

Rehab Group Pre Budget Submission 2022

BUDGET



What is a Budget?

Each year, the Government announces spending, tax and borrowing plans for the next year.

This is called the Budget.

The Budget covers all the money that the Government spends and takes in in taxes.

What is a Pre Budget Submission?

Each year, Rehab asks the people using its services about what would make a difference in their lives in the next Budget.



Rehab takes that information and gives it to the Government to try and show them how and where they need to spend money in the Budget.

How do you make a Pre Budget Submission?



This year, the Rehab Advocacy Team held **33 focus groups** around the country during May.

The focus groups were made up of service users and students, who were asked of their experiences of living with a disability in Ireland.

People from **21 counties** took part. We asked them about services, supports, and other challenges they faced.

Below is a brief summary of the issues raised by people in our services and what they would like to see in this year's Budget.

Summary

Overall, there were five main issues that came up in the feedback from the focus groups:

1. The struggle to live on social welfare like disability allowance – especially if you are trying to live independently



2. Challenges in finding a job



3. The cost and availability of suitable housing



4. The lack of transport and the high costs of accessible transport



5. Hidden healthcare costs



Issue 1:



The struggle to make ends meet on social welfare

The struggle to afford ordinary everyday things on social welfare was the biggest issue raised by participants. This is especially the case with people who live or who are trying to live independently.

The following are some of the feedback/comments made by participants:

The Struggle to Have Enough Money to Live:

“My mum buys my clothes for me because I can’t afford to and I’m 25!”

Disability Allowance is too low:

“[I’m] Left with very little to live on... [I] can’t have savings. [I] Have had to spend more on phone and internet bills due to the lockdown to keep in touch with friends and with staff. [The] Cost of living is

going up all the time but the Disability Allowance is not. It really is a struggle.”

“The fuel allowance helps but it isn’t enough and I sometimes have to choose between buying fuel and general living costs, for example topping up [my] phone. Electricity and gas are constantly increasing.”

“Rent keeps going up but Disability Allowance stays the same... Disability Allowance should be increased. It’s not easy to live on just Disability Allowance...it is hard to afford things like phones, laptops, all my bills too...A deposit for rent is very hard to save for.

It’s very difficult to live independently:



“Disability Allowance is not enough to live on, especially not if you are to live alone.”

“Disability Allowance has to be increased. It is difficult to make ends meet, especially when living alone.”



“Increase Disability Allowance, the cost of living is more than I have in income”

People rely on the support of their families because social welfare does not cover their needs:

“Sometimes it’s difficult to pay bills, I have to ask family for help now and again.”

“My parents give me a helping hand. They shouldn’t have to. They’re pensioners and I’m nearly thirty. It’s not right”.



“My mum buys my clothes for me because I can’t afford to and I’m 25!”

Disability Allowance hasn't increased in the past two budgets

"Disability Allowance rate hasn't gone up since 2019...I was disappointed in the budget last year that it didn't go up, and I do feel that it's leaving people with disabilities behind."

Many people struggle to afford one-off bills.

"Bills can be a worry, if they change or increase it can be stressful."

"If you get an unexpected bill it can be very difficult to pay- can cause stress. [It's] Impossible to save money, it is just enough to exist."



"I have a car and if it breaks down I can't afford to fix it".

Training Allowances are not enough:

A growing issue for people who use Rehab's services is the loss of the Rehabilitative Training Allowance (RTA). RTA was a training support to help students with the costs of taking part in further education. In 2019, the then Government decided to stop paying that allowance to anyone starting a new course.

Participants in our focus groups said this was an issue for them:

“Training allowance is a lifesaver. There should be training allowance for people with disabilities on more courses, not just some.”

Issue 2:

Challenges in finding a job



The second most common issue to be raised in focus groups was around how hard it was to find a job.

The following are some of the comments made by participants:

“Employers don’t really show an interest in taking on people with disabilities.”

“Employers don't want to know once they see you have a disability.”



“It is really difficult to get work. Having a disability holds us back. Employers are nervous about taking us on.”

People using Rehab services said that employers should take part in diversity and inclusion training:

“Sometimes the changes that companies have to make are very small, I wish they realised that.”

“...if they understood more there would be more people with a disability working”.

People in the Focus Groups had some ideas for Government on employment of People with Disabilities:

“We feel the government should invest in supporting businesses to educate themselves around disability. They should give more incentives to businesses to employ people with disabilities.”

“Government don’t tell employers about the grants that are available to help them take on people with disabilities”.

“The government should involve people with disabilities in planning incentives and education for the employment sector.”

Issue 3:

The cost and availability of suitable housing



The housing crisis affects anyone in Irish society looking for a home. A lot of the people we spoke with continue to live in their family homes. However, many expressed that they want to live independently.

The following are some of the comments made by participants:



“People should have access to appropriate housing for their needs. People should not end up in nursing homes because there are no proper services or the HSE doesn’t want to pay for supports”.

Many participants said a lack of social accessible housing was a big problem:

“There should be more social housing, especially small apartments for people who want to live alone. The available houses are often not suitable, too far out of the city...”

“There should be more social housing for people with disabilities to help them move out of home.”

“The government should be building more houses and apartments for people with disability, they are not putting enough effort into it”

Many participants said that they just couldn’t afford housing:



“Rent keeps going up but DA stays the same...a deposit for rent is very hard to save for”.

“With rent, bills, and shopping it’s just impossible to move out of home”.

People in our focus groups said they were afraid that they would have to move into nursing homes:

“We are frightened that if we apply for something else and it isn’t available that the only option left open to us is a nursing home.”

“I don’t want to end up in a nursing home”.

Issue 4:

The lack of transport and the high costs of transport



Many people in rural areas said the high cost of transport was a big issue for them:

“I find it hard to keep a car on Disability Allowance – costs like insurance, NCT, Motor Tax, then getting it serviced. It’s worth it as I’d be lost without it.”



“I have to limit how often I come in [to my day centre], because of the cost of taxis.”

“I’m really struggling. Some months are better than others. I need my car as I commute 150km round trip for my course. It can be really difficult to keep things going.”

Issue 5:

Hidden healthcare costs



Many people on the focus groups said GP doctors charging patients with Medical Cards for blood tests was unfair:

“GPs should not get away with charging Medical Card patients.”



“Some things aren’t covered by the Medical Card – bloods and dentist. That’s an extra cost.”

“Improve coverage of Medical Card – cover bloods.”



About a quarter of focus groups said trips to the dentist were expensive: *“[I] Would like the dentist to be covered by the Medical Card...you could go to a dentist and they could hit you with a bill of €500.*

A person who's on an allowance or a social welfare payment wouldn't have the money for that."



"Dental health costs worry me as dentists will not take medical scheme customers."

"Medical Cards should be for life we shouldn't have to renew every few years - we have a disability for life."

What are we asking the Government to do in the Budget?



After all our 33 focus groups, we are asking the Government to do 3 key things in the Budget.

We are asking the Government to:

- 1. Increase the amount of money in each Disability Social Welfare Payment.**
- 2. Set up a new cost-of-disability payment. This would be a payment that would take into account all the extra costs of living with a disability.**
- 3. Improve employment supports to help get more people with disabilities into employment.**