



## **Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality**

### **Question to NWC following presentation on Work – Part 2.**

Q. Is the political will or awareness there to change the SW [Social Welfare] system to individualised payments? Is there a process in place to change this?

A. There is a lack of political will to change the social welfare system to a fully individualised one. The system is complex and from our experience in NWC there is always both administrative and political resistance to changing established administrative systems. While the National Women's Council has consistently campaigned for removal of qualified adult status and the establishment of an individualised social welfare system there is also an absence of a broad-based movement calling for individualisation.

Instead, government has opted for piecemeal change over the last two decades. Some positive changes were made with regard to pensions, for example, while women may still be deemed a qualified adult, dependent on their male partners pension, they at least get the qualified adult payment paid directly to them, unlike other women who are qualified adults. However, the pace of change has been far too slow and we need to resolve this issue now.

There is some commitment expressed in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion that was published by government in 2019. It states that the Government is “open to adapting the current ‘adult-dependent’ concept that is currently an ingrained feature of the welfare system”. It made a commitment to “Review the current system of classifying second adults in households as ‘dependent adults’ with a view to individualising welfare payments and supports”. The timeframe associated with this commitment was Q2 of 2020. This commitment has not been progressed.

The National Economic and Social Council has recommended individualisation of social welfare in its recently published report on the future of the Irish social welfare system.

The Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) is completely individualised - every adult in the household who was at work and has lost work as a result of the pandemic is entitled to the payment in their own right. This provides a model that can be built on to individualise other social welfare payments. We want the principle of individualisation retained so that women do not return to being dependent ‘qualified adults’ with no payments in their own right and with little or no access to employment supports

NWC recommends that the Citizens Assembly produce a clear recommendation to government on the need to individualise the social welfare system.