



Minister Launches National Awareness Campaign To Promote Greater Take Up Of Supports For Carers

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

The Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D., announced details today of a major nationwide awareness campaign to promote and encourage an increased take up of the welfare supports and entitlements available for Carers, including the Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and the annual Respite Care Grant.

Minister Brennan said that supporting the valued role of carers in our society continues to be a key priority of the Government. The Minister added that he is also committed to further expanding and increasing benefits and supports for carers in forthcoming Budgets and also through other initiatives that recognise the valuable contribution carers make to Irish society through their dedication and sacrifice.

Currently the Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit schemes are being paid to over 27,000 carers at an annual cost of EUR267 million. The numbers qualifying for the Carers Allowance had increased significantly from 16,000 in 2000 to over 26,000 so far this year.

The most recent Budget delivered the biggest ever increases in rates of payment, extended the value of the Respite Care award by EUR200 to EUR1,200 for some 36,000 carers and introduced more flexibility and opportunity for carers. The Carers Allowance was increased for all over age 66 by over EUR30 to EUR200, making it the single largest welfare entitlement in the State.

The national awareness campaign, which begins today (Sunday) includes an extensive week-long TV, national and regional radio and national and regional print media advertising campaign. In addition, the support scheme will be promoted through the Department of Social and Family Affairs at LoCall 1890 66 22 44, all Social welfare local offices, Citizen Information Centres and Citizen Information Phone Service (1890 777 121) and by Comhairle, the national information agency. An information booklet on any of the supports can be ordered by phoning 1890 20 23 25 and further information is available on the Department's website at: www.welfare.ie.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Brennan said that the new Social Partnership Agreement, "Towards 2016", set out as a priority the drawing up of a comprehensive National Carers Strategy that would fully address the provision of services, supports and entitlements for carers. He had instructed his Department to commence the national consultation process on the Carers Strategy which will involve all the relevant Government departments and agencies, carer's representative groups and all the other stakeholders involved.

Minister Brennan said that in addition to developing the National Strategy, he was also committed to giving priority to further expanding the income limits for the Carers Allowance, so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify; implementing further significant increases in the annual Respite Care Grant in addition to the EUR200 rise in the last Budget which brought its value up to EUR1,200 and examining the scope for improved support services to carers; and enhancing economic and social inclusion supports to people whose caring responsibilities have concluded.



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The Minister added: "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 and also in a more strategic and long-term way through the developing and delivering of an overall National Carers Strategy. I am committed to the cause of carers. The Government's commitment was restated recently when the Taoiseach, Tanaiste and I met with carers' representatives to discuss the needs of carers. Recent increases in entitlements and benefits and enhanced supports have gone some considerable distance in responding to the specific requirements of carers.

"I want to build on what has already been achieved and I am committed to working for, and with, carers to deliver increased benefits, recognition payments and supports, and also to put in place for carers the type of services which provide practical help for those people who devote their time and energy to improving the quality of life for others."

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