



NEWS IN BRIEF OCTOBER 2025

ISCP
VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE

c/o Office 1 Willie Bermingham Place,
Kilmainham Lane, Dublin 8 D08 DP8P
Email: office@seniors.ie Office: 085 260 4957
(Hours of work: Tue - Thurs 9.00 - 5.00)
National Co-ordinator 087 430 3342

ISCP Review Budget 2026

Budget 2026 'Non-Event' in supporting older people

Budget 2026 offers minimal real-term increases for the State's most vulnerable, delivering too little to protect fixed incomes against ongoing cost-of-living pressures. There is no hint, or acceptance of pension reform, or benchmarking / indexation. The one-off payments in the 2025 budget for the increased cost of living need to be seen for what they were and that is a **"vote purchase" scheme**. Those cost-of-living challenges not only remain but have increased, much is made of falling inflation which means that costs are still rising.

"Let them eat cake" is a phrase which served as a historical symbol of the disconnect between the wealthy and the poor. The core meaning of the phrase is the perceived obliviousness and callousness of the rich and powerful toward the common people's struggles.

"Let them eat takeaways" could well be the phrase from the 2026 budget.



2026 summary for older people

State Pension Increase: There will be a **€10 increase** to the core weekly State Pension (both Contributory and Non-Contributory).



'Give pension increase - Gone with cost of living and LPT'

- For people aged 66 to 79, the State Pension (non-contributory) will increase from €278 to **€288** per week.
- For those aged 80 and over, it will increase from €288 to **€298** per week.
- This €10 increase applies to all core weekly social welfare payments.
- **Christmas Bonus:** Recipients of long-term social welfare payments, including the State Pension will receive a **"Christmas bonus" double payment**.
- **Other Allowances:** All core weekly social welfare payments are generally increasing by **€10**, which may affect retired people who receive other payments like the Carer's Allowance or Invalidity Pension.
- **Fuel Allowance:** The weekly Fuel Allowance payment is increasing by **€5 to €38**.
- **Home Adaptation Grants:** Funding has been allocated to help fund up to **17,000 Home adaptation grants for older people** and people with a disability.

Healthcare for Older People: The health budget includes funding to deliver more nursing home places and an additional **1.7 million Home Support Hours**

ISCP Workshops

Think ahead programme in cooperation with the Irish Hospice Foundation.



AND



seirbhís tacaíochta
cinnteoireachta

decision support service"

Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence – Older People

ISCP input to the committee on 30th September.



The most significant danger is the *digital divide*, the gap between those who have access to and an understanding of digital technology and those who do not. For many older Irish citizens, this gap is a reality.

Lack of Skills: Many older adults may not have the necessary digital literacy or access to the internet and smart devices to use AI-powered services. This can lead to exclusion from essential services that increasingly rely on AI, such as online banking, e-health platforms, and even social connections.

Feeling Left Behind: As society becomes more reliant on AI, those who can't keep up may feel marginalised, anxious, and socially isolated. This can negatively impact their mental health and well-being.

Dependence on Others: A lack of digital skills can increase dependence on family members or caregivers to navigate technology, which can diminish a person's sense of independence and control.

Ageism in AI: AI systems may be developed with datasets that underrepresent or misrepresent older adults. This can lead to algorithms that discriminate against older individuals, for example, by unfairly assessing their health risks, eligibility for loans, or job applications.

Reduced Human Interaction: AI-powered social robots or virtual assistants, while helpful, could potentially reduce opportunities for meaningful human connection. This is a serious concern for older people who may already be at risk of loneliness.



Healthcare Biases: In healthcare, AI is used to make diagnoses and treatment recommendations. If the data used to train these systems lacks diversity, it can lead to misdiagnoses or less effective care for older patients. For example, a fall detection system might be less accurate for older adults with specific mobility issues if the training data didn't include them.

Loss of Decision-Making: AI-assisted products are designed to make things easier, but they may inadvertently reduce an older person's opportunities to make their own decisions. This can affect their perceived control and psychological well-being.

Risk of System Failure: If a person becomes too reliant on an AI system for their safety or health, a technical failure or malfunction could have serious consequences. For instance, a smart home system designed for fall detection could fail, leaving a person without immediate help.

Link to recording of the meeting
<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/oireachtas-tv/video-archive/committees/>

A major issue of concern regarding AI and older people relates to the **Gaps in Official Statistics:** EU data-collecting bodies (like Eurostat and the Digital Economy and Society Index - DESI) often only track statistics for digital skills and internet use up to the age of 74. This creates a **significant data black hole** for the fastest-growing segment of the older population (75+ and 85+).

Policy Impact: This data gap hampers the ability to accurately measure the extent of digital exclusion among the demographic above 74 and to develop effective policies for inclusive public services (like e-health or e-government).

ISCP Fundraising Raffle 2025

FINAL Call for tickets to be returned by Thursday 20th November 2025
ISCP 2025 Raffle is on 25th November.



The Raffle is the **ONLY** fund-raising event for 2025 and Members support is crucial for its success.

ISCP Member – Shares Health Care Experience

EU Cross Border Directive: Helping Irish Patients Access Timely Comprehensive Care in the EU

As public hospital waiting lists in Ireland continue to grow, more and more patients are seeking alternative ways to access timely surgical care. **Healthcare Abroad**, one of Ireland's facilitators of cross-border healthcare services, is providing a lifeline by helping Irish patients access planned procedures in accredited hospitals across the EU, the majority of which are fully reimbursed by the HSE under the EU Cross Border Directive.

