



**More Than 28,000 Full-Time Carers Receive Increased And Extended
€1,000 Respite Care Grant**

Grants Totalling €31.2million Paid Out So Far

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today released figures which show that over 28,000 carers have benefited directly from an increased and extended respite care grant so far this year.

Earlier this year, in recognition of the valued contribution carers make to society, Minister Brennan increased the annual Respite Care Grant from €835 to €1000 and extended it to all carers providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with disability, regardless of their means.

Minister Brennan said that more than 24,000 people in receipt of the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit support schemes have received the grant, at a cost of €26.9m, along with more than 4,000 additional carers who have to date qualified this year following the extension of the support measure.

"So far this year, over 4,000 additional carers have received the grant following its extension, with grants of more than €4.3m paid out. I would urge all full-time carers who don't already receive the grant and haven't made an application to contact my Department's Respite Care Grant Section on 01 – 6732222," said Minister Brennan.

The annual Respite Care Grant is now available to all full-time carers, subject to certain employment related conditions, and will not be means tested. This means that carers who previously did not receive the grant, for example because they did not satisfy the means test for Carer's Allowance, may now have an entitlement.

The grant is paid automatically to carers in receipt of schemes such as Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and Domiciliary Care Allowance, administered by the Health Service Executive.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Brennan said: "Carers make a valued and valuable contribution to Irish society through their dedication and sacrifice. I want that work to be recognised and acknowledged through increased benefits and practical support measures. In this regard, a break from caring is one of the greatest needs identified by family carers. By increasing the Respite Care Grant to €1,000 and significantly expanding it to include thousands more recipients, we are going some of the way towards giving carers a badly needed break and recognition for their commitment and compassion. I am committed to the cause of carers. Recent increases and supports have gone some considerable distance in responding to the specific requirements of carers. A lot has been done, but much more remains to be achieved before we can be satisfied that the needs of carers have been fully addressed."

This year Minister Brennan has provided additional funding of more than €33m in increased allowances and support measures for carers. Improvements include:

- Extension of the Respite Care Grant to all persons providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with a disability, subject to certain employment-related conditions.
- Increase in the Respite Care Grant from €835 to €1,000 in respect of each care recipient – making it four times higher than when first introduced in 1999.
- Carers providing care for more than two people will receive a grant in respect of each person for whom they are caring. Previously a maximum of two grants was payable irrespective of the number of people receiving care.
- Increase of €14 in the weekly rate of Carer's Allowance and the Carer's Benefit, from last January.
- Income limits for the Carer's Allowance expanded by increasing the weekly means test income disregards by €20 to €270 for a single person and by €40 to €540 for a couple so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify. This means that a couple with two children can earn up to €30,700 and receive the maximum rate of Carer's Allowance while the same couple can earn up to €49,200 and receive the minimum rate of Carer's Allowance, Free Travel, the Household Benefits Package of Free Schemes and the Respite Care Grant. Effective from April 2005.
- Increase in the earnings limit for Carer's Benefit by €120 to €270 per week.

Press Release Ends



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Please see attached Note for News Editors:

Note for News Editors

Respite Care Grant – New Qualifying Conditions

Anyone who is not getting the grant under one of the current schemes, e.g. Carer's Allowance or Benefit, will qualify once they satisfy the conditions below:

The carer must:

- be aged 16 or over,
- ordinarily resident in the State,
- care for the person on a full-time basis,
- have been or be likely to care for the person for at least six months. This period of care must include the first Thursday in June,
- live with the person they are looking after or can be contacted quickly by a direct system of communication (for example, a telephone or alarm) between their home and the home of the person they are caring for.

In addition, the person they are caring for must:

- be so incapacitated as to need full-time care and attention (medical certification is required),
- not normally live in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution,
- not receive full-time care and attention within their own home from another person.

The carer will not qualify if they are:

- employed/self-employed outside the home for more than 10 hours a week,
- getting or are entitled to Unemployment Benefit or Unemployment Assistance or are signing for Unemployment Credits,
- living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution.

Carer's Allowance

Carer's Allowance is a payment for carers who look after certain people in need of full-time care and attention and who satisfy a means test.

Carer's Benefit

Carer's Benefit is a payment made to insured persons who leave the workforce to care for a person, or persons, in need of full-time care and attention.