

Annual Report

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Department of Social & Family Affairs



## *mission statement*

*"Our mission is to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families."*

Annual Report 2003

# Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	4
Chapter 1	
The Department of Social and Family Affairs	5
Chapter 2	
Income Support	9
Chapter 3	
Support to Work	22
Chapter 4	
Families	26
Chapter 5	
Poverty and Social exclusion	30
Chapter 6	
e-Government Agenda	35
Chapter 7	
The Department and its Staff	38
Appendices	51

"Our mission is to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families."



# *foreword*

Annual Report 2003



## Minister's Foreword

The 2003 Annual Report of the Department demonstrates our record of implementing policies which make real changes in the lives of those dependent on social welfare.

The strong economic performance of recent years has enabled us to make significant headway in promoting a caring society and supporting those who depend on social welfare services.

Social welfare spending rose by more than €4.5 billion between 1997 and 2003 to over €10.4 billion, an increase of nearly eighty percent in that time.

Budget 2003 ensured that the value of all rates of payments were maintained or increased, additional increases were given to those over 66 years of age and in particular to widows and old age pensioners, and provided further increases in Child Benefit.

In 2003 the social welfare budget reached an all time high with a spend of approximately €10.5 billion. This represented approximately 970,000 weekly payments to recipients in various schemes, benefiting approximately 1.5 million people.

This Government Department is extremely customer oriented with a network of over 200 local offices and a pro-active information service. In 2003 the Department handled in excess of 59 million transactions demonstrating the sheer scale of the administrative task involved and the constant need to update and improve our delivery systems. The Department's modernisation and change agenda is designed to ensure that the customer comes first by being placed continually at the centre of its operations and that our staff are equipped and supported in the delivery of this objective.

In May 2003 I established the Family Support Agency which brings together the main programmes and pro-family services providing a comprehensive and coherent response for families in need of those support services and for families generally.

I provided the Family Support Agency with a budget of €17.2 million for the year underlining my commitment to supporting families at a time of rapid social change in Ireland. In 2003 I also commenced a nationwide consultation on the family which will help inform a new families policy which I will be presenting in 2004.

The year 2004 will present fresh challenges. I look forward to them and would take this opportunity to formally place on the record my appreciation and gratitude for all the hard work and commitment shown by the staff of the Department of Social and Family Affairs throughout the country.

**Mary Coughlan TD**

Minister for Social and Family Affairs



## Introduction

This is the first report on the Department's statement of strategy, "Promoting a Caring Society" covering the period from 2003 to 2005. This strategy reflects the evolving role of the Department, from providing for the income support needs of our customers to addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion and supporting families. The implementation of this strategy was supported by changes to the structures of the Department. The Family Support Agency has been established and the Office of Social Inclusion completed its first year of operation in 2003.

The Department is facing many challenges arising from the rapid changes taking place in society such as changes in employment and family patterns, demographic changes and migration. While these changes will enable many to improve their standard of living, the Department has a particular responsibility to help those who do not benefit from the changes taking place.

We are committed to delivering a service of the highest quality to our customers, taxpayers, social insurance contributors and to Government and to do this in a consultative and partnership manner. The Department will continue to support and exploit the potential that IT provides for the delivery of quality service. The implementation this year of the online facility for the registration of births, reflects this potential and the progress the Department is making in delivering on its modernisation agenda.

The Department's modernisation action plan under 'Sustaining Progress' set out an ambitious programme of change for the medium term future and a good beginning was made in 2003 in commencing delivery of this agreed programme.

The success of any strategy is dependent on the Department maximising its strategic capability. A core element of this is the knowledge, skill and commitment of staff in engaging with the challenges of our changing environment. The Department's commitment to equip and support our staff in meeting these challenges is reflected in our statement of strategy, in our modernisation action plan and in the three key themes; *Partnership*, *Development and Performance*, of our HR strategy.

The Department has shown a great capacity and flexibility in responding to change over the years and I am confident that through partnership and the support of our agencies and in co-operation with other public service agencies we will continue to deliver a high quality service to meet the needs of our customers.

I would finally and especially like to thank the staff in the Department for their commitment and support over the past year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John Hynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John Hynes**  
Secretary-General



# *chapter* 1

The Department of Social & Family Affairs

Annual Report 2003

## Chapter 1

# The Department of Social and Family Affairs

### Functions of the Department

The main functions of the Department are:

- to formulate appropriate policies in relation to social security and related programmes;
- to administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social and family schemes and services; and
- to work with other Departments and agencies in the delivery of Government priorities.

The main business of the Department continues to be the provision of income support, including insurance (PRSI) based payments, social assistance (means tested) payments, associated secondary benefits and Child Benefit. The Department also provides employment supports for people in receipt of payments who need support in returning to the workforce.

The Department also has responsibility for co-ordinating and developing cross-Departmental action in support of social inclusion initiatives, through the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and policy in support of families.

### The Structure of the Department

The Department is structured on Aireacht/Executive lines and has a total of over 4,300 staff (of whom almost 1000 are work sharing) equating to about 3,300 full-time posts.

The *Aireacht* provides a range of corporate services comprising Personnel (including Staff Development Unit and the Employee Assistance Service), Finance, Facilities Management and Internal Audit. It also includes the policy area which is responsible for the formulation of social protection and other social support policies, the preparation of legislation and for the provision of policy support and advice to the Minister.

*Social Welfare Services (SWS)* is the executive arm of the Department and is responsible for the administration and management of social welfare schemes and services through a network of local, regional and other offices. Our main offices are located in Dublin, Sligo, Letterkenny, Longford, Waterford and Dundalk.

*Regional Structure* Delivery of some services is structured on a 10 region basis with regional offices in Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Longford, Sligo, Dundalk and three in the Dublin area. Within these regions there is a network of 58 Social Welfare Local Offices and 69 Branch Offices.

*Social Welfare Appeals Office* is an independent Office responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

### Statutory Agencies

The following offices come under the aegis of the Department:

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

The **Pensions Board**, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Pensions Act which concerns the security and development of occupational pensions, and for the development of occupational pensions coverage;

**Comhairle**, which has responsibility for supporting the provision of independent information, advice and advocacy services; and

The **Family Support Agency**, which is responsible for the provision of a family mediation service, the support, promotion and development of marriage and relationship counselling and other family supports, and the Family and Community Services Resource programme.



# Management Advisory Committee



John Hynes  
Secretary General



Bernadette Lacey  
Director General



Tom Mulherin  
Assistant Secretary



Alice O'Flynn  
Assistant Secretary



Brian O Raghallaigh  
Assistant Director General



Gerry Daly  
Assistant Director General



Gerry Mangan  
Director



Niall Barry  
Director



Eoin O'Broin  
Director



Vera Dervan  
Director



Cyril Havelin  
Director/  
Chief Appeals Officer

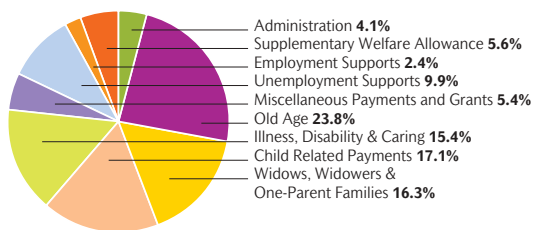


Oliver Ryan  
Director – REACH

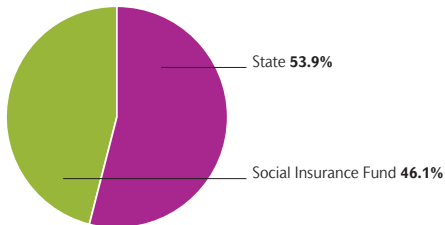
## Finance

In 2003, total expenditure by the Department amounted to over €10.49 billion. The charts below illustrate the sources of finance in 2003 and the programme areas where this money was spent. For full break down on expenditure see Appendix 3.

### Expenditure on Social Welfare by Programme, 2003



### Financing of Social Welfare Expenditure, 2003



### Financing of the Social Insurance Fund, 2003





# *chapter* 2

Income Support

Annual Report 2003

# Introductory Statement

The Department has set out in its Statement of Strategy 2003-2005 a number of high level goals covering the main areas of its work. This Report includes an account of the Department's progress in 2003 towards the delivery of these goals.

