

# Easy Read Handbook on the Rehab Group **Pre-Budget Submission** 2026

## 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 takes in through 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 is called a **Pre-Budget Submission**.

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



The Rehab Advocacy Team held more than 50 **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.

In total, they spoke to more than 600 service users and students.

## 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:**

<b>Cost of Disability</b>	
<b>Housing and Independent Living</b>	
<b>Health and Mental Health Care</b>	
<b>Transport</b>	
<b>Employment</b>	
<b>Social Care of People with Disabilities</b>	
<b>Education and Training for People with Disabilities</b>	
<b>Assistive Technology</b>	
<b>Fair Pay and Sectoral Funding</b>	

## Some Things People From Our Focus Groups Had to Say:

### Costs of Disability

I use the Deposit Return Scheme to make extra money and save. There is nothing left after the essentials are paid.

I am delighted when my sister asks me to dinner in her house twice a week so it's two less meals for me to think about, I know that sounds pathetic.

Winter months are hard and expensive; our house is old and it's very hard to heat or afford to heat. Some days we have to go without and just light the fire in the sitting room only."

### Housing and Independent Living

When I was renting it was very expensive and so my family would help me with paying my rent. I have had to move back home now because I couldn't afford to keep paying the high rent.

It takes 10 years to get a council house. I have been on the social housing list for 6 years.

I need more P.A. hours. It would help me to do more things out in the community.

### Healthcare

I was waiting 1.5 years for CAMHS. They didn't get back until it was an emergency and I was in hospital.

When I have a consultant appointment it's always in Dublin. I live in Cavan, I have mobility issues and it's too far for me - they need to make services more accessible for people

## Transport

I have no rural transport. I depend on my sister to buy the groceries for me and my mam every Friday, as taxis are too expensive.

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.

Ringling the train ahead to book the ramp is not easy, you really have to plan in advance you can't just decide to go.

## Employment

I'm worried about the risk of being punished and my allowance and my bus pass being taken off me.

I need a chance, they don't look at you if you have a disability. You've to hide your disability.

If there was a support person with you while you were doing your job to help you, because in the past I have not known what I was doing.

There's no support in workplaces for those with a disability, I have dyslexia and I was let go because I couldn't use the filing system and I had no help to make it accessible to me.

# What Rehab Has Asked the Government To Do in Budget 2026



## Cost of Disability



1. Set up a **Cost of Disability payment** of a minimum of €55 per week.

A **Cost of Disability payment** is money paid to help cover extra expenses that a person might have because of a disability. These expenses can include things like special equipment, help from a carer, or transport. The payment is meant to make life more manageable and fair for people with disabilities.

2. Increase Disability Allowance and other social welfare payments to at least €318 per week and increase Christmas bonus payments.
3. Keep the fuel allowance going during the summer but at a lower rate. Give people who need to use more fuel because of their disability a bigger fuel allowance payment. Give the fuel allowance to everyone who gets a disability related social welfare payment.
4. Give people with disabilities discounts for cultural and leisure activities.

## Housing and Independent Living



1. Give more funding to build social housing and focus on faster access for people with disabilities.
2. Give more personal assistants and home care staff support, especially in rural areas.
3. Set up support services for people with disabilities to make it as easy as possible to apply for social housing or to rent privately.
4. Increase funding for skills for life training to increase the confidence of those with a disability to aim to live independently.
5. Fund the implementation of the Housing Strategy for Disabled People (2022-2027)
6. Make changes to the **Capital Acquisitions Scheme** to make it easier for organisations like Rehab to provide housing. The changes should make it quicker and easier to build more accessible housing for people with disabilities.

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.

7. 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.

## Health and Mental Health Care



1. Make sure the medical card covers hidden healthcare costs like medical devices, injections, and dental treatments.
2. Make sure that Medical Card rules are followed so nobody gets charged for something covered by their Medical Card. Some people who took part in our focus groups mentioned they had to pay for blood tests even though they are covered by the medical card.
3. Put the Mental Health Strategy 'Sharing the Vision' into action and provide more funding for mental health services in local communities, especially for young people and those who are neurodivergent.
4. Keep the promises made in the Programme for Government by passing the Mental Health Bill 2024 and give the support needed to make it work.

## Transport



1. Make rural transport better by adding more Local Link services, running buses more often, and putting bus stops closer to where people live.
2. Make trains and buses more accessible and easier for people with disabilities to use, with a simpler booking process and no need to give advance notice.
3. Offer financial support to help individuals in remote areas to learn to drive and own vehicles.
4. Make sure bus stops and train stations are fully accessible; and improve pedestrian facilities by building safer footpaths and providing more zebra crossings.

