

Budget 2016 Summary- Family Carers

Care Alliance Ireland are pleased to welcome a number of initiatives announced as part of Budget 2016 which will go some way to the realisation of Governments commitment to see Family Carers as "Partners in Care". However, there are many families who will see minimal positive impacts from this Budget- for example Young Carers and Family Carers working fulltime and juggling caring responsibilities in the home.

Key initiatives include;

- Restoration to 2012 levels of the Respite Carer Grant (to €1,700 from €1,375). This grant is also to be renamed the "Carer's Support Grant" to reflect the varied usage of the grant by Family Carers.
- Raise in the Home Carer Tax credit (by €190 to €1,000) and a raise in the income threshold to €7,200.
- €3 per week increase in Carers Allowance for those aged 66 and over (to €242 from €239).
- €2.50 per week increase in the Fuel Allowance (to €22.50 from €20)
- Upon the death of the person being cared for, Carers Allowance will continue to be paid for 12 weeks (an increase from 6 weeks). (This only applies to Carers Allowance, not Carers Benefit)
- Increase in the Christmas Bonus to 75% (from 25%) of weekly payment.
- €15 million new funding to facilitate participation of children with disabilities in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme.
- €940 million in funding to the Fair Deal nursing home scheme, with a guaranteed maximum 4 week wait time.
- Additional funding to expand Speech & Language Therapy at primary care level.

Care Alliance Comment

While we welcome the initiatives for Family Carers announced for Budget 2016, Care Alliance Ireland remains concerned at the overall lack of enhanced investment for people with disabilities, long-term illnesses and mental health concerns. Family Carers support their loved-ones, often on a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week basis, with increasingly fewer supports available to those family members. Disability and Family Caring are two sides of the same coin.

In particular we are disappointed at the lack of reinstatement of the motorised transport grant, mobility allowance, or the telephone allowance as part of the household benefits package- initiatives which our colleagues in the Carers Association and other groups have highlighted as of particular concern to older people and their Family Carers.

We await the release of the 2016 HSE Service Plan to secure clarity as to where investment is being targeted and to see how the needs of older people and people with long-term illnesses and disabilities are proposed to be adequately met. This is particularly of concern given the level of funding for the Fair Deal nursing home scheme and the apparent focus on residential care versus care within the community.

Minister Howlin said in his Budget 2016 speech that "a fair society is one where those who work hard receive decent rewards." We would ask Minister Howlin to remember that Family Carers in Ireland provide over 6 million hours of care every week, which equates to over €4billion worth of care every year, and to then judge whether those Family Carers who "work hard" are indeed receiving those decent rewards.

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