

MS Ireland response to Budget 2017

MS Ireland shares the disappointment of the Disability Federation of Ireland and other charities that Budget 2017 failed to address key issues for people with MS and other long term illnesses and disabilities.

Whilst there were some welcome developments in the Budget, such as the increase in health spending of €497 million, the additional €10 million for home care services, the additional 1,000 nursing posts and the €5 per week increase in social welfare allowances, key questions and concerns remain unanswered including:

- Will any of the additional health funding be made available for critically underdeveloped and under-resourced neurology services? Will any of the additional nursing posts be neurology specialist posts (such as MS Nurses)?
- Will any funding be made available in 2017 for the development of neurorehabilitation services, as per the National Neurorehabilitation Strategy which was published in 2011?
- Whilst the provision of automatic Medical Card entitlement to all children in receipt of Domiciliary Carers Allowance is a positive development which will come as a great relief to many, what about adults with long term illnesses such as MS, which can accrue considerable additional financial burdens on individuals and families?
- The Budget promised to build 47,000 social housing units by 2021. What percentage of these will be properties that are adapted for people with disabilities?
- The €5 per week increase in social welfare payments including Disability Allowance (commencing in March 2017) does nothing to meet the extra daily cost of living for disabled people – the Disability Federation had previously sought a €20 per week increase
- The additional €10 million for home care services for older people is welcome, but as Age Action note, this is far short of what is needed after years of cuts. Even with this, fewer people will be receiving home help supports in 2017 than they were six years ago. MS Ireland also notes that these services need to meet the needs of younger people under the age of 65 with long term illnesses and disabilities as well as older people.
- Increased funding has been announced for Housing Adaptation Grants but this falls short of the €30 million sought by the Disability Federation to improve the chronic situation regarding these grants and does nothing to address the various issues regarding the system for means testing for these grants

You can read the Disability Federation of Ireland's full response to Budget 2017 here: <http://bit.ly/2e9t9pa> DFI have also prepared a summary of key points from the Budget which can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2eg0J0j>

You can read MS Ireland's Pre-Budget Submission here: <http://bit.ly/2dG8YAR>