

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COALITION OF CHARITIES CALL FOR RESTORATION OF FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

“A third of charities report a drop in their income”

27 September 2016 - Six national networks, encompassing over 1,600 Irish charities, today called on Government to prioritise the restoration of funding for social services and supports above tax cuts and capital spending in Budget 2017.

The call comes as a recent survey of charities show just over a third (34%) of charities have seen their income drop over the past year, while 71% report that demand for their services have increased over the same period. *

The Wheel, Disability Federation of Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland, Irish Rural Link, Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups and the National Youth Council of Ireland said in a joint statement that despite impressive economic growth in recent years, government spending on services for people with disabilities, young people, carers and rural communities remains well below the pre-crisis levels, in spite of increasing population levels across these groups of people. For example the number of those aged 85 and over is increasing by over 4% per year.

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel said: “We have heard a lot in recent months about the growing homeless crises, the lack of social housing, the lack of capacity in our health service, problems with the standard of care and growing social problems in rural areas; these issues are not unrelated, Ireland’s community and voluntary sector was subjected to disproportionate funding cuts since 2008, and the cumulative impact of these cuts is being felt in every community,” said Mr Cooper.

Diarmaid Ó Corrbuí CEO Carmichael Centre added: “The necessity and importance of complying with the ever increasing volume of regulatory good governance requirements is creating huge challenges for the sector. Recent controversies highlight the importance for CVC organisations to have rigorous and robust compliance systems in place.

“There is a serious capacity gap (skills and resources) in the sector and Government needs to recognise and support capacity building programmes. Failure to recognise and address this capacity gap will result in more governance failures. This will result in even greater difficulties for CVC organisations to attract and retain its volunteer board and committee members, further eroding their ability to function effectively and compliantly,” said Mr. Ó Corrbuí.

“This is a make or break budget for people with disabilities” said Sen. John Dolan, CEO of the Disability Federation of Ireland. “Government has the funding to make significant improvements in the health, housing and income supports of people with disabilities after years of cutbacks. The only question is whether they are willing to do so.”

Seamus Boland, Chief Executive of Irish Rural Link said: “The impact of the recession and austerity budgets is still being felt in rural areas. Incomes in rural areas are not adequate enough for many households to afford a basic standard of living. Farm incomes average €26,000, far below the average industrial salary with a reduction in off-farm incomes for many farming households. A

recent report from Teagasc showed that 34% of farms are now economically vulnerable with 31% of farm households in the border region having an off-farm income compared to 43% in 2007.”

Zoe Hughes, Policy & Research Officer at Care Alliance Ireland said: “Whilst we are pleased with the positive progress of actions within the National Carers Strategy over the last four years, it is vital that Phase 2 of the Strategy is developed soon, and indeed funded to ensure that progress continues, and so that Family Carers are truly recognised as Key Partners in Care by government and by our wider society.”

James Doorley, Deputy Director of the National Youth Council of Ireland said: “Ireland has one of the young populations in Europe, with the number of young people aged 10-24 years set to grow by 13% by 2020. Government should provide the resources for this growing youth population in Budget 2017 and ensure they can achieve their full potential and contribute to their communities and the country as a whole. This can be achieved by investing in youth work services, in supporting measures to promote the employment of young jobseekers and in actions to tackle youth homelessness as outlined in our pre-budget submission,” said Mr Doorley.

The six organisations have offered their support to Government in developing and implementing a plan for restoring funding for the above-mentioned 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: 086 176 9287 or email gert@wheel.ie.

NOTES TO EDITORS

*Survey of 278 charities conducted by The Wheel from 1 June and 15 July 2016. Response rate = 24%.

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 127 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. We exist to enhance the quality of life for Family Carers. We achieve this by supporting our 100+ member organisations in their direct work with Family Carers through the provision of information, developing research and policy, sharing resources, and instigating opportunities for collaboration.

Carmichael Carmichael Centre is the first and busiest largest shared facility for nonprofits organisations in Ireland. As a social enterprise serving the Irish Community and Voluntary Sector, the Centre has developed a range of specialised services to nurture and support the growth of social purpose organisations throughout Ireland.

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 ionadaíochta 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 1,300 organisations across Ireland, reflecting the enormous scope and scale of this vibrant and diverse sector.

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