

2001



Annual Report

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs



Mission Statement

The Mission of the Department of Social,
Community and Family Affairs is

“to promote social well-being through income and other
supports which enable people to participate in society
in a positive way”.

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Forewords

Foreword



I am delighted as the incoming Minister of Social and Family Affairs to publish the Annual Report of the Department for 2001. The publication of this report provides an opportunity to look back briefly at the changes which have taken place in Social Welfare over the past five years.

The effects of our social and economic policies over this period are clear:

- In 1997, consistent poverty was almost 10%. By 2000 it stood at just over 6%.
- In 1997, unemployment was 10.3% – now reduced to 4.3%.
- Long-term unemployment has been reduced from 5.6% to just 1.2%.
- The number of people in employment has increased by 400,000 since 1997.
- Consistent poverty among children has been halved from 17% in 1997 to 8% in 2000.

The Government has increased spending on Social Welfare from £4.5 billion in 1997 to €9.4 (£7.4) billion in 2002 – an increase of two thirds in just five years.

This increase in spending reflects our commitment to reduce poverty, increase pensions, reduce unemployment, and support all of our children through hugely increased Child Benefit.

Pension rates have increased dramatically over the period. In 1997 the old age pension (contributory) stood at £78 per week. Today this pension is €147.30 per week which is 31% of average industrial earnings compared to 28% when we came into office.

Because of the success of our employment support services the overall number of people of working age dependent on welfare has declined rapidly. Our expenditure on employment supports is now equivalent to 21% of the expenditure on unemployment payments at €202m. Compare that to the situation five years ago when expenditure on active measures was equivalent to less than 10% of expenditure on unemployment payments.

The largest single category of Exchequer-funded payments is Child Benefit, at over €1.4 billion. This represents an increase of 50% over expenditure in 2000, and is due to the substantial increases in Child Benefit in the last Budget, as well as the decision to bring forward the payment date to April.

This annual report demonstrates just how much we have turned around our social welfare system. I want to pay tribute to the work of my predecessor Dermot Ahern and I look forward to further improvements and developments in the system in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Coughlan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Coughlan TD

Minister for Social and Family Affairs

Foreword



This is the fourth and final Annual Report prepared under "Inclusion, Innovation and Partnership" – our Strategy Statement covering the period from 1998 to 2001. It reports on our progress in the past year in relation to achieving the key strategic aims and objectives set down in that Strategy Statement.

During 2001 the Department was engaged in developing a new Strategy Statement – "People, Policies and Services" – to cover the period from 2001 to 2004. The development of the Strategy Statement involved a detailed examination of the policies and services for which we have responsibility. This process allowed us to reassess our aims and objectives and to establish key priorities that will meet the needs of the rapidly changing society within which we live.

The Department is engaged in an ongoing process of consultation with staff, customers, voluntary and community representative groups, the social partners as well as other Departments and agencies. This type of collaboration is vital given the nature and number of increasingly complex, cross-cutting issues that we are facing. Taking the feedback from this process into account, we have further developed the range of services and supports offered to people so as to ensure that they are efficient and effective in meeting their needs. This process of continuous review and monitoring has led to improvements in the supports for various customer groups (e.g. older people, unemployed people, those who are ill, people with disabilities, carers etc.) and in the range of services offered through the various family and community support programmes. In order to ensure that resources are directed towards supporting those most in need and that fraud was minimised, effective management of resources continued to be a priority.

Of course, our many achievements would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of all staff within the Department. In recognising staff as critical to our ongoing programme of change, a number of improvements in relation to the internal administration and management of the Department were introduced in the past year. Rollout of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), addressing training needs, upgrading the office network, addressing Health and Safety issues and the further development of Partnership continued during 2001.

It is important to reflect on what has been achieved over the past year and I would like to express my thanks to all staff members for their contribution to those achievements. Each year the Department's staff have proved their commitment to the task of improving the services that we offer. I believe that if we continue to work together, in the spirit of Partnership, we will be successful in meeting the challenges set for the period ahead.

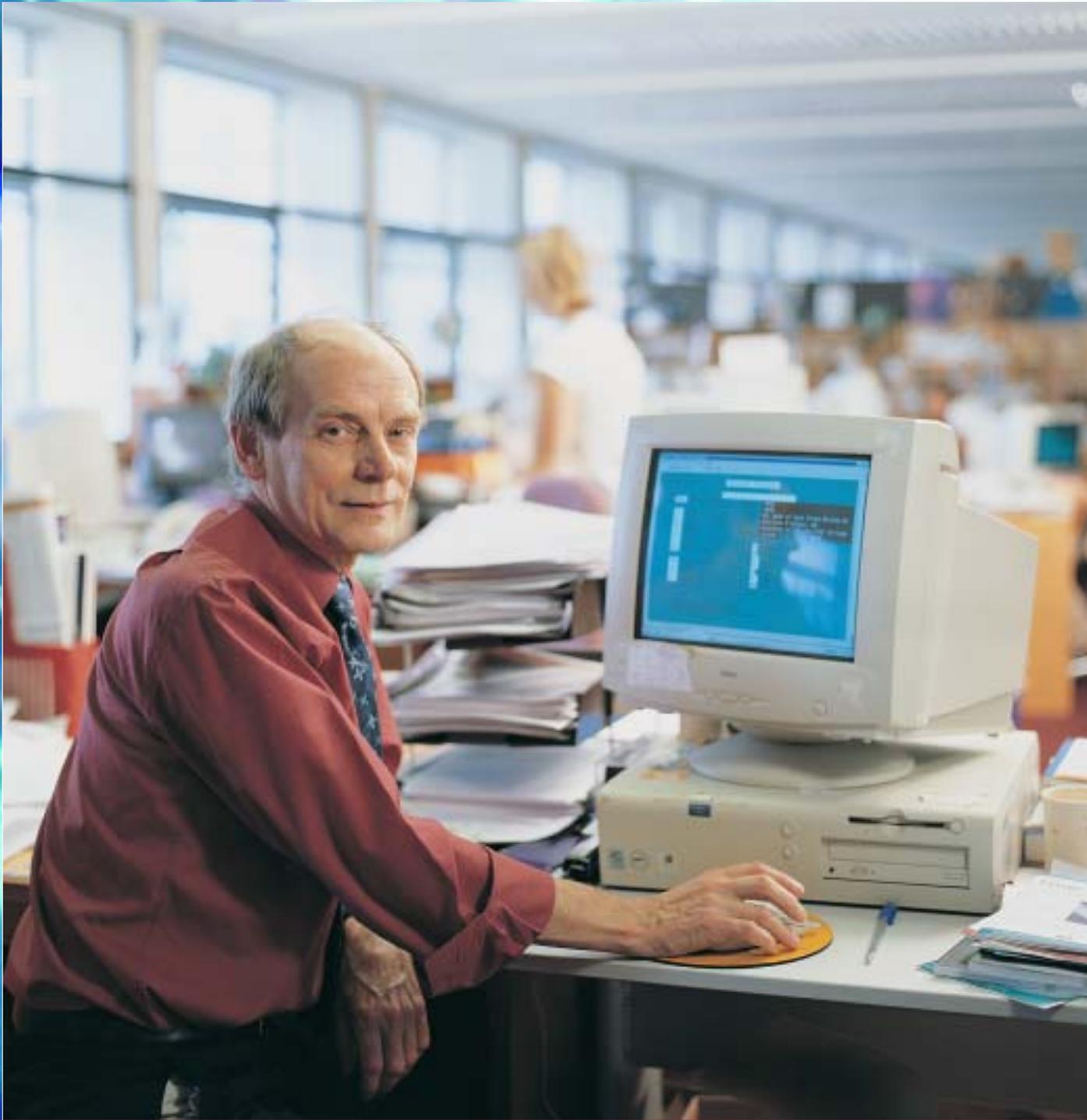
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hynes
Secretary-General



chapter 1

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs



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The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

Functions of the Department

The main functions of the Department are:

- to formulate appropriate social protection policies
- to administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social, community and family schemes and services
- to work with other Departments and agencies in the delivery of Government priorities.

The main business of the Department continues to be the insurance (PRSI) based payments, social assistance (means tested) payments, associated secondary benefits and Child Benefit.

In recent years the supports and services provided have been expanded to include:

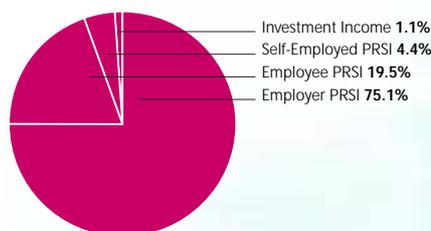
- employment supports for job-seekers
- assistance for people at work and on low pay and farmers on low income
- Voluntary and Community Development including: Grants to Voluntary Organisations, Community Support for Older People and Money Advice and Budgeting Service
- Marriage Support Services
- Family Mediation Services
- Family Resource Centres.

The Department also has a dedicated Unit with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-Departmental action in support of social inclusion initiatives and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

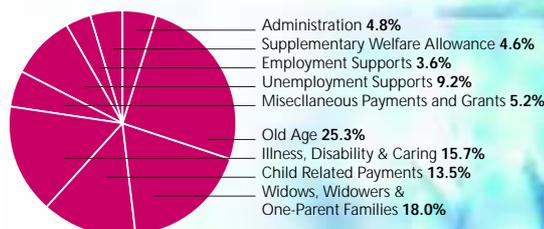
Finance

In 2001, total expenditure by the Department amounted to over €7,800m. This was mainly financed by the Social Insurance Fund and by the Exchequer. The charts below illustrate the sources of finance in 2001 and the programme areas where this money was spent.

Financing of the Social Insurance Fund 2001



Expenditure on Social Welfare by Programme



Statutory Agencies Under the Aegis of the Department

The Department is also responsible for a number of statutory agencies:

The **Combat Poverty Agency** has responsibilities in the areas of advice to the Minister, research, action programmes and information in relation to poverty in Ireland.

The **Pensions Board** is responsible for promoting the security and development of occupational pensions and the general issue of pensions coverage.

Comhairle, the new Information Agency, was launched on 12th June 2000 under the the Comhairle Act, 2000. It incorporates the former National Social Service Board (NSSB) and relevant functions of the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB). Comhairle has responsibility for the provision of independent information, advice and advocacy services for all citizens throughout the country.

The **Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests** is a statutory body responsible for overseeing the general administration of charities. The Commissioners provide a range of services to charities. Responsibility for the office was transferred to the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs from the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform on 27 July 2001.



Management Advisory Committee, 2001

*Seated (from left): John Hynes (Director-General), Edmond Sullivan (Secretary-General), Deirdre Carroll (Assistant Secretary).
Standing (from left): Gerry D. Daly (Assistant Director-General), Bernadette Lacey (Assistant Director-General), Tom Mulherin (Assistant Secretary), Alice O'Flynn (Assistant Secretary), Oliver Ryan (Director – REACH).*



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Strategic Management Initiative



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Strategic Management Initiative

Strategic Management Initiative

The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) is a wide-ranging programme for the modernisation of the civil and public service. It has three broad objectives:

- to deliver better quality services to the public
- to provide better value to the taxpayer
- to contribute to national economic and social development.

Among our main achievements in progressing the modernisation agenda have been:

- putting in place a comprehensive customer service programme
- making contributions to a range of cross-departmental initiatives such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the RAPID programme
- developing an eGovernment strategy and playing a leading role in the Reach initiative and the General Register's Office (GRO) project
- conducting a series of evaluations of Departmental schemes and programmes under the Programme Evaluation initiative
- developing Partnership across the organisation
- introducing the Performance Management and Development System
- implementing an improved programme of financial management.

The first independent evaluation of the SMI process across the civil service was undertaken between October and December 2001. The findings of the report will be of benefit in progressing the programme of modernisation, both in this Department and across the civil service.

Cross-Departmental Focus

The Department's role embraces a wide range of social and economic issues affecting individuals, families, communities and society in general. These issues can be complex, multidimensional and inter-related. Effective cross-departmental policy and service delivery responses, at national and local levels, play a key role in identifying and addressing these.

Cross-departmental activities include the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the RAPID programme, City and County Development Boards, Community Development and Family Resource Centres, MABS, Employment Supports and European Union developments.

Strategy Statement

In accordance with the requirements of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, the Department published its Strategy Statement for the period 2001-2004 in December 2001. The Statement, entitled "People, Policies and Services", is a framework document which sets out the Department's mission, high level goals and the strategies and actions which will be pursued to fulfil its remit over the next three years. The preparation of the Strategy Statement involved an examination of each major area of policy and activity. The Statement was informed by the views and feedback arising from the variety of consultation processes with customers and representative groups in which the Department engages. Also, the Department's staff participated in an extensive internal consultation process involving a series of working groups in order to input to the Statement.

The key elements of the Strategy Statement are:

- Policy Development
- Social Inclusion and Solidarity
- Service Delivery and Customer Service Development
- Income Maintenance Programmes
- Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Organisational Issues.

The title of the Strategy Statement reflects the emphasis on the Department's customers, both internal and external. The Department's aim is to have a customer-centred organisation delivering a service of the highest quality that takes account of best practice and the standards of leading customer service organisations. This will require reorganising and integrating services and enhancing the Department's processes, organisational structures and support systems.

Business Planning

The Strategy Statement outlines, at a high level, the role, direction and priorities of the Department. The Business Plans which were produced by the Aireacht, Social Welfare Services and the Social Welfare Appeals Office in 2001 detail how each area of the Department contributed to the implementation of the Strategy Statement over the course of the year.

Each business area produces monthly reports in which the performance indicators and targets are monitored and progress is outlined in relation to the many business unit activities.





chapter 3

Policy Development and Evolving Role of the Department



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Policy Development and Evolving Role of the Department

Aim:

To promote an inclusive society in which people can participate in a positive way, by understanding the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion and addressing the needs of those people affected.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

The overall aim of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) is to reduce the numbers of those living in consistent poverty. The goals of the Strategy are framed around five key themes of unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, urban disadvantage and rural poverty. Each of these themes has its own subsidiary targets and timeframes.

Developments in relation to social inclusion and anti-poverty initiatives across all Government Departments were detailed in the third Annual Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee (IDPC) on Social Inclusion, published in July 2001. The report also outlined the continuing downward trend in consistent poverty.

Results from the 1998 Living in Ireland Survey, conducted for the Department by the Economic and Social Research Institute, show that consistent poverty fell from between 7% and 10% in 1997 to between 6% and 8% in 1998. Provisional data in relation to the 2000 Living in Ireland Survey indicates that the reduction in consistent poverty is continuing towards the Governments target of below 5% by 2004.

The current national agreement, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) provided that, in consultation with the social partners, the NAPS would be updated, the underlying methodology reviewed, the existing targets reviewed and revised where appropriate, and possible new targets would be considered, in consultation with the social partners, under the themes of child poverty, women's poverty, older people, health, housing/accommodation and ethnic minority groups. The issues to be examined as part of the review were considered initially by six working groups on the themes of Educational Disadvantage, Health, Housing and Accommodation, Employment and Unemployment, Rural Poverty and Urban Disadvantage.

Also as provided for in the PPF, issues associated with the development of a benchmark for adequacy of adult and child social welfare payments, including the implications of adopting a specific approach to the ongoing up-rating or indexation of payments, were examined by a Social Welfare Benchmarking and Indexation Working Group. This group produced a final report and presented it to Government in September, 2001. An Income Adequacy Group was also convened to consider issues relating to income adequacy issues generally.

The reports of all working groups established to progress the NAPS review were synthesised by external consultants and a Steering Committee, which included representatives from relevant Government Departments, the Social Partners and relevant Agencies, oversaw the production of a NAPS framework document. A National Consultative Seminar was held to provide feedback to the Steering Group, prior to submission to Government of the National Anti-Poverty Framework Document.

Other NAPS developments in 2001 included:

- the completion of a transnational project, co-funded by the European Union, on developing guidelines for Involving Excluded People and their Representative Organisations in Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Policies

- ongoing work with the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Combat Poverty Agency to introduce the NAPS initiative in Local Authorities, primarily through the Local Authority Learning Network
- preparatory work with the Combat Poverty Agency towards a pilot project with the Regional Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan (NDP), which will assist in increasing the social inclusion focus of the NDP. The project is being undertaken on foot of the ongoing involvement of the NAPS Unit with the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee of the NDP.

EU National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion

The revision of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy has been undertaken in parallel with the introduction at European Union level of a requirement for all Member States to prepare a National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPincl), for the period 2001-2003.

Ireland's NAPincl, which was submitted in June 2001, provides an overview of a wide variety of initiatives, being worked on by the Irish Government, to drive forward the social inclusion agenda, touching every aspect of Government. The Plan is primarily grounded in the PPF and the National Development Plan and the actions ensuing from these programmes. The NAPS and NAPincl processes will now merge and future plans submitted to the European Union will be consistent with the revised Strategy. The next NAPincl will be required in 2003.

Poverty Proofing

The National Economic and Social Council published a report of their review of the Poverty Proofing process in November 2001. The report, which was undertaken in keeping with a Government commitment, made a number of recommendations aimed at enhancing the process towards a system of ongoing poverty impact assessment, involving training for officials, data collection, identification of progress indicators, and institutional support for the process.

The report will be considered in the context of the implementation of the revised NAPS, with a particular focus on the integration of the various proofing mechanisms and the extension of poverty proofing to Health Boards and Local Authorities.

Income Adequacy

The NAPS objective relating to income adequacy is to ensure that all policies in relation to income support (e.g. employment, tax, social welfare, pensions) provide sufficient income for a person to move out of poverty and live in a manner compatible with human dignity.

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, agreed between the Government and the Social Partners early in 2000, set the following targets for social welfare rates over the three year duration of the Programme:

- All social welfare rates will be increased in real terms
- Substantial progress will be made towards a target of €126.97 (£100) per week for the lowest rates of social welfare
- Child Benefit will be substantially increased over the period of the programme, with a priority focus towards €126.97 (£100) per month for the third and subsequent children.

The December 2001 budget continued to make progress towards all of these targets. The Budget provided for increases in personal rates of payment: a minimum increase of €10.17 per week, with higher increases for certain groups – for example people on the lowest rates of payment received increases of €12.14. Increases in Child Benefit of €31.80 on the lower rate and €38.10 on the higher rate were also announced. These increases will come into effect in 2002. (For full details of the Budget package see Appendix V.)

Child Income Support

The strategy of increasing income support for children in a way that does not contribute to work disincentives or poverty traps was intensified in 2001.

Child Benefit

In the Budget for 2001, the Government undertook to invest an additional €1.27 (£1) billion in the Child Benefit scheme over three years. As a first step, Child Benefit was increased by €31.80 (£25) per month on the lower rate and €38.10 (£30) per month on the higher rate in 2001. These increases were paid in June 2001, three months earlier than in the past. Increases of the same order announced in the Budget in December 2001, will apply from April 2002, a further two months earlier than 2001. These increases will bring the rate of CB for the first two children to €117.60 per month and the rate for subsequent children to €147.30.

Family Income Supplement

In April 2001, the FIS income thresholds were increased by €25 per week. The Budget in December 2001 announced further increases of approximately €27, which will apply from January 2002.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

The Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme is the State's guarantee of minimum income. Under Section 171 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 1993 "every person in the State whose means are insufficient to meet his needs and the needs of any adult or child dependant of his shall be entitled to Supplementary Welfare Allowance".

An Inter-Departmental Working Group, as part of the Department's series of Expenditure Reviews is currently reviewing the scheme. The review is a fundamental appraisal of the scheme aimed primarily at improving customer service and administrative efficiency. All aspects of the scheme are being examined. The review also provides an opportunity to re-focus the scheme to become more effective in tackling poverty and social exclusion. The first stage of the review involved an

examination of the objectives of the scheme and included a widespread consultation process. A total of 145 submissions were received from users of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance service, information providers and other interested parties including the Social Partners, the Health Boards who administer the scheme and the trade unions representing Community Welfare Officers. It is expected that the review will be completed in 2002.