Healthcare Abroad has already helped hundreds of Irish patients receive timely, high-quality treatment that would have otherwise taken years through the public system. Paul Byrne, COO of Healthcare Abroad, said, "We believe that no one should have to suffer or put their life on hold due to long waiting lists. Our services allow patients to access timely, high quality treatment in a world-class facility, while always remaining under the care of the HSE through the EU Cross Border Directive." For more information or to begin the referral process, visit: www.healthcareabroad.ie

Rita's Testimonial: "I am 73 years old and my journey began in February 2024 with a severe pain down my right leg. I had an MRI

and it showed a problem with the lumbar region of my spine. The pain management clinic in the local hospital told me there was a 3-year waiting list and even longer to be seen by consultant on the public list. I went private to see a pain management specialist only to be told I would be wasting my money if I paid privately for the injections as it would not benefit me. I then booked a consultation with a spinal surgeon in the Mater Private Hospital. There, I was advised I needed a spinal decompression and fusion and that the cost would be €24,000. As an old age pensioner, I had no idea how I would be able to afford that.

I tried to access the Cross Border Scheme in Belfast where I attended Knightsbridge Hospital. I once again paid for the consultation



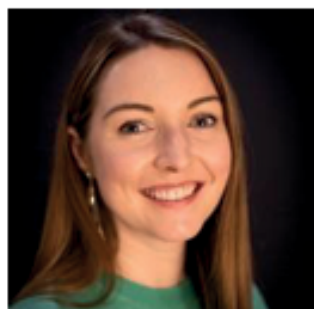
and x-rays at £444 to be told that the total cost of the procedure I would need would be €31,000. The HSE would only fund €19,723 and I would have to cover the shortfall. I didn't know what I was going to do

and the pain was getting worse.

By chance I saw an advert for Healthcare Abroad. I rang my daughter to see what she thought. She rang and we could not believe how quick things were arranged. In conjunction with my GP and my local Credit Union they booked the hospital and hotel, and my sister travelled with me. The date was set and we booked our flights. The communication from the Health Care Abroad team was excellent. We knew exactly what would happen before we travelled and from the minute, we got to the airport they facilitated our transfers and took me to the hospital for all of my appointments. The care was amazing. Nothing asked of them was too much bother. I had my surgery thanks to Dr Anwar Saab. I am pain free and all it cost was the consultation, hotel and flights.

Healthcare Abroad are a great team and I would recommend the service to anyone on a waiting list. The other patients I met in Denia (Spain) had all different types of surgery. We were like a family out there. I won't forget them and I will be forever grateful to my sister for the support and care she provided to me without which I would not have been able to undertake and complete this journey."

In the Spotlight:



Health & Wellness: Meagher's Pharmacy Partner with ISCP to Support Your Wellbeing

*Liz O'Hagan
Pharmacist & Lifestyle
Medicine Expert*

Pharmacy 360: Nutrition & Gut Health

Did you know that what you eat each day can have a huge impact on your long-term health? According to the World Health Organization (2023), up to 80% of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes – and 40% of cancers – could be prevented with healthier diets. Sadly, research also shows that poor diet is now the leading cause of illness and death worldwide.

The good news is this: even small, steady improvements in our daily food choices can make a big difference to our wellbeing - and it's never too late to start.

Why Our Food Choices Matter

In today's busy world, unhealthy options are often the cheapest and quickest. Supermarkets are filled with highly processed, sugary, and salty foods that are easy to grab but often low in nutrition. This environment has contributed to obesity becoming a global epidemic.

If you, or someone close to you, are living with obesity or related health concerns, please remember: this is not about blame or willpower. The world we live in makes it hard to stay healthy, but support is always available – and small, compassionate steps are the best way forward.

Small Steps Towards Better Eating

Here are eight simple ways you can support your gut and overall health through nutrition:

1. **Plan Your Meals** – A little preparation helps you avoid the pull of fast food and unhealthy snacks. Try writing a weekly meal plan and shopping list.
2. **Add More Fruits & Vegetables** – Aim for at least 5 portions per day. They are packed with vitamins, minerals, and fibre. Why not try a new vegetable on your next shop?
3. **Include Protein** – Foods like chicken, fish, eggs, beans, and lentils support recovery, muscle strength, and satiety (helping you feel full).

4. **Choose Whole Grains** – Swap white bread, rice, or pasta for whole-grain/brown versions to boost fibre and digestive health.
5. **Cut Back on Processed Foods** – Whole foods (in their natural state, or minimally processed) are best. A tip: the fewer ingredients on the food label, the better.
6. **Drink Plenty of Water** – Aim for 8 glasses a day (2 litres). Hydration supports concentration, energy, and digestion.
7. **Watch Portion Sizes** – Using smaller plates and mindful serving can prevent overeating, even with healthy foods.
8. **Practice Mindful Eating** – Slow down, chew well, and enjoy the flavours of your food. Avoid screens while eating to tune in to your body's natural "fullness" signals.

Remember: start small. Even one or two changes, repeated daily, will add up over time.

For cooking inspiration, you can download a free recipe book from their website:

www.thenimidiyet.com



Final Thoughts

Changing lifelong habits can feel daunting, but remember - progress, not perfection. Be patient with yourself, celebrate small wins, and don't be afraid to ask for support.

You can learn more and find additional resources on the Meaghers Pharmacy website, under "Pharmacy 360", or by scanning this code:



An Bólaíocht Fíorhíre
The Real Food Movement



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government supporting communities