

Positive Changes in Budget but 26,000 Still Neglected says The Carers Association

The Carers Association, the national voluntary organisation representing Ireland's family Carers, is encouraged by some of the changes made by Government in today's Budget, but is very concerned that approximately 26,000 fulltime carers are still neglected.

Speaking outside Government Buildings today, Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association says, "We are encouraged with this year's Budget, some of which marks a positive step for family Carers. However, the 26,000 full-time Carers who do not qualify for Carers Allowances are still being neglected."

The Budget has allowed increases in many areas of social welfare relating to family Carers including

1. The weekly Income Disregard to qualify for Carers Allowance will be increased by €40 to €580 per week for a couple and by €20 to €290 for a single person.
2. The Carers Allowance rate has increased by €26.40 to €180 per week for those less than 66 years of age and by €30 to €200 per week for those over 66.
3. The Carers Benefit has increased by €17 to €180 per week. The duration of this benefit has been extended by 9 months and can now be received for a total of 24 months.
4. For those in receipt of Carers Allowance, Carers Benefit or the Respite Grant the allowable hours of work has increased from 10 to 15 hours per week.
5. The Respite Grant has increased by €200 to €1200 per annum.

While these changes are welcome they will only allow approximately 500 more full-time family Carers to receive the Carers Allowance. This still leaves 26,000 from Ireland's 50,000 full-time family Carers who will not qualify and who have received no consideration in this year's Budget says Enda Egan. "Family Carers contribute 3 million hours of care per week and save the State €1.5 billion net per year. While €250 million is needed to bring the remaining 26,000 full time carers on to the carers allowance, this is only a small transfer back to family Carers for their full time work.

"Family Cares save the State enormously in financial terms and help ease pressure on the Health services. A main priority of The Carers Association's Pre-Budget Submission was the development of a National strategy for Carers which would put the necessary supports and structures in place for all full and part time family Carers. This has not been implemented as part of the 2006 budget, Government must now develop this national strategy as part of the next national agreement, providing the appropriate infrastructure to addressing the needs of Ireland's 150,000 family Carers.

The Carers Association is the National voluntary organisation of family carers in the home, providing support services, respite, training and information to carers throughout Ireland. The Carers Association can be contacted through the National Careline on 1800 24 07 24.

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For further information please contact

Mary Tallent, Purcell Masterson and Associates or

056 7723211 or 086 3010209

E-Mail [mary@purcellmasterson.com](mailto:mary@purcellmasterson.com)