Asylum Seekers

Expenditure on payments to asylum seekers under the SWA scheme was €77.23m in 2001, accounting for about 20% of SWA expenditure. At the end of 2001, there were 9,470 basic supplementary welfare allowance claims in payment in respect of 19,152 asylum seekers of which 13,219 were adults and 5,933 were children. Approximately 5,000 of the households also received rent supplements.

Housing Issues

Access to good quality, affordable accommodation is a major concern for people on low incomes, making housing a significant social inclusion issue. The Department's primary response is through Rent and Mortgage Interest Supplements paid as part of the SWA scheme. Expenditure on these supplements amounted to over €185m in 2001, with over 45,000 tenants and more than 4,000 mortgage holders benefiting at the end of 2001.

In 2001, a new disregard of €6.35 (£5.00) per week was introduced in the means test for Rent Supplement in the case of persons aged 65 years or more. In addition, the maximum rate of Rent Supplement payable to tenants in voluntary housing sector developments financed through the Capital Assistance Scheme was increased by €12.70 (£10.00) per week. This improved the finances and therefore the viability of such schemes.

Increased numbers of recipients, together with continuing increases in rent and mortgage costs, contribute to rapidly rising expenditure in this area, reflecting increased pressure on people on low incomes in relation to how they meet their housing needs.

Fuel Allowances

At the end of December 2001, there were just over 900,000 recipients of weekly social welfare primary payments. Some 274,000 or 30% of these included additional, means tested, supplements known as Fuel Allowances, at a cost in 2001 of €85.6m. In 2001, the standard rate of allowance was €6.35 (£5.00) per week, while €10.16 (£8.00) was payable in designated urban areas where a ban on the sale of bituminous coal is in place.

In 2001, the number of weeks for which allowances are paid was increased from 26 to 29. In addition, the means test was eased to enable some 3,700 additional households to qualify.

Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit

Budget 2001 made provision for the introduction of the following measures for carers:

- The weekly income disregard on the Carer's Allowance means test increased by £50 to £125 for a single carer and by £100 to £250 for a couple
- Annual respite care grant which is paid with both Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit increased by £100 to £400 and carers caring for more than one person received a double respite care grant of £800.

In addition, following the introduction of the Carer's Benefit scheme in October 2000, the Carer's Leave Act, was introduced on 2 July, 2001. Carer's Leave allows employees to leave their employment temporarily for a period of up to 65 weeks to provide full-time care for people in need of full-time care and attention. Those availing of this leave have their jobs kept open for them for the duration of the leave.

Long-Term Care

The Department appointed consultants in November 2000 to examine the strategic issues involved in the future financing of long term care.

The study, which also involves the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Finance, encompasses the financing of personal long term care needs both in the community and in institutional care and the potential of the private sector or a combined public/private sector approach to develop new initiatives in this area. It involves an assessment of alternative financing and funding approaches and their feasibility in the Irish context.

Sale of Residence

A review of the Sale of Residence provisions was completed and Budget 2002 made provision for two of the Review's proposals as follows:

Extension of the Sale of Residence disregard to existing categories of recipients (i.e. recipients of Disability Allowance, Blind Pension and recipients of means tested payments over age 66) who

- (i) sell their principal residence to move in with a recipient of Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit, where the Carer's Allowance/Benefit recipient is that pensioner's carer or
- (ii) move to sheltered or special housing in the voluntary, co-operative, statutory or private sectors.

Pensions

Social Welfare Rates

In its Action Programme for the Millennium, the Government gave a commitment to increase the personal rate of the social welfare Old Age Pension to €127 (£100) per week. Budget 2001 saw further progress on this commitment with the rate for the Old Age (Contributory) Pension exceeding the target rate following Budget increases.

Commitments were also made to increase the rate of the Widow(er)'s (Contributory) Pension to the same rate as the Old Age (Contributory) Pension and to increase the rate at which Qualified Adult Allowances for those over 66 years of age are paid to the maximum rate of Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension. Special increases were granted in Budget 2001 in pursuit of both of these objectives.

Occupational Pensions

The Pensions (Amendment) Bill, 2001 was published in July 2001.

This Bill was the culmination of a process which started with the report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Policy Initiative (NPPI) in 1998 and it is a specific commitment of the Government under the PPF. Given the overall aim of developing pensions policy, the legislation has a number of key objectives, as follows:

- (i) increasing overall occupational pension coverage, which is currently less than 50% of those at work. The main mechanism addressing this is the Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) framework
- (ii) providing a right of redress for those who have a dispute or complaint in relation to an occupational pension scheme and, in due course, a PRSA through the introduction of a Pensions Ombudsman
- (iii) enhancing the current provisions of the Pensions Act, 1990 so as to improve the position of existing and future pension scheme members both in terms of security and quality of their pensions entitlements allied with providing increased flexibility
- (iv) extending the composition of the Pensions Board by the addition of a representative of pensioners and a representative of consumer interests.

Free Schemes

In 2000 the full range of Free Schemes (Electricity/Gas Allowance, Telephone Allowance and Free TV Licence schemes) were extended to all people aged 75 years and over regardless of their income and household composition. Further improvements were made in this regard in 2001 when the qualifying age for entitlement was reduced to 70 years of age.

Social Insurance Developments

Aim:

To continually evaluate and adapt our policies and services and their impact on society to ensure that they are achieving specified objectives in an efficient and effective manner.

The Social Insurance system plays a key role in Irish life, in terms of the numbers of people who depend on it and also in terms of the financial and economic scale of the system. It is an important vehicle of income distribution and solidarity between generations and between those in work and those who have been, but who are not now currently, in work (for example, the sick and retired).

There continued to be a surplus in the Social Insurance Fund in 2001. The estimated surplus of SIF income over expenditure in 2001 was €444m, leading to a cumulative surplus of €1,117m at the end of the year.

The change in the tax and PRSI years from an April-April basis to a January-December basis (with effect from January 2002), meant that there was a nine month "year" for the purposes of payment of PRSI contributions from 6 April 2001 to 31 December 2001. However, arrangements were put in place to ensure that people subsequently claiming benefits based on contributions in that year would not lose out; this was done by awarding 14 extra contributions or credits, as appropriate, in the short year.

A number of changes in PRSI came into effect in April 2001, as follows:

- The main Class A social insurance rate, paid by most employees, was reduced from 4.5% to 4%
- the employer PRSI ceiling was abolished
- there was major restructuring of contributions for the self employed: both the income ceiling and the weekly PRSI-free allowance were abolished, and the contribution rate was reduced from 5% to 3%.

ESRI

The Department, has a research programme with the Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI) which relates to the Living in Ireland (LII) survey which is undertaken by the ESRI. The survey is part financed by the Department. The data collected provide an important resource for policy analyses and development especially in the context of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The data also underpin the ESRI tax-benefit model (SWITCH) which has been developed to model the effects of tax and social welfare changes.

Specific research undertaken by the ESRI for the Department in 2001 included:

- 'Non Cash Benefits and Poverty in Ireland', published March 2001
- 'Monitoring Poverty Trends and Exploring Poverty Dynamics in Ireland', published June 2001
- 'The Changing Face of Poverty in Ireland', published June 2001
- 'Family Formation in Ireland – Trends, Data Needs and Implications', published February 2002.

Families Research Programme

The Families Research Programme was established to support innovative, original research in the field of family policy and family services and in areas highlighted by the Commission on the Family in their report "Strengthening Families for Life" as being in need of further investigation.

Thirteen proposals submitted under the Families Research Programme were selected for funding. These research proposals were selected on the basis of their potential to inform the future development of aspects of policy relating to families and family services and cover a range of family-related topics including, marriage counselling and marital breakdown, children and parental separation, fathers and marginalised men. Four projects have been launched to date, namely:

- 'Balancing Work and Family Life: the role of Flexible Working Arrangements' by Dr Peter Humphreys et al of the Institute of Public Administration
- 'Grandparenthood in Modern Ireland' by Dr. Francesca Lundström for Age Action Ireland
- 'Supporting Parenting: a Study of Parents' Support Needs' by Sinead Riordan of the Centre for Social and Educational Research, DIT Rathmines and
- 'The Processes of Family Formation in Ireland' by Dr Tony Fahey and Dr Helen Russell of the Economic and Social Research Institute

Review of Expenditure Programmes

The expenditure review process is a civil service wide programme initiated in 1997. It is overseen centrally by a Steering Committee chaired by the Department of Finance.

The expenditure review process has twin aims:

- to provide a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by expenditure in each programme
- to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between expenditure programmes.

During 2001 the review of Qualifying Conditions for Old Age Contributory & Retirement Pension Phase 1 was submitted for consideration. This brings to thirteen the total number of reports submitted by the Department to the central Steering Committee since the initiative was introduced.

Work on six further reviews continued during 2001.

Lone Parents and Maintenance Payments.

The Review of the One-Parent Family Payment, published in 2000, proposed amendments to the means test associated with the scheme to provide incentives for lone parents to seek maintenance from the other parent. The Social Welfare Act, 2001 amended the means test to allow lone parents to retain up to 50% of any maintenance secured in addition to the already existing allowances for housing costs.

EU Developments

Open Method of Co-ordination

Following the European Council meeting at Lisbon in March 2000, application of the open method of co-ordination commenced. Its main purpose in the social field is to promote and facilitate co-operation between Member States with the EU Commission in developing and implementing strategies to modernise their systems of social protection and in combating social exclusion.

The method involves setting agreed objectives, preparing national action plans with strategies to meet these objectives, and the necessary measures to give effect to them over a specified period, review and analysis of the national action plans by the EU Commission and the other Member States. At the end of the process a Joint Commission/Council Report is submitted to the European Council.

A series of common indicators to assist in measuring and evaluating progress and identifying good practice are also being developed.

The process facilitates the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and good practice between Member States in developing and implementing policies to meet the commonly agreed objectives and the key goal set at Lisbon of strengthening good practice.

1 Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

This was the first area in the social field to which the open method of co-ordination was applied. A set of objectives were endorsed by the European Council at Nice, in December 2000. In June 2001 Member States (including Ireland) submitted National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion and to promote social inclusion (NAPSincl). The reports set down Member States' strategies to meet these objectives and the actions to be taken to implement the strategies in the two year period commencing in June 2001.

In December 2001, the Laeken European Council adopted a draft joint inclusion report, which analyses and evaluates each Member State's social inclusion strategy. The Council also endorsed a report of the Social Protection Committee containing recommendations for a series of indicators to assist in measuring and evaluating progress in promoting social inclusion and in identifying good practice during the next stage of the process.

2 Safe and Sustainable Pensions

Following a series of studies on pension policies carried out by the EU Commission and the Social Protection and Economic Policy Committees a set of objectives relating to safe and sustainable pensions was agreed at the European Council in Laeken. National Strategy Reports outlining the approaches being taken to meet these objectives together with the measures necessary to implement them are due to be submitted to the EU Commission by 15 September, 2002.

3 Social Security Rights for Migrant Workers

Discussions continued on the European Commission's proposal to simplify, reform and extend the EU Regulations which protect the social security rights of migrant workers and their families who move to other Member States.

In March 2001, the European Council at Stockholm mandated the Council to establish parameters to progress this project, thereby enabling Council and the European Parliament to speed up adoption. Agreed parameters were adopted by the Council of Ministers under the Belgian Presidency in December.

North/South Issues

The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) commissioned consultants to conduct a study of 'Obstacles to Mobility' on the island of Ireland. The terms of reference included, to identify obstacles to mobility of persons in either direction north and south, principally, to take up employment, study and reside. The Report was presented to the NSMC in November 2001 and it is expected that it will be published in 2002. There will be a further stage of consultation with interested organisations, after which final recommendations will be submitted to the NSMC.



International Developments

Co-operation Agreements

The Candidate Countries for accession to the EU need the assistance of other Member States in preparing for membership. The Department has been providing this assistance to some of these countries in relation to social security policy and administration and the specific demands of EU membership in relation to social policy.

Co-operation agreements were concluded with Hungary and with Lithuania during 2001 to put the provision of such assistance and support on a more formal footing. Several study visits from each of these countries were hosted during the year. Study visits were also made by officials from other countries including Malta, Moldova and Poland.

Council of Europe

A Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Family Affairs took place in Portoroz, Slovenia, on 20 to 22nd June 2001. The theme of the Conference was "Reconciliation of Work and Family Life" and a keynote address was delivered by Dermot Ahern TD, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs. Agreed conclusions were adopted to guide further policy development in this important area.

The Department was also represented at meetings of various Council of Europe committees on social issues, notably the European Committee for Social Cohesion.

OECD

Ireland was represented at meetings of the OECD Working Party on Social Policy which co-ordinates and oversees research on social policy themes. Ireland has agreed to participate in a research project on Family Support Policies which is due to be completed in 2003.

ILO

A wide-ranging discussion on social security, its current issues, challenges and prospects was held at the ILO Conference in June 2001 in Geneva at which the Department was represented. The role of the ILO in encouraging and supporting the expansion of social security cover, and assisting in its development to meet changing environments was examined and a series of conclusions agreed.

ISSA

The Department was represented at the World Assembly of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) in Stockholm, Sweden from 9th to 15th September, 2001. The theme of the Conference was "Developments and trends in social security".

United Nations

The Department was represented at the annual meeting of the UN Committee on Social Development held in New York in February 2001. The main theme of the meeting was "Enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalising world".

The sub-theme was "The role of volunteerism in the promotion of social development" to mark 2001 as the "Year of the Volunteer".

Live Register and Employment

Aim:

To ensure that social protection is provided in an employment friendly manner.

Live Register Trends

The numbers on the Live Register increased during 2001 – from 141,586 at the end of 2000 to 152,406 at the end of 2001. This represents an increase of 7.7% or almost 11,000.

Employment Action Plan – Referral and Activation

The policy of referral and activation in co-operation with FÁS, commenced in 1998, continued during 2001. Since September 1998, young unemployed (under 25) have been referred to FÁS for a job or employability support after six months on the Live Register. Unemployed adults are also engaged by the process on reaching nine months of unemployment, along similar lines, as those under 25.

During 2001 (up to end November), 22,497 individuals were referred to FÁS and at end December, FÁS had completed 14,779 interviews. Of the interviewees, 9,379 (63% of interviewees) subsequently left the Live Register and 5,134 (35% of interviewees) were placed in jobs or FÁS Programmes.

A total of 5,733 (25% of referrals) failed to attend for interview. Of these, 4,204 (73%) subsequently left the Live Register and 1,419 of these are known to have entered employment or education or a FÁS course.

The total number leaving the Live Register, taking FÁS interviewees and non-attendees together totals 13,583 and represents 60% of referrals.

Employability Study

A study of employability was initiated by the Department in 2000. An Advisory Group drawn from DSCFA, Department of Finance and Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment was established to oversee this study. The ESRI was engaged as consultants and the final report, which will form part of the ESRI's Policy Research series, was launched on 17th May 2001.

The report established that the main factors associated with reduced employability were:

- age
- gender and, for women, having children
- level of previous employment experience
- education levels and, in particular literacy
- location i.e. rural as opposed to urban
- access to transport.

The report included a recommendation that a longitudinal survey be undertaken of unemployed customers and, to try to identify at an earlier stage the factors giving rise to likely employability problems so that the appropriate intervention can be made. As a first step, the ESRI has been engaged to carry out further analysis of data obtained from surveys conducted in Galway and Waterford in 2000. It is expected that a final report from the ESRI will be available in the third quarter of 2002.

Employment Support Service

The Back to Work Scheme and the Back to Education Scheme continued to underpin the Department's Employment Support Services in 2001. At the end of 2001, there were 32,000 people participating in the Back to Work Scheme and 5,300 participants in the Back to Education Scheme. However, new participation in the Back to Work Scheme fell by some 7,000 in 2001. This reflects the continued buoyancy of the labour market for much of 2001.

In April 2001 the qualifying period for persons under 50 years participating in the employee strand of the Back to Work Scheme was increased from 12 months to 15 months. This change was in line with the Indecon report on the scheme, which recommended an enhanced focus on the longer-term unemployed and on the self-employed.

An independent evaluation of the role of the Job Facilitator was also initiated in 2001. This work will be used to help target resources and provide more tailor-made help where the need is greatest.

Budget 2001 saw continuing improvements to the Employment Support Services; the Back to Work Scheme was extended to Disability Benefit clients for the first time in mid-2001. In September 2001, the Back to Education Allowance was extended to 18-20 year olds, out of formal education for at least 2 years. Also in 2001, a weekly payment for 'out of pocket expenses' was made available to persons attending short-time courses – specific to their needs – and organised by the Jobs Facilitator. This is a recognition that those on tight budgets may need some extra help to attend courses and training which could be useful to them.

Disincentives

Disincentives to work have decreased in significance in recent years due to a combination of a buoyant employment market, social welfare changes and tax reliefs. The main developments in this regard in the year 2001 have been:

- (a) payment in June of first instalment of increases provided for in €1.27 (£1) billion Child Benefit investment package announced in the Budget for 2001, and confirmation of the second instalment in the 2002 budget in December 2001 (see Child Income Support, page 19)
- (b) ensuring the income thresholds for Family Income Supplement increase at least in line with unemployment payments: in March 2001 the rate of UA for a couple increased by €19.05 (£15.00); the increase of €31.74 (£25) in the FIS income thresholds meant that, in general, FIS recipients received an increase of £15
- (c) the substantial increases in the qualified adult allowances in April 2001, together with the extension of the upper income limit governing entitlement to the qualified adult allowance, improved the position for families, particularly, where the spouse was in low-paid or part-time employment
- (d) further changes to the arrangements for SWA rent/mortgage supplements announced in the Budget in December 2001 will enhance the incentive for people to take up part-time employment or training opportunities in 2002.

People with Disabilities

The main policy focus in relation to people with disabilities continues to concentrate on ensuring that the social welfare system facilitates and encourages people receiving disability payments to take up available employment, training and educational opportunities.

Measures which were introduced in this area in 2001 included:

- the adaptation of the operation of the Disability Allowance (DA) and Blind Pension schemes in order to facilitate the payment of proper training allowances by FÁS for people with disabilities who are in vocational training, as recommended by the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities. For people with disabilities involved in vocational training, FÁS now provide a standard training allowance at a rate equivalent to DA, together with an additional €31.74 (£25) weekly training bonus
- the further extension of the Back to Work Allowance scheme, on a pilot basis, to people who have been receiving Disability Benefit for at least 5 years
- the extension of access to the Back to Education Allowance to all people with disabilities who have completed participation on a Community Employment Scheme.

In addition, a conference was hosted by the Department to highlight the range of employment, training and educational supports available to people with disabilities. See page 42 for further details.

It is estimated that in 2001 approximately 17,000 people with disabilities receiving social welfare payments were availing of the various employment, training and educational supports available.

Budget 2002 continues with this policy by providing for:

- a 26% increase in the amount of earnings from rehabilitative employment or self-employment which can be disregarded for means-tested purposes in the case of the DA and Blind Pension Schemes, from €95.23 (£75) to €120 (£94.50)
- a further extension of the Back to Work Allowance scheme to those in receipt of Disability Benefit for three years or more
- an extension of the Back to Education Allowance to those in receipt of Disability Benefit for three years or more and
- the linking of two periods of incapacity not separated by more than 13 weeks in the case of people receiving Disability Benefit for 5 years or more. This measure is designed to encourage long-term recipients of Disability Benefit to re-integrate into the workforce, by ensuring that their benefits will not be reduced if they find that they are unable to continue working in the short-term.

Other improvements introduced in 2001 for people with disabilities included:

- the extension of the Living Alone Allowance of €7.62 (£6) a week to people under age 66 getting Invalidation Pension, Disability Allowance, Unemployability Supplement and Blind Pension
- the payment of full rate Disability Allowance where the person's partner is in receipt of any other social welfare payment and
- the exemption of income of up to €190,460 (£150,000) from the sale of a person's residence, which currently applies to pensioners, is being extended to people getting Disability Allowance and Blind Pension.