## Chapter 2

### GOAL 1: INCOME SUPPORT

*Promoting the development of adequate, secure and sustainable income support and related services and delivering appropriate services to the highest standards, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, and responsive to people's changing needs and entitlements, taking account of our responsibilities to contributors and tax-payers.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To meet effectively the income support and associated needs of defined customer groups.*

##### Review of Schemes

The Department reviews schemes and services on an ongoing basis and these reviews help to inform the decision-making process arising in the context of annual Estimates or Budgets. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that available resources are directed effectively to those in greatest need and are in line with the original objectives of the schemes concerned and to enable improvements in other areas of the social welfare code.

In the context of the Estimates for 2004, following a review of expenditure priorities, a number of measures were adopted to enable resources to be redirected to areas of need. These measures produced savings which, in turn, were directly re-invested in a substantial 2004 Budget package of €630 million.

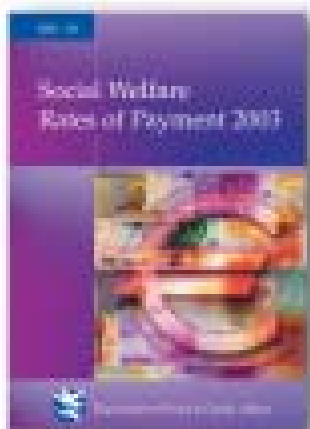
The measures included:

- an increase in the qualifying period for back to education allowance (third level)
- discontinuance of transitional payments of one-parent family payments
- discontinuance of half-rate child dependant allowance for high earning spouses of social welfare claimants
- discontinuance of additional half rate benefits for recipients of lone parents and related payments
- changes in conditions for entitlement to short-term social insurance payments
- changes in the conditions for supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) rent supplement payments and discontinuance of certain other supplements.

These measures generally came into effect at the beginning of 2004.

##### Increases in Weekly Rates of Payment

The 2004 Budget was announced in December 2003 and made provision for significant improvements in weekly rates of payment. These increases were provided for in the Social Welfare Act, 2003, to come into effect from the beginning of January 2004.



The principal improvements were:

#### Personal Rates of Payment

- An increase of €10 per week, from €157.30 to €167.30 per week, in the personal rate of Old Age Contributory and Retirement Pensions.
- An increase of €11.50 per week, from €155.80 to €167.30 per week, in the personal rate payable to recipients of Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension and Deserted Wife's Benefit aged 66 and over. This increase completed the commitment to bring the rate of these payments up to the rate of the Old Age Contributory Pension.
- An increase of €10 per week in the personal rate payable to all other recipients of social welfare payments. This brought the level of the lowest rate of payment to €134.80 per week.

#### Qualified Adult Rates of Payment

- The weekly rates of Qualified Adult payments increased by amounts ranging from €6.60 to €7.70 per week.



- Invalidity Pension Qualified Adults aged 66 and over received a special increase of €16.10 per week. This level of increase brought the level of this payment up to that payable to all other equivalent contributory Qualified Adults.

#### Support for Children

- The Government continued its programme of multi annual increases in Child Benefit during 2003. Child Benefit was increased by €8 per month and €10 per month in the lower and higher rates, respectively, with effect from 1 April 2003. Further increases of €6 and €8 in the lower and higher rates, respectively, were announced in Budget 2004, to come into effect in April 2004.
- From October 2003, entitlement to a child dependant increase was extended to persons in receipt of short-term schemes (for over twenty six weeks) where the child dependant is in full time education up to the age of 22 years or up to the end of the academic year after the 22nd birthday. The child dependent increase for these recipients was previously payable in respect of children aged up to 19 years or the end of the relevant academic year.
- In June 2003, the rate of payment of Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance in respect of children aged 12 and over was increased from €120 to €150 per child.
- Additional funding of €2 million was provided in 2003 under the school meals community programme.
- In January 2003, the income thresholds for entitlement to Family Income Supplement were increased by €17 per week. Further increases of €28 per week were announced in Budget 2004 and came into effect at the beginning of January 2004.
- The Widowed Parent Grant was increased by €200, from €2,500 to €2,700, with effect from December 2003.

## Carers

The following measures for carers were introduced in 2003.

- The weekly income disregard on the Carer's Allowance means test increased by €19 to €210 for a single carer and by €38 to €420 for a married carer, with effect from 1 April 2003. It was announced in Budget 2004 that these disregards were to be further increased to €250 and €500 respectively with effect from April 2004 thereby making significant further progress towards achieving the Government commitment to increase the level of the disregard for couples up to the average industrial wage.
- The annual Respite Care Grant which is paid with both Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit increased by €100 to €735 and carers caring for more than one person received a double Respite Care Grant of €1,470, with effect from 1 June 2003. Further increases, of €100 and €200 in these amounts, respectively, were announced in Budget 2004 and will come into effect in 2004.
- The income threshold for people in receipt of Carer's Benefit who wish to engage in limited employment or self-employment was increased to €150, with effect from 1 April 2003.

## Unemployment Assistance – Benefit and Privilege Assessment

Since the inception of the Unemployment Assistance scheme in the 1930s, the value of the benefit and privilege derived from residing in the parental home has been assessable for means testing purposes. In Budget 2003, the assessment of such benefit and privilege was abolished for all persons aged 29 and over with effect from May 2003. In Budget 2004, it was announced that the relevant age was to be further reduced to 27 years during 2004.

## Persons with Disabilities

### Island Allowance

- With effect from April 2003, entitlement to the Island Allowance was extended to all persons aged under 66 resident on specified islands and who are in receipt of Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance, Unemployability Supplement and Blind Person's Pension.

## Hearing Aid Grants

- The grant payable under the Medical Appliance scheme in respect of hearing aids was increased by €350, from €350 to €700, with effect from January 2003.



## Household Benefits Package – Telephone Allowance

- From January 2003, the Telephone Allowance was extended to people aged 70 years and over, residing in nursing homes, where they have their own telephone account.
- The Telephone Allowance structure was changed with effect from October 2003 to integrate the various rental and call unit components of the allowance into a single clearly-identifiable credit on client bills. In conjunction with this improvement, a special social benefit scheme rate was agreed with eircom, with ComReg approval. The standardised allowance structure will make it more straightforward for additional land-line and mobile phone service providers to participate in the scheme in due course.

## Rural Transport

As part of the Government's pilot Rural Transport Initiative, co-ordinated by the Department of Transport, an agreement was negotiated in 2003 with Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) to administer the Free Travel element of the pilot community transport projects on behalf of the Department. Under this agreement, the Department contributed €400,000 during the year for reimbursement to community groups who provided local transport services to free travel passholders. The programme is continuing into 2004, when the pilot scheme will be reviewed.

## OBJECTIVE 2

*To continually improve and update our system of service delivery.*



### Sustaining Progress: the Department's Modernisation Action Plan

In common with all other Government Departments/Offices, the

Department produced an action plan setting out the modernisation initiatives to be taken over the course of the Sustaining Progress Agreement with a view to the further development of quality services which are accountable, achieve value-for-money, focus on the needs of customers and respond quickly and flexibly to change.

The Department's modernisation and change agenda is designed to ensure that the customer comes first by being placed continually at the centre of its operations and that our staff are equipped and supported in the delivery of this objective. The Modernisation Action Plan is a detailed document which builds on our programme of change to date. Five key priorities were identified in the Plan:

- the increased use of new technology to deliver better services;
- greater flexibility in the way services are delivered;
- implementation of a new control programme;
- a range of changes in human resources, in particular in the area of promotions; and
- development of better financial management and information systems.

The overall aim of the Action Plan is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department in terms of the delivery of services and the internal management processes that support this. The Plan was agreed through partnership and substantial progress was made during 2003 in putting it into operation.

### The Official Languages Act 2003

The Act was passed into law in July 2003. The main objective of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. This will be achieved by delivering services in a coherent and agreed fashion through a statutory planning framework or scheme to be drawn up in the future by each public body included in the Act.

