

Children in Hospital Ireland Pre-Budget Submission 2022

SUPPORTING PARENTS WITH THE NON-MEDICAL COSTS OF CARING FOR A CHILD IN HOSPITAL

Parents and carers with children in hospital face substantial non-medical financial costs. Research carried out by Children in Hospital Ireland and published in its report, *Childhood Illness, Financial Stress (2020)* provides compelling evidence of the range of non-medical costs that may be incurred.

Parents may spend up to €150 extra per day during their child's hospitalisation. Costs include travel and accommodation, parking, food, and laundry.

Additional childcare for other children is another significant expense: 23% of the parents who responded to the Children in Hospital Ireland survey reported having to pay for extra childcare.



Parents are required to be almost constantly present with their child in hospital, restricting their ability to participate in paid employment and compounding the financial difficulties they experience. This was clearly evident in the findings of the Children in Hospital Ireland study:

- a large majority had experienced a fall in income, with their partners also faced with reduced earnings
- one-third of parents surveyed had given up work to care for their sick child
- 19% reported that they had missed out on career progression opportunities
- 58% of parents reported a strong or extreme negative financial impact due to their child being in hospital
- the majority indicated that they had serious concerns about their finances

It is parents whose child requires prolonged hospitalisation or who has repeated attendances who are most impacted by the non-medical financial costs of hospital care. They are likely to face the greatest expenses whilst simultaneously their capacity to engage in paid employment is the most restricted.

A further key finding of the Children in Hospital Ireland study was that the supports available to parents in this situation are limited and fail to adequately account for the complex financial pressures experienced as a result of a child's hospitalisation. No element of the current social protection system specifically addresses the issue.

WE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT, IN BUDGET 2022, TO INTRODUCE A NEW PAYMENT TO ASSIST IN MEETING THE NON-MEDICAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PROLONGED AND/OR REPEATED HOSPITAL CARE OF A CHILD.

Children in Hospital Ireland is calling for a new social protection payment, designed specifically to assist parents whose children spend a prolonged period in hospital or who require frequent hospital attendances.

The payment would recognise the cumulative impact of the increased expenses and decreased earning power experienced by parents of children in hospital.

The public expenditure required to provide such a payment would be modest: in any year, only a small minority of the total number of children who receive hospital care have prolonged stays or repeated attendances.

