommended to be completed by either a professional from a service already working with the family (e.g. school, health visitor, Brighter Futures) or by a Family Partnership Worker from the Children and Families Hub Service. The assessment will consider all the challenges the family are facing and when needed, a team around the child and family meeting will be convened with partner agencies to develop an early help plan and agree a lead worker.

Family Group Conferences

We offer family group conferences chaired by a professional to develop and strengthen the family support network, ensuring that family led support plans are in place and effective alongside any early help or social work Child In Need offer of support.

Relate services

We utilise the Relate services via referral from Children and Families Hub and Social Work staff for families – the government has an agreement with Relate and contributes to operation costs.

Resource panel

Multi Agency Resource Panel considers requests for specific services when assessed as needed by a social worker provided support and assessment to a family.

Edge of Care & Intensive Integrated Youth Service

The IIYS provides support to children and parents when concerns have escalated and there is a presenting risk of children becoming looked after, with a particular focus on adolescence.

SW support/Child in Need plan & the Family Intervention Service

Children in need of help and protection can be supported by a social worker via an assessment and Child In Need plan which are reviewed monthly. The Family Intervention Service can support the social worker in achieving some of the goals of the care plan, this could be through undertaking direct work with children, enabling looked after children to spend quality time with parents or other family members. They offer parenting support (1:1 support or training course, modelling in the home, routine & boundaries, behaviour management)

Connected carer, Post Residence Order Support & Post Adoption Support packages and Private Fostering

Children's Services provide effective support services for friends and Family carers, those needing support and guidance under private fostering arrangements and those who need additional support following adopting a child or being awarded a residence order for a child/ren. There is a financial support element including within these packages.

Costs of providing support

Support for families to stay together is a community provision across several Departments of Government, Non-governmental Organisations and the third sector. Other providers include: Customer and Local Services, Health Community Services; Andium Homes and specific charities.

The table below shows the costs incurred by the services in the department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills which help families to stay together within their wider remit of supporting children and families.

Services	COSTS 2023
Children and Families Hub and Early Help	3,089,000.00
Family Group Conferences	93,000.00
Resources panel	134,000.00
Third Sector including Brighter Futures	268,326.00
IIYS	613,000.00
Children in Need	981,000.00
Family Intervention	1,122,000.00
Connected Carers	798,000.00
TOTAL	7,098,326.00