In anticipation of the passing of the Act three specialised training courses for frontline staff were provided. In addition, other staff members attended Gaeleagras training courses in Gaeltacht locations. An increased range of forms and information leaflets were translated into Irish and were made available both externally (on the Department's website) and internally (in the Irish electronic shared-drawer). In December 2003 a working group of staff drawn from across the Department was set up to prepare for the implementation of the Act.

### Payment Services

The Department issued in excess of 59 million payment transactions in 2003. Over 42 million payments were issued via An Post, a further 7 million by cheque and 10 million by EFT into customers' accounts. Discussions took place with the Department's payments service providers to discuss payment related issues including service delivery and future payment options particularly having regard to the developing e-Government agenda.

### Central Records System

Over 2.8 million PRSI contribution records were received from the Revenue Commissioners during 2003 and updated to the Central Records System of the Department. Client Eligibility Services also amended 219,000 insurance records during the year as more information became available. A major data clean up of records in respect of Self-Employed (SE) contributors was undertaken in 2003. The clean up culminated in the transfer of an additional 390,000 SE records to the Central Records System and the identification of a significant number of incorrect classifications. This data clean up has resulted in speedier decisions of Old Age Contributory Pension applications for self-employed contributors.

### Pre-Pension Mailshot

As part of an ongoing commitment to improving customer service, a mailshot was sent to a group of customers approaching pension age who appeared to have deficiencies in their social insurance record which could cause delays in processing their contributory pension claims. All of the resulting queries were dealt with to the satisfaction of the customers involved.

### Customer Service

During 2003, Client Identity Services introduced a phone bank to deal with calls of a routine nature from members of the public in a more efficient manner, allowing more complex calls and paperwork to be dealt with more efficiently and with less interruption.

### Printing Facilities

A new printing facility system was introduced in 2003 which enables the Department to print significantly more documents internally and to a higher standard.

## OBJECTIVE 3

*To provide comprehensive and accurate information in a clear and easily accessible manner to customers, employers, staff and external partners.*



Minister Coughlan with Sandra Murphy and Sharon Joyce Information Services at the launch of DSFA Information Services Strategy 2003-2006

### Information Services Strategy

The Department's Information Services Strategy 2003-2006 was published in April 2003. Its primary purpose is to provide comprehensive and accurate information in a clear and easily accessible manner to customers, employers, staff and external partners.

As part of the preparation of the Strategy, an extensive consultation process with information providers, both internal and external, took place. That process identified a number of problems and weaknesses with the current information dissemination arrangements which the Strategy in time will address. An implementation group representative of all the main areas concerned in the Department has been set up to ensure the implementation of all the main goals outlined in the Strategy.

### Seminars

- An Information Seminar was held in Dublin Castle in April 2003 for all Departmental front-line information providers. Representatives from Citizens Information Centres attended the Seminar for the first time.
- In partnership with the Department of Social Development (Northern Ireland) an Information Seminar entitled "North/South Benefit Information Day" was held in Newry in December 2003. The purpose of the Seminar was to provide frontline information staff with adequate knowledge to address the Social Welfare information needs of those wishing to migrate North/South. The Seminar focussed on the themes of pensions and disabilities. It was attended by over 150 staff from the two Departments and included representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector.



- In pursuit of the commitment to addressing the information needs of emigrants, Information Services funded and participated in an Information Seminar in London in partnership with the Federation of Irish Societies. The purpose of this Seminar was to up-date Advice Workers in the Irish Centres in the UK on current Social Welfare Legislation and entitlements. We continued with our support for the Coalition of Irish Emigrant Centres in the USA.

### Publications in 2003

- A revised edition of the SW4 – Guide to Social Welfare Services was published.
- A new Directory of Services for the Ill and Incapacitated was launched.



- A number of existing information booklets were revised and updated.



Minister Coughlan with Clodagh McCarthy, NALA at the launch of the Plain English Campaign

### Plain English

In 2003, the Department initiated a policy of "Plain English" for all Departmental forms and leaflets. As a result of funding provided in 2003, the National Adult Literacy Agency engaged a Development Officer to work full-time with the Department's Information Services to ensure the use of plain English in all information material for our customers.

### Relocation of Information Services

In October 2003, Central Information Services was re-located to Oisín House, Pearse Street, Dublin 2. The Internet Unit also re-located and amalgamated with Central Information Services.

### Dublin Public Offices

Information Services took over responsibility for the two Dublin Public Offices in April 2003 and carried out a review of their role and functions with a view to ensuring a more effective delivery of information provision in the city centre.

### Exhibitions and Presentations

Staff participated in various exhibitions throughout the country and made information presentations on a wide variety of schemes and services to numerous groups and organisations.

### Information Grants

A total of €1.42 million was allocated to various national organisations and voluntary groups for information dissemination projects to our customers and to address the information needs of emigrants.

### Freedom of Information (FOI)

During 2003, a total of 593 FOI requests were received in this Department. This represents a 11% decrease on the number (670) of requests received in 2002. Of the requests received in 2003, 516 (87%) were from members of the public seeking access to personal records, including 25 requests from staff members for personnel records. The remainder were for non-personal records. The majority (87%) of requests were satisfied in whole or in part.

## OBJECTIVE 4

*To ensure that any person who is dissatisfied with the decision made on his/her social welfare entitlements is provided with the means to have such decisions reviewed.*

### Decisions Advisory Office (DAO)

During 2003 the Decisions Advisory Office continued to play a pro-active role in the provision of advice and support to Deciding Officers in the Department, to ensure decisions in regard to applications, or reviews on continued entitlement to Social welfare payments, were carried out in a consistent and high quality manner. Throughout the year the office organised and presented 15 training seminars for Training Officers and Deciding Officers across the Department.

The DAO responded to over 900 requests by Deciding Officers on issues relating to decision making, including interpretation of legislation. In its role as liaison with the Social Welfare Appeals Office, the DAO sought clarification from that office on over 50 appeal cases.

In line with the Department's Strategy Statement (2001-2004), in 2003 the DAO was involved in the development and subsequent promotion of a system that ensures that any decision by a Deciding Officer will be reviewed in the light of any further information brought to our notice. All customers who receive an adverse decision are advised of their right to have their claims reviewed by a Deciding Officer. The system was reviewed in 2003 to ensure that it was operating correctly.

## OBJECTIVE 5

*To ensure our income support programmes and associated supports are relevant, adequate, efficient, effective, recognising the needs of diverse customer groups and effectively address poverty and social exclusion.*

### Programme Expenditure Reviews

The expenditure review process is a civil service wide initiative, which was launched in 1997 to provide a systematic analysis of expenditure and a basis for informed decision making on expenditure priorities. The Department has completed 16 expenditure reviews since the start of the programme. The review of the Orphan's Pensions/Allowance and the review of the Illness and Disability Payment schemes were completed in 2003.

Work on the following reviews was undertaken and progressed in 2003:

- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance;
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance;
- Back to Education Allowance; and
- Application of the unemployment scheme conditions to workers who are not employed on a full-time basis.

These reports are planned for completion in 2004.

### Orphans Payments

The review of the social welfare payments to orphans which was published in March 2003, made a number of recommendations regarding policy direction, organisational issues, control and efficiency/performance indicators. A number of these recommendations were implemented in the Social Welfare Act, 2003 including discontinuance of the overlap between orphan payments and foster care allowance.

### People with Illnesses/Disabilities

A review of the various income maintenance payments for people who are ill and people with disabilities, which was undertaken as part of the Expenditure Review Initiative was concluded in 2003.

Overall, the review concludes that:

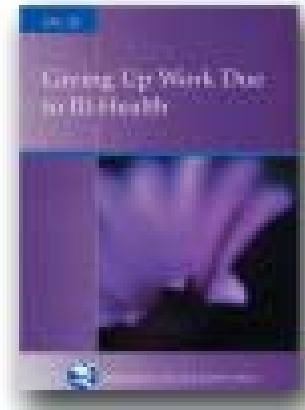
- The provision of income support for people with illnesses and disabilities is relatively comprehensive, but that its effectiveness and efficiency could be improved by making the system simpler and more consistent;
- Although the relevant data available is not comprehensive, it suggests that people with illnesses and disabilities face higher risks of poverty. While income support can play a role in reducing poverty, it is likely that other significant issues also need to be addressed; and
- Employment supports for this group provided by the Department need to be made more systematic and effective.

