

Press release

Minister Humphreys addresses Annual Carers' Forum

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Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, today addressed the Annual Carers' Forum held at Chartered Accountants House, Pearse Street, Dublin.

The Forum gives family carers a voice at policy level and is one of the Department of Social Protection's commitments under the National Carers Strategy. This is a cross-departmental strategy, led by the Department of Health, that sets the direction for future policies, services and supports provided by government departments and agencies for carers.

This annual event is an opportunity for government departments, carer organisations and family carers to discuss the issues that affect family carers and their loved ones on a day-to-day basis. The event consisted of sessions on health, social protection supports, transport and housing issues for people with disabilities and older people and issues affecting young carers. These themed workshops provide an opportunity for open dialogue and to hear how policies impact on people's lives.

Speaking at the event, Minister Humphreys said:

"Since my appointment as Minister for Social Protection, I have listened closely to the views of carers the length and breadth of the country.

"This annual forum gives me the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the issues experienced by family carers and hear their concerns first-hand.

"These engagements have helped inform some considerable improvements that have been introduced for carers in recent years, including delivering on the Programme for Government commitment to provide a pension solution for long-term carers.

"From January 2024, a new Long-Term Carers Contribution scheme was introduced. This significant reform enables long term carers, who have been caring for 20 years or more, to qualify for the State Pension Contributory. We know this reform is a reassurance and relief to the many carers across the country who have spent their lives caring for loved ones.

"Finally, I want to recognise the huge contribution that Family Carers make to our society and the Government's commitment to further enhancing the supports available to them."

Government Departments and agencies represented at the event included the Department of Health; the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Department of Transport the National Transport Authority and Tusla.

A note of the proceedings of the Annual Carers' Forum 2024 will be made available online at [Gov.ie - Annual Carers Forum \(https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9980c-annual-carers-forum/\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9980c-annual-carers-forum/).

Notes to Editors:

- €400 for people receiving Carer's Support Grant paid in November.

The Annual Carers' Forum forms part of the Department of Social Protections commitments under the National Carers' Strategy.

(<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a1e44e-national-carers-strategy/>). This cross-departmental strategy, led by the Department of Health, sets the direction for future policies, services and supports provided by government departments and agencies for carers.

Issues such as extending allowances or increasing means test thresholds are discussed at events such as the Carers Forum. This level of engagement has helped inform some considerable improvements that have been introduced for carers in recent years, including:

- In Budget 2021 the Carer's Support Grant was increased by €150 from €1,700 to €1,850 per year.
- In Budget 2022, changes to the Carer's Allowance disregard benefitting many family carers. For carers who work, the weekly income disregard was increased by €17.50 to €350 for a single person, and from €85 to €750 for carers with a spouse/partner. The capital and savings disregard for the Carer's Allowance means assessment was also increased from €20,000 to €50,000.
- From January 2024, a new Long-Term Carers Contribution scheme (<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/16642-long-term-carers-contribution-periods/>) was introduced. This significant reform enables long term carers, who have been caring for 20 years or more, to qualify for the State Pension Contributory
- As part of Budget 2024 and with effect from next month, the Carer's Allowance weekly income disregards will increase by €100 for a single carer and a €150 for a carer who is part of a couple.
- In addition, over the last number of Budgets, there have been a suite of once-off lump sum and double payments to assist with the cost of living and rising bills. More recently as part of Budget 2024, these include: -
 - A Christmas Bonus Double Payment to those in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment, including carers.
 - A further double payment was paid earlier in the year.

- The maximum rate of all weekly social welfare payments increased by €12. This is the third successive rise in weekly welfare rates. Rates have increased by €29.00 over the last 3 years.

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