

# Wheelchair user still has fight on his hands for better supports despite €64m investment



Budget case study: Wheelchair user Daniel Airey on what his needed for Budget 2024  
**Adrianna Wrona**

Daniel Airey (26), who has cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user from Dublin, has cautiously welcomed the announced increase in funding for personal assistants (PA) in the Budget. It should empower disabled people like him to live more independently.

Mr Airey's mother – who has never received a carer's allowance – has been his primary carer for 26 years. She now struggles with back and neck pain, meaning

Mr Airey is heavily reliant on PA support. The podcaster and filmmaker said many disabled people do not live full lives due to the State's failure to provide a PA service.

"I've been fighting for my own PA for two-and-a-half years," he told the *Irish Independent*. "It's been very time-consuming and stressful on me and my family. If I don't fight for my own support, who's going to do it?"

"It's a matter of continuing to move forward, talking to the people that matter and fighting for the life that I want to live."

## **"There are some positives, but then I need more clarity and details on it**

PA services allow disabled people to carry out tasks inside and outside the home. This can include assistance with personal care, shopping, support in the workplace or socialising.

Although there has been an increase in the allocation of PA hours since 2020 – provided through a range of voluntary service providers – Mr Airey said there is still a dearth of access to supports around the country.

He described the Budget as “a mixed bag” – welcoming the €64m investment in disability services, which will bring increased PA hours and rate increases for staff providing home supports.

“There are some positives, but then I need more clarity and details on it,” Mr Airey said.

“They’re presently at 1.7 million hours annually. I’d be looking at that to go up to at least 2.5 million.”

PA supports are provided through a State-funded provider, but Mr Airey would like to see disabled people access the funds directly and plan their own support, employing PAs directly.

He believes all disabled people should be given the option to go for a personal budget or a direct payment.

“It would be to manage and control what their own support looks like and, when it comes to housing, how they want to live their life,” he said.

Mr Airey submitted an application for housing to his local county council last year. Since then, he has received three separate letters but progress is slow.

**“More needs to be put into the housing crisis and supporting the housing needs for people with disabilities**

“In my case, with the necessary and correct support, I can live independently,” he said.

However, in order to be eligible for a 24/7 housing support package, he must have a house.

Furthermore, in order for him to qualify for independent living, he must have a 24/7 care package already in place.

He said he has contacted his occupational therapist and public health nurse but has found the process to be frustrating.

“It needs to be streamlined and made more transparent,” he said.

“More needs to be put into the housing crisis and supporting the housing needs for people with disabilities. It needs to be acted on.”