

Budget 2023 for Family Carers

Summary of Key Initiatives and Brief Analysis

September 29th 2022

Introduction

Budget 2023 has been delivered during a very challenging time for Ireland's 500,000 family carers. Following on from 2 years of feeling significant impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, family carers are now facing the challenges of the rising costs of living exacerbated by the additional costs of caring, which combine to make winter 2022 a difficult one. Many family carers, already at risk of poverty, cannot make the choice to conserve heat or power when caring for someone in their own home. Many instances of caring require specific equipment, the operation of which may add a significant amount to the cost of energy bills.

In our Pre-Budget Statement¹, we reiterated our calls to Government to make a number of changes which we and others across the sector had been advocating for a number of years. These included;

- Increases to respite care
- Address waiting lists for services to children with disabilities
- Extend GP Visit Card eligibility to those in receipt of the Carer's Support Grant
- Increase the Carer Support Grant to take account of the additional costs of care
- Introduce the Transport Support Scheme announced in 2014 as a replacement for the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant as a matter of urgency

Most of our key asks were not addressed.

We are particularly disappointed to once again see no mention of funding for the National Carers Strategy, no mention of the replacement Transport Support Scheme, and no specific mention of respite care in the Budget announcements. The announcement of additional funds to address hospital waiting lists, and the backlog of children waiting for an Assessment of Need is very positive. We also note that Minister Butler announced an

¹ https://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/files/CAI_PBS_DSPFocus_July22.pdf

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additional €50m in funding to maintain the supply of home care at current levels, with an increase of 15% in home care hours ringfenced for people with dementia². Ongoing ageing demographic pressures and staffing shortages will continue into 2023 however. We look forward to reading more detail on the packages of funding in the Dept. of Health in particular over the coming weeks and months.

We also welcome the modest increase in rates of income supports across Carers Allowance/Benefit and Domiciliary Care Allowance, and the additional once off €500 lump sum payments for many carers and those with disabilities. This will go some way to protecting incomes, allowing for the estimated inflation rates of 8.5% in 2022 and 7% in 2023.³

In the near term, we look forward to working with the various Departments to address the issues we highlighted in our Pre-Budget Statement.

Key Measures

Social Protection

- Weekly social protection payments (including Disability Allowance and Carers Allowance/Benefit) will increase by €12, from January 2023. Carers Allowance will now be paid at a rate of €236
- Domiciliary Care Allowance will increase by €20.50 to €330 per month, and can be paid to parents of babies who have to remain in hospital for up to 6 months after birth
- The Working Family Payment threshold will increase by €40
- There will be a €2 increase in the weekly rate for each Qualified Child
- There will be a once-off double week payment of all weekly Social Welfare payments (October)
- There will be a once-off double payment of Child Benefit (November)
- There will be a once-off cost of living lump sum payment of €500 for those in receipt of the Carer's Support Grant (November). Only one lump sum payment will

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/c13ef-minister-for-mental-health-and-older-people-announces-historic-further-increases-in-older-person-funding-in-budget-2023/>

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/speech/0ed8e-statement-by-minister-donohoe-on-budget-2023/>



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be paid per carer, regardless of how many individuals they may be caring for and how many individuals they receive a Carer’s Support Grant for

- There will be a once-off cost of living lump sum payment of €500 for those in receipt of Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension and the Blind Pension (November)
- There will be a once-off cost of living lump sum payment of €500 for those in receipt of the Working Family Payment (November)
- There will be a once-off lump sum payment of €400 for those in receipt of Fuel Allowance (November)
- There will be a once-off lump sum payment of €200 for those in receipt of the Living Alone Allowance (November)
- The Christmas Bonus (a double week for all weekly Social Welfare payments) will be paid (December)
- Increase of the earnings disregards on both Disability Allowance and Blind Pension by €25, from €140 to €165 per week

Health

- All inpatient hospital charges are abolished for public patients
- GP Visit Cards to be provided to 6 & 7 year olds, and those on or below the median household income of €46,000
- Once-off funding of €11.7 million to reduce backlogs in getting an Assessment of Need
- €138 million including €29 million for new developments to strengthen disability services, through the provision of additional respite, day service and residential places, in line with the Disability Capacity Review
- Overall funding increase of €149.9 million has been provided for Older Persons Services, including an additional investment of €17.7 million for new measures in services and social care for older persons, supporting the objectives of Sláintecare and the Dementia Strategy
- €443 million (€225 million of new funding) to address hospital waiting lists

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- An increase of €58 million for mental health services, incorporating €14 million to continue the increased provision of emergency placements within mental health services

Education

- 1,190 additional SNA’s and 680 additional special education teachers provided

Others

- 3x€200 electricity credit payments for all households (payable in November, January and March)
- The Legal Aid Board is allocated an additional €3 million for 2023 for legal advice and support to individuals under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015
- €67 million to fund 12,300 grants to adapt the homes of older people and people with a disability. €25 million for adaptation works to 1,800 existing social homes.

Conclusion

Whilst many of our key asks were not addressed in Budget 2023, we would like to acknowledge the additional once-off lump sum payments which will be paid to those in receipt of the Carer’s Support Grant, people on long-term disability payments and those in receipt of Fuel Allowance.

We are disappointed that many of the longer term items which could have been addressed in Budget 2023 were avoided. These measures include funding for the renewal of the National Carers Strategy – a point committed to in the Programme for Government and critical to the development of meaningful family carer policy in Ireland – and the inclusion of Carers Allowance as a qualifying payment for Fuel Allowance.

Budget 2023 was exceptional in many ways given that it included a supplementary Cost of Living Package. These payments will help family carers address the additional costs they face due to their caring role. However, for family carers who do not qualify for the Carer’s Support Grant or fuel allowance, there is little in the Budget for them.

Notes

The information contained within this document has been drawn from multiple sources pertaining to changes made as part of Budget 2023. These include the following;

- The speeches made by both the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/904d6-budget-2023-ministers-speeches/>
- Budget 2023 Expenditure Reports: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/eb6ec-budget-2023-expenditure-reports/>
- The Budget in Brief: A Citizens Guide to Budget 2023: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4de03-your-guide-to-budget-2023/>
- Budget 2023: Main social welfare changes and rates of payments (Dept of Social Protection): <https://assets.gov.ie/201552/2e76947c-bb9c-4b28-b462-ed692a77a876.pdf>
- Press release: Minister for Mental Health and Older People announces historic further increases in Older Person funding in Budget 2023: <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/c13ef-minister-for-mental-health-and-older-people-announces-historic-further-increases-in-older-person-funding-in-budget-2023/>

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