An implementation group has been established by the Department to consider how the recommendations in the report can be progressed.

### School Meals

An interdepartmental Working Group was established to review the Urban and Gaelteacht School Meals Scheme. The Group met on 10 occasions, the first of these being in September 1999, and the last in April 2002.

The Group engaged in an extensive consultation process as part of this review. All of the issues and difficulties with the current Urban Scheme and suggestions for a reformed scheme that emerged during the consultation process, formed the Group's consideration of the future policy direction for the scheme. The review of Scheme was completed in March 2003.



## OBJECTIVE 6

*To promote the provision of social protection through the social insurance system in accordance with Government policy by extending coverage where appropriate and adapting benefits to meet emerging needs, while ensuring the financial stability of the Social Insurance fund.*

### Social Insurance Fund

The estimated surplus of the Social Insurance Fund income over expenditure in 2003 was €258 million, leading to a cumulative surplus of €1,531 million at the end of the year.

### Benefit In Kind

The most significant development for the PRSI system during 2003 related to the administrative and legislative preparations to make way for the collection of PRSI and tax on non-pecuniary benefits received by employees and the self-employed from January 2004 onwards. This included working closely with the Revenue Commissioners to prepare the legislative, administrative and operational changes to support the new measure. Guidelines were published for employers and a number of information seminars were held to assist employers and other professionals who will be implementing the new policy. The new arrangements for the deduction of PRSI from benefits took effect from 1 January 2004.

### Social Partnership Working Group

A Working Group to produce proposals for the development of a fully inclusive social insurance model that would facilitate combining work and family responsibilities in the context of changing social patterns was re-established in July 2003 on foot of the Sustaining Progress agreement. Four meetings of the Working Group were held covering issues including level of Maternity Benefit payment, atypical working, insurability of spouses and relatives and worksharers. The work of the Group is ongoing.

### Other Developments in PRSI

- Earnings ceiling for PRSI increased by €1,680 from €38,740 to €40,420 per annum.
- The Class P (Optional) for sharefishermen was reduced from 5% to 4% with other small changes in the PRSI-free allowance and the minimum contribution payable by them.
- The qualifying conditions for the PRSI exemption scheme were refocused and brought into line with the back-to work allowance scheme for new claims.

## OBJECTIVE 7

*Development of a comprehensive pensions system (to include both State and supplementary arrangements) taking account of and finding a balance between the following (sometimes competing) factors of adequacy, sustainability and modernisation.*

### Development of a Comprehensive Pensions System

Work on the implementation of the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002 continued. The first Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) products were approved by the Pensions Board in February 2003 and were made available to the public soon afterwards. A key element of the PRSA strategy which requires employers who do not provide an occupational pension scheme to facilitate access to a PRSA for their employees took effect in September 2003. By the end of the year almost 20,000 PRSA accounts had been opened.

A successful National Pensions Awareness Campaign was run by the Pensions Board in consultation with the Department to support and supplement the publicity effort made by PRSA providers.

The Pensions Ombudsman was appointed in April and his Office opened for business in September 2003. The Pensions Ombudsman deals with complaints from beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of occupational pension schemes and PRSAs.

### EU Developments

*Adequate and Sustainable Pensions* – Member States submitted National Reports on Pensions Strategy in September 2002. These reports were reviewed in early 2003 and the Joint Council/Commission Report on Pensions Strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2003.

The Social Protection Committee is also involved in policy co-operation in the areas of making work pay, structural indicators and the future of health care and care of the elderly.

### Long-Term Care

In June 2003, the Minister published the study to examine the future financing of long-term care in Ireland.

The study centred on 3 areas as follows:

- The potential of the private sector or a combined public/private sector approach to assist in financing/funding long-term care.
- The potential of the PRSI system to finance/fund long term care.
- Whether the current system of long term care financing should remain the status quo.

There are significant issues discussed in the study, including those in relation to benefit design, cost and financing of long term care. A consultation document is being prepared to accompany the study which will aim to assist all interested parties on the specific issues that should be addressed.

## OBJECTIVE 8

*To implement controls on a cost-effective basis to ensure that error, fraud and abuse are prevented, detected and deterred and any monies incorrectly paid are recovered.*

### Control Strategy

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, a new control strategy was launched during the year. A key element of this new strategy is the undertaking by scheme managers of fraud risk assessments. The objective of these assessments is to identify the areas where there is a high risk of fraud and abuse. An analysis of the results of these surveys will assist in ensuring that control activity will be focussed on areas of high risk and that available resources will be more efficiently and effectively targeted. Fraud risk assessments were commenced in nine of the major income maintenance schemes during the year.

### Public Awareness

During 2003, the Department continued to raise public and staff awareness in the fight against fraud by publicising sanctions in respect of persons transgressing the Social Welfare code. In this regard, emphasis was placed on the Department's determination to recover monies received fraudulently or without entitlement and to prosecute those who defrauded the social welfare system and employers who failed to comply with their statutory obligations to comply with social welfare legislation. A summary of the new Control Strategy issued to all staff outlining their role in preventing, detecting and deterring fraud and abuse of schemes. In an effort to raise public awareness of the Department's strong control policy, the outcomes of court prosecutions were, where possible, publicised in local and national press.

### Co-operation with other Agencies

An important element, in the process of implementing an effective control policy, is co-operating with other Government Departments, State Agencies, local authorities, employer groups and trade unions, to ensure that information and best practice, is shared, subject to the statutory obligations under Data Protection legislation. The Department improved existing links with a number of relevant bodies, both national and international, and participated in a number of committees, which dealt with issues of relevance to control. A Staff Exchange Programme between Inspectors from the Department and Fraud Investigators with Benefit

Investigation Services, Northern Ireland, commenced with six regional staff visiting Belfast for one week in 2003. A draft Report on the Exchange Programme has been produced and a reciprocal visit is due in 2004.

### Computer Systems

Enhancements in the Department's computer systems continue to facilitate a more co-ordinated, focused and effective approach to control, enabling, inter alia, data from a variety of sources to be cross-checked and potential irregularities isolated and pursued. In particular the checking of commencement of employment notifications from Revenue revealed instances of persons having overlaps in the area of working and claiming social welfare benefits/assistance. All overlap cases were pursued and, where applicable, overpaid monies recovered and prosecution action initiated where appropriate. During 2003 a number of initiatives were undertaken to research the benefits of data-matching as a tool in providing intelligence to assist in more focussed, efficient and co-ordinated investigations.

### Identity Fraud

In recent years, particular emphasis has been placed on combating identity fraud and this continued in 2003 with a specific focus to ensure that persons do not use false identities to obtain PPS numbers or fraudulently obtain social welfare benefits. In this regard, a training programme for local staff, in the recognition of false/forged identity papers was undertaken. A total of 44 persons were arrested and charged with offences under the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act, 2001 by an Garda Síochána for producing false/forged documents in local offices.

### Debt Recovery

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 and to enforce maintenance recovery orders made against the liable relatives of recipients of one-parent family payments. Work is continuing on the design of a comprehensive computer system to handle overpayments and debt recovery across all schemes.

### Outcomes

Gross savings from the control activities on scheme payments amounted to €295.9 million in 2003 (see chart below). Some 320,000 claims were reviewed in this process. In addition inspections of employer records identified arrears of PAYE/PRSI amounting to €10.3 million. Overall savings from control activities were some 8% higher than in 2002.

Savings	€m
Unemployment	119.9
Illness	53.7
Pensions	106.2
Child Benefit	11.1
Carers	3.6
PAYE/PRSI	10.3
Others	1.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>306.2</b>

During 2003, as a result of a new focussed approach to the criminal prosecution of alleged offenders, a total of 355 cases (up 73% on 2002) were forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) for the initiation of court proceedings. A total of 210 criminal cases were finalised in court with the following results:

Outcome	Number
Fined	109
Imprisoned	11
Suspended Sentence	17
Community Service	12
Probation Act	27
Bound to the Peace	4
Adjourned/Liberty to re-enter	5
Struck out/dismissed	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>

In addition 50 civil cases were sent to the CSSO for court proceedings to facilitate the recovery of overpayments and the enforcement of maintenance recovery orders against the liable relatives of one-parent family recipients. 8 civil cases were finalised in the courts.

