

Entitlements for people with disabilities: 2009 update

This insert covers the main changes to the Citizens Information Board's *Entitlements for people with disabilities* booklet in 2009. It should be read in conjunction with the guide.

Disability-related payments: weekly maximum rates

Payment	Personal rate		Qualified adult	
Disability Allowance	204.30		135.60	
Illness/Injury/Health and Safety Benefit	204.30		135.60	
Invalidity Pension	Under 65	Age 65	Under 66	Over 66
	209.80	230.30	149.70	206.30
Blind Pension	204.30		135.60	
Disablement Benefit	235.40			
Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowance (paid by HSE)	204.30		135.60	

Additional payments

Blind Welfare Allowance	61.60 per week
Increase for child dependant	4.40 per week
	Monthly rate
Domiciliary Care Allowance	309.50 per child
Mobility Allowance	
Higher rate	208.50
Lower rate	104.25
Motorised Transport Grant (maximum rate)	5,020.50 (once-off payment)

Payments for carers and guardians

Payment	Caring for 1 (weekly)	Caring for 2 or more (weekly)
Carer's Benefit	221.20	331.80
Carer's Allowance*		
aged under 66	220.50	330.75
aged 66 or over	239.00	358.50
*A half-rate Carer's Allowance may be payable in addition to an existing social welfare payment.		
Respite Care Grant	1,700 per year for each person being cared for	
Guardian's Payment	176.50 weekly	
Foster Care Allowance (paid by HSE)	Child under 12 325 weekly	Child over 12 352 weekly

All qualified child increases are €26 in 2009.

Principal changes for people with disabilities and carers

The implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSEN) Act and the further implementation of the Disability Act are being deferred.

Duration of **Illness Benefit** is limited to 2 years for new claimants who have 260 or more paid PRSI contributions. Previously people with 260 contributions paid were entitled to Illness Benefit for as long as they were unfit for work and under 66. The earnings limit for **graduated rates of Illness Benefit** increased from €150 to €300 per week in the relevant tax year for new claimants from January 2009.

People over 70 are no longer automatically entitled to a medical card.

Amends to booklet

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Citizens Information Board's new address is:

Ground Floor

t +353 1 605 9000

George's Quay House

f +353 1 605 9099

43 Townsend St

e info@ciboard.ie

Dublin 2

www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Page 23	<p>Qualified Child Increases From January 2009, all qualified child increases are €26 per week.</p>
Page 25	<p>PRSI contributions for Illness Benefit The number of PRSI contributions required to claim Illness Benefit (and Jobseeker's Benefit and Health and Safety Benefit) increased from 52 to 104 in January 2009.</p> <p>Reduced personal rate of Illness Benefit If your average weekly earnings in the relevant tax year are less than €300 (previously €150), a reduced personal rate of IB will be paid and the increase for your spouse and/or partner is also reduced.</p>
Page 29	<p>Invalidity Pension For an Invalidity Pension claim made in 2009, the relevant complete tax year is 2008.</p>
Page 47	<p>Natural Gas Allowance If you are eligible for the natural gas allowance, from July 2009, you will get €53 deducted from each gas bill in the Summer months and €114 from each gas bill for the Winter months. If you don't use your full allowance, you can carry up to €150 to your next bill.</p>
Page 49-50	<p>National Fuel Scheme The heating season runs for 32 weeks, from September to April (this increased by two weeks in 2009).</p>

Page 53	<p>Child Benefit</p> <p>There is no increase to Child Benefit in 2009. The rate payable to a child aged 18 is reduced to half the usual rate from January 2009. From 2010, Child Benefit will not be paid to a child aged 18. Families receiving social welfare payments receive a special compensatory payment of €15 with their qualified child payment in 2009.</p> <p>Early Childcare Supplement</p> <p>Early Childcare Supplement is now paid monthly instead of quarterly. Children qualify until they reach 5. The payment is €41.50 per child from 1 May 2009. The supplement will be abolished at the end of 2009 and will be replaced in January 2010 with a free pre-school year of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).</p>
Page 64	<p>The Domiciliary Care Allowance has transferred to the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and the means test no longer applies. Application forms are available from your local social welfare office.</p>
Page 65	<p>Respite Care Grant</p> <p>You can apply for a Respite Care Grant retrospectively for 2009 (€1,700) up until 31 December 2009.</p>
Page 72	<p>Social security agreements</p> <p>Ireland has reciprocal agreements on social security with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (since 1 January 2009), Switzerland (largely superseded by EU regulations), Quebec and the USA.</p>

