

October 2016

Key Measures announced in Budget 2017: Family Carers

Care Alliance welcomes a number of measures announced in Budget 2017, but remains disappointed that a number of key issues which impact on the lives of many Family Carers across the country were not addressed.

Key initiatives include:

- Increasing Home Carers Credit by €100 to €1,100. This builds on last year's increase of €190 over 2015 levels.
- Medical Card coverage extended to all children in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance.
- Reduction in the cap on prescription charges to those over 70 to €20 from €25, applicable from March 2017.
- €5 increase in the Carers Allowance and Carers Benefit March 2017. The Half-Rate Carers Allowance will increase by €2.50. (Note that as the estimated inflation rate for 2017 is 2.2%, such increases will more or less keep pace with the increase in the cost of living)
- Most social assistance and benefit payments to increase by €5 from March 2017. Note this does not include the Domiciliary Care Allowance, which remains at the existing level.
- Christmas Bonus of 85% of payment will be paid in early December.
- Carers Allowance will now be paid for 12 weeks when the person being cared for moves permanently into residential care/nursing home. This is in line with the change in Budget 2016 which saw this increase in payment time (to 12 weeks) applied for those who provide care for someone who passes away. The cost of this initiative is estimated at €1.3m.
- 900 extra resource teachers to support implementation of a new model of special education provision, with a further 115 Special Needs Assistants to be provided from January 2017 (total cost of these initiatives is €48m).

- Increased funding for the provision of housing adaptation grants will enable some 9,000 grants to be made in 2017 (increase of €2.6m for 2017).

There was also announced a year on year increase in funding for the Health Service of €497m, which will include:

- 950 additional Home Care Packages
- 58 additional Transitional Care Beds
- Expansion of Community Intervention Teams
- 55 Additional Acute beds
- Increased funding for aids and appliances
- Additional €15m funding for National Treatment Purchase Fund
- Increased funding for Mental Health programmes (€35m) towards full implementation of *A Vision For Change*.

Further details of these are available [here](#) (Budget 2017-PART II Expenditure Allocations 2017-19 (pp45-50)) and will be outlined in greater detail in the Health Service Executive's 2017 National Service Plan.

Care Alliance Ireland Commentary

While we welcome the initiatives for Family Carers announced for Budget 2017, along with a €35m investment into mental health services, Care Alliance Ireland remains concerned at the overall lack of material enhanced investment for people with disabilities and long-term illnesses. 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 we and our colleagues in Family Carers Ireland and other groups have highlighted as of particular concern to older people and their Family Carers.

We are also very disappointed with the lack of material increases in investment in Home Care in Budget 2017. Whilst there will be an estimated increase of €13.8m funding for Home Care this small level of funding increase will not keep pace with existing demands. We estimate that the extra funding will allow for the provision of an extra 2.5% home care provision or in the region of 500,000 extra home care hours. Demand is increasing at approximately 4% per year.

This small level of extra resourcing will not address the ongoing deficit building since 2010 of an estimated 2m Home Care hours. Indeed, based on the limited announcements for budget 2017 this deficit will increase again in 2017.

Increasing overall wage pressures and impending HiQA regulation of Home Care services will also place upward pressures on the cost of service delivery. It is not clear that these costs have been taken account of fully.

We join with our colleagues in the sector with a continuing demand for real enhanced investment in Home Care as a cornerstone of the health system, and for it to be placed on a statutory footing similar to the statutory right to residential care which exists in the form of the Fair Deal Scheme.

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