



**Estimated 40,000 Carers To Benefit As Respite Grant Increased By €300
To €1,500**

***Minister Brennan Committed To Further Expanding And Increasing
Benefits, Supports And Services For Country's Carers.***

The Minister for Social Affairs Minister Brennan has announced that the annual Respite Care Grant is being increased from €1,200 to €1,500 from this month.

The Grant is available to all carers providing full-time care and attention to an older person or a person with disability, regardless of their means.

The Respite Care Grant will benefit almost 40,000 carers. Over 29,000 people in receipt of the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit support schemes will receive the grant. An estimated 10,000 additional carers will also qualify following the extension in 2005 of the support measure to full-time carers who previously did not receive the grant, for example because they did not satisfy the means test for Carer's Allowance. The estimated total cost of the scheme is almost €12.9 million.

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).

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 €1,500 we are going some of the



Department of Social and Family Affairs

way towards giving carers a badly needed break and also recognition for their commitment and compassion."

Minister Brennan said that a survey completed by his Department of 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 organized with family or friends.

Minister Brennan said that also later this year, in one of the most fundamental reforms ever undertaken of the welfare system, he will be introducing an entitlement allowing Carers to retain a full social welfare payment and to receive, in addition, up to half rate Carers Allowance. This will boost the income of an estimated 18,000 Carers by up to €109 per week.

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 extremely important step forward."

The Minister said that these extra benefits that have flowed from the welfare reforms agreed as part of Budget 2007 are in addition to the increases this year of €20 per week to recipients of Carer's Allowance under 66 and recipients of



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Carer's Benefit. Carer's Allowance recipients over 66 received an increase of €18 per week.

Minister Brennan added: "I am determined to work for carers and with carers to continue to deliver substantially increased benefits, proper recognition payments and the services and supports which provide practical help for those people who devote their time and energy to improving the quality of life for others. We have made substantial progress but there is a great deal yet to be achieved. Our next step forward will be to achieve our vision of a coordinated, comprehensive, 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"

Press Release Ends