Medical cards for people over 70

The Health Act 2008 abolishes the automatic entitlement of everyone aged 70 or over to a medical card and provides for a separate means test for this group. The Act came into effect on 1 January 2009 but the new rules did not affect those who are already aged 70 or over until 2 March 2009.

If you reached the age of 70 on or after 1 January 2009, you must apply for a medical card and you will qualify if your income is below the stated limits. The HSE has asked medical-card holders over 70 to surrender their medical card if they think they exceed the income guidelines.

There are **no changes** to the medical card and GP visit card schemes for people under 70.

Medical card income guidelines for people over 70

	Weekly income	Annual income
Single person	700	36,500
Couple	1,400	73,000

If your income is above these limits and you have difficulties meeting your medical needs you may apply for a medical card.

If you reached 70 on or after 1 January 2009, your application for a medical card will be subject to a means test.

Page 76	<p>Medical card income guidelines 2009</p> <p>All capital (savings and investments) is taken into account for medical card purposes. However, income on the savings/ investments or property of €36,000 for a single person and €72,000 for a couple are disregarded. These disregard figures apply to everyone since 1 June 2009 (previously there was a lower figure for people aged under 70).</p>
Page 78	<p>GP visit cards</p> <p>The GP visit card is not available to people over 70 who should apply for a medical card.</p>
Page 79	<p>Drugs Payment Scheme</p> <p>Under the Drugs Payment Scheme an individual or family has to pay only the first €100 (previously €90) for all approved prescribed drugs, medicines and appliances to be used by that person or his or her family in that month. You should not have to pay more than €100 in any calendar month to the pharmacist.</p>
Page 83	<p>Public ward</p> <p>The public hospital in-patient charge has increased from €66 to €75 per day.</p>
Page 84	<p>Out-patient charges</p> <p>People who attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) and other out-patient departments of public hospitals directly, without a referral from their doctor, are liable for a charge of €100. This only applies to the first visit for that accident or treatment. Medical-card holders are exempt.</p>

<p>Page 87-88</p>	<p>How much will I have to pay for long-stay accommodation?</p> <p>People in public long-stay care are divided into two classes – 1 and 2.</p> <p>People in Class 1 are those who are receiving in-patient services in premises where nursing care is provided on a 24-hour basis. People in Class 2 are those receiving in-patient services in premises where nursing care is not provided on a 24-hour basis.</p> <p>Class 1 long-stay charges increase by €33.25 to €153.25 a week.</p> <p>Class 2 charges increase by €24.95 to €114.95 a week.</p>
<p>Page 88</p>	<p>Standards in residential services</p> <p>HIQA published <i>National Quality Standards: Residential Services for People with Disabilities</i> in 2009. The HSE has started to implement the standards on a non-statutory basis (for budgetary reasons full statutory implementation of the standards, including regulation and inspection is not taking place).</p>
<p>Page 89</p>	<p>Nursing home subvention</p> <p>The new Nursing Homes Support Scheme – <i>A Fair Deal</i> comes into operation on 27 October 2009.</p>
<p>Page 125</p>	<p>Warmer Homes Scheme</p> <p>A new Home Energy Saving (HES) scheme run by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) was introduced in 2009. The HES scheme helps homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their home. Measures eligible under this scheme are roof insulation, wall insulation and heating controls. A Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate became compulsory for all homes sold or rented from 1 January 2009.</p>
<p>Page 126</p>	<p>Rent Supplement</p> <p>Entitlement to Rent Supplement will now be restricted to people who are existing tenants for at least 6 months or who have been placed on a local authority housing list following a full housing assessment.</p>

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Income levy

In 2009 a new income levy applies in addition to income tax.

