



Government not proceeding with publication of a National Carers' Strategy

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin T.D., and Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children with responsibility for Older People Maire Hctor T.D., today met with representatives from the Carers Association and Care Alliance Ireland to inform them of the difficult decision taken by Government not to publish a National Carers' Strategy.

Minister Hanafin said **"from the outset the Government made a commitment to social partners and the carer representative groups that the National Carers' Strategy would not be just a paper exercise. The economic situation we are all facing makes it difficult to commit to major advances in services for carers. I appreciate that it will be disappointing for carers and the people for whom they care that we are unable to publish a strategy."**

Minister Hanafin went onto to say this decision in no way diminishes the value of the role of carers across society. **"The Government is acutely aware of the sacrifices made by many people who care for a loved one and has sought to make many improvements in services and supports for carers. Over the past decade weekly payment rates to carers have greatly increased, qualifying conditions for carer's allowance have significantly eased, coverage of the scheme has been extended and new schemes such as carer's benefit and the respite care grant have been introduced and extended.**

I would like to acknowledge all those who took the time to make submissions as part of the public consultation process. I can assure all concerned that these submissions were considered in detail by the working group and will inform our thinking in the future development of services and supports for carers."

Minister Hanafin said that this year the Department of Social and Family Affairs is providing some €650 million in payments to



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support carers. Over 45,000 people will receive a carer's allowance payment. This includes some 16,000 people who receive the half-rate carer's allowance, in addition to another social welfare payment. Over 51,400 carers receive the annual respite care grant of €1,700.

The Department's of Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs will continue to work with all the representative groups in order to ensure delivery of services in the most effective manner.

ENDS

3rd March 2009

Note for Editors

The National Partnership Agreement *Towards 2016* (Page 54) contained a commitment to develop a National Carers Strategy. An inter-departmental working group was established in January 2008 to develop the strategy. This working group was chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach, with the secretariat provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The Departments of Finance, Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Health and Children, the Health Services Executive (HSE) and FÁS were also represented on the group.

The Strategy was to set out the Government's vision for family and informal carers and establish a set of goals and actions in areas such as income support, health care and services, housing, transport, information services, labour market issues, programmes of training (during caring and post caring), social inclusion and research and technology development.