



# **Commitment for Change**

# **4**

**Abolish the Means Test for Carers**

# Commitment for Change 4

## Abolish the Means Test for Carers

There are thousands of people in our country who have a job with a mandatory 365-day a year contract. No standard days of leave, no holiday time and no bonuses.

They are the carers within our communities who provide unpaid help for a family member or friend with a disability. And while nearly half of these carers have no paid employment and one third of them give more than 43 hours of unpaid time per week, less than a fifth receive financial assistance from the state for their invaluable and tireless work.

It is time to recognise their selfless commitment.

According to the Department of Social and Family Affairs, less than 19% of our 150,000 carers qualify for the Carers Allowance. This is because the means test, required for a possible €200 a week, is so severe. Therefore, one of the five Commitments that I am promising to deliver in government is to remove the means test. This means that carers will receive their allowance based on their level of work, rather than factoring in the other jobs they do outside this work or other assets that they own.

This Commitment for Change is a particular recognition of the unsung heroes who are making an invaluable contribution to our communities through the country.

These are people who live in our neighbourhoods and communities and who bear the responsibility of taking care of their child who has a disability, their incapacitated elderly relative or their partner who has suffered a stroke.

This is about a simple yet effective way of helping carers financially and removing a layer of unnecessary bureaucracy within our system, so that the work that they do in caring for others can be paid accordingly. Financial support should be given on the basis of the work that they do in caring, rather than factoring in other elements of their lives. This work is so valuable that it must be recognised in its own right.



Pat Rabbitte

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## Abolish the Means Test for Carers

### Cost

€140 million.

### Time for Delivery

Our first budget will remove the means test for the carer's allowance.

### Rationale

This is a situation where the numbers do speak for themselves. Latest statistics show that there are 148,754 carers in Ireland who provide unpaid help for a family member or friend with a disability. One third of these give more than 43 hours unpaid time per week. 65,000 of all carers have no paid employment, yet just over 28,000 get the carer's allowance or benefit.

In short, less than one fifth of people caring for an incapacitated friend or relative with disabilities receive financial assistance for this work.

A recent report by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) has indicated that the unpaid care provided by carers saves the Exchequer up to €2billion every year. Therefore, these people are already saving the state a vast expenditure that would arise if those currently being cared for at home needed institutional care – let alone the capital expenditure required to build such facilities.

In addition to this, the administration of means testing is an expensive process – savings from the abolition of means testing will be offset against the cost of this commitment.

Abolishing the means test for the carer's allowance is a concrete way of recognising the role of carers in our community, and supporting them.

### Implementation

This would require a small change to the statutory arrangements within the carer's allowance system. While we would retain the necessary testing to ensure that the assignment of carer is correctly maintained, we will also be able to reduce yet another layer of bureaucracy. Through this statutory change, resources that are currently assigned to means testing for the Carer's Allowance will be reassigned.

**For more information, please contact**

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