Income levy

Income band (per week)	Income band (per year)	Rate of levy
Up to 289	Up to 15,028	No levy applies
Up to 1,443	Up to 75,036	2%
Between 1,443 and 3,365	Between 75,036 and 174,980	4%
Over 3,365	Over 174,980	6%

Applies to all income except social welfare and similar payments. Medical card holders are exempt. People over 65 can have income up to €20,000 without paying the levy (€40,000 for a married couple).

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Tax exemption limits

Tax exemption limits for 2008 remain unchanged in 2009

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Rent

The rent tax allowance for 2008 remains unchanged in 2009.

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Medical expenses

The tax refund for money spent on certain medical expenses will be paid at the standard rate (20%) only from 1 January 2009.

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Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT)

The DIRT rate has increased to 25% (it was 23% from 1 January 2009 to 7 April 2009).

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Health Levy

The rate and thresholds for the Health Contribution (levy) have changed.

Health Contribution (levy)

Income band (per week)	Income band (per year)	Rate of levy
Under 500	Under 26,000	Nil
Under 1,443	Up to 75,036	4%
Over 1,443	Over 75,036	5%

Everyone over 70, medical-card holders, and people getting One Parent Family Payment, Deserted Wife's Benefit or Widow/er's Pension is exempt.

Page 140 People over 70 are no longer automatically entitled to a medical card but are still exempt from the Health Levy

Page 157 **FÁS training allowances**
The standard training allowance in 2009 is €204.30.

Page 161 **Changes to Back to Work and Education Schemes**
The **Back to Work Allowance** has been closed for new applicants. People currently receiving the allowance can continue to get it until their entitlement runs out.

The qualifying period required for the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)** scheme is reduced from 2 years to 1 year, provided you qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance. The amount of time you can participate on BTWEA is reduced from 4 years to 2 years for new applicants.

If you qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit and either qualify for statutory redundancy or have 104 PRSI contributions paid in the past 2 years, you may get immediate access to a shorter BTWEA called Short-term Enterprise Allowance. In this case, the allowance will be paid for the duration of your Jobseeker's Benefit entitlement (that is, either 9 or 12 months).

The **Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)** has been changed to allow earlier access to the scheme – after 3 months for the second-level option for people out of formal education for more than two years and 9 months for the third-level option when recommended by a Jobs Facilitator.

Community Employment and Rural Social Scheme

Claimant	Weekly rate 2008	Weekly rate 2009
Participant	222.20	228.70
Participant with a dependent adult	353.50	364.30
Qualified child	24.00	26.00

Weekly rates are based on a 19.5 hour working week.

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In 2008 it was announced by the Government that the establishment of a Personal Advocacy Service (PAS) for people with disabilities was being postponed in the light of budgetary circumstances.

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Department of Social and Family Affairs

There is a new lo-call number for information on:
Invalidity Pension, Disablement Benefit, Carer's Allowance/
Benefit, Bereavement Grant, Family Income Supplement
(FIS), Rent Allowance (De-Control of Rents) and Disability
Allowance

Lo-call: 1890 92 77 70

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Feedback

Please send feedback on *Entitlements for people with disabilities* to

Information Publications, Citizens Information Board
43 Townsend Street, Dublin 2

e publicationsfeedback@ciboard.ie

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Centres and the Citizens Information Phone Service. It also funds and supports the Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

Head Office

Ground Floor	t	+353 1 605 9000
George's Quay House	f	+353 1 605 9099
43 Townsend Street	e	info@ciboard.ie
Dublin 2	w	citizensinformationboard.ie

Citizens Information

LOG ON

www.citizensinformation.ie

LO-CALL

1890 777 121 Open Mon to Fri

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For your local centre see Golden Pages listing