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CHARITY NETWORKS CALL FOR NATIONAL STRATEGY TO PROTECT PUBLIC SERVICES

Six national networks, encompassing over 1,000 charities, have called Government to produce a cross departmental strategy to protect key public services.

The Wheel, the Disability Federation of Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Irish Rural Link, Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups and the National Youth Council of Ireland issued a joint statement calling on Government to ensure that children, young people, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities and the people who support and work with these groups, receive the services and supports they need to live life with dignity.

The six organisations say that almost 60% of charities have experienced a decrease in income over the past three years, with 60% of those experiencing a decrease of up to a quarter.

“Government regularly makes the important point that we need to achieve sustainability in our public finances. We agree. The challenge, however, is to do this while preserving our social fabric and the public services that people rely on,” the joint statement reads.

The six networks argue that while Government has detailed plans to balance national income and expenditure, there is no plan to sustain public services for people who need them.

They say the values underpinning recent budgets have been largely economic in their totality, focused on cuts. “We are seeing the economic take precedence over the social. The two realms have become disconnected in practice yet remain firmly linked in reality,” says John Dolan, Chief Executive of the Disability Federation.

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel agrees: “A successful economy depends on a successful society. We can’t have one without the other. Yet our current national recovery programme is degrading the social basis for a sustainable future”, says Ivan.

John Dolan added that the ‘chipping away’ at both disability-specific and mainstream supports in past budgets has drastically impacted the independence and quality of life of people with disabilities. “Budget 2014 must be driven not only by fiscal considerations but by the adjacent pursuit of sustainable social outcomes,” says John.

This sentiment is shared by Liam O’Sullivan, Executive Director of the Care Alliance Ireland: “Every day, family carers and key charities are supporting tens of thousands of vulnerable people to keep them at home and out of hospitals. Cuts to home care supports and to the Carers Allowance must not continue,” says Liam.

Seamus Boland, Chief Executive of Irish Rural Link concluded: “The consequences of austerity means the recession will last longer and ordinary people will be disadvantaged for an unbearably longer period of time.”

The six organisations have offered their support to Government to help develop and implement a plan for sustainable public services. They have also committed to involving people and communities in this collective effort.

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Interviews are available with the participants. Please contact Gert Ackermann on Tel: 086176 9287 or email gert@wheel.ie.

ABOUT THE SIX NATIONAL NETWORKS

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is the national support organisation for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions. There are organisations within membership or as associates in DFI.

Care Alliance Ireland is the National Network of Voluntary Organisations supporting Family Carers. Our vision is that the role of Family Carers is fully recognised and valued by society in Ireland. We exist to enhance the quality of life for Family Carers. There are approximately 274,000 Family Carers in the Republic of Ireland. Family Carer support is provided by a number of organisations, including those dedicated solely to carer support and others who support carers as part of their response to individuals with specific conditions. We work with our 85 member organisations and other agencies to support them in their work with Family Carers.

Irish Rural Link (IRL) is the national network representing rural communities. It represents the interests of community groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies and sharing experiences and examples of good practice. IRL directly represents nearly 500 community groups with a combined membership of 25,000.

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. Is é Comhairle Náisiúnta na nÓg an eagrais ionadaí-ochta an óige in Éirinn. It represents and supports the interests of around 50 voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. It seeks to ensure that all young people are empowered to develop the skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society.

The Wheel is a national organisation that represents and supports community, voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland. Founded in 1999, we currently represent over 900 organisations across Ireland, reflecting the enormous scope and scale of this vibrant and diverse sector.