



NEWS IN BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2025

ISCP
VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE

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2025 New Programme for Government

Draft Programme for Government 2025

Securing Ireland's Future

Words such as

Increased,
Gradually,
Explored,
Designed,
Considered,

may sound good but can have little meaning.

There are no real factual commitments!

The DRAFT Programme for Government synopsis with a health warning!

The new programme **promises** on improving care for older people and carers, and maintaining pension benefits.

Key initiatives include:

Home Care:

A new Statutory Homecare Scheme will be designed, home care hours and Housing Adaptation Grants will be increased, and support for providers will be available nationwide. The Enhanced Community Care Programme and day centre network will be expanded, and Community Healthcare Networks will continue to be supported.

Carer Support: Carer support will be increased through better training,

clearer service pathways, improved respite access, and full funding of the Carer's Guarantee. Income limits for Carer's Allowance will be significantly increased, with the goal of eliminating the means test. Carer's Payments and the Carer's Support Grant will also be gradually increased. Specific support will be provided for older parents caring for children with disabilities, and better support for those caring for multiple people will be explored. A Pay-Related Carer's Benefit will also be considered.

Residential Care:

Funding for the Fair Deal Scheme will increase, and waiting lists will be kept short. More public nursing home beds will be built. A **review** of nursing home pricing will be conducted, and a new funding model developed. A career pathway for healthcare assistants will be created.

Pensions:

The State Pension Age will remain at 66. The Social Insurance Fund's sustainability will be ensured, and weekly pension payments **gradually** increased. The Benefit Payment for 65-year-olds will be retained. Vulnerable groups will be supported through **reviews** and improvements to benefits like the Fuel Allowance. Ways to help women qualify for a State Pension will be explored.

There is no commitment to
An Independent Commissioner for Older People.

Real Pension Reform starting with the 34% Pension promise

A promise is ONLY a promise when it is kept, otherwise, it's a lie

Housing



As we go to print on this issue you have likely read or heard commentary on the recent CSO publication on new dwelling completions for 2024. You might be surprised to know that CSO relies upon data provided by ESB on connections. It is the only source relied upon by Government, and it feeds into policy decisions. The only breakdown available are Single Dwelling, Scheme Dwellings and Apartment Dwellings. The state's reliance on raw ESB connection info leaves no scope to provide breakdown of accessible housing completions. This needs to change.

Lack of supply of accessible housing exacerbates difficulties older people encounter when searching for a home to buy or rent. In May 2023 Alone and Threshold released a report highlighting that the number of older people in private rental accommodation doubled between 2016 and 2022 Census figures.

Social Justice Ireland's response to Programme for Government 2025 included the following "We welcome practical housing options for positive ageing and expect a lifecycle approach to housing delivery. This includes adopting Universal Design principles to ensure housing is suitable for older people and those with disabilities, as committed to in the Government's policy statement on housing for older populations."

(<https://www.socialjustice.ie/publication/>)

Many of you have lived experience in trying to access Housing Adaptation Grants to assist you or loved ones to age in-situ in your own home. For those who might prefer moving to a more suitable home in your community the lack of focus on inclusion of suitable home types in schemes does not bode well for increasing supply at the required level.

We need proper planning for population changes. Much of the narrative about increase in the percentage of those aged 65 years and over in recent years has focused on pension provision or health spend. 2022 census showed those aged 65 years and over accounted for 15.1% of total population, projections are for this to increase to between 17.8% and 31.6% of total population by 2057 (*Population Projections Results Population and Labour Force Projections 2023-2057 - Central Statistics Office*).

Supply of suitable housing needs to urgently move from planning phase to implementation. We are not suggesting that a new mechanism is required to obtain this data, we suggest the next Census should gather information on accessibility of dwellings as part of its remit. www.cso.ie has updated some of 2022 Census results, one sample is included below.

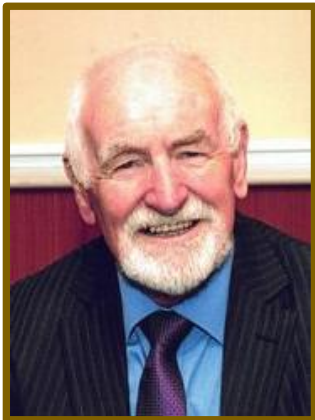


We welcome your comments to feed into further discussion on this important topic.

Table 4.1 Housing stock, 2011-2022

State totals	2011	2016	2022	Actual change 2016 - 2022	% change 2016 - 2022
Housing stock	1,994,845	2,003,645	2,124,590	120,945	6
Occupied households	1,660,111	1,707,453	1,858,526	151,073	9
Temporarily absent	45,283	50,732	33,177	-17,555	-35
Unoccupied holiday homes	59,395	62,148	66,135	3,987	6
Vacant dwellings	230,056	183,312	166,752	-16,560	-9

Remembering - Pat Fitzgerald



Pat Fitzgerald
A serving Executive
Committee member of
the ISCP
The Irish Senior
Citizens Parliament
Staff, Board of
Directors and
Executive Committee
were very saddened to
hear of Pat's sudden

passing on the 1st Dec 2024.

