

Emergency Winter Payment

For Disabled People

Key Points

In line with demands from a coalition of disability organisations¹ in December 2025, the Social Democrats are calling for:

- an emergency winter payment of €400 for disabled people to be implemented immediately. This emergency winter payment is expected to benefit circa 310,000 recipients at a once-off total cost of circa €124 million.
- no further delays in implementing a permanent annual cost of disability support payment

¹ Irish Wheelchair Association, Access for All, Disability Federation of Ireland, Early Onset Parkinson's Disease Ireland, Vision Ireland, Rehab Group, Inclusion Ireland, Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland.

Background

More than 1 in 5 people in Ireland report having a disability or disabling condition or difficulty, and most people will experience some form of disability at some point in their lives.

Disabled people face some of the greatest barriers to full participation in Irish society. They are at significantly greater risk than non-disabled people of experiencing poverty, social exclusion, and unemployment, as well as barriers in transport, housing, education, and other areas.

For example, 2 in 5 people with a disability are unable to afford essentials like heating or new clothes, more than double the national average. 1 in 5 people with a disability live in consistent poverty, nearly four times the national average. Ireland also has one of the widest disability employment gaps in the OECD: less than a third of people with disabilities in Ireland are in employment, compared to an EU average of just over half.

People with disabilities face a higher cost of living. In the context of rapidly escalating costs in energy, food, and housing, disabled people are particularly vulnerable to cost pressures, especially as they are more likely to spend more of their time at home. The extra cost of living with a disability has been estimated to be in the range of €10,490 - €14,830 per year². As the rate of inflation accelerated during 2025, these costs are now likely to be significantly higher, and rising rapidly.

The need for a cost of disability payment was identified as far back as 2004. That principle was reaffirmed in the State-commissioned Indecon report, published in 2021. The 2025 Programme for Government committed to the introduction of a permanent Annual Cost of Disability Support Payment with a view to incrementally increasing this payment. However, such payment was not included in Budget 2026. In fact, The Disability Federation of Ireland estimated that Budget 2026 would make disabled people €1,400 worse off in 2026 when compared to 2025³.

Although the Minister for Social Protection has committed to bring in the cost of disability support payment in Budget 2027, this means that disabled people

² The Indecon Cost of Disability in Ireland report, published in 2021, established that disabled people live with extra costs of approximately €8,700 - €12,300 a year, that are not covered by existing social welfare provision. Adjusted for subsequent inflation, the Cost of Disability is in the range of €10,490 - €14,830.

³ [Disability Federation of Ireland](#)

will go unsupported for at least another 12 months even as their cost of living continues to rise.

The Social Democrats believe that disabled people deserve dignity, equality, and support to live their lives independently. To this end, we are calling for an emergency winter payment in the amount of €400 as a urgently needed stopgap measure until the full cost of disability support payment is implemented

Emergency Winder Payment Proposal

The €400 emergency winter payment would be paid immediately to all qualified recipients, including those on:

- Disabilities allowance
- Invalidity pension
- Blind pension
- Incapacity supplement
- Disablement Pension
- Domiciliary care allowance

This emergency winter payment is expected to benefit circa 310,000 recipients at a once-off total cost of circa €124 million.

There is financial room for this measure to be implemented immediately through the supplementary estimates process given, for example, gross voted current expenditure for 2025 was €500 million below profile.

Previous Social Democrats Proposals

In our alternative budget 2026, the Social Democrats set aside €238 million to implement a €20 per week Cost of Disability payment. We also proposed an extra €15 per week in Disability Allowance. Combined, these measures would have increased disabled people's incomes by over €1,800 a year.

To fund permanent measures such as this, the Social Democrats also proposed complementary revenue raising measures, including increasing stamp duty on non-residential property, increasing the banking levy, and increasing gambling duties



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