

EXAMPLES OF CUTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 2008-2016

Revenue and Tax Credits

- Blind Tax Credit, Incapacitated Child Credit, and Home Carer Credit cut by 10% in this period.
- Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit and Incapacitated Child Tax Credit only available to primary carer from 2014. Tax relief for Medical Insurance capped at €1,000 for an adult, €500 for a child in 2014.
- Income threshold for medical cards for the over-70s lowered to €900 for a couple and €500 for a single person.
- Pension levy increasing to 0.75% for 2014, but reduced to 0.15% in 2015 and will cease after that.
- Replaced health levy and income levy introduced in Budget 2009 with the Universal Social Charge in Budget 2011. This amounts to approx. €600 per year for a person earning the equivalent of the living wage.
- VAT increased from 21% to 23% in 2012.
- Regressive taxes on property coupled with water charges introduced in 2013 and 2014 respectively.
- Consumer prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 5.8% from 2010-2015.
- Discontinued the weekly rate of €230.30 for Invalidity Pension at age 65, and reduced it to €193.50 in 2013.
- Number of waiting days for Illness Benefit during which no payment is made increased from 3 to 6 days in 2013.
- Expenditure on Exceptional Needs payments reduced from €64.9 million in 2010 to €19.2 million in 2014. This represents a reduction of over 70%.
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance cut by 11% in period 2009-2015.
- Deep cuts to the Household Benefits Package have directly affected people with disabilities as they often have additional costs in the areas of electricity, gas and telephone.
- Child Benefit reduced by 21% (€36) per month for the 1st and 2nd child, and by 36% (€73) per month for the 3rd child. It is also no longer payable to children aged 18 in full-time second level education. This was partially restored in Budget 2016.
- Changes in the eligibility for the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme mean that a person in receipt of a disability payment will only get the full rate of subvention (€95) if they also qualify for a medical card (2013). If not, they will receive €50 only.
- People without children aged 18 -24 years in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance were cut by €44 (51%) per week in 2013.
- Payment entitlement for part-time workers receiving Jobseekers Benefit changed from a six-day week to a five-day week.

Income Supports

- Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension, and Carer's Allowance cut by an average of 8% from 2009. Budget 2016 did not increase primary social welfare rates which means, in effect, a cut in the real value of social welfare payments due to increases in prices (an average increase of 5.8% from 2010 until December 2015 (CPI)).
- Respite Care Grant cut by 19% in 2013. Restored in Budget 2016.

Education Support

- The number of Special Needs Assistants was capped in 2011. This needed to be incrementally breached to allow for an extra 493 posts in 2013-2014, 169 in 2014-2015, and 666 in 2015 to meet demand.

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) budget cut by €2.3 million or 21% in 2011.
- Funding for access programme for students with disabilities cut by 20% in universities in 2012.
- Student contribution fee increased by €250 to €2,750 in 2014, to reach €3000 in 2015.
- New entrants to FÁS and Youthreach courses who receive a training allowance will no longer be able to retain social protection payments from 2014.
- Introduction of pro-rata charge for FÁS apprentices in 2014.
- VTOS, PLC, and Youthreach programmes have had capitation grants cut by 10% in 2008, with further cuts in 2015. A €200 student contribution for PLC courses was also introduced.
- Allocation of a mere €3 million in Budget 2016 for adult literacy and numeracy programmes despite almost 1 in 5 of the adult population (16-65) scoring at or below Level 1 in OECD survey of adult skills.

Housing

- Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes cut by 56% since 2010. Restrictions to eligibility introduced in 2014.
- Funding for social housing budget reduced by 54% from 2008-2015.
- The Capital Assistance Scheme, used to house people with disabilities reduced from €145m in 2010 to €71 million in 2015.
- The minimum contribution required of rent supplement recipients increased in 2012, with a further increase for couples in 2014.

Health / Individual Supports

- The Drugs Payment Scheme threshold has increased by 44% since 2010 from €100 to €144.
- Prescription charges for medical card holders have risen from 50 cent per item in 2012 to €2.50 in 2014, a fivefold increase since 2012. The refund cap increased to €25.
- From 2014, those on Return to Work will receive a GP Visit Card (currently a medical card) for 3 years only. The

termination of the card applies regardless of whether the person suffers from a disability or not and so doesn't factor in the extra cost of disability.

- Income threshold for medical cards for the over-70s lowered to €900 for a couple and €500 for a single person in 2014. However, again the application of the scheme is indiscriminate as to whether the person is disabled or not.
- The number of discretionary medical cards fell by 16,581 between January 2013 and April 2014 – which means over 21% of people were no longer deemed eligible.
- Waiting list for Personal Assistance hours and home help hours remains a significant obstacle, with a growing unmet need.
- Furthermore, in 2014 over 1000 people with disabilities were waiting for occupational therapy services and speech and language therapy services. These lists also continue to grow.
- Since 2007 the number of home help hours delivered has decreased by 21% (2.5 million hours).
- The Optical Treatment Benefit Scheme was limited to a free eye exam every two years only. Free spectacles or contact lenses are no longer available. The department will not pay for an eye exam for a driving test or VDU work.
- Hearing aids will also only be provided for once in two years.

Health / Disability Services

- Approximately 9.4% cut from HSE funding for disability services over the period 2008-2013.
- However, on an individual basis, organisations have sustained cuts in excess of these amounts.
- In addition, research done by DFI in 2012 found that fundraised income was severely affected by the economic downturn. Over half of the organisations we sampled sustained an average drop of 17% in their fundraised income.
- Funding withdrawn in 2014 for Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO). Temporarily restored until 2016 with reviews pending of those support services deemed not “disadvantaged” enough, as well as scheme itself