

The Carers Association Welcomes Government's Promotion of Carers Payments

The Carers Association, the national voluntary organisation representing Ireland's 150,000 family Carers, is welcoming the decision by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to undertake a public information campaign on Carers entitlements. The Department recently tendered for a National TV and Radio advertising campaign to promote carers payments. The campaign is to run from Friday the 25th to the 29th of September and has a budget of €130,000.

“We certainly welcome the Government's decision to increase awareness among Carers of their entitlements”, says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. “One of the largest difficulties experienced by family Carers is getting information on and access to state benefits and many carers have contacted our helpline in relation to difficulties experienced in applying for various payments and entitlements. This can be a very frustrating process and often costs them dearly in terms of stress, time and money wasted on phone-calls”.

The advertising campaign will highlight improvements to the Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and Respite Care Grant and provide information on how carers can apply. The means testing of carer's income has been improved for the Carer's Allowance, the duration of receipt for the Carer's Benefit has been extended from 9 months to 2 years and the Respite Care Grant has been increased from €200 to €1,200. However, The Carers Association estimates that only slightly more than one in five of the country's 150,000 carers have applied for or are automatically entitled to the Respite Care Grant.

“We are disappointed with the number of carers who have applied to date for the Respite Care Grant, particularly as it has been increased”, says Mr. Egan. “There are many other Carers who would be entitled to this annual payment and we would urge all Carers who think they may be entitled to apply”.

“Carers can often be confused by the application process for such grants and benefits. We would ask the Department of Social and Family Affairs to make the application process as straightforward as possible and ensure health professionals are fully informed to better help and advise carers. We welcome the Department's campaign to publicise help available for carers and increases in existing payments as it is imperative carers, a particularly vulnerable sector of society, have their rights and entitlements made clearly available to support their invaluable work”.

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 on the National Careline Freefone 1800 24 07 24 or see www.carersireland.com.

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