Family Policies

Aim:

To promote policies which protect and support families

Maternity and Adoptive Benefits

A number of improvements in the Maternity Benefit scheme were introduced in 2001, in line with the recommendations of the PPF Working Group to Review and Improve the Maternity Protection Legislation. As a consequence of the increase in the period of maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks, the duration of Maternity Benefit was similarly increased by 4 weeks from early March 2001. In addition, credited PRSI contributions were introduced for the period of additional unpaid maternity leave (which was extended from 4 to 8 weeks) from early March 2001. These credited contributions have the effect of preserving existing social insurance entitlements during the period of unpaid maternity leave.

A similar 4 week extension in the duration of Adoptive Benefit was introduced in early March 2001 and credited PRSI contributions were introduced for the period of additional unpaid adoptive leave (which was also extended from 4 to 8 weeks). The minimum and maximum rates of both Maternity and Adoptive Benefits were also increased from April 2001.

Budget 2002, provides for a €10.28 (£8.09) increase in the minimum rates of Maternity and Adoptive Benefits from January 2002.

Family Mediation Service

The Family Mediation Service is a free, professional, confidential service which enables couples, who have decided to separate, to reach agreement on all issues related to their separation. It assists couples to address the issues on which they need to make decisions including: post-separation living arrangements, finances, and parenting arrangements to enable children to have an ongoing relationship with each parent.

The establishment of a nationwide Family Mediation Service is a key objective in the "Action Programme for the Millennium". Over the last four years the number of centres has been increased from two, Dublin and Limerick, to eleven. New services have been established in Cork, Wexford, Athlone, Dundalk, Tralee, Galway, Tallaght, Castlebar, Marino serving Coolock and the surrounding areas. A new service is planned for Blanchardstown in 2002. The new services are co-located with other State and voluntary and community services where this has proved possible.

Statistics

There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of couples seeking assistance from the Family Mediation Service from 484 couples in 1997 to 1301 in 2001.

Funding for the Family Mediation has been significantly increased over the past few years from £300,000 in 1997 to £1.35m in 2001.

Family Support Agency

In the review of the "Action Programme for the Millennium" the Government has stated its commitment to put the Family Mediation Service on a statutory basis. The Family Mediation Service will become part of the new Family Support Agency which is to be established in 2002. This new Agency will provide family mediation, support, promote and develop voluntary organisations providing marriage and relationship counselling and support, promote and develop Family Resource Centres.

The new Agency will undertake research, provide and disseminate information about parenting and family issues and provide advice to the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs on matters relating to its functions.

Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling and Services

The Department administers a Scheme of Grants to voluntary organisations providing marriage counselling services, marriage preparation courses, child counselling services in relation to parental separation and bereavement counselling and support services.

A total of £4.81m was allocated in 2001 for the further development of this programme, representing more than five times the level of funding available in 1997.

This allocation included a grant of £70,000 in respect of the Rainbows Programme which provides a special type of support to children whose lives have been affected by bereavement or parental separation. In addition, £40,000 was grant aided to Turning Point who provide specialist bereavement counselling.

Some 430 organisations benefited from the Scheme in 2001.

Work is continuing on the further development of the Scheme, in consultation with key providers of services, towards a network of accessible services for families throughout the country.

Family Services Pilot Project

A pilot project to enhance information services for families is underway in three local offices – Waterford, Cork and Finglas in Dublin.

An evaluation of the first phase of the pilot period was completed in 2000 and plans for the expansion of the successful elements of the projects have now been drafted. The Government has provided £12m in the National Development Plan for the development of the successful aspects of the pilot project over the years 2000-2006.

Total funding for the Family Services Project for 2001 was £1m.

Supporting Voluntary Activity

Aim:

To encourage self-help and empowerment through the community structure in recognition of the beneficial effects which can be attained through seeking and achieving solutions to community problems by local participation.

The “White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector” was published by the Government on 13 September 2000. The White Paper marked the start of the Government’s long term strategy to develop and support the Community and Voluntary sector. It sets out the rationale for developing the relationship between the State and the sector and the principles which should underpin this relationship.

A unique feature of the White Paper is the direct involvement of the sector in this process of change through the Implementation and Advisory Group, which was established to oversee the implementation of the White Paper’s recommendations. The Group commenced work in July 2001 and consists of 6 members from the Community & Voluntary Sector and 6 from the Statutory Sector.

The main matters progressed in 2001 are as follows:

- **Funding for National Federations and Networks**
€2,539,000 was provided by the White Paper to support the work of Federations and Networks in the Community and Voluntary sector. The scheme was finalised and advertised in October, 2001
- **Funding for Training and Supports in the Community and Voluntary Sector**
€2,539,000 was made available by the White Paper to foster the availability of additional training and supports to the Community and Voluntary sector. A scheme was finalised to commence in early 2002
- **Legal and Regulatory Framework**
Responsibility for charity regulatory matters and the office of the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests transferred to the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs in July 2001. A competitive tendering process was put in place to arrange expert advice to assist in the process of reform which will include widespread public consultation

- **Research Programme**

The White Paper provides €508,000 for a programme of research into the extent of community and voluntary activity in Ireland. The Group examined plans for the research programme in 2001 and proposals are expected to be sought by public advertisement in early 2002

- **Multiplicity of Funding Sources**

The Group has commenced an examination of issues relating to the multiplicity of funding sources for the sector and to consider the related matter of a funding manual for the sector

- **National Committee on Volunteering**

The National Committee on Volunteering was established in November 2000 to mark the UN International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001 and to devise strategies and actions for supporting and developing volunteering for the longer term. During 2001, much of the detailed work of National Committee was carried out at sub-committee level

- **Grants Subcommittee**

The Committee was established to draw up the criteria for a grant scheme to mark IYV 2001. €444,000 of the €1,270,000 budget allocated to the National Committee was set aside by the Committee for the grant scheme which was advertised in March 2001. Over eighty community and voluntary groups throughout the country were awarded grants in 2001

- **IYV 2001 Implementation Subcommittee**

The Committee was established to draw up an Action Plan for IYV 2001. The committee focused primarily on organising events to celebrate volunteering and its contribution to society

- **Awareness and Support Subcommittee**

The Committee was established to develop awareness of the role which volunteers play in Irish society, to look at measures to widen the pool of volunteers and to look at the range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering

- **Accreditation Subcommittee**

Committee established to examine issues of training and accreditation for volunteers.

The National Committee will report to Government at the end of 2002.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their mainstream business practices. In July 2001, the European Commission published a Green Paper on CSR, opening a wide debate and raising awareness in relation to CSR. The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs co-ordinated the Irish response to the Green Paper at Government level and will continue to participate in the follow-up to the Green Paper.

The Foundation for Investing in Communities was established in November 1998 in response to a challenge from the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs to provide increased recognition for businesses who are making Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) an essential part of their business practice. The work of the Foundation is carried out by two separate companies – Business in the Community (BITC) and The Community Foundation for Ireland.

Through Business in the Community (BITC), the Foundation encourages and supports Irish businesses to place corporate social responsibility and community involvement in the mainstream of their business practice.

A unique feature of the Foundation is the building of an Endowment Fund to help disadvantaged groups/communities with a particular focus on children's needs. This fund is being raised through The Community Foundation for Ireland who also act as grant-makers. To date, over €440,000 has been allocated to different groups since the establishment of the Foundation in November 1998.

Social Capital

Social Capital denotes people working together for common purposes. In March 2001, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, as part of its direct contribution to the International Year of Volunteers, organised a one-day seminar on the topic 'The Importance of Social Capital'. A number of prominent international and Irish experts were guest speakers at the seminar.

Dormant Accounts Act, 2001

The Dormant Accounts Act, 2001 was passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in July 2001. The purpose of the Act is to reunite account holders with their dormant funds in credit institutions and to provide for a scheme to disburse unclaimed monies for projects and programmes designed to alleviate poverty and social deprivation. The scheme will also be applied to programmes to assist people with a disability or primary school students with learning difficulties.

If the owners of accounts which have been dormant for 15 years or more, as at 31 March, 2002, do not come forward by the end of March 2003 to reclaim their monies, the balances in the accounts will be transferred to a "Dormant Accounts Fund". This fund will be established and managed by the National Treasury Management Agency. The transfer of monies will take place on the basis that the beneficial owners will have a guaranteed right of reclaim to their property at any point in the future.

The Fund will be managed by the Agency for two purposes:

- to meet claims for refunds from owners and
- to make payments under a scheme of disbursement.

The Minister for Social, Community & Family Affairs will appoint the members of the 'Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursement Board', whose remit will be to oversee a scheme for disbursement of surplus dormant funds for community and societal benefit, from April 2003.

Community Development

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' schemes and programmes of support for community development focus on investment in capacity building, so that socially excluded groups and local communities can be active participants in identifying and meeting their own development needs, working alongside the other social partners.

The support provided by the Department through the Voluntary and Community Services Section ranges from small, once-off grants to three-year renewable funding.

Voluntary & Community Services – Annual Grant Schemes

Voluntary and Community Services once-off grant schemes provide support to a wide range of locally-based groups involved in anti-poverty work in their communities.

The Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations provides grants for renovation or acquisition of premises, the purchase of equipment, once-off publications or research or other special projects. The Community Development Education and Training Grants Scheme provides funding for training and education initiatives aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of local community and voluntary groups. The Scheme of Grants for Locally-Based Community and Family Support Groups provides funding to groups involved in programmes of self-help and personal development designed to tackle poverty and disadvantage and improve family life.

The total allocation for 2001 under the VCS Annual grants schemes was €2,774,377 (£2,185,000) and the allocation for 2002 is at the same level. This is divided on a regional basis in accordance with population profile.

Community Development Support Programmes

Under the Community Development Support Programmes support is provided on a three-year renewable contract basis to locally-based groups involved in identifying and addressing poverty and social exclusion in their own communities. The Community Development Support Programmes include the:

- Community Development Programme
- Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme
- Programme of Core-funding to Locally-based Community & Family Support Groups.

These programmes focus on investment in capacity building, so that socially excluded groups and local communities can be active participants in identifying and meeting their own development needs, working alongside the other social partners.

Under the Community Development Programme some 130 projects/areas countrywide are in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion in the programme. Expansion of the programme continued in 2001 in line with commitments set out in Partnership 2000. Some 80 projects/areas countrywide were in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion under the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme at the end of 2001 with expansion of the programme continuing in line with the recommendations of the Commission on the Family. Some 50 projects/areas countrywide were in receipt of funding or have been approved for inclusion in the Programme of Core-funding to Locally-based Community & Family Support Groups at the end of 2001.

These programmes are now administered under the Community Development and Family Support Measure of the National Development Plan 2000-2006. Funding of €139.7 (£110) million has been made available to these programmes over the lifetime of the plan with funding of €21.61 (£17.02) million allocated in 2001 and €27.647 (£21.77) million in 2002 to support these programmes.

Responsibility for projects being supported by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs under the Family & Community Services Resource Centre Programme will transfer to the new Family Support Agency when it is established.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) operates nationwide through 50 local projects. Two additional projects were approved for inclusion in the Programme in 2001 and are expected to come on stream in 2002. The service is designed to target families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and moneylending. Each local project is an independent information and service provider. Management Committees are drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups and often include Credit Union representatives. An evaluation of the Programme commenced in 1998 with the second and third phase being completed in 2000. The recommendations of the evaluation were considered and endorsed by the MABS National Advisory Committee and are under consideration by the Department. Phase four of the evaluation, which will commence in early 2002, will pull together the various strands of the process and reach final conclusions.

Work which commenced in 2000 on the drafting of legislation to give effect to the decision to put MABS on a statutory basis continued in 2001.

The Budget allocation for MABS for 2001 was €8.465 (£6.667) million and for 2002 is €9.702 (£7.64) million.

Scheme of Community Support for Older People

The purpose of the Scheme of Community Support for Older People is to improve the security and social support of vulnerable older people. This funding is provided by way of grant aid to voluntary groups and organisations who have undertaken to identify those elderly people in need of assistance under the Scheme.

€32.38 (£25.5) million has been allocated to this scheme since 1996 which allowed some 89,136 individuals up to the end of 2001 to receive assistance under the scheme. An allocation of €4.444 (£3.5) million has been made to the scheme for 2002.



chapter 4

Developing Service Delivery



chapter 4
Annual Report

chapter 4

Developing Service Delivery

The Department provides services to many categories of people (unemployed, older people, the sick, people with disabilities and carers) and to families and communities in general.

The Customer Service Programme is designed to:

- further promote and develop a strong customer service culture throughout the Department and the agencies under its aegis
- ensure that the service is provided in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner
- promote an integrated approach to the delivery of service while providing reasonable choice in the methods of service delivery
- equip staff with the skills, information and supports to fulfil customer service objectives
- develop measurable customer service quality standards
- further develop participative structures where customers and staff can express opinions and give feedback on the services delivered
- take a proactive approach to the provision of quality information and advice and ensure ease of access
- provide review mechanisms where customers are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Service Delivery Model

Good progress was made during 2001 on the service delivery model (SDM) project which was approved by Government in 2000. The project aims to modernise the way in which the Department delivers services to its customers. This modern service delivery model will be underpinned by new computer systems which can take advantage of other modernisation initiatives such as the Civil Registration System and the Reach Public Service Broker.

The first scheme to avail of the new SDM is Child Benefit. Work began in February 2001 on design and development of the new system with a view to replacement of the current Child Benefit system in 2002. A parallel programme of organisational change in Child Benefit section was also commenced. The target date for implementation of the new system and work processes is July 2002.

Close contact was maintained during 2001 with the projects underway in Reach and the General Register Office. Procedures and technical interfaces to be finalised so that Child Benefit Section can access birth certificates electronically in support of CB claims.

Phase 2 of SDM will cover Old Age Contributory Pension, Retirement Pension, Free Schemes and Bereavement Grant.

Euro

The change-over to euro notes and coins on 1 January 2002 impacted extensively on DSCFA, with significant changes needed to business procedures and IT systems. Comprehensive training and public awareness measures were also required to ensure that both staff and customers received appropriate information in a timely manner about the social welfare aspects of the change-over.

A major project, among the most wide-ranging ever undertaken by the Department, was established to put the necessary preparations in place. Payment systems were appropriately amended and all necessary legislative, training and public awareness measures were implemented in a timely manner. A smooth change-over was achieved, payment continuity was maintained in full and all payments due to the Department's customers on their first pay-day in January were made on time in the new currency.

Delivery of Budget Increases

Budget 2002 social welfare weekly rate increases were effective from January 2002.

The increased rates, which were announced in the Budget on 5 December 2001, required payment systems to be amended over a short period of time to ensure increases were delivered to customers at the earliest feasible date. In the case of customers whose payments are issued on a weekly basis – those receiving short-term benefits – the increased rates were paid on time from the beginning of January 2002.

In the case of customers whose payments are made by means of books of payable orders – mainly those receiving long-term benefits – the increase for the weeks before the start of the new books in February and March was paid separately in mid-February in all cases. This was the earliest date from which it was administratively possible to make this payment to these customers. Similarly, Child Benefit increases from April 2002 were paid in May.

LoCall

A LoCall service provides customers ringing from anywhere in the country with phone access at local call rates. The Department has operated a LoCall service (1890 400 400) in the Child and Treatment Benefits Office in Letterkenny since July 2000. The Office receives over 500,000 calls per year. In November 2001 a LoCall service (1890 74 74 34) was introduced for customers of the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The Office receives approximately 50,000 calls per year.

LoCall is a key component of the Department's evolving service delivery infrastructure. LoCall services for other areas of the Department are in preparation.

Information

The Department's policy on information is to provide up to date, accurate and comprehensive information through a variety of methods.

All developments and improvements in social welfare services were widely advertised by Information Section using an appropriate mix of media at local and national level.

Information Strategy

As part of the preparation of a new Information Services Strategy for the Department, staff and management in the various regions and scheme sections were consulted to:

- (1) elicit information from information officers and other relevant staff about the problems encountered by them in delivering an information service to the public and
- (2) obtain ideas as to how information services to customers of the Department could be improved.

The findings from these meetings will help to determine future information policy within the framework of an information strategy.



Media Campaigns

Two major information campaigns were undertaken in 2001. To ensure a smooth change-over to Euro, a campaign was launched in the National Press, Radio and TV. The main message of this campaign to our customers was "You won't lose out, when the Euro comes in". A Euro Freephone was also put in place.

A media campaign was also undertaken to inform our customers of the 2002 budget increases and particularly the arrangements for payment.

Exhibitions, Talks and Seminars

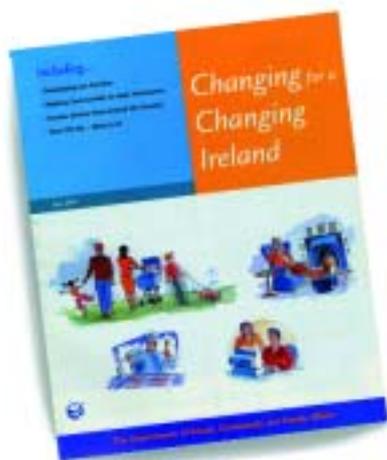
Staff participated in exhibitions, presentations, seminars, and conferences on an on-going basis during the year.

Presentations to various advice workers in the UK re the pre-53 pension were organised and facilitated. Workshops were also chaired on best practice for exchange of information between this Department and the Federation of Irish Societies in the UK.

Welfare Awareness Week

Welfare Awareness Week was designated as the week from 18th June to 23rd June 2001 and was launched by the Minister on the 18th June in Kilkenny.

A magazine "Changing for a Changing Ireland" outlining all the Departments functions with particular emphasis on its changing role was issued to all households in Ireland. The theme of the mailshot was showing how the Department interacts with families from "cradle to grave".



In addition to the household maildrop, PRSI Mailshots were issued to all employers later in the year.

Training and Seminars

Media skills training was organised for HQ and regional staff to better equip them for participation on Local Radio.

Two seminars were also hosted for Information Officers and for other relevant information staff.



Customer Action Plan

A new Customer Action Plan 2001-2004 was published in May 2001. It builds on the substantial progress already made and details how we will give effect to the new Principles of Quality Customer Service over the next 3 years.

During 2001 monitoring of the progress on the implementation of the plan continued with monthly reports on the customer service business actions in the Social Welfare Services and Aireacht Business Plans.

Customer Consultation

Customer Consultation and feedback mechanisms which involve day-to-day contacts, surveys, panels and comment cards have been an integral part of our business in recent years.

2001 saw the continued use of customer panels.

The following tables give details of the customer consultation activity which took place during 2001, including the type of customers involved and the location:

Customer Surveys

Type	Area	Date
Disability Benefit	Dublin	Autumn 2001
Disability Allowance	Longford	Autumn 2001
Unemployed	Donegal	April 2001
Unemployed	Newbridge	September 2001

Two "touchscreen surveys" were carried out in 2001 in Donegal and Newbridge. The use of touchscreen surveys using touchscreen technology is a fast, efficient, cost effective and customer friendly method of carrying out surveys with the results available minutes after the completion of the survey.

Customer Panels

Type	Area	Date
RP/OACP Pensions	Limerick	Jan 2001 Feb 2001 May 2001 Nov 2001
Widows/Widowers	Tullamore	Dec 2001
Unemployed	Cobh Limerick	Dec 2001 Feb 2001 Nov 2001
Disabilities/Carers	Dundalk	Sept 2001 Dec 2001

A total of 10 panel meetings were held countrywide in 2001.

Employer panels were carried out using e-mail on a bimonthly basis.

Customer Service Comments and Complaints

The Quality Customer Service Principles include a commitment to operate a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided. While the Department has always handled customer complaints it is now intended to introduce a customer service comments and complaints system on a formal basis and to publicise the availability of this system to our customers.

