

## What you can do to support the campaign

- 1. Write a letter to your local TDs** asking them to help restore the universal non-discriminatory nature of Child Benefit. You will find pre-addressed letters in your pack which you might like to use – alternatively, you could write your own version.
- 2. Raise universal Child Benefit as an issue with election canvassers.** The impending General Election means that your local politicians and election workers are likely to be visiting your area. You can put the issue on the agenda by asking them two simple questions:
  - a) Do you know that some children living in Ireland are not getting Child Benefit?
  - b) What are you going to do about it?
- 3. Sign FLAC's petition** calling on the government to put children's rights before immigration policy. You can sign it online, or in writing by downloading it from the FLAC website ([www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)) and sending it back to us – but collect some signatures first!
- 4. Write a letter to your local newspaper,** highlighting the inequality that the HRC has introduced. You could use this leaflet as a reference for drawing up your article or contact us in FLAC if you need any support.
- 5. Take part in our postcard campaign.** All you have to do is sign it and send it off. We hope that your support will help An Taoiseach to understand the urgency of this injustice to children.
- 6. If you know anybody who is affected by this policy,** or if you have been affected by it yourself, please contact FLAC – we'd be very happy to hear from you.

## Contact details

**FLAC** is an independent human rights organisation dedicated to the realisation of equal access to justice for all and it campaigns through advocacy, strategic litigation and authoritative analysis for the eradication of social and economic exclusion.



For further information or support, please contact FLAC at:

13 Lower Dorset Street, Dublin 1  
tel: 01-874 5690  
fax: 01-874 5320  
e-mail: [campaigns@flac.ie](mailto:campaigns@flac.ie)  
web: [www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)

**The campaign to restore universal child benefit is actively supported by:**



Issued November 2006

## Not every child in Ireland gets the children's allowance



## Don't make **children** pay the costs of immigration policy

What used to be called Children's Allowance payment is now called **Child Benefit**. And what used to be a universal payment is now denied to some children.

Until 1 May 2004, all children living in the State received Child Benefit monthly, regardless of family income or immigration status. Then, in response to the enlargement of the European Union, the government introduced the **Habitual Residence Condition (HRC)**. This is a condition which must be met by certain people seeking certain social welfare payments, including Child Benefit; and it effectively ended the previous policy of universality in relation to that payment for children.

The HRC, which was originally introduced to control the flow of EU workers into Ireland, is now impacting hardest on families living in vulnerable situations – and especially their children. It places immigration policy requirements above the rights of children and makes children's rights contingent on their parents' situation.

Examples of people adversely affected include:

- ✧ families where parents are not permitted to work, such as people awaiting a decision on their residence application, including asylum seekers;
- ✧ parents who are non-Irish nationals with no record of work in Ireland, including migrant workers who have been working in Ireland but who, through employer exploitation, have become 'undocumented', e.g. where the employer has not paid their tax or social insurance;
- ✧ parents working here for less than two years who cannot demonstrate a 'centre of interest' in Ireland nor previous EU work experience.

FLAC is deeply concerned that children are being driven into poverty and that the rights of some children have been lost in the imposition of the State's immigration policy.

Children living within Ireland are treated in an unequal and discriminatory way based on their parents' nationality and residency status.

### Why a universal benefit?

- ✧ Because all children are equal
- ✧ Because a child should not be treated differently because of his or her parents' status – or lack of it
- ✧ Because children have the right **NOT to live in poverty**

The State has always recognised that Child Benefit is an important mechanism for keeping or bringing children out of poverty. However, through the imposition of the HRC, Child Benefit is denied to children who are living in vulnerable situations.

Further, many children of taxpayers are being denied Child Benefit for no particular reason, even though the parents of these children are contributing substantially to Ireland's growth and wealth.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, signed and ratified by Ireland, provides that States Parties - the countries which have signed up the agreement - must respect and ensure the rights of children, including the right to benefit from social security, without discrimination.

The Convention also holds that all actions which impact on children **must put the best interests of the child first**.

The imposition of the Habitual Residence Condition on Child Benefit is contrary to International Human Rights Law, to the dignity of the child, and to equality and anti-discrimination norms.

It leads to child poverty.

Child Benefit is no longer a universal payment and this has created an **inequality** between children living in Ireland.

**Therefore:**

**FLAC calls on the government to restore Child Benefit as a universal payment that is paid to every child living in Ireland and to comply with international state obligations, stated government policy and ordinary standards of human decency.**