

Immediate release: 11 December 2009

Issued by The Wheel

BUDGET 2010 UNDERMINES ABILITY OF CHARITIES TO SERVE VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The Wheel, Ireland's largest representative body for charities and voluntary organisations, today warned that Budget 2010 will undermine the ability of charities to serve and protect the most vulnerable in society.

The body, which represents over 860 community and voluntary organisations, said that deep cuts to service budgets would directly impact on charities' capacity to provide essential services in the areas of healthcare, disability services, housing, development, childcare and education.

"Community and voluntary organisations are now facing into very testing times, providing for the needs for of the growing number of people in need, with reduced funding," said Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel.

The budget of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs - a vital source of funding support for charities - has been reduced by 13% (a reduction of over €60 million) and over €400million of service reductions have been announced in the HSE's budget.

"There is no evidence that Government has examined the effects that the cumulative impact that the many cuts to services budgets will have on the people who are dependent on public services," said Mr Cooper.

He added that those living in poverty will be made poorer by the 4.1% cut in welfare rates, prescription charges for medical-card holders and the increased cost of fuel, thus placing further pressure on charities.

Mr Cooper urged Government to ensure that funds and supports remain available to support community and voluntary organisations in their vital work at this most critical time for vulnerable people.

“Government must also continue to work with community and voluntary organisations in meeting the needs of disadvantaged people in Ireland, with a view to making Budget 2011 a fairer budget for vulnerable people,” he said.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel is available for interview. Contact Gert Ackermann on mobile: 086 176 9287, or email: gert@wheel.ie

ABOUT THE WHEEL:

The Wheel is a national support and representative body for community, voluntary and charitable organisations. We provide a wide range of information and support services, advice and training to individuals and organisations involved in community and voluntary activity. We are also a representative organisation promoting both our members' and the wider sector's interests. www.wheel.ie

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