

Easy Read Handbook on the Rehab Group **Pre-Budget Submission** 2025



Hard Words

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

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 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. This 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.

They were asked what it was like living with a disability in Ireland. People from across the country took part. 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 nine main issues that the Rehab Pre-Budget Submission will highlight to Government:

Costs of Living



Housing and Independent Living



Healthcare



Transport



Employment



Education and Training



Social Care for People with Disabilities



Funding and Reform



Assistive Technology



Some Things People From the Focus Groups Had to Say:

Costs of Living

Some weeks you have to cut back on food to pay for electricity.

I can't afford my medication and my shopping each week. I find it difficult to make ends meet.

I have to go to St Vincent the Paul for food vouchers sometimes.

Housing and Independent Living

I need more P.A. hours. It would help me to do more things out in the community. Currently there is no cover if my P.A. is out sick or on holidays, this needs to change.

I can't afford to live independently; I have to live with my parents.

It is difficult to apply for the housing list and housing schemes, more information and support is needed to advise people in this process.

Healthcare

Medical cards don't cover all medications, this doesn't make sense. I have to pay 150 euro for inhalers for my asthma, this isn't covered under the medical card or the LTI scheme.

The only reason I got mental health support is because I ended up in hospital for 2 weeks. The lay over from CAMHS to adult services is shocking.

Transport

Transport is really important for social interaction, you need transport, you have to give 24 to 48 hours' notice to go anywhere. It should be the norm to travel easily.

The lack of transport limits how often and how well I can link in with my community. Tutors from the ETB come out to our centre. This is really helpful as we are a rural service. We can't use public transport to access it otherwise.

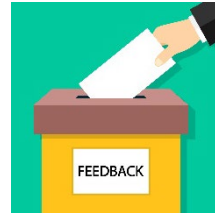
There are no options to use public transport in the evenings and weekends. I have to rely on family to drop and collect me. I'm an adult and I feel like a child. I should be able to travel independently to go out socially.

Employment

Employers don't see the value of having people with disabilities in the work force. When I tell them I am on the spectrum they say no. It's the lack of disability awareness that's the problem.

If I was to have to miss work as a result of my illness I would have no money for that week, I need my secondary payments. Without Disability Allowance I have no security. I feel that we should be kept on the system because if we make enough money, we lose our benefits and then have to reapply again.

What Rehab Has Asked the Government To Do In Budget 2024



Costs of Disability



- Increase Social Welfare payments by at least €30 per week
 - Start a cost of disability payment (suggested €50 per week)
 - Make the fuel allowance available to anyone who gets disability-related social welfare payments.
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- Pay a higher level of fuel allowance to people who need to use more fuel for medical and/or disability needs.
 - Extend the period of the fuel allowance for people with a disability.
 - Give payments or discounts for social activities or vacations.

Housing and Independent Living



- Build accessible housing and set up independent living supports to make sure that people with disabilities have the choice to live independently.
- Give an extra 270,000 Personal Assistance Hours and 40,000 Home Support Hours.
- Make changes to the **Capital Acquisitions Scheme** to make it easier for organisations like Rehab to provide housing.

The **Capital Acquisitions Scheme** is when local County or City councils give money to organisations to build or buy social housing for older people, homeless people, or people with a disability.

- Set up support services for people with disabilities to make it as easy as possible to apply for social housing or to rent privately.
- Increase funding for **Housing Adaptation Grants**, make it less complicated to apply for one and increase the maximum grant.

The **Housing Adaptation Grant** is a type of payment the Government gives people with a disability to help you make your house easier to get into or to move around in.

- Make sure enough of new housing is built so that it can be accessed and used by all people no matter their age, size, ability or disability.

