



CARERS IN CRISIS



SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES BUDGET 2019

Family Carers Ireland is working with Government to create an Ireland where carers are properly recognised, supported and empowered; where they are enabled to maintain their own health and wellbeing; to care with confidence; and can participate as fully as possible in economic and social life (National Carers' Strategy, 2012, p.2). Significant policy reforms are needed in Budget 2019 to make this vision a reality.

1. Urgently address the home care crisis pending the introduction of a statutory home care scheme.

- Home Support Hours should be increased by at least 25 percent from 17.094m hours provided to 50,500 people in 2018 to 21.4m hours delivered to 53,500 people. (Cost €102m).
- Publish the HSE's Audit of Respite Provision commenced in 2016 and enshrine within the statutory home care scheme an annual entitlement to at least 20 days respite in line with the statutory leave available to paid workers.
- All carers receiving the Carer's Support Grant should be granted a Medical Card. (Cost €64m).
- Plan for the future care and housing needs of people with disabilities, and invest in a range of independent living and community-based residential centres so people with a disability can live with dignity and independence and their parents have peace of mind knowing that their child will be looked after when they are no longer able to provide care.
- Address the shortage of homecare workers by reforming social welfare rules and incentivising employment in the sector.

2. Increase carer payments by €20 per week and the Carer's Support Grant to €2,000.

- Recognise the fulltime care required of Carer's Allowance recipients and increase the rate by €20 from €214 to €234 (Cost €79m).
- Increase Carer's Benefit by €20 from €215 to €235 per week (€2.8m).
- Increase the annual Carer Support Grant from €1,700 to €2,000 (€34m).
- The Domiciliary Care Allowance, which has not increased in almost 10 years, should be increased from €309.50 to €330 per month (€8.3m).
- In line with Government's Roadmap for Pension Reform, increase the hours a carer can work or study while receiving Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit or the Carer's Support Grant from 15 to 18.5hrs per week.

3. Increase the income disregard for Carer's Allowance from €332.50 (single)/€665 (couple) to €450/€900 respectively and extend allowable deductions.

- Increase the income disregard for Carer's Allowance from €332.50 (single) and €665 (couple) to €450 (single) and €900 (couple).

- Extend the allowable deductions in the assessment of means for Carer's Allowance to include dependent children, rent/mortgage payments, medical costs and Fair Deal contributions.
- The formula for assessing means from capital (savings, shares and property) for Carer's Allowance should be increased in line with the Disability Allowance, where the first €50,000 in capital is disregarded rather than €20,000 allowed for Carer's Allowance applicants, reflecting the desire of carers to provide financially for their loved ones after their death.
- The financial assessment for Carer's Allowance should be based on net, not gross, income, in line with the assessment of earnings under Carer's Benefit.
- Carer's Allowance should not be subject to tax.
- Disregard the Half-Rate Carer's Allowance in the assessment of means for Fuel Allowance.
- Disregard Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit in the assessment of income for the Working Family Payment.

4. Address the anomaly affecting carers who have no State Pension entitlement.

- Introduce a 'carer pension' that recognises the contribution of lifetime carers who have cared in excess of 20 years but don't qualify for a State Pension.
- Overhaul the Homemaker's Scheme to offer more practical interventions for carers such as making voluntary contributions on their behalf; offering generous tax relief on voluntary contributions paid by partners; or abolishing the 2-year rule and awarding carer credits to all carers.

5. Extend eligibility for Carer's Benefit to include the self-employed.

- Extend eligibility for the Carer's Benefit scheme to include people who are self-employed (paying a Class S stamp).

6. Extend the Free Travel Scheme to children in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance.

- Children in receipt of DCA should have an automatic entitlement to the Free Travel Scheme.

7. Replace the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant withdrawn in 2013.

- Immediately introduce the Transport Support Scheme committed to in 2014 as a replacement for the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant.
- Extend eligibility for the Disabled Driver and Disabled Passengers Scheme to all people with a disability, not only those with a physical impairment.

8. Disregard Carer's Benefit and Fair Deal contributions in the assessment of SUSI Grants.

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9. Reduce processing times for Carer's Allowance and establish a central Medical Assessment Unit.

- Allocate additional staff to the Carer's Allowance, Domiciliary Care Allowance and Disability Allowance sections to address backlogs in claims processing.
- Establish a centralised Medical Assessment unit to manage the medical assessments of all social welfare and health supports.
- Recipients of the Carer's Support Grant who then apply for Carer's Allowance should not be required to complete the medical report section of the CR1 form, similar to the arrangement in place for carers of children in receipt of DCA.

10. Publish a refreshed and funded National Carers' Strategy (2018-2023).

- Ring-fence funding for phase two of the National Carers' Strategy 2018-2022.
- Remedy the postcode lottery experienced by carers and support the move to primary care by increasing section 39 funding to Family Carers Ireland to allow us to deliver a package of supports, including respite to carers in each of the 9 CHO regions.

