

Ibec highlights pressure on carers, calls for fully-funded Carer's Guarantee

ANDY PRENDERGAST

In advance of the referendum on the 'Care' provision in the Constitution this week, employer body Ibec pushes the case for stronger intervention to assist working caregivers who are finding it increasingly challenging to balance their jobs and caring responsibilities.

On Tuesday of this week, Ibec published a report on unpaid caregiving in Ireland, revealing that the majority of people caring for another adult are also in employment.

Most employed primary caregivers of adults agreed that it can be "challenging to manage all responsibilities" (89%) and that "balancing work and caregiving responsibilities is difficult" (73%).

As part of Ibec's Better Lives Better Care campaign, Ibec is advocating for "a fundamental shift in how we value care and caregivers, given the increasing number of working caregivers as our population ages."

This is in the context of an ageing population in Ireland and greater need for care provision in the years to come.

Ibec is urging the Government to "fully fund a Carer's Guarantee for core services and to review the current support schemes for carers."

Additionally, Ibec "is encouraging employers to ensure that the workplace is supportive of working caregivers."

Dr Kara McGann, Head of Skills and Social Policy at Ibec, said: "People in Ireland are living longer, and while this changing demographic brings significant opportunities, it also poses challenges due to the increased need for care. Caring responsibilities are increasingly concerning for our members as staff struggle to balance care with work.

"With the potential rise in the number of individuals requiring long-term care, relying solely on informal care and working caregivers without adequate supports and services is unsustainable. Care must be accessible, affordable, and responsive to the changing demographic needs of the country", she added.

Dr McGann added there “is a crucial role for both the Government and employers to better support individuals in need of care and those providing ancillary care [...] Increased state investment, improved recruitment and retention levels, and a more flexible approach to the availability of supports are necessary.”

“Failure to do so will potentially have significant repercussions for the labour market”, she warned.

SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The new Ibec report makes several recommendations, as follows:

- An integrated statutory system for long-term care and increased investment in care options such as sheltered housing, respite and daycare
- A statutory home support scheme similar to the entitlement to nursing home support under Fair Deal
- A review of support schemes for carers to make them less restrictive
- Better coordination of respite and support services.
- A national campaign to promote the value and profile of careers in care
- Reviewing eligibility criteria for benefits and investing in development and career pathways for home care staff
- Encouraging employers to become ‘Caring Employers’ through programmes like those offered by Family Carers Ireland.