The introduction of a customer service comments and complaints system on a formal basis will:

- provide the necessary information to highlight what our strengths and weaknesses are regarding the service we deliver – saving time and resources in the long term
- ensure consistency in how complaints and comments are handled across the organisation
- inform customers of exactly how their complaints will be dealt with and how soon they can expect to hear from us if follow up is necessary etc.
- be publicised through the use of a customer service video, posters and information leaflets
- provide staff with guidance and support in dealing with the procedure will be fully operational by May 2002.

Independent Customer Survey

The Department commissioned an independent survey into customer satisfaction levels. The Market Research Bureau of Ireland (MRBI) were employed to carry out the survey. The objectives of the 2001 survey were to measure the reaction of our customers to the services provided to them, to identify specific areas in which improvements were required and to assess reaction to new methods of payment.

The 2001 survey was based on a sample of 997 respondents of the four main categories of Social Welfare recipient groups:

- Unemployed
- Old Age Pensions
- Survivors/Lone Parent
- Ill/Incapacitated.

The survey focused on:

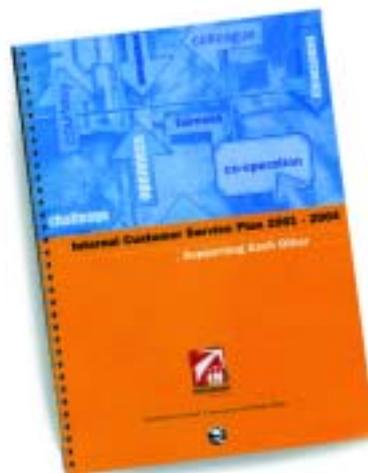
- initial contact re claim
- payment
- information
- facilities and staff.

The research findings of the 2001 survey show that overall satisfaction levels with the service remain high. In particular, the survey shows that there is recognition of improvements in public office accommodation, our Information Service and payment methods (see summary of MRBI National Survey findings in Appendix VII).

Internal Customer Service

The Civil Service Modernisation Programme has emphasised the importance of internal customer service in ensuring that a high quality service is delivered to external customers. The need for improved internal customer service has also been a feature of staff feedback in this Department. Therefore, it was decided, via Partnership, that an Internal Customer Service Plan for the period 2001-2004 would be prepared based on the QCS Principle of the Internal Customer.

The Plan entitled "Supporting Each Other" was launched in December 2001. Among the issues addressed in the Plan are improved departmental communications, a programme of staff consultation on services provided, new and improved computer systems and training and awareness raising initiatives emphasising the importance of internal customer service.



The Plan, accompanied by a calendar and posters entitled "Our Commitments to Each Other", was distributed across the Department.

The Plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis via the Partnership process and progress will be reported to all staff on a regular basis.

Customer Service Training

The delivery of a comprehensive three-module Customer Service Training Programme for staff from headquarter offices who deal with the public, continued during 2001. The overall objective of the programme is "to apply the principles of excellent customer service to all points of contact with both internal and external customers".

This training programme is being revised to ensure that it reflects the needs of both staff and customers and is up to date with the latest developments in customer service. It is intended that the revised programme will be available, during 2002, to staff who deal with the public.

Irish Service

Seirbhís as Gaeilge

Ionus go mbeidh seirbhís cáilíochta trí Gaeilge ar fáil do custaiméirí na Roinne amach anseo, fhreastail baill foirne d'oifigi áitiúla ar cúrsaí traenála Gaeilge i mBaile Atha Cliath agus Gaillimh. Sainchúrsaí piolóta iad a d'eagraigh Forbairt Corporáideach agus Aonad Forbairt Foirne i dteangmháil le lucht foirne oifigi áitiúla. Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh agus Gaeleagras i mBaile Atha Cliath a chuir an traenáil – seacht lá go hiomlán – ar fáil. Bhain na mball foirne go léir ann tairbthe as na gcúrsaí. Leanfaigh an traenáil ar aghaidh i mbliana.

Equality and Diversity

One of the major challenges in the field of Quality Customer Service is the development of strategies for serving a diverse customer base and meeting the provisions of equality legislation. Equality, with its focus on fair treatment, its objective to secure fair outcomes for all and its emphasis on accommodating diversity is an essential basis for quality service. In our Customer Action Plan 2001-2004 we state that “we are committed to serving all our customers in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner”.

Staff Training and Awareness Raising

Awareness raising on anti-discrimination issues was initially delivered as part of our Customer Service Training Programme which has been delivered to approximately 2,600 staff that deal with the public. Due to the increasing diversity of our customer base over the last number of years it was recognised that more detailed training on anti-discrimination issues needed to be developed. A two-modular course was jointly designed by the Department, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, and the Travellers Visibility Group. It is intended to deliver this training to other staff in 2002. It is recognised that the content of the training meets the needs of both staff and customers and must be up to date with developments in this complex and evolving area.

Staff Supports

Guidelines to support staff dealing with non-national customers are in preparation. These guidelines include the following elements:

- an overview of the relevant legislation and DSCFA and civil service wide initiatives
- definitions of commonly used terms in this area
- an overview of the asylum seeking process
- information on policy developments including resettlement and direct provision
- an overview of entitlements of non-nationals to the services provided by the Department and other state agencies
- a section on best practice in interviewing the customer, addressing both the customer service and control aspects.

The provision of translation and interpretation services is also being examined. Work continued during the year on reviewing needs in this area. Two initiatives commenced in late 2001. The first involves staff in the Cork area being trained to provide translation services in French and Spanish. The second is a telephone based interpretation service which is being piloted in a number of Local Offices.

Research

During the year the Department contributed to a research project examining the equality/diversity aspects of Quality Customer Service. The research was commissioned by the SMI QCS Working Group.

Accommodation and Access

Local Offices

The Department, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW) made further significant progress in 2001 with the programme of upgrading existing local office accommodation paying particular attention to the issues of access and privacy.

- New local offices were opened at Blanchardstown and Caherciveen
- Work continued at local offices already under construction at Bishop Square, Dublin, Dundalk and Listowel

- During 2001 construction work commenced on new local offices at Northside Civic Centre in Coolock, Dungloe and Navan while major renovations began at Arklow and Longford
- Plans are under consideration for new offices in Dublin's north inner city, Bray and Castlebar
- Major repairs were carried out to Kilbarrack and Newbridge offices
- Refurbishment was carried out at Ballyfermot and Ballymun local offices under the OPW "Disabled Access Programme". Those offices are now fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Headquarters Buildings

2001 saw a substantial demand for accommodation. New sections were created at Pensions Services Office (PSO), Planning, Data Cleanup and Service Delivery Model. The rollout of the Performance Management & Development System also created a demand for additional accommodation.

- New and additional accommodation was provided for the PSO at the Waterfront Building, Sligo
- New accommodation was provided at Finglas Local Office for the transfer of the Maintenance Recovery Unit from the PSO
- 64 staff were relocated to other offices in Dublin from Clare House
- Goldsmith House in Dublin, was vacated in advance of refurbishment and occupants were transferred to newly refurbished accommodation at Shelbourne House
- Further additional accommodation was secured at 2/3 Parnell Square, Dublin, and following fit-out, building is scheduled for occupation in early 2002
- Construction phase of decentralised offices at Dundalk was completed
- Planning permission was granted for major renovations at Con Colbert House, Dublin
- Information Technology Facilities back-up site was re-located to Gandon House, Dublin.

Health and Safety

2001 was another busy year for the Health and Safety Unit which provides advice on all matters relating to Health and Safety.

- Health and Safety (H&S) training courses for managers in HQ buildings commenced in 2001 – 40 managers attended
- Manual handling training courses were provided for 48 staff
- H&S audits were carried out in 12 offices during 2001
- Over 400 VDU eye tests were arranged during 2001.

Report from sub-committee on violence in the workplace reported back to the H&S committee with recommendations.

Following discovery of asbestos in two HQ buildings, a firm of Environmental Consultants examined the remainder of HQ buildings in Dublin to determine if asbestos was present.

A Medical Consultant gave talks to staff from buildings concerned and to staff from IT area. Medical checks were provided on request.

Further surveys were conducted in Clare House, Dublin in an effort to determine when exactly the asbestos was disturbed.

The Office of Public Works was requested to examine the remainder of the Department's buildings, countrywide, as soon as possible.

A meeting was held with the Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Finance to discuss how any staff concerns arising from any future discoveries of asbestos might be best addressed.

Disability Services

Disability Allowance Customer Survey [Quality Service Standards & Consultation and Evaluation]

A survey of 1,000 Disability Allowance customers was completed.

The main findings were:

- 80% of respondents were either very satisfied/satisfied that their claim was dealt with very quickly
- 90% of respondents were either very satisfied/satisfied in the manner in which they had been dealt with
- 93% of respondents were either very satisfied/satisfied that the staff they had dealt with were polite, helpful, willing to listen, knowledgeable, easy to understand.

Disability Customer Panels

Meetings of the Customer Panel of people with disabilities were held on two occasions in 2001, at which recipients of Carers Allowance, Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance provided their view on the services delivered.

Disability Consultative Forum

A Forum of the principal organisations representing people with disabilities and service providers was established by this Department in 1996. The Consultative Forum, which is chaired by the Department, has continued in operation, meeting on a quarterly basis and has since been broadened to address issues concerning Invalidity Pension and Carers Allowance schemes.

Employment Support Conference for People with Disability

A conference on the range of employment and training supports available to persons with Disabilities was launched by the Minister on 15 June 2001. All agencies who have a role in the provision of income support, training and employment services attended and provided presentations regarding the services and policy developments for people with disabilities.

Pension Services Office

Free Schemes

As announced in the Budget in December, 2000, the various Free Schemes were extended to all persons aged 70 and over regardless of income or household composition with effect from May, 2001. A simple one page application form and short explanatory booklet was designed specially for this project.

By the end of 2001 75,207 out of an estimated 80,000 potential claims (from approximately 40,000 people) had been received and 72,993 had been processed.

With an average of 840 new claims per week being received to date in 2002, the project is expected to last until end February when work will commence on the implementation of the new Household Benefits Package effective from May, 2002 and other smaller projects announced in Budget 2002.

Pre 53 Pension

The Pre 53 Pension Scheme is a special half-rate Old Age Contributory Pension for persons who made social insurance contributions prior to 1953. While it was estimated originally that approximately 3,000 people would gain from the scheme, over 16,000 have benefited to date. By the end of 2001 some 23,000 people had applied for this pension leading to an award rate of approximately 65% on decided claims.

General Benefits Branch

The Branch provides benefits under the Disability Benefit, Injury Benefit and Medical Care Schemes.

Disability Benefit

Disability Benefit is mainly a short-term illness scheme for people with sufficient PRSI qualifying contributions paid while in employment.

Service was provided to over 250,000 new customers in 2001.

Some 50,500 payments were maintained weekly and over 35,000 intermediate medical certificates processed every week. Approx. half the latter were processed at Local Offices throughout the country. The facility to process first medical certificates was re-introduced into a number of Local Offices during the year and it is hoped to extend this to more offices in time.

While the average duration of claims is six to eight weeks there are also a number of long term customers receiving Disability Benefit.

Expenditure for the year was €334m.

Back to Work and Disability Benefit

A number of Long-term Disability Benefit customers were given an opportunity in 2001 to take part in the the Back to Work Scheme. Provision in Budget 2002 will allow more customers to avail of this work opportunity while retaining part, or in the case of self-employment, all benefit for a specified period.

Control of the Scheme

The Disability/Injury Benefit schemes are controlled mainly by the Medical Referral and Assessment System. Over 40,000 Medical Assessments were set up in 2001.

Customer Survey

A Customer Survey of 1,000 customers was undertaken in the third quarter of the year and the response showed a high level of satisfaction with the service being provided.

Control

The Department's control policy aims to keep fraud and abuse to a minimum, by promoting control as an essential element of the day-to-day work of the Department. To meet this objective the Department's approach to control aims at preventing fraud and abuse, detecting incorrect payments at the earliest possible stage and ensuring maximum deterrence. The importance of keeping the approach up to date is recognised, and work on a new control strategy for the Department, which began in 2000, continued through 2001.

During 2001 the Department continued efforts to raise public awareness of activities to prevent fraud and the incentives available to secure legitimate work as an alternative to being involved in the hidden economy were highlighted.

Continuing developments in the Department's computer systems have facilitated a more co-ordinated, focused and effective approach to control, allowing for data from a variety of sources to be cross-matched and thereby used to highlight cases of abuse.

The Department continued to develop the level of co-operation with other agencies in tackling fraud, and, in particular, the liaison and flow of data between the Department and other appropriate Government Departments.

Considerable effort continues to be put into improving the effectiveness of debt recovery measures and pursuit of defaulters. Civil proceedings have been initiated in some cases to recover outstanding overpayments including PRSI arrears due from employers. Work is continuing on the design of a comprehensive computer system to handle overpayments and debt recovery across all schemes.

The Department strives to promote control awareness internally among staff, particularly those involved in processing and payment of claims. As part of the control awareness programme, a module on control awareness is included in various internal training programmes.

Outcomes

Gross savings from the control activities on scheme payments amounted to £200m in 2001 (see chart). In addition, inspections of employer records identified arrears of PAYE/PRSI amounting to £11.8m. Some 325,000 claims were reviewed. In 2001, 154 cases of fraud were passed to the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) for prosecution. 199 cases were finalised in 2000. Of these, 175 were convicted with a variety of penalties imposed.

Savings

Unemployment	£96.28m
Illness	£36.70m
Pensions	£60.24m
Child Benefit	£4.42m
Carers	£1.53m
PAYE/PRSI	£11.80m
Others	£0.75m

Regional Director's Office

Registration of Disability Benefit & Occupational Injury Benefit Claims Locally

The facility allowing the registration of doctors certificates received locally from customers claiming either Disability Benefit or Occupational Injury Benefit was localised to 38 Local Offices of the Department from 1 October 2001. Local Office staff were trained and appropriate equipment was also provided to facilitate this enhanced customer service. In the three month period to end December, 2001, some 11,000 doctor certificate registrations have been processed locally.

Notification of Unemployment Benefit via the Internet

The Government mandated all Departments to prioritise the development and provision of selected electronic services for customers as specified in the e-Europe Benchmarking Framework.

The Unemployment Benefit scheme, administered by the Department, is one of the services to customers selected for benchmarking. To facilitate access, the Department introduced an online Internet facility to allow customers begin the procedure to obtain Unemployment Benefit from October, 2001. This facility allows customers, who are or are about to be unemployed, to access and complete an online notification via the Department's website. A receipt to the customer advising him/her that the nearest Local Office will be in touch to make arrangements for a formal scheme application issues immediately on effecting a valid Internet notification. To end of December, 2001, some 176 customers had availed of this service.

Foot and Mouth Task Force

In the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in March 2001, the Minister established an Inter-Departmental/Agency Task Force for the purpose of reviewing the response needed in the area of social welfare and related services in County Louth. The Task Force brought together representatives from all the relevant agencies. The Report of the Task Force was published in April 2001.

A local implementation committee chaired by the Louth County Manager was set up to monitor and follow up the Task Force recommendations.

Freedom of Information

The Department received in excess of 553 FOI requests during 2001. The majority of these (87%) were from members of the public for personal records including 29 requests from staff members for personnel records. The remainder, were for non-personal records.

The vast majority of processed requests (90%) were granted in whole or in part.

Client Identity Services

Client Identity Services was set up in 1999 to focus attention on the identity data on the Department's database, the Central Records System and to work with REACH, the agency set up to progress the development of integrated State Services.

Personal Public Services Number

Client Identity Services is responsible for the issue, management and control of the Personal Public Service Number (PPS Number). This is the individual's unique identifier and forms the basis for the integration of public services. During 2001, Client Identity Services continued to tighten up on the control measures surrounding the PPS No. and introduced a quality assurance process. This process, and the ongoing cleanup of data, has served to greatly improve the quality of data on the Central Records System.

Regional Managers/Locations



Denis Galvin
MIDLAND REGION
(LONGFORD)



Oliver Nixon
NORTH EASTERN
(DUNDALK)



Christy McDonagh
NORTH WESTERN
(SLIGO)



Barry Kennedy
WESTERN REGION
(GALWAY)



John Glennon
DUBLIN NORTH



Jim O'Connor
MID WESTERN
(LIMERICK)



John Melia
DUBLIN SOUTH



Maureen Waldron
DUBLIN WEST



Gerry Maher
SOUTH EASTERN
(WATERFORD)



Bríd Leonard
SOUTHERN REGION
(CORK)

Broader use of the PPS Number

Legislation introduced in the Social Welfare Act, 2000 allows Client Identity Services to provide PPS Numbers to customers of agencies permitted to use the number. In line with this, Client Identity Services has matched data and supplied validated PPS No's for the General Medical Services Board (900,000) and the Department of Education and Science (260,000). It is envisaged that a similar service will be supplied in 2002 for the many other Public Services who have requested this having adopted the PPS No. within the past year.

Data Protection

During 2001, Client Identity Services continued its strategy of highlighting public awareness of data protection.

Data Protection information leaflets were distributed to all staff in the Department and the Infosys system was enhanced by the addition of an entry screen which requires staff who enter the system to acknowledge that they undertake to safeguard personal data. This development was supported by a circular to all Departmental staff.

In the latter stages of 2001, Client Identity Services contracted consultants to carry out a review of the Department's Information Security Architecture with a view to identifying areas which need improvement and the best options available to develop a more secure upgraded information system.

Web Site Developments

A re-design of the Department's web site was implemented in quarter 4, 2001. The main objectives of the re-design was to deliver a solution which would enable the Department to exploit the potential of the web in the delivery of service to our customers.

The re-design team involved representatives of customer panels in the design of the new site in an effort to provide a more customer centric interface to the services provided through the web site. The solution also included a content management facility which will provide content contributors with access to maintain the site content. This functionality will ensure that the information on the site is complete and up to date at all times.

The site provides information on all the services provided by the Department together with links to related supports provided by other agencies/ organisations. In addition to the facility to download application forms, the site also provides an online facility to notify the Department of unemployment and request application for child benefit.

It is planned to provide all content contributors with access to the site through 2002, to extend the level of online services, to provide an increased level of service through Irish and to make provision for the sharing of information with other government sites.

The Department's web site received the highest score among the Social Security sites in the 15 EU member states in an eEUROPE benchmarking exercise carried out in October 2001. This exercise evaluated the percentage of basic public services available online. The objectives of this benchmark was to enable member states to compare performance, and to identify best practices in order to stimulate progress in the field of eGovernment.

Service Delivery Support, IS Division

Service Delivery Support seeks to meet the broader aims of the Department within the context of the broader objectives of the ISD, namely:

- to provide secure, reliable and robust ICT systems to the Department in support of its current policy, service delivery and administrative objectives
- to provide external services in support of the Department's participation in eGovernment programmes
- to develop new ICT capabilities in line with the Department's strategic directions.

Provide Secure, Reliable and Robust ICT systems

In association with its business counterparts, SDS provides support for the maintenance and development of a number of key applications that support services based around client identity and client eligibility data. These main applications are Central Records System (CRS), Client Maintenance System (CMS), ERIN, INFOSYS and self-employed system.

The work of the division during the year included investigating systems difficulties reported by users, as well as carrying out longer-term development work so as to extend and improve the functionality of the system in line with user requests. Furthermore, applications were made EURO-compliant and amended and tested to cater for the alignment of the tax and calendar years.

External Services

The Department's Central Records System is one of the biggest public sector customer databases in the country and is expected to play a key role in relation to the development of eGovernment services. A considerable amount of development work was taken up in meeting the department's objectives and obligations in the eGovernment arena. This extended from a number of data matching exercises with other departments and agencies, liaising with the REACH project in developing an authentication service which is a key component in a soon to be established Reach Services Portal. It also included liaising with the GRO project to obtain birth data (to be followed by death and marriage data), which can be used to improve the delivery of the Department's services.

