



Minister Announces That Number Of Carers Receiving Weekly Recognition Payments To Increase To Almost 30,000 As Result Of Extra €100m Support Package.

Decision To Abolish Rule For Carers That Two Welfare Payments Can Not Be Made Will Boost Incomes Of 18,000 By Up To €109 Per Week

Estimated 40,000 Carers To Benefit As Respite Grant Increased By €300 To €1,500 & All Carers Payments Increased By Up To €20 A Week

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., announced today that at least 1,200 new Carers will now qualify for direct payments for the first time in recognition of their valuable work, which will bring the total number receiving a dedicated weekly income to almost 30,000, as a result of a range of major new support initiatives.

In addition, some 2,500 existing carers will have their incomes significantly boosted as part of a major new €107 million package of increases, supports and improvements that have now commenced.

Minister Brennan said that also later this year, in one of the most fundamental reforms ever undertaken of the welfare system, the long standing rule that forbids a person receiving two welfare payments will be abolished in the case of Carers.

The result will be the introduction for the first time in the history of the State of an entitlement allowing Carers to retain a full social welfare payment and to receive, in addition, up to half rate Carers Allowance, which will boost the income of an estimated 18,000 Carers by up to €109 per week.

The Minister said that that the extra benefits that will flow from the welfare reforms agreed as part of Budget 2007 are in addition to the increases from this month of €20 per week to recipients of Carer's Allowance aged under 66 years of age that will benefit over 27,000 carers in addition to the 1,700 recipients of Carer's Benefit who will also receive the weekly increase.

In addition, this month will see a weekly increase of €18 for 1,400 recipients of Carer's Allowance aged over 66.



The Minister said the numbers of Carers directly benefiting from other Budget increases, supports and improvements included almost 40,000 who will receive the substantially improved annual Respite Care Grant which has been increased by €300 to €1,500; 1,200 new carers who will qualify for payment for the first time, and 2,500 existing carers who will receive increases in weekly payments following the easing of the means test for Carers Allowance later this year.

Minister Brennan said that a recently completed comprehensive survey by his Department on the Respite Care Grant had shown that many people used the grant to take a holiday while a family member took over their caring role. In other cases it was possible for the carer to bring the person they are caring for on holiday, while other carers used the money to employ a carer, perhaps for a few hours a week, rather than taking a long break. The importance of family and friends in enabling carers to get a break was also evident. 73% of respondents indicated that respite care was provided in their own homes and 65.7% indicated that it was organised with family or friends.

Minister Brennan said: "Abolishing the old rule that says you cannot get two welfare payments means that for the first time people who are caring can have some real recognition of their caring duties. It means under this new dual payment system we will be starting to recognise the Carers Allowance less as a welfare payment and more as a support for caring duties. I consider this reform to be an important step forward and I am now determined to press ahead with other needed reforms in the caring area, including the publication in 2007 of the first ever National Carers Strategy."

Minister Brennan said that Carers make a valued and valuable contribution to Irish society by devoting their time and energy to improving the quality of life for others. The Minister also said that family and informal care is a cornerstone of future long-term care policy and that over the coming year, the Government will be looking at such issues as the needs of the Carers as part of a development of respite services and training for carers.

"We have traveled some distance in recognizing and acknowledging the enormous contribution Carers make in looking after people in their own homes and communities. Our next step forward will be to achieve our vision of a coordinated, comprehensive,



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accessible and sustainable system of delivering services and supports in the community to people who need care while at the same time rewarding Carers and making sure that we care for the Carers” Minister Brennan said.

Press Release Ends