
IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS
NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE

WELFARE REFORM

October 2012

1. Congress welcomes the opportunity to respond to call for consultation and evidence for the Committee stage of The Welfare Reform Bill.
2. Congress expects the NI Executive to give the Welfare Reform Bill full scrutiny in order the NI Executive understand the full ramifications of this Bill on your constituents and on the wellbeing of society in NI. Congress believes that these proposals are not steeped in Equality and Human Rights, Congress urges the committee to look at the proposals in this context. Congress believes that as they stand the proposed welfare changes are predicted to make poverty worse. We are of the view that just to remove the most drastic aspects of this Bill is not enough as the remainder will impact negatively on thousands of citizens in NI. Our views on this are also reflective of the concerns of major organisations among the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Churches. Congress is responding in opposition to the this Bill which is predicated on cuts.
3. Congress is the central body for trade unions in Northern Ireland. There are 34 affiliated unions in NI representing over 215.000 workers who are employed in the full range of economic and social activity in our society. These workers also cover all of the S.75 categories and currently over 50% of trade union membership is female. Congress has a long history of campaigning for equal rights and fighting discrimination both in the workplace and in wider society.
4. Congress it should be noted has given particular attention to those workers with disabilities and has continued to work closely with the relevant Government departments to promote educational and job opportunities in the

labour market. Congress has a core function in enhancing the lives of the unemployed and other social and economically disadvantaged groups by providing education, training, advice, representation and counselling to the unemployed and citizens of NI.

5. Congress provides information and campaigns on the issues, problems and social benefits affecting the employed and unemployed.
6. Congress promotes and conducts research into the causes of unemployment, strategies for employment and structures of the labour market.
7. Congress campaigns against and exposes the broader issue of poverty and its depilating impact on our society.
8. We are aware that 64,000 people are currently unemployed in Northern Ireland with a further 51,000 being economically inactive but who are willing to work if there was suitable employment opportunities. Congress believes that, at the current time, there are neither the jobs nor employment opportunities available to address the objectives of the proposals contained in the bill and we are seriously concerned that the safety net of the Welfare State will be removed at a time when it is needed more than ever.
9. Congress has responded to previous consultations and availed of opportunities to make direct representation to the Minister and Committee. It is regretted the views expressed by Congress have not been reflected into the bill to meet the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.
10. The table below and the attached documentation relate the views of Congress to the clauses of the bill before the committee. We would ask the committee to consider the documents in their entirety.
11. Congress welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee. We trust you will find our comments helpful. If there is any

further way in which we could contribute to this process we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

12. The Bill contains 7 Parts, 7 sub chapters, 134 clauses and 12 schedules.

Part	Title		Clauses	ICTU Reference Page/Para
1	Universal credit			
		1. Entitlement and Awards	1-12	6/11; 11/7.1; 54/Q5-Q6; 55/Q7; 56/Q8; 57/Q9-Q11; 58Q12; 58/4
		2. Claimants Responsibilities	13-30	
		3. Supplementary and General	31-44	11/7; 12/(ii)
2	Working-age benefits			
		1. Job seekers Allowance	45-50	7/15-16; 25/7.7; 26/7.8
		2. Employment and Support Allowance	51-58	6/12; 20/7.4; 23/7.5
		3. Income Support	59-60	7/15
		4. Entitlement to Work	61-63	6/13; 24/7.6
3	Other Benefit changes		64-75	6/11; 8/18; 8/20; 19/7.2-7.3; 31/7.10; 32/7.13;
4	Personal Independence Payment		76-94	7/17; 28/7.9
5	Social Security; General		95-120	5/10; 8/19; 8/21; 41/7.15; 43/7.17; 31/7.11
6	Miscellaneous		121-129	44-46
7	Final		130-134	

Pauline Buchanan, Equality and Social Affairs Officer

Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

pauline.buchanan@ictuni.org 02890 247940