REACH Initiative

In 2001, the REACH Agency concentrated its efforts on the definition and specification of the Public Services Broker. This is in line with REACH's mission to specify and establish the Broker as a 'single multi-channel gateway to government' and to 'develop a framework for the integration of public services'. Also in 2001, REACH obtained approval from Government to proceed with the drafting of legislation, which would underpin the operation of the Public Services Broker.

Proof of Concept

REACH tested aspects of the emerging definition in a proof of concept model developed during the year. The proof of concept added significantly to greater knowledge and understanding of the efficacy of various options available to the project.

Along with the development of the proof of concept model, REACH invested significantly in the development of the architecture of the Broker and this has contributed greatly to the key 'specification of requirements' document which will issue as part of the procurement exercise planned for early in 2002.

reachservices.ie

Towards the end of the year, REACH agreed and helped develop a working model of the Broker with the Local Government and Computer Services Board. Known as 'reachservices.ie' the facility is to go live early in 2002 and will provide on an interim basis, some of the services and functionality envisaged by the Broker.

Donegal Project

In accordance with its remit in the area of service integration, REACH embarked on a joint project in County Donegal in which many aspects of service integration (in the form of 'one-stop shops') and the operation of the Public Services Broker are to be examined in a working environment. The focus is to evaluate the Broker and get customer feedback by piloting the Broker and associated services, processes and procedures at one of the Donegal One Stop Shops.

Communications

REACH initiated and significantly progressed a communications approach and strategy which will support the roll out of the Public Services Broker in 2002 and beyond and which is directed at the internal public service audience as well as the general public.

Civil Registration Service Modernisation Programme

The General Register Office (GRO) is responsible for the administration of the Civil Registration Service in Ireland and operates under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children (DH&C). The day to day service is delivered by the Health Boards (HBs) on an agency basis for the GRO.

In July 1999 the Government agreed a programme for the modernisation of the Civil Registration Service. This is a joint programme of work between the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (DSCFA) and the Department of Health and Children (DH&C).

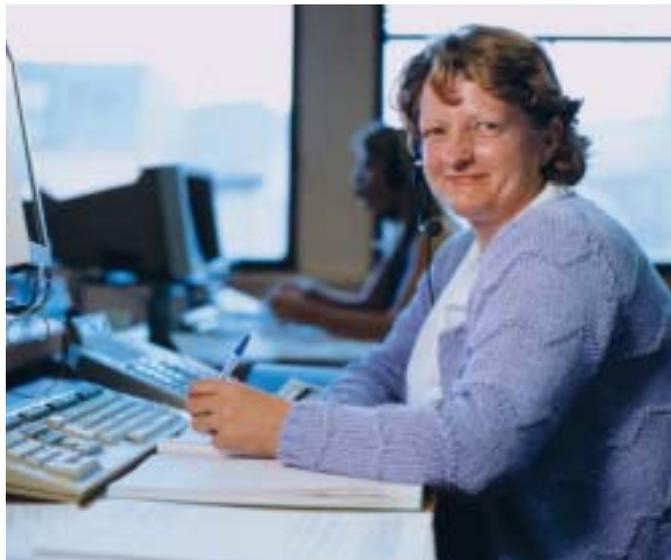
The modernisation of the Civil Registration Service has four distinct elements:

- reform of the legislation
- design and development of a new organisation structure and business processes
- introduction of modern technology and
- the capture, in electronic format, of historical records.

The modernisation programme is led by a full-time Programme Director who reports to a Steering Committee comprising senior representatives from the Departments of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Health and Children, Finance, Environment and Local Government, Central Statistics Office and General Register Office.

The main developments during the year 2001 were as follows:

- The Draft Heads of a new Civil Registration Service Bill, were approved by Government
- Consultants were engaged for Programme Management Support and for the Technology and Organisation Projects. Work commenced 1st March 2001
- A consultation/communication framework was developed to ensure that the views of all parties – Government Departments/Agencies, citizens, users and providers of the service – with an interest in the Civil Registration Service are considered during the course of the Modernisation Programme. A document setting out the context and the proposed approach to registration and related services was published on 1st May 2001, inviting stakeholders to submit their views and opinions. A total of 171 responses were received.





chapter 5

Human Resources “Releasing the Potential Staff Numbers”



chapter 5
Annual Report

chapter 5

Human Resources “Releasing the Potential Staff Numbers”

The Department employs over 4,700 staff and the salary costs in 2001 were €132m.

The high turnover of staff experienced in recent years continued in 2001. 526 employees joined the Department of whom about 340, including 295 Clerical Officers, were new recruits into the Civil Service. 280 staff were promoted of which 111 came from inter-departmental competitions, some of whom would have been existing employees. 460 employees left the Department during 2001, including 113 who transferred out on promotion to other Departments and 223 who transferred in their existing grade.

100 staff resigned their positions during the year and 8 staff retired.

Career Opportunities

During 2001, there were 42 Civil Service Competitions administered by Personnel Branch, in addition to running 18 competitions for internal promotions. Approximately 25 schemes which provided opportunities for career advancement and development were processed during 2001, including the Anglo/Irish Exchange Scheme and Research Fellowship in Trinity College.

Family Friendly Measures

The Department continues to positively support more flexible attendance arrangements. To this end, the Term Time Summer Leave Scheme was made available to all staff in summer 2001. On this occasion, 316 employees (20 male and 296 female) availed of the option, with only 13 applications having to be refused for business reasons.

The recruitment of temporary staff is a key issue in making the Term Time Summer Leave Scheme available to as many employees as possible. In Summer 2001, temporary recruits for Dublin offices were selected by the Civil Service Commission, while in the case of provincial locations recruitment of temporary staff was dealt with by local managers. A mix of options were used and in many cases recruitment was done jointly with other Departments in the locality.

The pro-rata salary arrangements whereby staff can spread the cost of the Term Time Summer Leave over the full year is an important feature of the scheme and has made it more attractive to staff. This option had to be limited to 9 months in 2001 because of the change in the financial year from April to January.

The change in the financial year has also meant that, in order to continue to provide the pro-rata salary option, the Term Time Scheme has to be announced and contracts signed in the October/November period so that pro-rata reduction can commence in January for Term Time during the summer.

In addition to Term Time, almost 700 employees were working on a job sharing basis at the end of the year. About 350 employees availed of Parental Leave, 148 took Maternity Leave, 53 availed of the option of extended Maternity Leave and 62 employees took Career Breaks, over 50% of which were for family reasons.

Decentralisation

Following Department of Finance approval in 1998 some 90 of the Department's staff were scheduled to be relocated under the Government decentralisation scheme to new Government Offices in Dundalk. The Department's Accounts Branch was selected for the relocation which is the fifth phase for this Department, as already over 1000 staff are located in 4 headquarters offices outside of Dublin.

The plan involved the rehousing of staff of the existing Social Welfare Local office at Barrack Street and also those of Regional Management Office at Wilton House including investigative staff. The new offices will also accommodate Revenue, Justice and Agriculture.

The project involved the complete re-staffing of Accounts Branch with civil servants who wished to be located in Dundalk and the simultaneous reassignment within the Department of Accounts Branch staff who did not wish to move, all to be completed well in advance of the scheduled date for the move – June 1, 2002.

The procedure involved firstly an internal canvass for volunteers in all grades, followed by a civil service-wide trawl to make up the shortfall. All the main promotions were over-subscribed. However, the main shortfall was at Clerical Officer level, which necessitated a special competition for recruitment of COs for Dundalk in order to supplement those available from the transfer list. The vast majority of staff required were assigned to the area during 2001.

Training, Development and Education

Resources

The organisation of the training resources within the Department reflects the significant staffing numbers (some 4,700) and the wide geographical spread of offices. Staff Development Unit, based in Dublin, is the central training unit with a staff of twenty but works with and supports the staff of the training units in decentralised headquarters buildings and a network of 57 Local Office Trainers based throughout the country. A separate IT Training Unit looks after the training needs of IS Division staff. In addition, in late 2000, 16 additional trainers were appointed for the roll-out of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), based both regionally and in Dublin headquarters working with the PMDS project manager and team.

The strong emphasis on training, development and education continued in the Department during 2001 with the added impetus of the implementation of the PMDS. Training and Development plans for nearly 1,500 staff emerging from Performance Management meetings have been received by Staff Development Unit and priority is given to the training needs emerging from this process.

Building Training Capacity

There was a significant turnover in personnel in the Staff Development Unit during 2000 and the early part of 2001. In order to address this and to equip the trainers both centrally and in the decentralised training units to meet the needs emerging from PMDS, tenders for two training programmes for trainers were awarded. The first, "Train the Trainer", encompasses all trainer skills including training needs analysis, training delivery skills, evaluation of learning and the trainer as an

internal consultant in the organisation. The second programme is for the PC and computer trainers who will be awarded a Diploma in IT Training through the Joint Education Board (JEB) on completion.

Training Budget

The annual training budget allocation for 2001 was €1.52m, €690,000 of which was delegated to Principal Officers for use in accessing external training courses in areas which the Department does not have the expertise or resources to provide. The training budget also covers funding for special training projects (to meet particular business needs) and the Fees Refund Scheme to encourage staff to pursue third level courses outside business hours.

Training Publication

The quarterly newsletter published by Staff Development Unit previously entitled "SDU News" was renamed "Training Matters". The change of name is to highlight the fact that training is not just the remit of SDU and the other training units but of all managers and staff in the organisation. "Training Matters" includes information on all aspects of training and development initiatives (formal courses, on-the-job coaching and alternative learning) within the Department and is circulated to all staff.

Training Strategy

During 2001, work commenced on the development of the Department's Training Strategy. Staff Development Unit hosted a workshop comprising a representative group of managers from the Department to discuss and draft an outline of contents for the training strategy. This strategy will set out the issues and actions in training, education and development to be addressed over the next three years. A draft strategy document was completed and will now be reviewed and finalised through the Partnership process.

Training Services Supplied

Staff Development Unit offer a 'menu' of courses on an ongoing basis under the headings of Induction, Customer Service Interpersonal Skills, Manager Development and Computer and PC Training. In addition, specialised training is provided for particular roles within the organisation (e.g. Service Officers, Local Office Managers and staff, Inspectors and Information Officers) and for particular business needs. The unit also actively promotes and supports staff in the provision of on-the-job training and coaching and is working on identifying mechanisms to record and recognise training of this nature.

Learning Centre

During 2001, SDU actively expanded the Learning Centre which is the interactive facility and lending library to meet the self-managed needs of all staff in the Department. The implementation of PMDS has highlighted this approach to training and development. Over 1,000 requests for material from the Learning Centre including CD Roms, books and videos on topics relating to personal and interpersonal effectiveness, managing for results, thinking style and problem-solving have been generated by the PMDS process.

Refund of Fees

For the academic year 2001/2002, there are 286 staff members availing of the Refund of Fees Scheme. This includes 4 people pursuing Masters Degrees (in Social Policy, Public Management and Social Science) and 176 pursuing courses in core study areas which include Social Policy, Human Resource Management, Public Administration, Financial Management, Information Technology (including ECDL) and Irish Language. A refund of 100% is available for staff pursuing courses in certain core study areas regardless of whether they have previously availed of the scheme. Where courses are being pursued outside the core study areas, an 80% refund is available for first-time applicants with a 50% refund of fees for second and subsequent courses.

Irish Language Training Programme

A specialised Irish Language pilot training programme for a group of the Department's local office staff was delivered in co-operation with Gaeleagras and NUI Galway during 2001. The main objective of the programme was to equip front-line staff to deliver a quality customer service through Irish. An evaluation of the pilot showed the programme to be a success and feedback from the participants will inform Irish Language training and support during 2002.

Customer Service Training Programme

Module 3 of the Customer Service Training Programme was completed for most headquarters sections during 2001 covering Anti-Racism and Disability Awareness as well as Effective Correspondence.

Action Learning

The pilot programme of Action Learning, the experiential development programme, was completed during 2001. This programme enables managers working in a similar field and/or at comparable levels of management to meet together to learn from and support each other in management development and problem-solving. An evaluation of the programme was conducted and some of the identified benefits were: being able to discuss problems and issues in a safe environment; learning from the experience of others; developing listening and diagnostic skills and getting support and assistance from peers.

Due to the exceptional success of the pilot, a new programme of Action Learning will be held in 2002.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness identified effective management of performance at all levels as one of its key objectives. PMDS gives the civil service the framework that defines how we can advance towards improved performance, greater job satisfaction and better service delivery.

Resources

The implementation of PMDS is a major project which requires the commitment of significant resources – funding, training and development, management time and commitment. A Project Board, chaired at Management Committee level, and a Project Team led by a Project Manager have been set up to address the implementation issues in the Department.

16 Trainers at HEO level have been assigned to roll-out the initial 3 phases of PMDS training and to assist in meeting the training and development plans emerging from the process. Consultants have also been employed to provide training support and to assist in the evaluation of the process.

Implementation

While it was envisaged and planned that the PMDS rollout would simultaneously involve all grades from Secretary-General to part-time Cleaners, this was not possible as the Civil & Public Services Union (CPSU) decided that its members in this Department would not be included at the initial stage.

PMDS was launched in the Department in February 2001 with the provision of 70 PMDS Information Roadshows. These Roadshows were provided countrywide to some 1,600 staff from Secretary-General to Executive Officer and for Services Officers/Attendants and Cleaners. These Information Roadshows included a video on PMDS which was produced for the Department by Windmill Lane Ltd.

Phase 1 training rolled out to these same staff groupings from March to June 2001 with 147 (two day) training courses being held. Phase 2 training (1 Day) commenced in October 2001 with some 122 courses held by the end of the year. Phase 3 is scheduled to start in March 2002.

Evaluation

The implementation of PMDS is being evaluated on an ongoing basis through staff questionnaires and workshops held with staff representatives.



chapter 6
Efficiency and Effectiveness



chapter 6
Annual Report

chapter 6

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Change Management Fund

The Change Management Fund is a fund managed by the Department of Finance which is directed at co-funding projects within Departments/Offices which target one or more of the key initiatives under the SMI programme of modernisation.

In 2001 the Department received significant assistance with a number of key projects including the Performance Management and Development System, the Management Information Framework and the production of customer service videos.

Financial Management

The Department is committed under its Strategy Statement to ensuring that Financial Management Systems will meet current and changing statutory and accounting obligations and will:

- identify the financial resources necessary to meet programme and administrative needs
- support the management system by providing appropriate internal financial reporting and by ensuring accountability and control of delegated responsibility
- facilitate structured resource allocation procedures for both capital and non-capital expenditure
- be flexible so as to meet the demands of future financial management. Particular attention will be given to the financial data analysis and reporting needs of strategic management processes and appropriate skills will be developed
- evaluate Financial Management Systems against performance criteria designed to measure flexibility, effectiveness and the value of information provided to users.

The post-Budget programme and administrative estimates for 2001 were produced and published in the volume "Revised Estimates for Public Services – 2001".

The pre-Budget estimates for 2002 were produced and published in the volume "Estimates for Public Services (Abridged version) & Summary Public Capital Programme – 2002".

Throughout the year, actual expenditure was monitored and reviewed against these profiles and monthly assessments were prepared for the Department of Finance. Separate administrative expenditure reports were supplied each month and more frequently on request, to budget-holders. Comprehensive reviews of all expenditure and income headings were carried out on a quarterly basis and the results were conveyed to the Department of Finance.

Work commenced in mid-2001 to upgrade the financial management system in the Department, both to improve functionality and to ensure euro capability with effect from 1 January 2002. Conversion of the Department's payroll system to euro also took place in December 2001. In addition, a major review of the Payments Reconciliation Section was completed shortly before Christmas 2001, which identified the scope for changes in certain practices and procedures in the area, along with proposals for development of the existing technology systems. Implementation of the recommendations of the Report will roll out over the course of 2002 and should prove to be of benefit in streamlining the work of the area, thereby helping to reduce backlogs and the potential risk of fraud for the Department.

Management Information Framework (MIF)

The report 'Delivering Better Government', which outlined the programme for change for the Irish Civil Service under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), identified the need to improve financial management systems in order to ensure the achievement of best value for money. One of the key elements in the reform process is the development of a Management Information Framework (MIF).

The overall objective of the MIF is to provide Departments not only with a flexible system of accounts but also systems to facilitate more effective resource allocation, planning, programme evaluation and managerial decision-making models.

During 2000 the Department established a Project Board to manage the implementation of the roll-out of the MIF. A Project Manager with overall responsibility for the management of the project was appointed in early 2001.

A contract for consultancy assistance in the planning and development of a MIF for the Department was signed in August 2001.

Following an extensive programme of consultation throughout the Department the consultancy team aided by the DSCFA MIF Unit produced three reports which included a review of the current state of reporting in the Department, the design of a new MIF for the Department and an implementation plan based on the design report.

It is expected that elements of the implementation plan will be progressed during 2002.

Internal Audit and DSCFA Audit Committee

During the year, the Internal Audit Unit evaluated the business control, risk and governance processes in a variety of areas of the Department and provided appropriate advice, assurance and recommendations to Management on these and other control-related matters.

The Department and the Internal Audit Unit benefited significantly in 2001 from the work and advice of the DSCFA Audit Committee, which following its inaugural meeting in December 2000, met on four occasions in 2001. The DSCFA Audit Committee has five members, three of whom (including the Chairperson) are external to DSCFA. Its role is to oversee and advise DSCFA on matters relating to its business control and risk management environment; to the operations and development of the internal audit function and to the relationship with external audit.



Appendices

appendix i

Management of the Department in 2001

Dermot Ahern, TD, *Minister*

Edmond Sullivan, *Secretary-General*

John Hynes, *Director-General, Social Welfare Services*

Tom Mulherin; Deirdre Carroll; Alice O'Flynn (*all Assistant Secretaries*)

Bernadette Lacey; Gerry Daly (*both Assistant Director-Generals*)

Cyril Havelin, *Senior Director, Regions*

Dr M. Chambers, *Senior Director, Medical Advisor*

Benny Kevitt, *Senior Director, Long Term Schemes*

Niall Barry, *Director, IS Division*

Sean Reade, *Director, Social Welfare Appeals*

Sean Halpin, *Director, Employment Support*

Joan Connolly, *Director, Technology*

Joe Madden, *Director, Decisions Advisory Office*

Oliver Ryan, *Director, REACH Agency*

appendix ii

Status Report on Organisational Targets for 2001

Clearance Time Targets

Activity	Standard Clearance Time ¹	Status Performance
i New Claims		
Old Age Contributory Pension ²	55% in 5 weeks	46% Achieved
Retirement Pension	80% in 5 weeks	71% Achieved
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	80% in 5 weeks	78% Achieved
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	65% in 8 weeks	57% Achieved
Blind Pension	65% in 8 weeks	57% Achieved
Widow(er)'s (Non-Contributory) Pension and One-Parent Family Payment (Widow)	75% in 5 weeks	87% Achieved
One-Parent Family (Unmarried Parent)	65% in 8 weeks	31% Achieved
One-Parent Family (Separated Spouse)	65% in 12 weeks	38% Achieved
Carer's Allowance	80% in 8 weeks	26% Achieved
Free Schemes	70% in 5 weeks	51% Achieved
Unemployment Benefit	85% in 2 weeks	71% Achieved
Unemployment Assistance	70% in 2 weeks	52% Achieved
Disability Benefit	90% in 1 week	74% Achieved
Treatment Benefit ³	90% in 2 weeks	78% Achieved
Child Benefit	90% in 1 week	53% Achieved
Maternity (before commencement of benefit)	80%	72% Achieved
Family Income Supplement	70% in 3 weeks	82% Achieved
Invalidity Pension	70% in 9 weeks	68% Achieved
Disability Allowance	70% in 9 weeks	60% Achieved
ii Arrears		
PSO (Sligo)	80% within 3 weeks of being put in payment	87% Achieved
Longford SWS		80% Achieved

This table covers both insurance-based and means-tested schemes. Of their nature, means-tested schemes take longer to process.

