



With some older people in Co. Wexford describing **Budget 2014** as “savage”, the implications around the wider community in Co. Wexford are a cause of concern to many older people, both for themselves, their children and their grand-children.

***General Comments from our members:***

“The phone for people in Wexford is most essential for the elderly living alone, many may have to forfeit their landline to make ends meet”

“When you look at people living in total isolation in rural areas, the cutting of the telephone allowance is hard to believe”

“Suggestions of more funding being put into the Seniors Alert scheme is contradictory as you need your land line for your emergency response unit to work”

“The increase in the prescription charge on top of other so-called insignificant cuts, is totally unacceptable”

“Will the ceiling for the medical card income criteria continue to be dropped from now on? We live in fear of this being chipped away at”

“The cuts to the U25s are most unfair and if they are to be trained, trained for what?”

“I agree when people are healthy their medical card should be means tested, but for both U5s and older people, but for those with a long-term illness or a disability – they should be given a medical card in their own right”

“The worst was the increase in the cost to the monthly prescriptions, especially where people have a large amount of medicines to get, why are sick people getting this treatment?”

“Young people coming out of Education with Degrees & Masters are being very badly treated after all the hard work they put in studying to try and get a job. The Minister says they are setting up more courses for them, but what can graduates gain from these? Without jobs they can only get out of this country”

“The system works against you if you try to look after yourself. The reduction of Tax Allowance against VHI for a single person on Plan B will lead to a €2 or €3 a week direct increase, with a further increase in the future as a result of the cost of private beds in public hospitals, imposed by the HSE, which will be passed on to the consumer”

“I must keep my landline if I am to remain connected to Emergency Response. Using a mobile is not an option for me”

“We in Kilmore SCOPE have about 70 people with pendant alarms for which you must have a landline (although I think they are now finding a method for using a mobile). How can you expect people to hold onto their landline with this extra cost and it their only means of security, what an act of butchery”

“They are “crowing” about not having reduced the pension, when in fact they have with Local Property Tax, reduced electricity units, fuel allowance cut, Christmas bonus gone, this new prescription charge of €2-50 is - we cannot even afford to “die”, phone allowance gone, Carbon tax raised again, anyone with private health insurance will be unable to maintain it due to yearly massive increases and phone allowance cut”

“Oh it's unbelievable but a fact! All we can do now is to shop around, and find a supplier who will give us a better deal, but that'll be very difficult. For now we have to hope our sufferings will lead to a better time for all of us”

**Note Re Using Emergency Response Systems without having a landline:**

If someone with a Personal Alarm chooses to get rid of their landline, the alternative option is not considered age friendly, as it involves keeping a SIM card topped up with credit. The cost of a change over for an existing customer is €300 to €350. This can be done on a GMS system provided you can get cover in your area. The cost of the top up is about €10 to €12 a month, this of course is in addition to an annual fee to which ever company you are with currently, costing around €80.

**Other Notes:**

18,367 residents of Co. Wexford are aged 65 years or over

- This figure represents 12.6% of the total population of the county, one percentage point

higher than the national percentage figure

- There has been a 24.2% increase in those aged 85 and over living in Co. Wexford
- Over 44% of those aged 85 or over, who live in private households, live alone (State figure)

## **Statement from Active Retirement Ireland – Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2013**

Budget 2014 targets the young, the old and the sick and takes no account of the current circumstances of any of these already-marginalised groups. Active Retirement Ireland is deeply unhappy with the abolition of the telephone allowance, the increase of €1 in the prescription charge, the lowering of the income threshold for medical cards for the over-seventies, the withdrawal of the bereavement grant and other measures taken in the Budget that affect not only older people, but also our young people, pregnant mothers, family carers, people with long-term illnesses and parents.

In 2008, the then-Government published a budget that had devastating consequences for older people. At that point, we took to the streets to ask for the reversal of the decision to remove the medical cards from those over seventy. In 2008 we were one group, affected by one decision. The choice was clear and we protested with one voice.

In 2013, the situation is less obvious. Older people have been hit with four or five savage cuts, depending on circumstances. As well as our own lives, the lives of our sons and daughters and our grandchildren have been affected by a swathe of unjust and shameful cuts. We are many groups, with many issues, but we all want one common goal: equality.

Active Retirement Ireland encourages every member of every local group to contact their TDs and let them know how unequal this Budget has been for older people and for other marginalised groups. Your National Executive and staff team will be working at national level to ensure that Ministers Noonan, Howlin and Burton are fully aware of the devastating effects this Budget will have on older people and their families.

We will be in contact with the Government before the Finance Bill is brought to the floor of the Dáil to campaign for a reversal of these savage cuts, as will our colleagues in other ageing organisations and organisations that represent the young, the sick and all the other cohorts affected.

We cannot allow ourselves to react without thinking carefully about what our key issues are. If you would like to have your say to us on what our next steps should be, please call us on 01-8733836 or email us on [info@activeirl.ie](mailto:info@activeirl.ie)

## Statement from Irish Senior Citizens Parliament - 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013

TO: Each Organisation affiliated to the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

### Protest Rally

### Against Cuts Affecting Senior Citizens

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October at 1.15pm Molesworth Street, Dublin 2**

Dear Colleague,

Since **Budget Day** it has become clear that the old, the sick, the poor and young people who are unemployed have been worse affected.

Older People have been affected by

- the further reduction on the Over 70 Medical Card Limit
- the increase to €2.50 on the prescription charge
- the Ending of the Telephone Allowance
- the Ending of the Bereavement Grant

The Parliament has been inundated with 'phone calls and emails from Older People and their families on these matters. We are actively campaigning to seek to get Government to reverse these decisions.

In response to the many people who have been on to us we are organising a protest for next

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October at 1.15pm Molesworth Street (poster enclosed). We urge you all to make a special effort and to attend in large numbers.**

Each and every one of your organisations can play a vital role in seeking to have these measures reversed. You must start **NOW** by

- lobbying **all** your local representatives especially those from the Government Parties i.e. Fine Gael and Labour as well the other Political Parties. *(If media reports are to be believed Government TDS are not experiencing "TOO MUCH HEAT" from older people).* **LET'S CHANGE THAT NOW. IT IS TIME TO SHOUT STOP**
- call to their clinics and meet them in their constituencies over the weekend. Seek to speak to them politely but firmly and impress on them the concerns you have regarding these proposals.
- remember In the space of two years the Over 70s Medical Card Limit has been reduced by €300 gross for a couple and €250 gross for a single person. The prescription charge has been increased by 500% and the telephone allowance has been abolished.

***Get out there, Get working, Get talking to your local politicians and demand that changes be made.***

**FINALLY, WE URGE YOU ALL TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO COME WITH YOUR "COLOURFUL AND IMAGINATIVE" POSTERS.**

Yours sincerely,

**Máiréad Hayes - Chief Executive Officer**