## Employment



1. Let people with disabilities keep their Disability Allowance while working. Only count their own income (not family's) when checking if they still qualify for their Disability Allowance. Let people with disabilities who are in work keep benefits like the medical card and free travel.
2. Provide funding for job coaches and support staff to help people adjust to the workplace.
3. Fund training for employers to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage more inclusive hiring.
4. Set up a scheme to help offer more supported work placements that can lead to real jobs.
5. Provide funding for the Work Ready Programme in the 2026 budget, either through current schemes or a new one specifically for the Work Ready Programme.
6. Improve the **Wage Subsidy Scheme**

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

  - Match the rates of the Wage Subsidy Scheme to changes in the minimum wage and raise the basic subsidy to 70% of the minimum wage.
  - Reduce the required weekly working hours from 15 to 8, to include more people with significant disabilities.
  - Allow shorter job contracts at the beginning (from 6 months down to 3 months). Any contract after that should be 6 months at least.
7. Fully apply EU rules that allow public contracts to be set aside for companies that employ people with disabilities. Put systems in place to track and promote this.
8. If public agencies don't meet disability hiring targets, they should be made pay a set amount on contracts that support disabled employment.
9. Boost funding by at least 25% for the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service and make it available across all local mental health services.



## Social Care for People with Disabilities

1. Fully Fund the Disability Action Plan. Make sure the government provides enough money to carry out all the promised actions and targets in the Disability Services Action Plan.
2. Give S39 organisations (non-profits providing disability services) funding for essential therapy staff like physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists.
3. Make sure there is funding available for people who need day services after developing a disability later in life.
4. Increase funding for services to rent or lease properties that meet the needs of people using disability services.
5. Provide money to repair, upgrade, and maintain buildings where disability services are delivered, so they meet proper standards.
6. Include funding for transport including drivers, insurance, and fuel so people can get to and from adult day services.
7. Fund the full cost of running services, including staff pay on Bank Holidays and increases in the minimum wage.
8. Plan for people who are moving from disability to older person services based on what they need and want, with proper funding in place.
9. Review the **Home Care Authorisation Scheme** to make sure there's enough funding, and treat **S39 organisations** fairly compared to private providers.

The **Home Care Authorisation Scheme** is a new system set up by the HSE and the Department of Health to make sure home care services in Ireland are safe and high quality.

**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.

## Education



1. Bring back and protect funding for **Specialist Training Places (STP)**. Make sure there is enough funding to meet the demand for STP.

**STPs** offer training and services that focus on the needs of learners. The goal is to help people with disabilities who face challenges getting into work or going back to work. These training programmes help students build skills and are available from QQI Level 3 to Level 5.

2. Fund services over several years so they can plan properly and run efficiently instead of on a year-by-year basis.
3. Follow the expert review recommendations for STP and Rehabilitative Training. Make sure the recommendations are carried out together and that there is enough funding to put them in place quickly.
4. Make funding for Specialist Training fair for the organisations that provide it. Make sure that the funding for delivering STP is fair with a definite minimum amount and not just based on student attendance. Training providers need a minimum level of funding to keep running.
5. Spend funding on accessible, inclusive learning spaces that are designed for students with additional needs.
6. Provide dedicated career support to help students in special classes plan their futures.
7. Fund a proper system to help students with extra support needs access further education after secondary school and make sure they don't fall through the cracks. Make sure the Department of Social Protection (DSP) helps connect them with the right services.
8. Give funding so students with disabilities can join clubs, societies, and events - just like everyone else.

## 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.

1. Keep building and improving assistive technology (AT) services across Ireland. Follow the recommendations from the ATA-C and GREAT reports and increase investment in tools and support that help people with disabilities fully take part in everyday life using assistive technology.
2. Make it easier to get funding for assistive devices through the HSE. Put more money into the HSE Aids and Appliances Fund and create a clear, simple, and fair process for people to apply.
3. Raise awareness about assistive technology. Help more people—including users, healthcare workers, teachers, students, families, and support staff—understand how AT can improve lives.

## Funding and Reform



1. More work is needed to make sure staff providing vital services in **S39 organisations** are paid the same as staff in similar roles in the HSE.  
**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.
2. The government must fully fund the goals set out in the Action Plan for Disability Services.
3. Organisations that provide important services for the HSE and the Government need reliable, multi-year funding to plan the support they give people.
4. The government should make a long-term plan for investing in facilities and equipment needed by disability services.
5. Services should be fully funded to handle the extra financial pressures caused by new rules and central charges.