- 1 Clearance time: Elapsed time from date of receipt of claim to date of decision.*
- 2 Old Age (Contributory) Pension – 85% awarded before pension age, where claim received one month before pension age.*
- 3 This relates to all optical claims and 40% of dental claims where pre-retirement claims are submitted.*

appendix ii

Customer Service Targets

Activity	Standard	Status 2001
i Telephone Service Response Standard	90% of calls to be answered within 10 seconds	Average Response 19 Seconds
ii Issue of PPS Nos (In response to requests from Tax Offices)	70% in 5 days	81% Achieved
iii Scope Decisions	55% in 13 weeks	43% Achieved
iv Reply to Public Representations	80% in 3 weeks	52% Achieved
v Issue of Contribution Records to Members of the Public	60% in 5 days	77% Achieved
vi Customer Surveys Internally conducted	1 internal survey in each of 4 regions	1 in 2 regions*
	1 internal survey in each of 2 schemes	1 in 2 schemes*
	* (figures affected by Foot and Mouth travel restrictions)	
Independently conducted	Survey of customers	Complete
vii Customer Satisfaction	Aim to achieve: 90% overall satisfaction with service delivery	Average satisfaction rating in completed survey – 84%
	10% improvement in satisfaction with information provision	90% overall satisfaction with information provision – 3% increase on previous survey

appendix ii

Control Targets

Schemes	Savings & Reviews (Actual)			Targets		
	€m	£m	Numbers	€m	£m	Numbers
Unemployment	122.253	96.282	92,781	126.974	100.000	110,000
Illness	46.589	36.692	142,918	50.790	40.000	150,200
Pensions	76.492	60.242	50,222	63.487	50.000	31,300
Child Benefit	5.619	4.425	24,104	5.714	4.500	30,000
FIS	0.598	0.471	13,422	0.635	0.500	16,500
Carers	1.941	1.529	1,432	2.539	2.000	1,000
SWA	0.359	0.283		11.428	9.000	
Total	253.851	199.924	324,879	261.567	206.000	339,000
PAYE/PRSI	14.994	11.809	8,950	15.237	12.000	10,000
Overall Total	268.845	211.733	333,829	276.804	218.000	349,000
* Employer Inspections			8,950			10,000
* General Inspections			7,028			8,000
* SIU/JIU			2,790			2,000

appendix iii

Expenditure on Social Welfare by Payment Type, 2001

Type of Payment	€000
Old Age (Contributory) Pension	716,474
Retirement Pension	697,349
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	490,718
Pre-Retirement Allowance	82,774
Total Old Age	1,987,315
Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension	672,891
Deserted Wife's Benefit	84,867
Widow's (Non-Contributory) Pension	107,164
Deserted Wife's Allowance	9,179
Prisoner's Wife's Allowance	13
One Parent Family Payment	537,376
Widowed Parent Grant (Contributory)	1,312
Widowed Parent Grant (Non-Contributory)	80
Total Widows, Widowers and One Parent Families	1,412,882
Maternity Benefit	78,933
Health and Safety Benefit	210
Adoptive Benefit	260
Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance	9,451
Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension	4,421
Child Benefit	964,847
Total Child Related Payments	1,058,122
Disability Benefit	329,540
Invalidity Pension	354,414
Carer's Benefit	2,457
Injury Benefit	10,870
Disablement Benefit	54,844
Death Benefit	5,054
Disability Allowance	332,308
Medical Care	225
Carer's Allowance	130,325
Blind Pension	13,156
Total Illness, Disability and Caring	1,233,193

Type of Payment	€000
Unemployment Benefit	290,257
Unemployment Assistance	429,875
Total Unemployment Supports	720,132
Family Income Supplement	37,099
Employment Support Services	195,955
Farm Assist	50,650
Total Employment Supports	283,704
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	363,576
Total Supplementary Welfare Allowance	363,576
Treatment Benefits	56,505
Rent Allowance	736
Free Schemes	240,994
Miscellaneous	76,929
Equal Treatment – Insurance Payments	56
Equal Treatment – Assistance Payments	–
Redundancy and Insolvency	33,404
Total Miscellaneous Payments and Grants	408,624
Administration – Insurance Schemes	158,910
Administration – Assistance Schemes	215,838
Total Administration	374,748
Grand Total	7,842,295

appendix iii

Number of Recipients and Beneficiaries of Weekly Social Welfare Payments, 2001

Type of Payment	Recipients	Beneficiaries
Old Age (Contributory) Pension	94,871	120,167
Retirement Pension	80,326	106,270
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	89,061	94,441
Pre-Retirement Allowance	11,807	18,263
Total Old Age	276,065	339,141
Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension	101,267	116,443
Widow/er's (Non-Contributory) Pension	16,811	16,811
Deserted Wife's Benefit	12,177	22,743
Deserted Wife's Allowance	1,612	1,612
Prisoner's Wife's Allowance	2	2
One-Parent Family Payment	77,142	200,189
Total Widows, Widowers and One Parent Families	209,011	357,800
Maternity Benefit	9,376	9,376
Health and Safety Benefit	25	44
Adoptive Benefit	16	16
Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance	1,528	1,528
Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension	1,189	1,189
Total Child Related Payments	12,134	12,153
Disability Benefit	50,715	100,526
Invalidity Pension	50,615	83,762
Injury Benefit	861	1,618
Interim Disability Benefit	449	758
Disablement Benefit	11,230	12,181
Death Benefit Pension	676	886
Disability Allowance	57,655	75,593
Carer's Benefit	425	929
Blind Pension	2,125	2,727
Carer's Allowance	18,785	35,770
Total Illness, Disability and Caring	193,536	314,750

Type of Payment	Recipients	Beneficiaries
Unemployment Benefit	59,884	112,118
Unemployment Assistance	66,563	120,911
Total Unemployment Supports	126,447	233,029
Back to Work Allowance/Enterprise Allowance	32,191	81,266
Back to Education Allowance	4,101	6,057
Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme	340	340
Family Income Supplement	11,570	37,996
Farm Assist/Smallholders	8,380	22,351
Total Employment Supports	56,582	148,010
Supplementary Welfare Allowance ¹	29,167	55,258
Total Supplementary Welfare Allowances	29,167	55,258
Rent Allowance	433	433
Total Miscellaneous Payments	433	433
Grand Total	903,375	1,460,574

¹ Includes basic weekly payments only.

appendix iv

Social Welfare Services

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs provides a range of payments. The payments can be divided into several broad categories of social insurance, social assistance and others. The Department also administers a number of grant schemes to support voluntary and community activity.

Social Insurance Payments

Payments under social insurance are funded in part by employers, their employees and the self-employed. Entitlement to social insurance benefits depends on the claimant having a number of the class of contributions paid or credited in a specified time period. The contribution conditions vary according to the different schemes.

The social insurance schemes are:

- Adoptive Benefit
- Bereavement Grant
- Carer's Benefit
- Deserted Wife's Benefit
- Disability Benefit
- Health and Safety Benefit
- Incapacity Pension
- Maternity Benefit
- Occupational Injuries Benefit
- Old Age (Contributory) Pension
- Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance
- Retirement Pension
- Treatment Benefit
- Unemployment Benefit
- Widow's/Widower's (Contributory) Pension

Occupational Injuries Benefit

The Social Insurance system also provides for payment of benefits in respect of injury, disablement or death, as well as medical care resulting from an occupational accident or disease. These benefits are available to employees, irrespective of age. The Social Insurance Fund finances expenditure on these benefits.

Social Assistance Payments

Social Assistance payments are financed entirely by the Exchequer. Social Assistance is usually paid to those who do not satisfy the contribution conditions necessary for receipt of social insurance benefits or to people whose entitlement to insurance benefits has expired. To qualify for social assistance the claimant must satisfy a means test.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) is usually payable where the person has no means or insufficient means to meet essential needs and where the conditions for receipt of Disability Benefit and Unemployment Benefit/Assistance are not satisfied. The Allowance is a safeguard measure that ensures that persons receive a basic income maintenance payment. Assistance under the SWA Scheme includes Rent and Mortgage Supplements, Exceptional Needs and Urgent Needs Payments and Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

The social assistance payments are:

- Blind Pension
- Carer's Allowance
- Deserted Wife's Allowance
- Disability Allowance
- Family Income Supplement
- Farm Assist
- One-Parent Family Payment
- Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension
- Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension
- Pre-Retirement Allowance
- Prisoner's Wife's Allowance
- Rent Allowance
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance
- Unemployment Assistance
- Widow's/Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is also funded entirely from the Exchequer. It is payable in respect of all children, without reference to the family's means.

Administrative Schemes

Administrative schemes are non-statutory schemes, which are approved by Government decision.

Administrative schemes are:

- Back to Work Allowance (Employees)
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Back to Education Allowance
- Student Summer Jobs Scheme

Additional Schemes

The Department also provides a range of allowances principally for the elderly and people with disabilities.

These allowances are:

- Electricity Allowance/Natural Gas Allowance/Bottled Gas Allowance
- Telephone Allowance
- Free Television Licence
- Free Travel
- Fuel Allowance – including Smokeless Fuel Allowance
- Living Alone Allowance

Free Travel is available to every citizen, aged 66 or over who is permanently resident in the State. The other allowances are provided as enhancements in respect of certain social welfare payments, such as pensions, which are payable to qualified people who are elderly or have a disability who are either living alone or living with only certain prescribed persons.

Since May 2001 entitlement to free schemes (Electricity Allowance/Natural Gas Allowance/Bottled Gas Allowance/Telephone Allowance/Free Television Licence) has been extended to all persons aged 70 or over.

In addition, the Department also provides a number of grant schemes to support voluntary and community activity. The individual supports and schemes are provided under the following headings:

Money Advice and Budgeting Service [MABS]

- Community Development Support Programmes
- Community Development Programme [CDP]
- Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme [FRC]
- Programme of Core-Funding to locally-based Community and Family Support Groups [CFG]
- Community Support for Older People [CSOP]
- Once-off Grant Scheme [Advertised Annually]
- Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations [VO]
- Community Development, Education and Training Grants Scheme [CDETG]
- Scheme of Grants for Locally-Based Community and Family Support Groups [CG]

More Information

The Department publishes a range of information booklets and leaflets about its schemes, which are available, free of charge from local offices of the Department or from the:

**Information Service,
Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs,
Áras Mhic Dhiarmada, Dublin 1
Telephone: (01) 704 3000**

Information is also available on the Internet at:
www.welfare.ie

appendix v

Budget Changes Implemented in 2001 in Euros and Irish Pounds

Summary	Cost 2001* €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
1 Increase in Weekly Rates	403.41	(317.71)	535.88	(422.04)
2 Child and Family Income Support	255.93	(201.56)	434.02	(341.82)
3 Pensioners	8.47	(6.67)	11.25	(8.86)
4 Widows/Bereavement	9.57	(7.54)	12.71	(10.01)
5 Frees/Fuel Allowance	19.29	(15.19)	25.61	(20.17)
6 Disability/Carers	25.64	(20.19)	32.77	(25.81)
7 Incentives/Employment Supports	1.50	(1.18)	1.75	(1.38)
8 Child Supports	0.25	(0.20)	0.25	(0.20)
9 Family Supports	16.86	(13.28)	21.09	(16.61)
10 Voluntary and Community	2.67	(2.10)	2.67	(2.10)
11 Comhairle	1.27	(1.00)	1.27	(1.00)
Total	744.85	586.62	1,079.28	850.00

* Costings for 2001 have, in most cases, been calculated on the basis of the measure coming into force with the rates increases from the beginning of April (i.e. 39 weeks).

Details of Items	2001 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
1 Increases in Weekly Rates	403.41	(317.71)	535.88	(422.04)
1.1 €12.70 (£10) increase in all personal rates for pensioners aged 66 and over on full rates, with proportionate increases for pensioners on reduced rates				
1.2 €10.16 (£8) increase in personal rates for those aged under 66 years, with proportionate increases for those on reduced rates				
1.3 Increase in Qualified Adult Allowances to make progress towards target of 70% of appropriate personal rates				
1.4 €10.16 (£8) increase in minimum rate of Maternity Benefit from €90.70 to €98.70 [April]				
2 Child and Family Income Support	255.93	(201.56)	434.02	(341.82)
2.1 €31.74 (£25) increase in lower rate of Child Benefit, from €53.96 (£42.50) to €85.71 (£67.50) and €38.09 (£30) increase in higher rate, from €71.11 (£56) to €109.20 (£86) [June]				
2.2 Increase in FIS income thresholds by £25.00 a week [April]				
3 Pensioners	8.47	(6.67)	11.25	(8.86)
3.1 Phased increase in rate of QAA for qualified adults aged 66 and over to bring them up to OAP rate with proportionate increases where pensioner is on a reduced pension [April]				
3.2 Ease clawback of budget increases in pensions for SWA Rent and Mortgage Supplement purposes by €6.35 (£5) a week [April]				
3.3 Exempt Health Board Allowance for frail elderly people boarded out for means test purposes (maximum exemption – allowance for 2 people boarded out) [April]				
3.4 Introduce Islander Allowance for pensioners – Additional €12.70 (£10) allowance [April]				

Details of Items	2001 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
4 Widows	9.57	(7.54)	12.71	(10.01)
Additional €3.68 (£2.90) increase in over 66 rate of Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension and DWB as part of phased increase in these payments to OACP rate [April]				
5 Frees/Fuel Allowance	19.29	(15.19)	25.61	(20.17)
<i>Free Schemes</i>				
5.1 Extend Free Schemes to all people over 70 years regardless of income and household composition [May]				
5.2 <i>Fuel Allowance</i>				
■ Pay Fuel Allowance for 3 extra weeks [April 2001]				
■ Increase weekly income disregard for Fuel Allowance from €38.10 (£30) to €50.79 (£40) [October]				
6 Disability/Carers	25.64	(20.19)	32.77	(25.81)
People with Disabilities				
6.1 <i>Disability Allowance</i>				
■ Extend Sale of Residence provisions to DA recipients				
■ Ease couple "limitation" for DA purposes [April]				
6.2 Extend Living Alone Allowance (€7.62/£6) to recipients of Invalidity Pension, DA and BPP under 66 years [April]				
Carers				
6.3 <i>Carer's Allowance</i>				
■ Increase €95.23/€190.46 (£75/£150) weekly income disregards to €158.72/€317.44 (£125/£250) [April]				
■ Increase Respite Care Grant by €126.97 (£100) from €380.92 (£300) to €507.90 (£400) [June]				
■ Pay 2 Respite Care Grants in respect of a Carer who is looking after two or more carees (€507.90/£400 grant) [June]				
6.4 Increase Constant Attendance Allowance to level of Carer's Benefit [April]				

Details of Items	2001 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
7 Incentives/Employment and Unemployment Supports	1.50	(1.18)	1.75	(1.38)
7.1 <i>Back to Education Programme</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Extend eligibility for Back to Education Allowance to UB/UA recipients and lone parents aged between 18 and 20 who have been out of the formal education system for 2 years and who have been on the Live Register or in receipt of OPFP for at least 6 months [September] ■ In the case of specific courses recommended by a Jobs Facilitator or Area Partnership Co., reduce age qualification for the Education and Training Option for UA/UB recipients to 18 years who have been on the Live Register for 6 months or more ■ Pay additional €31.74 (£25) per week to long-term unemployed persons or lone parents where they attend training/development courses run by locally based service providers and which are initiated by Job Facilitators [April] ■ Disregard meal and travel allowances paid while on training courses to recipients of UA and OPFP in respect of approved/appropriate courses of a short term duration by FÁS etc. ■ Allow people with disabilities coming off CE courses to access the BTEA even where they were never previously in receipt of a social welfare payment [September] 				
7.2 Funding for activation programme for lone parents – Jobs Facilitators to fund appropriate training/development courses run by locally based service providers				
7.3 <i>Back to Work Allowance</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishment of new fund, similar to Technical Assistance Fund, to assist BTWA participants who take up self-employment with the costs of Public Liability Insurance ■ Introduce Pilot BTWA scheme for long term Disability Benefit recipients (200 places ring-fenced) and evaluate scheme when all places filled 				

Details of Items	2001 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
<i>7.4 Other Employment Support Measures</i>				
■ Increase upper ceiling for tapered QAA arrangements from €171.42 (£135) to €184.11 (£145) [April]				
■ Introduce scheme of special housing aid for the elderly				
■ Increase maximum rate of Rent Supplement for tenants under the Capital Assistance scheme by €12.70 (£10) a week to €36.82 (£29) for single people and €39.36 (£31) for others [April]				
<i>7.5 Improvements in Unemployment Payments</i>				
■ Exempt grants under ESF and VEC Scholarship schemes for UA/FA purposes				
8 Child Supports	0.25	(0.20)	0.25	(0.20)
<i>8.1 Improvements in School Meals Scheme</i>				
<i>8.2 Disregard amounts paid by Health Boards towards the care of Foster children for the purposes of assessing income for entitlement to QAA</i>				
9 Family Supports	16.86	(13.28)	21.09	(16.61)
<i>9.1 Maternity Benefit</i>				
■ Extend duration of Maternity and Adoptive Benefit by 4 weeks				
■ Award credited contributions for the period of 8 weeks additional maternity leave				
■ €12.95 (£10.20) increase in maximum rate of Maternity and Adoptive Benefits to €232.36 (£183) a week [April]				
<i>9.2 Family Services</i>				
■ Increase in funding for scheme of grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services – Marriage Preparation, Marriage Counselling and Child Counselling in relation to Parental Separation				
■ Support for the Rainbows Project				
■ Support for Turning Point Counselling Service				
■ Funding for start-up costs of a Longitudinal Cohort Study of Children				

Details of Items	2001 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
10 Voluntary and Community Services	2.67	(2.10)	2.67	(2.10)
10.1 <i>Community Development Programme</i> Additional funding to meet commitments				
10.2 Increase funding for MABS to meet existing commitments, provide new advisors for some projects and improve premises				
10.3 Additional funding for the Combat Poverty Agency for training and education activities in projects as part of roll out of NAPS to local authorities and additional staff to respond to PPF commitments to increase number of national anti-poverty networks				
11 Comhairle	1.27	(1.00)	1.27	(1.00)
Additional funding for Comhairle				
Total	744.85	(586.62)	1,079.28	(850.00)

appendix vi

Items Announced in the December 2001 Budget for Implementation in 2002

	2002*		Full	
	€m	£m	Year	£m
			€m	
1 Increase in Weekly Rates	597.89	(470.88)	597.89	(470.88)
2 Child and Family Income Support	312.58	(246.18)	416.03	(327.65)
3 Pensioners	2.00	(1.58)	2.00	(1.58)
4 Frees/Fuel Allowance	30.04	(23.66)	33.05	(26.03)
5 Carers/Disability	16.67	(13.13)	21.22	(16.71)
6 Incentives/Employment Supports	1.04	(0.82)	1.16	(0.92)
7 Family Supports	0.64	(0.50)	0.64	(0.50)
8 Voluntary and Community	5.92	(4.65)	5.77	(4.53)
9 Comhairle	1.52	(1.20)	1.52	(1.20)
Total	968.30	(762.60)	1,079.28	(850.00)

* Costings for 2002 have, in most cases, been calculated on the basis of the measure coming into force with the rates increases from the beginning of January (i.e. 52 weeks).