Pat will be missed deeply by his family, friends and groups of which he was a member. He was an active, hardworking and engaging member of the ISCP Executive Committee for a number of years. Comfort can be taken in his loyal service to his community. He also served with distinction as a Councillor on Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. Pat was deeply principled, direct with his advice and opinions, and always willing to challenge. Above all, Pat was a good friend, considerate, courteous, kind and had a mischievous sense of humour.

It was a privilege to work with Pat, on the Executive Committee. He was always sincere in his input and while passionate in his beliefs, always courteous of others and open to hearing another point of view. He was a true gentleman and will be missed.

S Shaw- Retired ISCP CEO

It was only recently that I had the privilege of being introduced to Pat at the annual meeting of the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament (ISCP) last May in Dublin's Liberty Hall. I greatly benefited from both his company and his often-astute observations at several meetings of the ISCP executive committee, at Age Action's AGM and, late last month, at a lobby of general election candidates jointly staged by both organizations in DCU, Drumcondra. His loss to the Grey Movement is immense and we are much in his debt.

Everything Pat spoke about at meetings expressed his deep commitment to pursuing justice for marginalised people and he has left a proud legacy of social and political activism to both his family and the wider community in "The

*Borough". I'm grateful to him for introducing me to the Dún Laoghaire branch of Active Retirement Ireland. **Member of the Executive Committee***

Pat was certainly a unique man. One in a million. He was a great debater; few could get the better of him, but he was always considerate, kind with a great sense of humour, great friend and comrade. His insight and passionate contributions will be missed by all at our ISCP meetings. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew him, and his funeral service was a testament to the immense love and respect he earned from his family and community.

Pat, Your work here is done.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Annual Parliament Meeting



The in person 2025 APM will be held on Wednesday **14th May 2025.**

The Board, Executive and staff team look forward to meeting as many group representatives as possible. It is a great opportunity for members to get together to discuss the issues that matter to older people and how best to address them.

2025 Affiliation Fees



2025 Affiliation Fees

The **minimum** fee is €2 per member per group (e.g., €200 for a group of 100 members). These fees are essential for our continued operation. The

Executive Committee have mandated the minimum fee for a group of €50. While we are acutely aware of the cost-of-living etc. we would encourage all our members to consider the value of their membership and where possible to consider a minimum of €3 per member up to any maximum which your group feel is appropriate.

Fair Deal - A guide for Older Adults



The Fair Deal scheme, officially known as the Nursing Home Support Scheme, aims to make long-term care more affordable for older adults in Ireland.

What does it offer?

Fair Deal provides financial support towards the cost of nursing home care. It involves two main elements: a Care Needs Assessment and a Financial Assessment.

Care Needs Assessment:

This assessment, conducted by the HSE, determines the level of care you require. It helps establish your eligibility for the scheme and the type of care setting that best suits your needs.

Financial Assessment:

This assessment looks at your income and assets to determine how much you can contribute towards your care costs. It considers various factors, including your savings, property, and pension.

How are contributions calculated?

Your contribution is based on a percentage of your assessable income and assets. For income, the contribution is generally 80%. For assets, it's 7.5% annually of the value of your assets above a certain threshold. Critically, the family home is included in the assets assessment, but there is a cap of 3 years on the contribution based on the value of the primary residence. This means that after 3 years, you will no longer be required to make a contribution based on the value of your home.

What about the Nursing Home Fees?

The HSE pays the remaining balance of the nursing home fees directly to the chosen nursing home. You will only be responsible for your assessed contribution.

In the Spotlight:



We are delighted to welcome **Sharon Casey** to the ISCP team as our replacement Membership Development Officer. Dear Members, my name is Sharon Casey, I am from North County Dublin. I am delighted

to introduce myself as the new Membership Development Officer. I joined the team at the start of February and will work part-time, two days a week. Pat and Grace have given me a warm and encouraging welcome. Thanks also to Sue Shaw for the sessions she facilitated.

My journey so far in short. I returned to education in 2017 after a career in retail Banking. Like most of my peers, I did not have the opportunity of attending university as a school leaver. I completed a degree in Sociology and Social Policy in Trinity College. During my studies, I took the opportunity of spending 6 months in Sweden on Erasmus.

During my time in Sweden, I found it very interesting to see how public buildings have multi uses, universal design, with many services co-located. Significant amounts of the health spend is allocated to preventative measures, saving money in the long term but more importantly it is of huge benefit to the well-being of residents. It brought social policy into life for me, lifting it from academic lectures into lived experience.

My own lived experience has shaped how I approach life. My interest lies in how others' lived experience shapes their lives and creating spaces where they get to co-create solutions to life's challenges.

I look forward to meeting with you, working with you to capture the issues which are important to you. I will use that information to design and deliver workshops along with my ISCP team colleagues on topics and matters of concern and interest. The issues you raise will feed into submissions to relevant Government departments, allowing us to advocate in a meaningful way on behalf of members.

Feel free to contact me, my contact details are:

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Phone **085 260 4955**



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobal

