

Budget 2026: Key Announcements for Family Carers

Social Protection
• €2bn increase in spending for the Department of Social Protection, bringing total budget to €28.9bn in 2026. • Increase in the Carer's Allowance income disregard from €625 to €1,000 (single carers) and from €1,250 to €2,000 for couples (July 2026). • Weekly social welfare payments including Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit will increase by €10 with proportionate increase to Half Rate Carer's Allowance and Increase for Qualified Adult payments (January 2026). • DCA will increase by €20 to €380 per month (January 2026). • Christmas bonus double payment (early December 2025). • Weekly Fuel Allowance rate will go up by €5 per week to €38 (January 2026). • Child Support Payments will increase by €8 for children under 12 (up to €58) and €16 for those aged 12 and over (up to €78 per week). • Eligibility for Fuel Allowance has been extended to those receiving Working Family Payment (March 2026 with payments backdated to January). • Income thresholds for the Working Family Payment increased by €60 (January 2026). • The Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance has been extended to 2 and 3-year-olds subject to means test (June 2026).
Health & Disability
• Total funding for health is €27.4bn, an increase of €1.5bn on 2025. • Funding for 3,370 new hires across the health sector - 300 more staff for mental health; 100 more clinicians for mental health crisis teams. • 220 acute hospital beds, 280 community beds, 1.7 million more home support hours and 500 more nursing home places. • €3.8bn for disability services. • 250 new residential care placements and day service supports for 1,400 young people finishing school, and 50 places for older adults. • Funding for 6,500 private Assessments of Need. • 150,000 hours of home support, 10,000 overnight and 15,000 day respite sessions for people with a disability. • A new dedicated unit has been established in the Dept of Children, Disability and Equality to lead a full review of Ireland's disability service model. This unit will work hand-in-hand with disabled people, their families, and representative organisations to shape a long-term vision for services to 2030.

Carers in Paid Employment
- The national minimum wage will increase by 65 cents to €14.15 per hour from 1 January 2026. - The ceiling for the 2% Universal Social Charge (USC) band will increase by €1,318 to €28,700 in line with the 65 cent per hour increase in the national minimum wage from 1 January 2026. - The reduced rate of USC for medical card holders is being extended until 31 December 2027. Reduced rates of USC apply to people who have a full medical card whose income is €60,000 or less a year. - Pension Auto Enrollment from January 2026.
Special Education
- Department of Education and Youth will receive a total €13.1bn in 2026. 1,717 additional SNAs for students with Special Educational Needs in 2026 - the highest number of SNAs we have ever had in our education system at almost 24,900. - an increase of 1,042 teacher posts, including 860 additional teachers working across various Special Educational Needs settings including in mainstream, special classes, special schools. - New Education Therapy Service to roll out therapy supports directly into special schools.
Housing
- Total of €11.3bn in funding to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. - Extension of the Rent Tax Credit by 3 years until the end of 2028. - Extension of the Mortgage Interest Relief for a further 2 years. - Extension of the 9 per cent rate of VAT on gas and electricity bills until the 31st of December 2030. €130m for housing adaptation for older people and people with a disability. €2bn for social home building and acquisitions, €1.2bn for starter homes schemes including the extension of Help to Buy.
Transport
€4.7bn for the Department of Transport. - Including spending on DART+, Bus Connects and major road, greenway and active travel projects. - Reduced public transport fares will be maintained for next year. €5,000 VRT relief for EVs extended to end 2026.