appendix vi

Details of DSCFA Budget Package 2002

	2002 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
1 Increases in Weekly Rates	597.87	(470.88)	597.88	(470.88)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ €15.29 (£12.04) increase in the personal rate for Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension aged 66 and over, a minimum of €12.71 (£10.01) increase for all other pensioners aged 66 or over on full rates, €12.14 (£9.56) increase for STUA and SWA recipients and a minimum €10.17 (£8.01) increase for all others aged under 66 ■ Proportionate increases for persons in receipt of reduced rates [January] ■ Increase in Qualified Adult Allowances of a minimum of €12.70 (£10.00) for Contributory Pension QAAs aged 66 or over, increase of €11.43 (£9.00) for Non-Contributory pensioner QAAs aged under and over 66 and Contributory Pension QAAs aged under 66 and an increase of €10.23 (£8.06) for all other QAAs. Proportionate increases for persons in receipt of reduced rates [January] ■ €10.28 (£8.09) increase in minimum rate of Maternity Benefit from €125.32 (£98.70) to €135.60 (£106.79) [January] ■ Increase FIS thresholds by €34.00 (£26.78)/€35.00 (£27.57) in line with UA increase [January] 				
2 Child and Family Income Support	312.58	(246.18)	416.03	(327.65)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase Child Benefit Lower Rate by €31.80 (£25.04) and Higher Rate by €38.10 (£30.01); New Rates: €117.60 (£92.62) and €147.30 (£116.01) [April] ■ Increase in the income limit for Back to School Clothing & Footwear Scheme from €6.35 (£5.00) per week to €50.00 (£39.38), an increase of €43.65 (£34.38) [June] ■ Increase in the rate of Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance paid in respect of children aged 12 years or more from €99.04 (£78.00) to €120.00 (£94.51) [June] 				

	2002 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
3 Pensioners	2.00	(1.58)	2.00	(1.58)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase the pension disregard for Rent Supplement from €6.35 (£5.00) to €10.00 (£7.88) [January] ■ Increase Widowed Parent Grant from €1,270 (£1,000) to €2,500 (£1,969) [December 2001] ■ Extend the Sale of Residence disregard to recipients of OAP/DA/BPP who sell their principal residence to move in with a recipient of Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit, where the Carer's Allowance/Benefit recipient is that pensioner's carer [April] ■ Extend the Sale of Residence disregard to recipients of OAP/DA/BPP who move to sheltered or special housing in the voluntary, co-operative, statutory or private sectors [April] 				
4 Free Schemes and Fuel Allowance	30.04	(23.66)	33.05	(26.03)
<i>Free Schemes</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce Household Benefits Package for Free Schemes by aligning conditions for receipt of Electricity and Telephone Allowance [May] ■ Extend Free Travel Companion Pass to Invalidation Pensioners [May] ■ Increase units for Electricity Allowance by 300 per annum (from 1,500 to 1,800) with corresponding increases for Natural Gas Allowance [February] 				
<i>Fuel Allowance</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase €6.35 (£5.00) rate by €2.65 (£2.09) to €9.00 (£7.09) based on 29 week Fuel Season [January] 				

	2002 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
5 Carers/Disability	16.67	(13.13)	21.22	(16.71)

Carer's Allowance

- Increase Respite Grant by €127.00 (£100.02) to €635.00 (£500.10) for one caree and €1,270.00 (£1,000.21) for two or more carees **[June]**
- Increase income disregard from €158.72 (£125.00)/€317.43 (£250.00) per week to €191.00 (£150.42)/€382.00 (£300.84) per week. [€32.28 (£25.42)/€64.57 (£50.85) increase] **[April]**

Disability Allowance

- Increase earnings from rehabilitative employment disregard for DA from €95.23 (£75.00) to €120.00 (£94.50) per week **[April]**

General Benefits

- Link DB claims of 5 years duration or more for up to 13 weeks in relation to periods of incapacity **[April]**

6 Incentives/Employment and Unemployment Supports

1.04	(0.82)	1.16	(0.92)
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Back to Work Allowance

- Extend entitlement for BTWA to the following recipients: Widow/er's (Non-Con) Pension, DWB, DWA and PWA **[April]**
- Reduce qualifying period for entitlement to BTWA to Disability Benefit recipients of 3 years or more duration [from 5 years] **[April]**

	2002 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
<i>Back to Education Allowance</i>				
■ Extend BTEA Scheme to DB recipients who are in receipt of DB for 3 years or more [September]				
■ Extend eligibility for BTEA to Widow/er's (Non-Contributory) Pension and Deserted Wife's Allowance [September]				
■ Enable a couple to access BTEA at two personal rates of payment and Cost of Education Allowances simultaneously [September]				
<i>Other Employment/Unemployment Support Measures</i>				
■ Provide for payment of CDAs in the case of UB, STUA and other short-term schemes up to the end of the academic year where children in full-time education reach 18 years in that year [April]				
■ Increase upper ceiling for tapered QAA arrangements from €184.11 (£145.00) to €196.81 (£155.00) per week [January]				
■ Increase the additional income disregard in Rent Supplement from €31.74 (£25.00) per week to €50.00 (£39.38) [January]				
<i>Improvements in Unemployment Payments</i>				
■ Disregard periods on PRETA for the purposes of linking two UA claims (in order to encourage trial moves from PRETA to employment) [April]				
■ Link two PRETA claims within 52 weeks [April]				
7 Family Supports	0.64	(0.50)	0.64	(0.50)
■ Additional funding for scheme of grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Service				

	2002 €m	£m	Full Year €m	£m
8 Voluntary and Community Services	5.92	(4.65)	5.77	(4.53)
<i>Community Development Programme</i>				
■ Increased funding to meet existing commitments and cost of 25 new projects approved in principle and increased funding to meet existing commitments & cost of 2 additional support agencies and additional staff				
<i>Core Funding Groups</i>				
■ Increased funding to meet existing commitments and cost of 6 new projects agreed in principle				
<i>Family Resource Centres</i>				
■ Increased funding to meet existing commitments and cost of 33 new projects agreed in principle				
■ Capital Funding				
<i>MABS</i>				
■ Increased funding for MABS to meet existing commitments, additional staff and equipment				
<i>Cross Border Community Development Programme</i>				
■ Cross Border Community Development Programme				
<i>Carmichael Centre</i>				
■ Once-off grant for the Carmichael Centre				
9 Comhairle	1.52	(1.20)	1.52	(1.20)
■ Additional funding for Comhairle				
Total	968.30	(762.60)	1,079.28	(850.00)

appendix vii

Listening to our Customers A Summary of MRBI Survey Findings, 2001

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs is committed to:

- delivering quality services to its customers with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay
- creating a positive working environment for its staff
- fostering a climate of mutual respect between staff and customer.

The Work of the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

The main functions of the Department are to formulate appropriate social protection policies and to administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social, community and family schemes and services.

For many years now the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs has been putting quality customer service at the top of its list of priorities. This is not surprising in an organisation which provides supports and services for all citizens from 'the cradle to the grave'. In carrying out this function we make payments to over 874,000 people each week and process 1.7 million claim transactions annually.

The Department is committed to delivering quality customer service and to ensuring continuous improvement in the standards of service we provide.

The Importance of Customer Service

The provision of quality customer service is one of the key objectives of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) the programme for modernisation of the Irish Public Service. The SMI objectives require each Department to examine its role in relation to:

- delivering better quality service to the public
- providing better value to the taxpayer
- improving its contribution to national economic and social development.

A number of initiatives have been introduced by the Department in recent years which have been aimed at improving the quality of service provided to our customers. Among these have been:

- measuring and monitoring our performance on a regular basis in the areas of claim processing times, telephone response times and savings from control of fraud and abuse and responding to these findings
- carrying out a systematic programme of customer surveys with over 40 surveys taking place to date
- setting up and operating customer panels where customers meet officials regarding their needs and concerns
- making customer comment cards available in the Department's offices to improve feedback. The availability of a customer comment and complaint card will be publicised as part of the introduction of a formalised comment and complaint system later this year
- implementing the Department's Building Programme involving the provision of new and refurbished public offices
- delivering a Customer Service Training Programme for staff particularly those dealing directly with customers
- providing choice for customers, where possible, for example in relation to methods of payment
- initiatives at central and local level to improve co-ordination of public services between the Department and other agencies
- provision of an independent Social Welfare Appeals Office for customers who are dissatisfied with a decision on entitlement to payment
- the provision of comprehensive, accurate information in a clear and simple manner is an essential element in the effective delivery of social welfare services. Recently the Department has been issuing information newsletters to customers and will be using this method to inform all citizens about the Department's services in the near future.

Customer Consultation

Our customer consultation and feedback mechanisms, which involve day-to-day contacts, surveys, panels and comment cards, have been an integral part of our business in recent years. Since 1994 just under 40 customer surveys have been carried out around the country while approximately 50 customer panel meetings have been held. Both panels and surveys involve a wide variety of customers including people claiming pensions, unemployment payments, lone parents and Disability and Carer's Allowance.

The Surveys

As part of the programme of consultation with customers, the Department from time to time arranges for an independent survey of customers to ascertain their views about the quality of service, areas where improvements might be made etc. The objective of the 2001 research was to obtain new information on our customers' opinion of the service we deliver (including views on the future development of the service).

The survey involved a sample of 997 customers who were representative of four main customer groups:

- Old Age Pensioners
- One Parent Families (including widows/widowers)
- Disability payment recipients
- Unemployment payment recipients.

The broad areas covered in the survey were as follows:

- overall service delivery
- claim processing
- ongoing payment
- communication
- information
- office facilities.

The Survey Findings

The customer survey examined the perceptions of the Department's customers concerning the nature and level of the service provided.

The Service provided by the Department

- Overall level of satisfaction with service... 84%.
49% were very satisfied and 35% were fairly satisfied. This is consistent with the findings of our internal customer surveys which are in the main very positive. The Department is committed to continuously improving its services. An outline of planned key action points can be found in the Department's Customer Action Plan 2001-2004.

Making a Claim

- Customers who would go to, write to or phone a Social Welfare Office first if they need to make a claim... 90%.

This shows that the vast majority of customers would see an approach to the Department as being the most appropriate route when making a claim.

- Percentage who found completing application forms to be quite easy/straightforward... 74%.

We acknowledge that for some there can be difficulty in completing forms. The Service Delivery Model which sets the framework for delivery of social welfare services in the future, will reduce the amount of form filling. The system will produce a personalised form for the customer from information held by the Department and/or received from the customer by telephone. The customer will only have to complete the elements of the form where additional information is required.

- Level of satisfaction with time taken to decide claims... 78%.

Performance Indicators in the areas of claim processing, telephone response times and correspondence have been developed. The performance standards are monitored on a monthly basis and updated annually. The standards and performance levels achieved are published in the Department's annual reports.

Payment

- Satisfaction with method of payment... 96%.

Satisfaction with payment methods is very high. For most customers, the post office is their current source of payment and generally it is regarded as convenient and direct.

Information

- Percentage of people who see contacting the Department directly as the best source of Social Welfare information... 74%.

The Department recognises the need for an independent information, advice and advocacy service and in this regard the agency, Comhairle under the aegis of the Department is responsible for this service.

- Percentage of those who were satisfied with the information received... 90%.

Social Welfare Offices

There is general satisfaction with facilities at Social Welfare Offices particularly in the following areas:

- seating availability
- areas for completing forms
- ease of access to building
- display of information leaflets
- areas for getting information
- queues and sign-posting within social welfare offices.

While great improvements in facilities have been achieved, the Department is aware that there is still room for further improvement, particularly in terms of greater privacy through meeting rooms. These areas are being addressed in the Building and Refurbishment Programme as part of the Department's Customer Action Plan 2001-2004.

Staff

The survey asked specific questions regarding the quality of service provided by staff. The survey shows that there is a high level of satisfaction with staff in the following areas:

- courtesy
- ability to handle complaints
- ability to provide information
- number of staff available and ability to listen.

The survey findings, related to the Department's offices and staff, clearly demonstrate that the facilities and service offered have improved. The Department is committed to continuously supporting staff through training and other initiatives.

It is recognised, however, that there is always room for further improvement and we will continue to strive to achieve those improvements.

Recognising that a major part of the work of the Department involves dealing with the public, the Department has developed a comprehensive customer service training programme. The programme was designed in conjunction with training officers and staff members from across the Department. This followed research into best practice in other service delivery organisations and feedback from our customers and their representative organisations.

Customer Service Training will continue to be a central feature of the Department's training and development programme. It is included in induction training and, in various aspects, is featured in training for specific job types within the organisation.

Communicating with the Department

- Percentage of customers who said that they received a letter setting out the amount to be paid... 77%.

- Percentage of customers who said they got all entitlements when making a claim... 62%.

Over the last number of years the Department has been making particular efforts to improve communication with its customers. We will continue to give special attention to communicating with our customers.

- Percentage of customers who have a preference for dealing with the Department through Irish... 2%.

Future Service Delivery Developments

- Awareness of Personal Public Service No... 15%.

It is clear from these findings that the Department will need to publicise the existence and purpose of the PPS No.

- Awareness that Payments will be in EURO... 87%.
- Customers who have internet access at home... 9%.
- Customers who envisage communicating via e-mail with the Department in the future... 10%.

These findings raise issues regarding future service delivery developments.

Conclusions

The findings of the 2001 survey are in the main very positive. They show that the Department has a strong focus on providing excellent customer service and that customers on the whole acknowledge that. There are some areas where improvements are needed and these are being addressed as outlined in the Customer Action Plan 2001-2004.

Information

The Department's policy on information is to provide up to date, accurate and comprehensive information through a variety of methods. In this regard a key feature of the information programme is the provision of information by locally based Information Officers. Through Comhairle, the Department promotes and supports the development of independent information advice and advocacy services.

Consultation

We place a high priority on consultation and feedback from our customers. By obtaining the views of our customers we can understand their needs and expectations so that our policies and services reflect and are responsive to, the requirements of individuals, families and communities.

Particular emphasis will be placed on further progression of the areas of consultation, complaints and redress. It is recognised that the current complaint procedures in the Department need to be developed and formalised and a formal customer service comments and complaints system is due to be introduced by the end of 2001. It will form part of the wider programme of customer consultation and feedback.

The Department's Customer Action Plan 2001-2004 will build on the substantial progress already made and detail how we will give effect to the new Principles of Quality Customer Service over the next three years. In summary, the Department will continue seeking to improve the quality of the service provided to all our customers.

appendix viii

Legislation Enacted in 2001

Legislation Enacted in 2001

During 2001, 38 Statutory Instruments were produced by the Department. A brief description of each instrument follows.

S.I. No. 5 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (Defence Forces) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for a reduction in the employer social insurance contribution Class H by 0.7%. The rate is reduced from 11.3% to 10.6%. Class H contributions are payable in respect of Non-Commissioned Army Officers and enlisted personnel of the Defence Forces. This reduction takes effect from 21st December 2000 to coincide with the introduction of the new National Training Fund Levy (0.7%), to ensure that there is no overall increase in the employer's PRSI contribution.

S.I. No. 76 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions And Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 1) (Credited Contributions) Regulations, 2001

Social Welfare legislation currently provides that employment contributions will be credited to insured persons in certain circumstances, including persons in receipt of Maternity Benefit. These Regulations provide that employment contributions will also be credited to insured persons who avail of additional unpaid maternity leave, under the terms of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994.

S.I. No. 99 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (Increase in Rates) Regulations, 2001

The Social Welfare Act, 2001 provided for increases in the maximum rates of social insurance payments arising from the Budget, with effect from April 2001. These Regulations provide for increases in the reduced rates of Disability Benefit, Unemployment Benefit, Health and Safety Benefit, Old Age (Contributory) Pension (OACP), Retirement Pension, Widow's and Widower's (Contributory) Pension, Deserted Wife's Benefit and also provides for increases in the rates of tapered increases in respect of Qualified Adults. All of these increases take effect from the first week in April 2001.

The Regulations also provide for increases in the minimum and weekly rate of Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit with effect from 2 April 2001. These Regulations further provide for the conversion of the reduced rates of payment to Euro amounts to coincide with the introduction of the new Euro currency from January 2002.

S.I. No. 100 of 2001

Social Welfare (Rent Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for increases in the amount of means disregarded for people affected by the decontrol of rents and the minimum rent for the purposes of the Rent Allowance scheme with effect from 5th April 2001. The Regulations also provide for the conversion of the amounts disregarded to convenient Euro amounts in line with the conversion to the new Euro currency from January, 2002.

S.I. No. 101 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide a disregard of £5 per week for pensioners in the assessment of means for the purposes of Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement. The Regulations also increase the maximum amount of Rent Supplement payable to tenants in voluntary housing developments funded through the local authority Capital Assistance scheme from £21 to £31 for couples and £19 to £29 in all other cases.

S.I. No. 102 of 2001

Social Welfare (Occupational Injuries) (Amendment) Regulations, 2001

The Social Welfare Act, 2001 provided for increases in the maximum rates of benefits payable under the Occupational Injuries Benefits Scheme arising from the Budget. These Regulations provide for increases in the reduced rates of the following Occupational Injuries benefits:

- in respect of Disablement Gratuities appropriate to degrees of disablement assessed at 19% or under from the 2nd April 2001
- in respect of Disablement Pension payable in lieu of such gratuities from the 6th April 2001, and
- in respect of Injury Benefit payable to persons under the age of sixteen from the 2nd April 2001.

These Regulations also provide for the conversion of the above rates to convenient Euro amounts in line with the introduction of the new Euro currency from January 2002.

S.I. No. 103 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 1) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for miscellaneous changes to the Social Welfare code consequent on Budget 2001 and certain provisions contained in the Social Welfare Act, 2001.

The Regulations provide for the following:

- the disregard of foster care allowance received from a Health Board in calculating a spouse's income for the purposes of the Qualified Adult Allowance
- an amendment to the conditions regarding transitional payments in respect of One-Parent Family payments. Where a qualified parent's income exceeds £230.76 per week he or she may be entitled to continued payment at half the rate previously applicable. Under current Regulations this payment may be made for up to 52 weeks. In some cases, the employment may be temporary and when it ceases the person can again become eligible for OPF. If he or she subsequently obtain further employment, he or she may again become entitled to the transitional payment. These Regulations provide that in future the maximum duration of payment under these Regulations may not exceed 12 months, whether in one period or an aggregate of periods, over the life of the claim
- the purposes of Carer's Allowance, an increase of £50 per week for single persons and £100 for couples in the weekly income disregards, bringing them to £125 and £250 per week respectively
- the extension of the payment after death provisions to include Carer's Benefit.

S.I. No. 132 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for miscellaneous changes to Social Welfare payment provisions consequential on the Social Welfare Act, 2001. The Regulations provide for:

- the extension of the sale of residence disregard, in the assessment of means, to Disability Allowance and recipients of Blind Pension aged under 66 years and
- a list of islands off the coast of Ireland in respect of which the new Island Allowance is payable to pensioners over 66 who are normally resident on those islands.

The Regulations also provide for an amendment to the provisions regarding the payment day for Pre-Retirement Allowance. These Regulations now provide that the Allowance will be paid in the same manner as Unemployment Assistance and Farm Assist.

S.I. No. 133 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 3) (Refunds) Regulations, 2001

Where a separated person makes an enforceable maintenance payment, PRSI is levied at the point at which it is earned as part of the person's earnings/income and also as income in the hands of the receiving spouse. Section 23 of the Social Welfare Act, 2000 provided for the return of social insurance contributions in certain circumstances to the maintenance payor.

These Regulations outline the circumstances in which a return of contributions is made in such cases and the basis for calculating the amount of PRSI contribution to be returned.

Article 72B (2) provides that, subject to sub-article (3), where a person makes application in writing to the Minister such contribution or contributions as were paid on that part of a person's income which was paid in maintenance shall be returned.

Article 72B (3)(a) provides that where an insured person's aggregate income from all sources is less than or equal to the employee ceiling, then any contribution paid on the amount of maintenance shall be returned.

Paragraph (b) of that article deals with cases where the insured person's aggregate income from all sources exceeds the employee ceiling but when reduced by the amount of maintenance paid is less than the ceiling. In such cases, the amount to be returned will be the amount of contributions paid on the difference between his or her aggregate income less the maintenance and employee ceiling.

