



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibrithe Sóisialta

2nd September 2020

Special Interest Group in Ageing (SIGA) Pre-Budget Submission Budget 2021

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) Special Interest Group on Ageing (SIGA) provides a professional forum for social workers working with older persons in a variety of settings to promote the highest standards of professional practice while advocating for continuous improvement in service delivery. While SIGA members primarily work with older persons, our members often also work with adults of all ages across a variety of settings from safeguarding, primary care, medical, rehabilitation, integrated care, hospital, independent social work and residential care services.

Slaintecare has identified a single, long-term vision for health and social care for the country, a vision to achieve a universal single-tier health and social care system.

“Slaintecare is about delivering a health and social care service that meets the needs of our population....a universal health service that offers the right care, in the right place, at the right time” (Dept, Health, 2019)

Home Support services are at the very core of this system, supporting individuals to remain living at home in a safe, supported environment. The current Home Support service in our country is far from being a robust, acceptable service with numerous discrepancies and lack of standardisation identified throughout the country. The current most significant and alarming issue for professionals are the lengthy, unacceptable waiting lists identified for Home Care Packages (HCPs).

SIGA are now calling for additional Home Support hours to be provided equitably across the country to reflect the extensive waiting lists for HCPs pre and post the Covid-19 pandemic.

The need for additional Home Support is now even greater due to traditional day and respite services being closed since March 2020. The ripple effect of this has resulted in significant carer burnout that is placing extreme demands on families. In recent research conducted by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland; 61% of carers for people with Dementia identified a concern about their own mental health due to lack of said services (Alzheimer Society of Ireland, 2020). Similarly, a recent Family Carers Ireland’s (2020) report, focused on caring during the pandemic, highlights that 60% of carers surveyed are worried about a decline in their own health and wellbeing. A further 56% reported caring for loved ones who are displaying more challenging behaviours during this time.

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In addition to addressing the current waiting lists, SIGA also call for a significant increase in the Home Support budget to provide additional Home Care Packages to address these new, unmet needs due to the closure of traditional services outlined above

Additionally, SIGA are calling to fully reinstate all funding (as this has not been available in many areas) for Intensive Home Care Packages (IHCPs).

Lack of adequate funding for Home Care Packages and Intensive Home Care Packages are resulting in:

- Unnecessary presentations and admissions to hospital EDs and wards
- Extensive delayed discharges from acute hospitals
- Premature admission of individuals to Nursing Homes
- Extreme carer burnout

Given the delay in rolling out the Statutory Homecare service, there remains an outstanding need for an increase in Home Support funding at this time.

To summarise, SIGA are now calling for an extensive investment in Budget 2021 to provide a, fair, transparent, sustainably funded, high quality home care service where access is determined by a care needs assessment and not geography, age or other determinants.

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