

EMBARGO: Tuesday, 23 September, 11am

CHARITIES CALL FOR PLAN TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

Six national networks, encompassing over 1,500 Irish charities, today called on Government to develop a cross-departmental plan to restore and grow funding for 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 said in a joint statement that funding for many community and voluntary organisations has been cut between 8 and 10%* in each of past seven Budgets, and this has resulted in a deficiency of essential support services for children and young people, older people, people with disabilities, carers and rural communities.

By way of illustrating the seriousness of the situation: a survey conducted by The Wheel in May this year found that 59% of charities experienced a fall in their income over the past year, while more than two-thirds (67%) reported that demand for their services had increased over the same period. Over a third (36%) of charities had to cut back or suspended services over the same period.**

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel said: “While Government has detailed plans to balance national income and expenditure, there is currently no plan to protect public services. Recent Budgets have focused on achieving sustainability in our public finances, but we must acknowledge that this has come at an enormous cost for those who rely on public services. The protection and restoration of public services should now take precedence over tax cuts,” said Mr Cooper.

John Dolan, Chief Executive Officer of the Disability Federation of Ireland 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: “DFI calls on the Government to improve vital services and income supports for people with disabilities in Budget 2015. In particular, we urge Government to increase disability services provided in the community to facilitate the independent living of disabled people now and into the future,” said Mr Dolan.

Liam O’Sullivan, Executive Director of the Care Alliance Ireland added; “Now is the time to provide adequate resources for Ireland’s 274,000 Family Carers so they can continue to provide care for their loved ones. He asks for a reversal of the 19% cut to the respite care grant, provision of a statutory entitlement to Community Care Services and adequate funding of the Housing Grant Adaptation Scheme.

Diarmaid O’Corrbui, Chief Executive of the Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups said: “Since 2008 Carmichael Centre’s core statutory funding has been cut by 77% which has required us to cut services and staff. We need the funding cuts to stop before they cause irreparable damage,” said Mr O’Corrbui.

Seamus Boland said: “Irish Rural Link is calling for the government to re-examine the grant system for students especially middle income families who have borne a disproportional weight during the economic crisis. Now is the time to relieve some of the financial strain felt by these families.”

Mary Cunningham, Director of the National Youth Council of Ireland said: “As noted by the OECD, young people have been hit hardest by the economic downturn. In the youth sector, just over 1,500 staff work with almost 40,000 volunteers to provide services for more than 380,000 young people. At less than €4 a week per young person involved, supporting these vital services makes economic sense. It is essential that

Government now sets out a plan that will help preserve these services and build upon the excellent work carried out by youth groups up and down the country.”

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: 086 176 9287 or email gert@wheel.ie.

NOTE TO EDITORS

*Budget 2014 Analysis by Brian Harvey available at <http://goo.gl/1K5ztl>

** Survey of 297 non-profit organisations conducted by The Wheel, May 2014

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. There are approximately 274,000 Family Carers in the Republic of Ireland. 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 95 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 Centre is the first and largest shared services centre for the community and voluntary sector 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 not-for-profits 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 1,000 organisations across Ireland, reflecting the enormous scope and scale of this vibrant and diverse sector.

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