The rate at which the return will be calculated will be the rate at which the contribution was paid. In cases where more than one type of contribution was paid, the return will be calculated by reference to the highest rate first and by reference to other rates in descending order if necessary.

Article 72B (4)(a) provides that in cases where a person's total income when reduced by the amount of maintenance exceeds the employee ceiling, no return shall be made. Paragraph (b) provides that any return to be made shall be reduced if necessary to ensure that the appropriate minimum contribution is paid in the case of self-employed or voluntary contributors.

Sub-article (5) provides that where a self-employment contribution is returned to a person who is also an optional contributor, an equal amount will be returned in respect of the optional contribution.

S.I. No. 134 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Contribution Rates) Regulations, 2001

The Social Welfare Act, 2001 provides for a number of changes to the social insurance (PRSI) provisions. These Regulations provide for the consequential amendments to the regulations governing the payment and collection of insurance contributions as follows:

- amendments required on foot of the abolition of the Employer PRSI Ceiling
- the deletion of Article 32 of the Principal Regulations, which provides for the minimum Voluntary Contribution rate (these rates are now contained in primary legislation) and
- a reduction of 0.5% in PRSI Classes E and H, payable by employees. Class E social insurance contributions are payable by Ministers of Religion, and in this Regulation are reduced from 3.83% to 3.33%. Class H social insurance contributions are payable by non-commissioned Army Officers and enlisted personnel of the Defence Forces. In this Regulation, the contribution is reduced from 4.4% to 3.9%.

S.I. No. 230 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 12) (Commencement) Order, 2001

Section 12 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001, provides for the extended duration of Maternity Benefit from 14 to 18 weeks and the extension from 10 to 14 weeks for Adoptive Benefit in the case of persons in insurable self-employment. This Order provides that these improvements apply with effect from the 8th day of March 2001.

Section 12 also provides for the extended duration to apply in the case of a father entitled to Maternity Benefit following the death of the mother, or to Adoptive Benefit following the death of the adoptive mother. For such persons the extension of entitlement takes effect from 8th of February 2001. These dates mirror the provisions which apply in respect of employed persons.

S.I. No. 231 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 4) (Modified Social Insurance) Regulations, 2001

People employed in a permanent and pensionable capacity in the Civil Service, Local and Public Authorities and other public bodies are liable for a modified rate of social insurance (PRSI) contribution. Modified rates of insurance provide cover for a limited range of benefits i.e. Widow(er)'s and Orphans (Contributory) pensions, Carer's Benefit and Bereavement Grant.

In 1996, the modified rate of social insurance was extended to employees of Bord Telecom Eireann (now Eircom Plc) which, following the formation of a strategic alliance was no longer regarded as a Public Authority under the Social Welfare code.

These Regulations provide for the continuation of a modified rate of social insurance for persons who, on the 5th April 1995 were employed by Eircom and who, immediately on ceasing to be employed by Eircom become employed by Eircell 2000 Plc under terms and conditions which provide that he or she continues to be employed in a permanent and pensionable capacity and for payment during illness on a basis considered adequate by the Minister.

S.I. No. 242 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 3) (Sharing of Information) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations prescribe the information which a specified body may be required to share with the Department of Education and Science in relation to the use of the Personal Public Service Number as a unique student identifier at all levels of the education system. In addition, information in relation to a person which may be shared between the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and any other specified body for the purposes of seeking or giving that person's Personal Public Service Number, is specified.

The Regulations also specify the information which may be shared between the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and Local Authorities in relation to tenancies supported through the Supplementary Welfare Allowance system in order to assist those authorities in carrying out their statutory responsibilities in relation to private rented accommodation.

S.I. No. 243 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Part 5) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides for the commencement of Part 5 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 with effect from the 29th of May 2001. Part 5 provides for amendments consequential on the alignment of the income tax and calendar year.

The alignment process will mean that the period commencing on 6 April 2001 and ending on 31 December 2001 will be a nine month tax year. Accordingly, **Section 29** provides that the Minister may make Regulations to provide for the preservation of rights for all contributors with regard to entitlement to benefit in that short tax year.

Section 30 sets the annual PRSI flat-rate contributions and allowances in 2001 at 74% of the normal full year amounts in line with income tax arrangements for 2001. Section 30 also provides for transitional arrangements so that claims to benefit made in 2002 will be decided by reference to the contribution year April 2000 to March 2001 rather than the nine month tax year from April 2001 to December 2001.

As contribution records in respect of this period would not be available until later in 2002 it is necessary to maintain the current gap between the date of a claim and the contribution year on which entitlement is based.

S.I. No. 244 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 38) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 38 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 with effect from the 29th of May 2001.

Consequent on the alignment of the income tax year and calendar year with effect from 1 January 2002, Section 38 sets the annual Health Contribution earnings threshold at approximately 75% of the normal full year amounts for the tax year commencing on 6 April 2001 and ending on 31 December 2001. The duration of the 2001 tax year will be nine months, approximately 75% of a normal full tax year.

S.I. No. 300 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 22) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides that Section 22 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 shall come into effect from 2nd July, 2001. Section 22 provides that social welfare payments credited directly to a beneficiary's personal account in a bank or other financial institution after the beneficiary's death may be recovered by the Minister from the financial institution.

S.I. No. 301 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 26) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides that Section 26 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 shall come into effect on the 28th June 2001. Section 26 provides for amendments to the qualifying conditions for entitlement to Carer's Benefit.

It provides for:

- an amendment to the definition of a 'carer' whereby he or she is no longer required to be under pensionable age
- an amendment to the definition of 'relevant person' to include a person who is under 16 years and
- regulations to prescribe an alternative three-month period to establish whether a person was engaged in full-time remunerative employment.

S.I. No. 326 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 4) (Island Allowance) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for the addition of Island Roy in Co. Donegal to the list of prescribed islands for the purposes of the Island Allowance payable to pensioners over 66 who are normally resident on those islands.

S.I. No. 327 of 2001

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Control Provisions) (Amendment) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations extend existing control provisions which require employers in the construction industry to maintain on-site records.

S.I. No. 360 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 25) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides that Section 25 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 shall come into effect on the 27th July, 2001. Section 25 provides for a technical amendment to the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, to provide that where the Collector-General initiates a prosecution for offences under the income tax and social welfare codes, a certificate stating that a debt is due and owing, which is offered in evidence, may be signed by an Officer of the Revenue Commissioners rather than the Collector-General. This is to reflect similar changes to the Revenue code.

S.I. No. 361 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 1998 (Section 17) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides that Section 17 of the Social Welfare Act, 1998 will come into effect on the 27th day of July, 2001. Section 17 provides for actuarial reviews of the Social Insurance Fund on a five-yearly basis. It further provides that a report of the review will be made to the Minister and a copy of any such report will be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas within 6 months of the completion of the review. The date for completion of the first review is not later than 31st of December 2002.

S.I. No. 407 of 2001

Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Sections 13 (1)(A)(iii), (2)(A)(iii), (3)(b) and (4)(b)) (Commencement) Order, 2001

This Order provides for the commencement of Subsections (1)(a)(iii), (2)(a)(iii), (3)(b) and (4)(b) of Section 13 of the Social Welfare Act, 2001 with effect from the first week in September 2001. These subsections provide for the disregard of maintenance grants received under:

- the Maintenance Grants Scheme for students attending Post-Leaving Certificate Courses
- the Vocational Education Committees Scholarship Scheme and
- the Third-Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for trainees in the assessment of means for certain schemes.

S.I. No. 408 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 5) (Educational Opportunities) Regulations, 2001

To mirror an improvement in qualification for the Back to Education Allowance and Educational, Training and Development option, these Regulations now provide for unemployed persons aged between 18 and 20 years to retain their entitlement to payment of Unemployment Benefit or Assistance while participating in an approved course of education, training or development in the following circumstances:

- where they have been in receipt of Unemployment Assistance or Unemployment Benefit for not less than 156 days, and
- where they have been out of formal schooling for at least two years.

S.I. No. 532 of 2001

Social Welfare (Temporary Provisions) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for the payment of a Christmas Bonus to long-term social welfare recipients, equivalent to 100% of their normal weekly payments, subject to a minimum payment of €20.

The bonus payment applies to recipients of

- Disablement Pension
- Death Benefit by way of pension
- Old Age (Contributory and Non-Contributory) Pension
- Retirement Pension
- Invalidity Pension
- Widow's and Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension
- Widow's and Widower's (Contributory) Pension
- Orphan's (Contributory and Non-Contributory) Pension
- Pre-Retirement Allowance

- Blind Pension
- Carer's Allowance
- One-parent Family Payment
- relevant payments under section 18(1) of the Social Welfare Act, 1996 (formerly Deserted Wife's Benefit and Allowance and Prisoner's Wife's Allowance)
- Unemployment Assistance at the long-term rate
- Disability Allowance and Farm Assist.

S.I. No. 548 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No.6) (Widowed Parent Grant) Regulations, 2001

This Regulation provides for an increase in the Widowed Parent Grant from €1,000 to €2,500 (€1,968.91), with effect from the 5th of December 2001, as announced in Budget 2002.

S.I. No. 613 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 6) (Euro) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for the conversion of certain PRSI rates contained in the Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) Regulations, 1996 to convenient Euro amounts and are in line with changes made to the PRSI rates in the 2001 Social Welfare Act.

S.I. No. 614 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) (Amendment) (No. 7) (Euro) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for the conversion of certain rounding and means banding provisions contained in the Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) Regulations, 1994.

S.I. No. 615 of 2001

**Social Welfare (Liable Relative)
(Amendment) (Euro) Regulations, 2001**

The Liable Relative Regulations provide for the rounding of any amount of contribution due by a liable relative up or down to the nearest £1 where the amount is under or over 50 pence and for the payment of a minimum contribution of £2. These Regulations provide for the conversion of these amounts to convenient Euro amounts.

S.I. No. 616 of 2001

**Social Welfare (Rent Allowance)
(Amendment) (No. 1) (Euro) Regulations, 2001**

Regulations currently provide for the disregard of the qualified child weekly rate of £13.20 in the assessment of means in relation to the Rent Allowance scheme for people affected by the de-control of rents. These Regulations provide for the conversion of this amount to a convenient Euro amount of €16.80.

S.I. No. 617 of 2001

**Social Welfare (Occupational Injuries)
(Amendment) (No. 1) (Euro) Regulations, 2001**

These Regulations provide for the conversion of certain rounding provisions as well as an income limit of £24 provided for in the Rules of Behaviour and a £100 payment limit in relation to disablement benefit, contained in the Occupational Injuries Regulations.

S.I. No. 618 of 2001

**Social Welfare Act, 2001 (Section 37(6))
(Commencement) Order, 2001**

The Social Welfare Act, 2001 contains provisions for the conversion of certain monetary amounts contained in the Principal Act, consequent on the introduction of the new Euro currency in January, 2002.

This Order gives effect to these provisions, and details the effective dates for the purposes of the relevant social welfare payments.

S.I. No. 650 of 2001

**Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments
Provisions) (Amendment) (No.8)
(Increase in Rates) Regulations, 2001**

The Social Welfare (No.2) Act, 2001 provides for increases in the maximum rates of social insurance payments arising from the Budget, with effect from January 2002.

These Regulations provide for increases in the reduced rates of Disability Benefit, Unemployment Benefit, Health and Safety Benefit, Old Age (Contributory) Pension, Retirement Pension, Widow's and Widower's (Contributory) Pension, Deserted Wife's Benefit, and also provides for increases in the rates of tapered increases in respect of Qualified Adults. All of these increases are effective from the first week in January 2002.

The Regulations also provide for increases in the minimum weekly rate of Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit with effect from January 2002.

S.I. No. 651 of 2001

**Social Welfare (Rent Allowance)
(Amendment) (No.2) Regulations, 2001**

These Regulations provide for increases in the amount of means disregarded for people affected by the de-control of rents and the minimum rent for the purposes of the Rent Allowance scheme with effect from 3rd January 2002.

S.I. No. 652 of 2001

Social Welfare (Occupational Injuries) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations, 2001

The Social Welfare (No.2) Act, 2001 provides for increases in the maximum rates of benefits payable under the Occupational Injuries Benefits Scheme arising from the Budget. These Regulations provide for increases in the reduced rates of the following Occupational Injuries Benefits:

- in respect of Disablement Gratuities appropriate to degrees of disablement assessed at 19% or under from the 31st December 2001
- in respect of Disablement Pension payable in lieu of such gratuities from the 4th January 2002, and
- in respect of Injury Benefit payable to persons under the age of sixteen from the 31st December 2001.

S.I. No. 653 of 2001

Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No.1) (Income Disregards) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for an increase of €18.26 (from €31.74 (£25) to €50.00 (£39.38)) in the income disregard for part-time workers claiming Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme as announced in Budget 2002.

The Regulations also provide for an increase from €5 to €10 (£7.88) in the amount of pension income disregarded for the purposes of Rent and Mortgage Interest Supplement.

These increases are effective from the first week in January 2002.

S.I. No. 654 of 2001

Social Welfare (Transitional Arrangements) (Alignment of Income Tax Year with Calendar Year) Regulations, 2001

With effect from 1st January, 2002 the Income Tax Year and the calendar year will be aligned and consequently, the period 6 April, 2001 to 31 December, 2001 will comprise a 'short' tax year. These Regulations contain the transitional arrangements necessary to preserve entitlement to social insurance-based benefits, to ensure that people are not adversely affected by the 39 week Income Tax Year.

The Regulation contains the following provisions:

Article 4(1) provides that fourteen (14) additional employment, optional or voluntary social insurance contributions will be awarded in the 'short' transitional tax year, 6 April to 31 December, 2001.

Article 4(2)(b) provides that where a person has paid more than one class of employment contribution, the 14 additional contributions will be awarded at the highest rate.

Article 4(3) specifies the manner in which these additional contributions will be reckonable for the purpose of qualifying for social insurance benefits. They will be reckonable as qualifying contributions:

- for all contribution conditions requiring a certain number of contributions paid or credited in a Governing Contribution Year
- where a minimum number of paid contributions is required in the Governing Contribution Year, and
- for the purposes of the yearly average tests used for pensions.

Article 5 provides for the award of fourteen (14) additional credited contributions where a person is not awarded any additional contributions, in accordance with Article 4, and has at least one credited contribution in the relevant period.

Article 6 contains amendments to the Social Welfare (Consolidated Payments Provisions) Regulations, 1994 (S.I. No. 417/94). **Article 6(1)** provides that in the Benefit year 2002 (i.e. the period 7th January 2002 to 5th January 2003), for the purposes of qualifying for Disability Benefit and Unemployment Benefit, the appropriate Governing Contribution Year will be the contribution year commencing on 6th April 2000 and ending 5th April 2001.

Maternity and Adoptive Benefit payment rates are determined on the basis of a woman's reckonable earnings in the last complete income tax year before the beginning of the Benefit Year in which the claim is made. **Article 6(2)** provides that in the 2002 Benefit Year the Income Tax Year 6th April 2000 to 5th April 2001 will be applicable.

Article 6(3) provides that, for the purposes of determining entitlement to Health and Safety Benefit in the Benefit Year 2002, the appropriate Governing Contribution Year will be 6th April 2000 to 5th April 2001. **Article 6(4)** provides that, for the purposes of determining entitlement to Treatment Benefit in the Benefit Year 2002, the appropriate Relevant Contribution Year will be April 2000 to April 2001.

Article 7 provides for the amendment of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) Regulations, 1996 (S.I. No. 312 of 1996). **Article 7(1)(a)** contains a necessary amendment to the definition of "income tax month" which is defined in relation to time limits for remittance of social insurance contributions. **Article 7(1)(b)** amends a date in relation to refund of PRSI contributions in respect of Seafarers from "5th April 2004" to "31st December 2003".

Article 7(2) provides that the additional insurance contributions awarded in accordance with these Regulations are excluded from the provisions governing refund of contributions.

Article 8 provides that the minimum amount below which self-employment contributions are payable will be 74% of the normal annual rate in the 'short' transitional Income Tax Year.

Article 9 amends the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act to provide that, in the 'short' Income Tax Year, 52 contributions will be recorded in respect of all self-employed people who discharge their liability.

S.I. No. 23 of 2001

Occupational Pension Schemes (Revaluation) Regulations, 2001

Section 33 of the Pensions Act, 1990 (as amended by Section 11 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 1996), provides that the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, after consultation with the Minister for Finance, shall, in respect of each revaluation year, make Regulations determining what amount the preserved benefit is to be increased by in that year.

This Regulation provides for a revaluation percentage of 4% for 2000.

S.I. No. 329 of 2001

Occupational Pension Schemes (Schemes with External Members) (United Kingdom) (Amendment) Regulations, 2001

These Regulations provide for the amendment of Article 5 of S.I. 470/2000 by requiring that Actuarial Funding Certificates (AFCs) to be submitted in respect of "qualifying Irish schemes" be in the form set out in the Schedules to those Regulations (as inserted).

appendix ix

Ministers in Charge of the Department Since 1947

	From	To
James Ryan	22 January 1947	18 February 1948
William Norton	18 February 1948	14 June 1951
James Ryan	14 June 1951	2 June 1954
Brendan Corish	2 June 1954	20 March 1957
Patrick Smyth	20 March 1957	27 November 1957
Sean McEntee	27 November 1957	24 June 1959
Sean McEntee	24 June 1959	12 October 1961
Kevin Boland	12 October 1961	21 April 1965
Kevin Boland	21 April 1965	16 November 1966
Joseph Brennan	16 November 1966	2 July 1969
Kevin Boland	2 July 1969	6 May 1970
Joseph Brennan	6 May 1970	14 March 1973
Brendan Corish	14 March 1973	5 July 1977
Charles J Haughey	5 July 1977	12 December 1979
Michael Woods	12 December 1979	30 June 1981
Eileen Desmond	30 June 1981	9 March 1982
Michael Woods	9 March 1982	14 December 1982
Barry Desmond	14 December 1982	14 February 1986
Gemma Hussey	14 February 1986	10 March 1987
Michael Woods	10 March 1987	18 July 1989
Michael Woods	18 July 1989	13 November 1991
Brendan Daly	13 November 1991	11 February 1992
Charlie McCreevy	11 February 1992	12 January 1993
Michael Woods	12 January 1993	15 December 1994
Proinsias De Rossa	15 December 1994	26 June 1997
Dermot Ahern	26 June 1997	

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Parliamentary Secretaries/Ministers of State

	From	To
Michael J Kennedy	19 June 1951	24 April 1954
Michael J Kennedy	24 April 1954	2 June 1954
Michael J Kennedy	1 March 1957	23 June 1959
Michael J Kennedy	24 June 1959	15 September 1961
John Geoghan	9 July 1969	5 February 1973
John Geoghan	2 March 1973	14 March 1973
Frank Cluskey	14 March 1973	25 May 1977
Tom Nolan	25 March 1980	17 December 1980
Tom Hussey	17 December 1980	30 June 1981
Mary Flaherty	30 June 1981	9 March 1982
Denis Gallagher	23 March 1982	27 October 1982
Rory O'Hanlon	27 October 1982	14 December 1982
Fergus O'Brien	16 December 1982	15 December 1983
John Donnellan	15 December 1983	14 February 1986
Seamus Pattison	14 February 1986	20 January 1987
Joan Burton	14 January 1993	17 November 1994
Bernard J Durkan	20 December 1994	26 June 1997

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Social Welfare Services Office

Social Welfare Services is the executive arm of the Department and is responsible for the day-to-day administration and delivery of social welfare payments and schemes. It is headed by the Director-General. The service is delivered through a network of local, regional and headquarters offices.

The provision of a comprehensive local service for customers has been developed in recent years through decentralisation and localisation of the Department's services. The development of the Department's computer network has assisted this process and improved services generally for customers.



Department of Social,
Community and Family Affairs
