

Carers March Backwards on Dail

Symbolising Government "going backwards" in supporting family carers

Urge Government not to hit most vulnerable in society

(2nd April 2009) 161 carers, representing 0.1% of Ireland's 161,000 family carers, will march backwards to Government buildings today to highlight Government's 'going backwards' instead of forwards in supporting family carers. Organising the protest march, The Carers Association is appealing to Government not to take further steps backwards by cutting any of the vital allowances for family carers in the upcoming Emergency Budget, having already dealt a dreadful blow in recent weeks by deciding not to publish the National Carers Strategy.

"Carers across Ireland are extremely worried that vital allowances such as the carers allowance, particularly the half-rate allowance and the carers respite grant will be targeted in the budget", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "We know that all allowances are under review for the upcoming emergency budget and are urging Government not to hit carers again. Family carers contribute three and a half million hours of work every week propping up our health services by providing high levels of care in the home and saving the state a conservative EUR2.5 billion annually."

With pressures set to increase on family carers with a rapidly increasing ageing population, cuts in frontline service provision by the HSE and spiralling hidden costs of care, carers are now living in real fear of what little supports they have being cut in next week's emergency budget.

"In the 2006 budget the Government conceded that Family Carers are a unique group and gave carers a greater increase in payments than other social welfare recipients in an acknowledgement of their caring role. The Government must be mindful not to further undermine the value that family carers contribute to our economy in next weeks budget and accordingly should not target carers payments for any cuts" says Mr. Egan. "While other lobby groups are in a position to march in their thousands, unfortunately carers, due to the high level of dependency of the people they are caring for, cannot get out in such huge numbers. We sincerely hope that government will not take advantage of this fact by hitting this vulnerable group."

"The fact remains that family carers providing round the clock care and receiving the carers allowance are paid EUR1.30 per hour for their caring work, compared with Government paying a minimum EUR13 per hour to care workers employed by our health services. Family carers are essentially providing this Government with care on the cheap. Following the disgraceful decision not to publish the long fought for National Carers Strategy, we are asking Government not to cut essential social welfare supports for family carers, who are a unique group, particularly when you consider that carers save the state over EUR2.5 billion every year and provide over 90 per cent of all community care" says Enda Egan.

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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Family carers in a variety of caring situations are available for interview.