## EU INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

### EU – Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

The Minister and officials participated in all four formal meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in 2003. These meetings were held in Brussels in March and December and in Luxembourg in June and October. In terms of social protection, one of the main issues throughout the year was the proposal for the reform and simplification of Regulation 1408/71. Other items of relevance to this Department included:

- a) Report on Adequate and Sustainable Pensions;
  - b) Streamlining the Open Method of Co-ordination in the field of Social Protection;
- and
- c) Immigration, Integration and Employment.

The two informal Ministerial meetings held during 2003 were also attended. The main topics at the meeting in Nafplion (Greece) in January were a “Review of the European Employment Strategy” and “Social Protection – the European Social Model”. The discussion at the Varese (Italy) meeting in July focussed on the link between employment strategy and social policies.

### EU – Social Protection Committee

The Department participated in the work of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) especially in the following areas:

*Preparing Joint Council Commission Report on Social Inclusion:* This was based on a Commission draft drawing on national action plans submitted by the Member States in July 2003.

*Streamlining the Open Method of Co-ordination:* Much work has been undertaken in an effort to move towards streamlining the open co-ordination process as it applies to social protection and social exclusion. In 2003, the European Commission presented a Communication stating that “streamlining of policy co-ordination in social protection should enhance the quality and the coherence of the overall socio-economic governance of the EU”. This Communication has received the broad support of the Council on the basis of an opinion of the Social Protection Committee.

These developments paved the way for the Irish Presidency (in co-operation with the Commission, the SPC and the Employment Committee) to present for the first time an integrated key messages paper to the 2004 Spring European Council. This will be reflected in the work of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in the areas of social inclusion, pensions, making work pay, gender equality and employment-related policy challenges.



### EU – Social Security Rights for Migrant Workers

In 1999, the Commission presented a proposal aimed at reforming EEC Regulation 1408/71 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons, and their families, moving within the Community. Its objective was to simplify Community legislation in order to remove obstacles to the free movement of persons created by the co-existence of different national social security systems.

Significant progress was made in the development of this proposal in 2003 and, in December 2003, political agreement was reached at Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on the remaining chapters of the new Regulation. Work continued with the aim of reaching codecision on the new Regulation with the European Parliament before the end of its Parliamentary term in 2004.

### OECD

The Department was represented at the Joint European Commission/OECD Conference on the economic and social aspects of migration where some of the topics discussed were: Migration for Employment; the Integration of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities; and Migration and Equal Opportunity.

The Department participated in the OECD Working Party on Social Policy and the Interdepartmental Committee on OECD Affairs.

## Council of Europe

The Department was represented at a number of Council of Europe events including the following:

- Meetings of the Committee for Social Cohesion. The Committee was chaired in 2003 by the Irish delegate. Issues discussed included: Revision of the Strategy for Social Cohesion; Future activities concerning children and families; and Possible revision of the Au Pair agreement;
- Information Seminar on the European Social Charter (hosted by the Irish Centre for European Law in association with the Department of Foreign Affairs; the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment and the Council of Europe). The main agenda items were: Employment and Labour Rights; Social Inclusion; Compliance and Effectiveness; and Reflections on the future of the European Social Charter in Ireland.

## Six Countries

The "Six Countries" (Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and USA) meeting takes place every 18 months. In October 2003, the Department was represented at the meeting, which was held in Australia. The meeting discussed disability benefits and service delivery.

## UN

The Department was represented at the UN Commission for Social Development in New York in February 2003. The main topics on the agenda were: Year of People with Disabilities (2003); Year of the Family (2004); and Integrated Approach to Social Development.

In June, the Department facilitated a UN Expert Group which prepared a paper on the topic "Improving Public Sector Effectiveness", which will be the priority theme at the 2004 Commission for Social Development.

## Bilateral Relations with Other Countries

The Department received visitors from a number of countries during 2003, including Ministers and officials from Armenia, Bulgaria, France and South Africa and officials from Australia, China, Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Korea, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA .

The bilateral agreement with Australia was reviewed and proposed amendments are being considered. Further preparations were made for the introduction of a proposed bilateral agreement with Korea.

The two regular UK/Ireland bilateral meetings were held in 2003, one in Dublin and one in London. Issues discussed included recent developments in Ireland and the UK, Ireland's Presidency, Six Countries meeting 2003, Social Protection Committee business, finalisation of the UK/Ireland agreement and Regulation 1408/71. In addition to these regular meetings, other meetings were held with UK officials to discuss FIS, the new UK tax credits and issues arising at EU level.

## North/South Co-operation

Work progressed with regard to the development of an information service for people moving between North and South. As a preliminary step in the development of a website dedicated to addressing information deficits consultants have been hired to carry out a comprehensive review of existing information.



Éire 2004 Uachtaránacht an Aontais Eorpaigh  
Ireland 2004 Presidency of the European Union

[www.eu2004.ie](http://www.eu2004.ie)

## EU Presidency

Preparation for Ireland's Presidency of the European Union (1 January 2004 to 30 June 2004) commenced in 2003.

The Department was fully involved in the Interdepartmental Co-ordination Committee on EU Affairs (ICCEUA) and in the special Lisbon Group set up to prepare for the 2004 Spring European Council and participated in the relevant committees.

The Programme for the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council was jointly developed by this Department, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Department of Health and Children and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Presidency events for the social policy area were planned and preparations were advanced to a considerable degree. This involved working closely with a wide variety of organisations such as the European Commission, the OPW, the Gardaí, other Government Departments and a variety of conference venues and service providers.



# *chapter 3*

Support to Work

Annual Report 2003



## Chapter 3

### GOAL 2: SUPPORT TO WORK

*Facilitating return to work or participation in training or further education by people in the active age groups dependent on State income supports, through a range of supportive measures, including referral to other agencies as necessary.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To actively support customers in their efforts to access the labour market.*

##### Employment Support Services

The range of employment support services administered by the Department continue to be reviewed to ensure their relevance to current labour market and economic conditions.

The Back To Work Allowance and Back To Education Allowance were further amended in 2003 to ensure their continued focus on the more vulnerable groups in society. The qualifying period for Back To Work Enterprise Allowance was reduced from 5 years to 3 years for persons on unemployment benefit/assistance, this will take effect from March 2004.

In 2003 eligibility criteria for the PRSI exemption scheme changed to link it exclusively with the Back To Work Allowance.

The qualifying period for the Back To Education Allowance, Third Level Option, was increased from 6 months to 15 months, this change will take effect from September 2004. The qualifying period for the Second level Option was not changed to ensure that this strand of the scheme retains its focus on the more disadvantaged groups in society who do not have a second level education qualification and who are at risk of becoming dependent on social welfare payments on a long-term basis.

##### Profiling

Work continued during 2003 on developing profiling as a possible tool of Live Register management. The original cohort from the Galway survey of 2000 were re-examined to check current status with regard to Live Register attachment, occupational status etc. The fresh data was given to the ESRI who are expected to report and make recommendations in 2004.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

*To assist in the implementation of the Employment Action Plan (EAP)*

The EAP referral system was extended to persons on the Live Register in excess of six months, and aged between 18 and 55 years during 2003. Commencing in the Dublin regions in June the process was extended on a phased, regional basis with all regions completed by December.



During 2003 a total of 39,418 persons were referred to FÁS through the EAP. This represents an increase of 22% on 2002 when 32,427 persons were referred and an increase of 63% on 2001. Of these referrals, 23,932 persons had left the Live Register by end-January 2004. This represents 61% of referrals and is the same sign-off rate as 2002. A further total of 7,975 (20% of referrals) had been placed in a job, a FÁS training course or had returned to education. A rollout of the EAP to those not previously selected under the standard EAP commenced in June 2003. By end-December 2003 a total of 4,177 had been referred to FÁS under this process for interview. Of these, 30% of referrals (1,252 persons) had left the Live Register by end-January 2004 and 475 (11% of referrals) had been placed in a job, FÁS training course or returned to education.