Hidden Healthcare Costs



- Remove hidden healthcare costs by making sure that medical devices, blood tests, injections, and dental treatments are fully covered by the medical card.
- Increase funding to encourage dentists to join the medical card scheme.
- Provide increased funding for respite services for people with disabilities.
- Reduce waiting times for people with disabilities to see qualified counsellors.
- Include funding for social inclusion to help people with mental health issues. Make leisure activities (pools, gyms etc.) available free of charge or at greatly discounted rates for people with disabilities.
- Focus on laws to change the Mental Health Act 2001 so that it does what it is supposed to for Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Transport



- Improve and add to the Local Link services and make sure those services are accessible to disabled people.
- Make sure all Local Link services are covered by the free travel pass. and that people who have a travel pass do not have to pay anything to use them.
- Make sure all bus stops and train platforms are accessible. Build all new ones so they are accessible and fix any old ones that are not accessible.
- Set up public transport services on evenings and weekends, 3specially in rural places.
- Support people with disabilities to take driving lessons through discounts or grants.
- Make the Driver Theory Test and other costs of learning to drive free or discounted for people with disabilities.
- Set up the Transport Support Scheme to replace the **Motorised Transport Grant** and the **Mobility Allowance**.

The **Motorised Transport Grant** and the **Mobility Allowance** are two types of payment that used to help people with a disability access transport. In 2013 the Government stopped these payments to new applicants.

Employment



- Encourage employers to take Disability Awareness and Diversity Training to reduce any worries they might have about giving a job to a person with a disability or mental health challenge.
- Let people with a disability who get a job keep their full Disability Allowance for a set amount of time until they settle into their new job.
- Increase the amount of money you can earn in your job without losing your Disability Allowance.
- Link the **Wage Subsidy Scheme** to the National Minimum Wage.

The **Wage Subsidy Scheme** tries to help people with a disability to get a job by giving the employer money to support them to employ the person with a disability.

- Lower the minimum hours per week to 8 hours to help more people with significant disabilities to get a job.
- Make the first job on the Wage Subsidy Scheme have a contract of at least 3 months.
- Use the Wage Subsidy Scheme to encourage the employer to keep a staff member who may get a disability during their lifetime.
- Give more funding to systems like the National Learning Network's Work Ready programme to help people with a disability to get jobs.
- Give an extra 25% funding to the NLN Individual Placement Service (IPS) to make it available to people with mental ill health across the country.
- If a government office does not employ enough people with a disability make it buy a percentage of its services from an organisation like Rehab.

Education



- Give a set amount of funding to National Learning Network that is not based on how many students go there.
- Give funding to National Learning Network so it can make its buildings and services as good as possible for its students.
- Pay for career guidance supports for students in special classes.
- Set up a clear and uncomplicated system for students leaving secondary school to apply for further education.
- Give funding for clubs/societies and social events to be fully accessible so students with a disability have the same experience as student who do not have a disability.
- Put money into making Assistive Technology easily available to people with a disability to help improve their lives.

Social Care for People with Disabilities



- Support and fully fund Disability Services.
- Give enough money to **S39 organisations** so they can support the people who use their services with supports like Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Therapists.
S39 or Section 39 Organisations are organisations funded by the HSE to provide services, often care or assisted living services. RehabCare is section 39 organisation.
- Make sure disability day services are able to give people who get a disability later in life a service.

- It would be better and cheaper for the HSE to pay S39 Homecare providers than to pay private companies.
- Include funding for transport running costs (driver, insurance etc.) for adult day services.
- Include funding for all the costs for an organisation to give a service how the Government wants it to: payment for bank holidays, increases in the minimum wage etc.

Funding and Reform



- Government must commit to provide the funding to match the ambition of the Action Plan for Disability Services.
- Pay the people who work in S39 organisations the same as people who do the same work in HSE organisations.
- Give funding for more than one year at a time to disability organisations that do work on behalf of the HSE and the State.
- Put the Department of An Taoiseach in charge of the National Disability Strategy.
- Change the 2004 Health Act so Section 39 organisations are funded the same as the HSE or Section 38 organisations.

Assistive Technology



Assistive Technology is any tool that can be used by a person with a disability to make their life easier at home, in work, in school, out and about etc.

Assistive Technology can be as basic as a magnifying glass for someone with a visual impairment or as technical as a computer that speaks for a person who cannot speak.

Rehab wants the Government to make sure Assistive Technology is available and easy to find for people with a disability and that they can afford it.

The Government can do this by:

- Set up a system so government policies, community supports, and private companies come together to make Assistive Technology accessible to people with a disability.
- Let students keep the Assistive Technology devices they have been using at school or in college when they leave so they can keep their independence.
- Have an easy to understand way for people with a disability to get funding for AT through the HSE Aids and Appliances Fund.
- Give extra funding for laptops and tablets that help people who have difficulties speaking or communicating to meet demand.