



Minister Hanafin says “no plans to change half rate carers”

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin recently told the Dáil that she has no plans to change the conditions associated with half-rate carer’s allowance. **“The introduction of the half-rate carer’s allowance is only one of a number of improvements to payments to carers in recent years. Since 1997 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.”**

Minister Hanafin said that this year the Government was providing some €650million in payments to support over 45,000 Carers. This includes some 16,000 social welfare recipients who are also in receipt of the Half Rate Carers Allowance. A further 6,200 people receive the annual Respite Care Grant of €1,700.

“In a recent interview I was pointing out the massive increases in spending and eligibility that have occurred across a number of Social Welfare schemes such as Carers, Child Benefit and Lone Parent payments. But I also said, and it was reported correctly, that I would not be recommending any changes. However, some opposition parties have tried to whip up fear amongst people with some of their interpretations of my comments. There are no plans to make cuts in any of the 50 or so schemes administered by the Department, which this year will spend almost €20billion in supports to 1.7 million customers.”

There are two types of support available – the Carers Allowance which is a means tested payment for people who are providing full time care and attention to a person who needs it. Carers Benefit is a social insurance payment for people who take time out of the workforce to provide full time care and attention and can be paid for up to two years. In addition to these weekly payments, the Respite Care Grant is an annual grant to all carers providing full time care regardless of whether or not they are in receipt of carer’s allowance or benefit.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

This year those in receipt of Carers Allowance receive €239 per week (over 66), while those under 66 years of age receive €220.50 per week. The rate of Carers Benefit is €221.20 per week.

Full details of all the Social Welfare supports available for Carers is available from any Social Welfare Office or on the website www.welfare.ie

ENDS

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