### OBJECTIVE 3

*To facilitate and improve access to education, training and labour market programmes for people with disabilities.*

#### Enabled for Life Programme

This programme for assessing employment support measures for people with disabilities, was developed in 2003, initially in Cork.

For the 40 participants involved the outcomes were as follows:

- 3 progressed to part-time employment;
- 29 have undertaken training/education; and
- 8 have special needs to be addressed.

The programme was considered a success and a follow-up programme is in place in Donegal to assess the programme's suitability in a rural location.

#### Disability Allowance

Disability Allowance customers can avail of employment, training and educational opportunities. Uptake of employment is facilitated through the operation of the means disregard for rehabilitative employment. Under this arrangement income from

rehabilitative training is not assessed as means and special arrangements are in place for transfer to FÁS-funded vocational training, including restoration of Disability Allowance on cessation. There is ongoing consultation with FÁS and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in relation to this programme.

### OBJECTIVE 4

*To facilitate and encourage lone parents to access employment.*

### OBJECTIVE 5

*To facilitate and support older people to remain in or access employment and participate in the provision of local services.*

### OBJECTIVE 6

*To promote greater self reliance through active measures which lead to education, training, rehabilitation and work experience.*

Those who have been out of the labour market, particularly lone parents and people with disabilities availed of pre-employment and personal development training through the Special Projects fund which was set up to help the long-term unemployed people access the labour market and is accessed locally by Regional staff. €2.12 million was provided through this fund for training and supports for the harder to reach groups who are most distant from the labour market.

The groups who need special help of this type also include the very long-term unemployed, travellers and people with literacy difficulties as well as older people.

The Special Projects initiative demonstrates the positive results of a partnership approach between the Department, the voluntary & community and private sectors as well as other players in identifying and addressing local needs in terms of training and development.

In 2003 over 200 special projects were funded for these harder to reach customers. Outcomes from these projects cannot be measured over a short period of time but there is positive and informative data coming on stream in relation to the intense case management nature of the interventions and the potential for impacting positively on social inclusion as well as enhancing employability.

The newly enhanced role of Jobs Facilitators will continue to focus on the training, development and other needs of customers and their families on a case management basis. In addition to their involvement with labour market activation programmes, Facilitators play a key role in the provision of enhanced information services and referral to appropriate services for customers within the remit of the Family Services Project. (See page 28.)





# *chapter* 4

Families

Annual Report 2003

## Chapter 4

### GOAL 3: FAMILIES

*Supporting families in caring for children and other dependent family members, ensuring specific supports for disadvantaged families, families in conflict, one-parent families and families on low incomes and working with other agencies to identify and develop responses to key family issues.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To contribute to the development and implementation of appropriate policies and actions to promote family welfare generally.*

##### Public Consultation on the Family

The Minister undertook a nation-wide consultation on the future development of family policy, during the course of 2003, organised by the Department. The fora provided an opportunity to hear the views of a cross section of family members from different regions of the country and those who work with them, including public representatives. Their views were sought on the main challenges that confront families today, the effectiveness of Government policies and programmes in supporting families to meet these challenges, and on what the priorities should be for strengthening families.

Five fora were held from May to December 2003 in Donegal, Kilkenny, Cork, Galway and Dublin.

Drawing on the views and analysis emerging from this consultation process, it is intended, in consultation with all the relevant Departments and agencies, to have a statement of policy, in relation to families prepared by the end of 2004, the 10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family.

##### Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland

Preparations for a National Longitudinal Study on children in Ireland, to be jointly funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the National Children's Office, were intensified during the year. A Steering Group were established to make the necessary preparations for the commissioning of the study. The Group is chaired by the Director of the National Children's Office.

By end year arrangements to initiate the tendering process were being finalised, with a view to the tender being issued and the contract awarded during 2004, during the 10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family.

The aim of the project will be to study the factors, which contribute to, or undermine, the well being of children in contemporary Irish families, and, through this, contribute to the development of effective and responsive policies relating to children and to the design of services for children and their families. The project will be the most significant of its kind to be undertaken in Ireland, particularly in terms of its scope, length of study period and cost. It is anticipated that 10,000 children from birth and 8,000 children aged nine will be recruited to participate in the study.

##### OECD

The Department co-ordinated Ireland's participation in an OECD review of family friendly policies with a number of other OECD Member States. Austria and Japan were the other countries reviewed with Ireland in the latest phase of the project. The review, which is part of a series entitled "Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life" analyses how the existing mix of policies, including tax/benefit policies, childcare policy and employment and workplace practices, contributes to different parental labour market outcomes and other societal outcomes.

The OECD Report makes specific policy recommendations for Ireland and will feed into the development of the strategy in relation to families that is being prepared for the end of 2004.

### Families Research Programme

The Families Research Programme was launched in 1999 to provide grant aid to support research projects which have the ability to inform the future development of aspects of public policy which relate to families and family services. Under the Programme 13 projects were initially commenced and one additional project has been included since then. The topics range from such diverse areas of family life as marriage, marital breakdown, the impact of counselling services on relationships, children and parental separation, fathers, grandparents and family friendly work practices.

## OBJECTIVE 2

*To ensure that the social welfare system responds effectively to the needs of different family situations.*

### Family Services Project (FSP)

The Family Services Project provides a high quality information service on the range of supports available to families from State agencies and from the community and voluntary sector with a particular emphasis on the services available locally.

Within the Family Services Project, an enhanced programme of support is available to a small group of customers with complex needs, for example, very young lone mothers, other parents rearing children without the support of a partner, carers and dependent spouses in households with children depending on social welfare payments.

The expansion of the project continued during 2003 and is now well advanced in all ten regions of the Department. A significant amount of work was done during the year to promote the resources available for FSP. This has given a new impetus to the Programme which, it is anticipated, will gain further momentum in 2004.

The Government has provided €15.2 million over the period 2000-2006 in the National Development Plan for the progressive expansion of the successful elements of the Family Services Project. Total expenditure on family related initiatives through the Family Services Project for 2003 was €1.5 million approximately (52.06% increase of 2002 spend).

### One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP)

Delivery of the One-Parent Family Payment is being transferred to the Department's local offices. The first phase of localisation of OPFP, which involved new claims being taken on in Tallaght, Finglas and Waterford Local Offices, proved to be very successful. Procedures have been devised for integrating processing of claims into the day-to-day work of offices and the benefits are already apparent as evidenced by a reduction in processing times.

## OBJECTIVE 3

*To put in place programmes and supportive measures to help families in conflict and to address the effects of separation and divorce on families.*

### 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family

2004 is the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family. Under Sustaining Progress the Department of Social and Family Affairs is responsible for preparing a national programme focussing specifically on the development of family policy and supports to mark the Anniversary Year.

A Steering Committee, chaired by the Department was established to co-ordinate a governmental programme of activities for each region. This committee includes a range of Government Departments and agencies involved with families. The members of this committee have been identifying initiatives which they can develop in the context of the year and also seeking to create awareness about the year among NGO's. Meetings also took place with representatives of NGO's and social partners.



Details of the events and initiatives planned will be available on the Departments website in 2004.

## OBJECTIVE 4

*To work with other Departments and agencies in delivering support to families.*



### Family Support Agency

#### Family Support Agency

The Family Support Agency was established in May 2003 under the Family Support Agency Act, 2001. The Agency brings together the main programmes and pro-family services developed since 1997. It provides a comprehensive and coherent response for families in need of these support services and for families generally.

The establishment of the agency involved the transfer of certain responsibilities from DSFA. These responsibilities included the development and delivery of the Scheme of Grants to Voluntary Organisations providing Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services, and the Family Mediation Service. In 2003, €17.2m was made available for these services and programmes.

A Chief Executive Officer was appointed to the Family Support Agency in May 2003. The Chairman and Members designate of the Family Support Agency were formally appointed with the establishment of the Agency. The membership includes people with expertise and experience in the fields of Family and Community Services, Counselling, Family Mediation, Research and Family Law.

The Agency developed their Strategic Plan in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and this was submitted to the Minister for approval in November 2003.

