

# Not a right in sight - the impact of austerity budgets on women's health

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# Outline

- Health components of Programme for Government
- Critique progress to date
- Impact of austerity budgets on women's health

# Women's health

- Women living longer
- More disability among women
- 70% of those living alone over 65 with condition that limits basic physical activity are women
- 66% of carers are women
- Poorer mental health among women
- Higher poverty among women

# Programme for Government 2011-2016

- *this government is the first in the history of the State that is committed to developing a single-tier health service which guarantees access to medical care based on need, not income*
- *UHI will be designed according to the European principle of social solidarity*
- *no discrimination between patients on the grounds of income or insurance status*

# Programme for Government

- *The two tier system of unequal access to hospital care will end*
- *Act speedily to reduce costs in the delivery of public and private healthcare*
- *Establish a special delivery unit*
- *Minister of Health will be responsible for health policy and cost control*
- *HSE will cease to exist overtime, functions return to Minister and Department of Health*

# Programme for Government

- *Free GP care for all by 2015*
- *Hospitals to become independent trusts*
- *Money follows the patient*
- *Investment in more and better care for older people*
- *Bring down price of drugs*
- *Capital budget will be a priority*

# Programme for Government

- *New GP & consultants' contracts & reduced remuneration*
- *Range of mental health commitments including €35 million for community mental health teams*
- *Legislate to clarify law on assisted human reproduction, to regulate stem cell research, for post mortems, organ retention and organ donation*

# Programme for Government

- *We acknowledge the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights subsequent to the established ruling of the Irish Supreme Court on the X-case. We will establish an expert group to address this issue, drawing on appropriate medical and legal expertise **with a view to making recommendations to Government on how this matter should be properly addressed***

# What's good about it?

- First ever attempt to introduce a one tiered health system with access based on need not ability to pay
- Plans for free GP care
- Some progress on waiting times
- Emphasis on public health and primary care

# Implementation of PfG

- *Future Health: a strategic framework for reform of the health service 2012-2015*
- 50 pages, not a road map
- Very vague, little new info if anything a retrenchment on previous positions
- *extension of BreastCheck to 65-69 year old women will commence in 2014*
- Invisibility of women

# Progress to date

- Free GP care
- Driving down the cost
- The HSE ceasing to exist
- The Special Delivery Unit
- Minister and Department of Health reclaiming power
- Budget 2013

# Progress on free GP care

- Failure to deliver on 300 extra staff in 2012
- No free GP care for 70,000 on long term illness scheme by March 2012
- Unlikely that those on high tech drugs will get free GP care by March 2013
- Primary Care Centres debacle

# Progress on driving down costs

- Failure to deliver primary staff
- Cuts of 950,000 home help hours in 2012, 2.5 million fewer hours than 2008
- Failure to renegotiate and cut pay of GPs and consultants
- Failure to deliver on drug cost savings
- €399 HSE deficit and supplementary budget

# Progress of abolishing HSE

- Abolished board, got rid of CEO
- Introducing new directorates
  - Hospitals
  - Primary care
  - Mental health
  - Social care
  - Health and well being (public health)
  - Corporate/shared services
  - Child and Family Support Agency to start in 2013
- No clarity on what happens post 2015

# Progress of Special Delivery Unit

- Remit to reduce trolleys and wait times for hospital treatment
- 23% fewer trolleys, 45,000+ Jan & Sept'12
- Nearly met target that no one wait over 9 months, fewer waiting over 3 & 6 months
- Still too many waiting - 385,462 first apt  
46,000+ more than 2 yrs, 11,000+ 4 yrs+
- Progress due to clinical care programmes

# Progress on reclaiming power

- A purge of senior officials including minister of state, Roisin Shortall
- Bringing power and purse back into Department of Health
- Evident in people, primary care centres and hospital groups
- *The Government will decide the make-up of the Hospital Groups*

# Budget 2013

- €781 Million out of health budget
- On top of €2.5 BILLION & 9,000 fewer staff
- €323 M 'savings' from primary care
- €160 M drug savings???
- €51 M drug charges up from .50 – €1.50
- €10 M DPS up from €132 to €144 monthly
- €70 M from prof fees

# Budget 2013

- €32 M ‘changes to PC schemes’
  - Over 70s from €700 to €600 for full medical cards, affects 20,000 people
  - tighten rules for medical card eligibility to include current income and spending not currently taken into account...
- Increased ‘death charges’ for Fair Deal
- Increased charges public & private beds
- No cuts to home helps???
- €35 M new money for mental health?

# Budget 2013

- Cannot take €781 M out without impacting on patient care
- Little detail – don't know or won't tell
- Further retrenchment of services
- Increased charges, hit sickest and poorest hardest
- Look at budget in its entirety.....

# Budget 2013

- Cuts to child benefit
- Taxing maternity benefit
- Cuts to front line services (maternity)
- Tightening up of medical card eligibility
- Cuts to respite care
- 'protecting the most vulnerable' is nonsense
- Not a right in sight for women....

Thanks very much

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