

Easy Read Handbook on the Rehab Group **Pre-Budget Submission 2024**



Hard Words

This handbook has some hard words. The first time we write a hard word, the hard word is in **orange**.

We will explain what the hard word means.



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 all taxes it receives.



What is a **Pre-Budget Submission**?

Each year, Rehab asks the people using its services 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 where they need to spend money in the Budget.

This is called a Pre-Budget Submission.

How do you make a **Pre-Budget Submission**?

This year, the Rehab Advocacy Team held 49 **focus groups** around the country. The focus groups were made up of service users and students.

We asked them about services, supports, and other challenges they faced.



What is a **focus group**?

A **focus group** is when a group of people come together to talk about one particular topic or issue.

In our focus groups people who use Rehab services came together to talk about what issues they face in their day-to-day lives.

Summary

There are seven main issues that the Rehab Pre-Budget Submission will highlight to Government:

1. **Cost of Disability** -----



2. **Independent Living and Housing** -----



3. **Hidden Healthcare Costs and Mental Health Costs** -----



4. **Transport** -----



5. **Training and Education** -----



6. **Employment**-----



7. **Funding** -----



Some Things People From the Focus Groups Had to Say:



Cost of Disability

“Please realise that we can’t survive independently on what we get in our D.A. It’s embarrassing having to ask our family for help. I’m an adult, I want to be independent.”

“I live alone and have to rely on ‘Food Cloud’ most weeks to supplement my weekly food shop as I can’t always afford to buy enough to keep me going.”

“I moved into my new home two weeks ago and I’m concerned about how I’m going to survive. At the minute, my brother is helping me out with my food bills. But that can’t continue.”

“If you are powering equipment like a wheelchair the cost of electricity is really important and extra help is needed.”



Housing and Independent Living

“I struggle to pay rent, so I share my bedroom with another person.”

“I can’t afford to live independently; I have to live with my parents.”

Hidden Healthcare and Mental Health Costs:



“I can’t afford to go to the dentist. If I don’t go for checkups or to get my teeth cleaned now because I can’t afford it, my teeth will end up getting bad and I’ll need fillings or to get my teeth taken out which will be even more money that I don’t have!”

“I am disappointed and annoyed at the fact that no dentists are taking medical cards. It is very expensive for dental work on top of getting a teeth clean.”

“The disability allowance is low enough and I can’t afford dental care, it’s very expensive. The cost of the dentist would prevent me from going to see the dentist”.

Transport



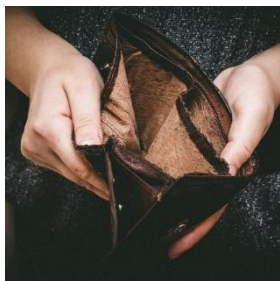
“Access to transport for wheelchair users is a big problem. We have a normal bus and I am the one that suffers because I can’t use it.”

“There are no wheelchair accessible taxis in [Town] and I wish there was so I could be more independent.”

“A night-time bus-service for people that works and better rural transport and local link services are needed in this area”

What Rehab Has Asked the Government To Do In Budget 2024

Costs of Disability



- Increase in basic rates of Social Welfare payments like Disability Allowance by at least €30 per week.
- Make the fuel allowance available for longer for people with a disability.
- Bring in a **Cost of Disability Payment**.

A **Cost of Disability Payment** would be a payment for people with a disability that covers the extra costs that come with having a disability.

- Publish an Implementation Plan on the Cost of Disability Report

Independent Living and Housing



- Increase the **Rent Supplement** and give people more time on the supplement.

Rent Supplement is a payment support for some people who are renting privately but cannot afford the full rent. It is a short term support.

- Build enough **Universally Designed** social housing units.

Universally Designed homes are homes that are designed to be fully accessible to everyone and all disabilities.

- Give support services for people with disabilities who may need it to get housing.
- Increase the most amount of money you can get on the **Housing Adaptation Grant** and stop means testing the income of everyone in the household.

The **Housing Adaptation Grant** is a grant for people who acquire a disability or their disability gets worse so they need to make changes to their house to make it accessible.

- Increase the number of Personal Assistance Hours.

- Invest in **Assistive Technology** to support inclusion and participation of disabled people in all aspects of life.

Assistive Technology is any kind of technology or aid that can help people with disabilities do routine tasks, from walking and moving, to reading, speaking, listening, and writing.



Hidden Healthcare and Mental Health Costs

- Give more dental care services under the Medical Card scheme.
- Give dentists more of a reason to join the medical card scheme to help increase people's choices of dentists.
- Make sure the cost of general blood tests for people with disabilities are covered by the medical card.
- Reduce waiting times for people with disabilities to see qualified counsellors for their mental health.
- Provide funding so local councils can make leisure activities (pools, gyms etc.) available free of charge or at greatly discounted rates for people with disabilities (e.g., on disability allowance).

Transport



Mobility Allowance.

- Give extra funding to local link services for more bus routes and to make sure those services are accessible to disabled people.
- Set up the **Transport Support Scheme** to replace the Motorised Transport Grant and the

The **Transport Support Scheme would** be a payment to support people who don't have access to public transport to pay for other types of transport.

- Give grants or other types of support to people who need more specific travel support so they can access transport.

- Provide allowances for driving lessons to people with disabilities and remove the other costs that can come with learning to drive (Theory Test, license application etc.).



Training and Education

- Give a definite basic level of funding to education providers.
- Give government funding for buildings and equipment so students can learn in a good environment.
- Give students in special classes access to career guidance supports
- Make it easier for students finishing secondary school to find suitable courses to allow them to go on to further education.
- Pay teachers and trainers in NLN fairly and equally to teachers/trainers in other further education and training organisations.
- Give funding for students to take part in clubs, societies and social events to make the college experience real and similar to the experience of those who do not have a disability.

Employment

- Change policies so that the government gives priorities to companies who employ people with disabilities.
- Encourage employers to take Disability Awareness and Diversity Training.
- Give government and other public contracts to organisations that employ many people with disabilities
- Support a new programme called the Transitional Workforce Solution which would make it easier for employers to take on people with disabilities.
- Develop a one-to-one placement service in all local mental health services to help people using these services find jobs.



Wage Subsidy Scheme

The **Wage Subsidy Scheme** gives money to businesses to employ people with disabilities.

- Cut the lowest number of hours per week that someone **has** to work on to 8 hours (it is 20 hours at present). This would help more people with significant disabilities to become employed.
- Shorten the first contract on the Wage Subsidy Scheme to a minimum of three months instead of six months.
- Give different levels of support based on the employee's abilities.
- The Wage Subsidy Scheme should apply to existing employees if they acquire a disability after they started working for the company.
- Make sure the Wage Subsidy Scheme matches the living wage* at all times.
- Make it easier for employers on the scheme to get an Employment Assistance Officer.
- The WSS should emphasise the positive benefits of employing someone with a disability.



Funding and Reform of the Sector

Many of the organisations providing services to people with disabilities are facing major difficulties as they are not receiving enough funding to pay their staff and keep their services going. There was a review of how these organisations are funded a few years ago which made some suggestions how the situation could be improved. However, very little has happened. We are calling on the government to take the following actions:

- Give funding to support the recommendations of review that was carried out.
- Tell the organisations who provide disability services how much they can spend over a three to five-year period instead of having to agree new funding every year.
- Have a plan to put into action policies that have been agreed.
- Provide funding so all staff in disability organisations can be paid equally to people doing the same job for the HSE.