## OBJECTIVE 5

*To ensure insofar as possible that people meet their obligations to support their family.*

#### Maintenance Recovery

Work by the Department in recent years has led to an increase in the level of maintenance being paid by liable relatives and also to an increase in savings on scheme expenditure. Court actions taken against liable relatives who failed to contribute to social welfare payments made to their spouse and/or children have been successful.

All one-parent family payment claimants are required to make ongoing efforts to seek adequate maintenance from their spouse or, in the case of unmarried applicants, from the other parent of their child. Since 2001, one-parent family payment claimants are allowed to retain 50% of any maintenance received without reduction in their social welfare entitlements as a further incentive to seek support themselves.



# *chapter* 5

Poverty and Social Exclusion

Annual Report 2003



## Chapter 5

### GOAL 4: POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

*Provide relevant and effective supports to those affected by poverty and social exclusion and co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Government's strategy in this area, in co-operation with other statutory and voluntary agencies.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To take a leading role in driving forward the implementation of the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy in co-operation with the other agencies and organisations involved.*

##### National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)

The main national instrument in the fight against poverty and social exclusion is the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) – Building an Inclusive Society – which was launched by the Government in February 2002. The strategy sets out a range of targets in the areas of income adequacy, employment and unemployment, education, health, housing and accommodation. The key target overall is to reduce the number of people living in consistent poverty to under 2% and, if possible, to eliminate it by 2007. In addition, specific targets and objectives have been established in respect of groups identified as being particularly vulnerable to poverty including the elderly and people with disabilities.

A significant development which reinforced the Strategy during 2003 was the social partnership agreement "Sustaining Progress", which was adopted by the Government and social partners in the first quarter of the year. The agreement identified eight special initiatives in the area of social inclusion, which would be the subject of a sustained focus of effort from all parties during the life of the

agreement. The initiatives included such key policy areas as Ending Child Poverty, Housing and Accommodation, Long-term Unemployed, Vulnerable Workers and those who have been made Redundant, Tackling Educational Disadvantage – Literacy, Numeracy and Early School Leaving, Care – Children, People with Disabilities and Older People, Alcohol/Drug Misuse, Migration and Interculturalism, including everyone in the Information Society. The Department, through the Office for Social Inclusion, has lead responsibility for progressing the Ending Child Poverty Initiative.



##### Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)

2003 was the first full calendar year for the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), which was established in December 2002. The role of the OSI is to facilitate and support the implementation of the NAPS, including the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (see below), by co-ordinating the process across Departments and Agencies and by implementing key support functions related to the strategy. The key challenge for the Office is to ensure that the social inclusion agenda is being implemented and further developed at national, regional and local levels of government, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Priority areas of attention in 2003 included the preparation of the 2003-2005 National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion under the EU open method of co-ordination (OMC), the establishment and support of the new institutional structures identified in the revised NAPS, the commencement of monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achieving the NAPS targets and the development of a data strategy with the support of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) drawn from other Departments, and statistics and research experts.

### Institutional Structures

The implementation of the revised NAPS is supported by an enhanced set of institutional structures. In addition to the Office for Social Inclusion, these include:

- The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, which is chaired by the Taoiseach and includes all relevant Ministers and Ministers of State with responsibility for areas relevant to the NAPS;
- The interdepartmental Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion, co-ordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach which met monthly during 2003 to brief and advise the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion;
- The Management Group of Assistant Secretaries, drawn from relevant Departments, which is tasked with overseeing the work of the OSI;
- The Social Inclusion Consultative Group, involving the social partners and anti-poverty experts – which met twice during 2003 to advise and inform the ongoing development of the NAPS and particularly the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion; and
- The National Economic and Social Forum convened the first annual Social Inclusion Forum in early 2003 to give people experiencing poverty, individual members and representatives of the community and voluntary and other sectors an opportunity to contribute to the NAPS process.

### OBJECTIVE 2

*To develop a greater understanding of the causes of poverty and exclusion and the strategies to address it.*

#### NAPS Data Strategy

Work commenced in 2003 on developing a comprehensive Data Strategy with the support of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) drawn from other Departments, and statistics and research experts. This was undertaken in parallel with a wider initiative under the aegis of the Statistics Board to develop a national framework for equality and social statistics. The outcome of a special consultative seminar on

data issues, held as part of the preparation of the NAPs/incl., will inform ongoing work in this area.

#### Research Programme

The programme of research with the ESRI continued during 2003 in addition to ongoing liaison with the Combat Poverty Agency in relation to their research programme.

### OBJECTIVE 3

*In line with agreed EU guidelines, to co-ordinate the preparation and submission of Ireland's National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/incl) and support other EU initiatives in this area.*



#### National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/incl) 2003-2005

Together with Sustaining Progress, another significant development which reinforced the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy was the preparation and submission of Ireland's National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2003-05. As envisaged in the revised NAPS, the national and EU processes have now merged to form a combined NAPS strategy.

The preparation by EU member states of national action plans against poverty and social exclusion is part of an EU wide drive to meet the EU objective set by the European Council at Lisbon in 2000 to 'make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010'. The preparation and

evaluation of the national action plans facilitates the exchange of good practice and provides a basis for exchanges with the EU Commission and member states in devising the best way to meet common objectives in the area of social inclusion.

Ireland's second national action plan builds on the commitments and priorities contained in the revised NAPS, 'Sustaining Progress' and the Programme for Government and provides a clear road map for implementing the NAPS in the coming two years. Development of the national action plan was also informed by a wide ranging public consultation process involving a series of national and regional seminars in April and May 2003. These were organised by the OSI and the Combat Poverty Agency. A large number of written submissions were also received. The outcome of both strands of the consultation process was launched, together with the National Action Plan 2003-2005 in August 2003.

### Transnational Level

The Department was actively involved in the work of the EU Social Protection Committee (SPC) in assessing the member States' National Action Plans and in preparing the Joint Report on Inclusion scheduled for adoption at the Spring 2004 European Council.

The Office for Social Inclusion is represented on the SPC Indicators' Sub Group (ISG) in relation to the formulation and definition of agreed common indicators for monitoring poverty and social exclusion.

The Office is also actively involved in the European Union Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006. The programme, which is part of the open method of co-ordination, aims at supporting co-operation between Member States on combating poverty and social exclusion.

The Office is also engaged in a programme of work as part of the social inclusion strand of the British-Irish Council. During 2003, attention was focused on the area of financial inclusion, and in this regard, OSI facilitated a 2 day study visit to Dublin in December 2003 by officials from the constituent members of the Council to examine the work of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), as an example of best practice in assisting people to avoid chronic indebtedness and achieve financial independence.

## OBJECTIVE 4

*In the context of the development of policies for and the delivery of social welfare and related services, ensure that the particular interests of groups affected by or vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion are addressed and protected.*

### Equality/Diversity

One of the key components of the Strategic Management Initiative is the development of excellent customer service. The Government's equality/diversity principle of customer service, adopted in 2000, affects all other aspects of the service delivery agenda.

The Department is represented on the various Quality Customer Service (QCS) Groups established under the SMI QCS Initiative, including the sub-group on equality/diversity. Our staff-supports, training and awareness-raising initiatives are, and will continue to be, grounded in the overall objective of serving all our customers in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner.

### Supports for Staff

#### (a) Diversity Awareness

15 one-day courses for front-line and HQ staff on diversity awareness have taken place, involving some 300 staff in the Department. Modules cover issues relating to non-national customers and general disability awareness. Our external partners in delivering this training include the Centre for Migration Studies in UCC, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and the Irish Wheelchair Association. Looking forward, we are also exploring a new module dealing with travellers (history, culture, etc) – it is expected that this will be rolled-out in early 2004 with the assistance of trainers from Pavee Point.

#### (b) Guidelines for staff when dealing with non-national customers

These contain information and advice regarding relevant Departmental procedures, entitlements, the asylum process, information sources and cultural best practices etc. These guidelines are to be updated to

take account of new developments following the various changes in legislation (during 2003) regarding refugees and asylum seekers.

#### (c) Interpretation Service

A telephone interpretation service has been installed in 10 of the Department's Local Offices across the country and the two public offices in Dublin. This service enables a three-way conversation between the customer, interpreter and staff member.

