

BUDGET 2010 – INCLUSION IRELAND FACTSHEET

Finance Minister Brian Lenihan delivered Budget 2010 on 9th December 2009. The following factsheet explains the implications of Budget 2010 on people with an intellectual disability and their families.

Cuts to allowances

Inclusion Ireland rejects cuts to people on Disability Allowance and Carers Allowance announced as part of Budget 2010 in December. The Disability Allowance now stands at €196 a week and Carers Allowance for those under 66 is €212. These cutbacks are compounded by other cuts to child benefit, the prescription levy and cuts in dental treatment. The Social Welfare Bill has now passed all stages in the Dáil without much outcry. This will only make it easier next year for the Government to come back with more callous cuts. Inclusion Ireland will voice its concerns over the Budget with Taoiseach Brian Cowen, Health Minister Mary Harney, Social and Family Affairs Minister Mary Hanafin and Disability Minister John Moloney.

Innovation Funding for Disability & Mental Health

Disability Minister John Moloney announced that an Innovation Funding of €3 million has been provided in the 2010 HSE Vote in respect of disability and mental health. This funding will be allocated to The Person Centre, a non-profit organisation which has established a fund with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies to support transition from institutional to person-centred models of care in disability and mental health services. Proposals will be invited jointly by The Person Centre and the HSE from service providers who can deliver a transition of service users from institutional to community settings on a cost-neutral basis, after the initial transitional period. Inclusion Ireland welcomes this investment.

Inspection of residential facilities for children with disabilities

Minister John Moloney announced that funding is being provided in 2010 for registration and inspection of children's disability services, which the Minister says will commence by the end of 2010. This is in line with the commitment in the implementation plan of the recommendations of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Report. The Minister added that detailed proposals would also be brought to Government early in the New Year in respect of the protection of adults with disabilities in residential services.

Mental Health Capital Programme

The Department of Health and Children announced a €43million investment in the mental health strategy 'A Vision for Change'. Disability and Mental Health Minister John Moloney said provision for continued funding of the programme will be made in the 2011 Estimates and subsequent years. This will be funded through the sale of former 'mental health assets', such as old institutions. Inclusion Ireland welcomes the investment into mental health and the commitment to a 'Vision for Change', and hopes the commitment to invest in provisions for people with an intellectual disability and autism who have mental health problems remains an important part of this plan. This investment is vitally important, but assurances are needed that this money will not be taken from the disability budget as has happened in the past. €53 million from the disability and mental health fund were diverted in 2007, and €17 million of monies allocated specifically to disability was diverted away in 2009. Disability cannot be seen as an easy pocket from which money can be picked for other health service areas.

Dental treatment

Budget 2010 introduced cuts to entitlements under the Treatment Benefit Scheme. Under the old scheme, provided that you qualified, you were entitled to a range of discounts, in addition to a check-up, on services such as teeth cleaning, fillings, extractions and root-canal therapy. From January 1st 2010, this will be cutback to a free dental or eye exam from January, with all other benefits -- except for hearing aids -- abolished. The entitlements to a free clean-and-polish or reduced rates for extractions and fillings will end in January.

Cuts to agencies

There have been cuts to agencies which protect people with a disability and prevent them from being discriminated against on the grounds of disability. The Equality Tribunal and the Health and Information Quality Authority (HIQA) have both suffered cuts of approx. 8%. These are frontline agencies working to promote and protect people's rights and make very real differences in people's lives.

Medical Card

There will now be a Medical Card prescription charge of 50 cent per prescription up to a maximum charge of €10.00 per month per family. A person with a medical card will now pay 50 cent for each item they are prescribed from April 1st next year. The charge will be capped at €10 per family per month.

Education

The National Educational Psychological Service has had its funding increased by €2.4 million to €24 million, while funding for the National Council for Special Education was reduced by €2.3 million to €8.6 million.

NEW RATES FOR ALLOWANCES

Disability Allowance

- Disability Allowance (personal rate): was 204.3, now €196
- Disability Allowance (person with qualified adult): was €339.90, now 326.10

Carers Allowance

- Carers Allowance (under 66): was €220.50, now €212
- Carers Allowance (over 66): was €239, now €239

Carer's Benefit and Constant Attendance Allowance

- Carers Benefit: was €221.20, now €213

Respite Care Grant

- No change in the Respite Care Grant, so it will remain at €1,700 annually.

Domiciliary Care Allowance

- No change, remains at €309.50, payable monthly.

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