#### School Meals

The new School Meals Programme introduced in 2003 is targeting secondary schools with the highest concentrations of pupils at risk of early school leaving and their primary feeder schools. Given the scale of implementation the new programme is being phased in initially targeting the most disadvantaged children. The Department of Education and Science is identifying the schools that make up these school groups. The new Programme also supports initiatives which are targeting dispersed disadvantage and children with special needs.

## OBJECTIVE 5

*To support through a nationwide service, families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and money lending.*

#### Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Money Advice & Budgeting Service was established in 1992 with 5 local projects. There are now 52 service providers operating throughout the country. The MABS are independent information and advice providers, rooted in the local community.

The key features of the Programme may be summarised as follows:

- An emphasis on practical, budget-based measures that will succeed in removing people permanently from dependence on moneylenders and open up alternative sources of low cost credit through the credit unions;
- An approach which targets families identified as having problems with debt and money-lending, in particular, those dependent on social welfare or on low income; and

- A prominent role for local statutory agencies, such as the Social Welfare Regional Managers, Community Welfare Officers, local voluntary and community groups, credit unions, SVP etc.

The total amount of funding for MABS in 2003 was €9.6 million.

MABS has also set up important relationships with many of the "main" group of creditors encountered by MABS money advisors in the day-to-day business of money advice. These include the utilities, the local authorities with whom a code of practice has been established and the financial institutions with whom a debt settlement pilot has been established. This MABS/IBF debt settlement programme, which was piloted in a limited number of MABS, has now been extended to include all of the 52 offices.

A "New Logo and Look" has been rolled out to each MABS Office. New self-help leaflets and booklets have been drawn up and are also available on the MABS website, [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie).



## OBJECTIVE 6

*To support, where appropriate, initiatives at local level which encourage self-help and empowerment.*

#### Locally Based Grants Scheme

Responsibility for the Scheme of Grants for Locally – Based Community and Voluntary Organisations transferred from this Department to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaelteacht Affairs in 2002. During 2003, this Department supported the Department of CRGA in its responsibility to administer the scheme through the participation of DSFA regional staff in the initial screening and assessment of applications process. Regional staff continued to represent the Department on County and City Development Boards in 2003.



# *chapter 6*

e-Government Agenda

Annual Report 2003

## Chapter 6

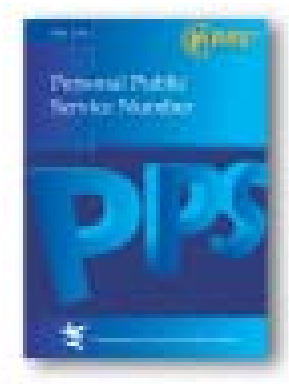
### GOAL 5: E-GOVERNMENT AGENDA

*Promoting the use and development of integrated services in line with the development of the e-Government Agenda.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To deliver identity services to support the provision of public services.*



##### Personal Public Service (PPS) Number

The Department's Client Identity Service has continued to provide data matching services for Departments/Agencies to facilitate the use of the PPS Number. During the year data matching exercises were carried out with Dept of Education, Dept of Agriculture, The Companies Registration Office, Various Health Boards and the Passport Office.

##### Public Service Identity

The tender for Public Service Identity (PSI) services was issued in December. These services will be linked to a single customer database and allow Departments/Agencies to validate customers PPS Numbers or to find a PPS Number for a customer. This will further facilitate the use of the PPS Number as the unique customer identifier for the provision of integrated government services.

##### Data Protection

The Code of Practice for the use of the PPS Number was kept under review. Progress was made on the compilation and publication of the Register of Users

of the PPS Number with sixty-two replies published on the Department's website. The compilation of the Register is ongoing.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

*To support the provision of, and internet-based access to, information about public services.*

##### Department's Website

The website was re-launched in September 2003. It was developed to the WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative AAA Standard making its content more accessible to disabled customers – the blind and partially sighted in particular. In addition, the site complies to XHTML 1.0 Standard, which means that by viewing the new upgraded site with web based translation tools its content can also be seen in a variety of other languages including French, German and Italian.

#### OBJECTIVE 3

*To implement the Civil Registration Modernisation Programme – 'GRO Project'.*

##### 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 (DoH&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 and Family Affairs (DSFA) and the Department of Health and Children (DoH&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 main developments during the year 2003 were as follows:

- the new civil registration computer system went 'live' in GRO Headquarters in July 2003 for the production of electronic certificates for births, deaths and marriages. Electronic certificate production also commenced in 24 other offices by end-2003;
- electronic registration of births and deaths commenced in the Cork registration office in September 2003 with roll-out to all other offices planned by mid-2004;
- Personal Public Service Numbers for new born children are allocated and claims to child benefit automatically processed by DSFA on receipt of the electronic notification of birth registration data from the civil registration service;
- implementation of the new organisation structure for the registration service commenced in tandem with the roll-out of the new computer system;
- a comprehensive training programme was delivered to all staff prior to roll-out;
- the Civil Registration Bill was published in July 2003;
- meetings/briefing sessions were held with staff and all groups/organisations with an interest in the Civil Registration Service; and
- an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Reform of Marriage Law, comprising representatives from various Government Departments and State Agencies, published eight discussion papers in 2003.

## OBJECTIVE 4

*To develop its internal systems so that they will support electronic delivery of service to its clients.*

### REACH Initiative

REACH was established by Government decision in 1999 and in May 2000 was mandated by Government to build or procure the Public Services Broker. In 2002, the REACH Agency moved into the procurement phase and following due process and evaluation a Statement of Requirements was issued to the companies who were short-listed.

During 2003 there was intensive series of discussions with the shortlisted companies aimed at clarifying their understanding of the REACH requirements ahead of the submission of their final bid documents. A preferred supplier was selected towards the end of 2003.

### Inter-Agency Messaging System

REACH also concluded a programme of work leading to the implementation of an Inter Agency Messaging Service (IAMS), an example of a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), which currently facilitates secure messaging between agencies such the General Registrar's Office, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Central Statistics Office.

This service will continue to support the exchange of life event information between the General Register Office (GRO), the Department of Social and Family Affairs' Client Identity System (CIS) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The DSFA has used the IAMS model to build an SOA to integrate services with the IAMS and its own back end systems.

As the Inter-Agency Messaging Service is built on agreed data standards and data models, it facilitates streamlined interactions between Departments and contributes significantly to the infrastructure upon which Departments can offer e-services to their customers.



# *chapter* 7

The Department and its Staff

Annual Report 2003



## Chapter 7

### GOAL 6: THE DEPARTMENT AND ITS STAFF

*Developing an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of pride, innovation and performance with a high level of involvement and participation by people at all levels and a climate which fosters personal and career development.*

The new developments during 2003 in pursuit of this Goal are set out under the relevant objectives, as follows:

#### OBJECTIVE 1

*To promote and develop a strong customer service culture throughout the Department and the agencies under its aegis and to deliver continuous improvement in quality customer service by placing the customer at the centre of the process.*

##### Developing Service Delivery

The Department is committed to delivering a quality customer service to all our customers and also to ensuring the continuous improvement in the standard of service we provide. The Department's Statement of Strategy and Customer Action Plan provide a specific focus on customer service development. Our Customer Action Plan 2001-2004 was published in May 2001. During 2003 progress achieved on the implementation of the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Principles set out in the Plan continued to be monitored and reviewed.

In October 2003 a progress update 'Charting our progress' was issued to all staff to keep them informed of developments in relation to customer service. A survey regarding the practical implementation of the Principles in the Department's network of local offices formed part of this review and the main findings of this survey were outlined in the update.

##### Internal Customer Service

The Civil Service Modernisation Programme has emphasised the importance of Government Departments/Offices addressing the needs of both external and internal customers.

The services for which this Department is responsible provide essential supports to people who have recourse to them. The delivery of those services has to be of a high standard in order to meet the legitimate needs of customers. Our internal customer service plan, 2001 – 2004 emphasises the importance that the Department places on ensuring that good external and good internal customer service share the same qualities – e.g. timeliness, courtesy, accuracy, etc.



The Internal Customer Service Committee monitors and reports on commitments made and progress achieved by all areas of the Department on Internal Customer initiatives. Under our Partnership process the Committee continued its work in 2003.

### Customer Consultation

2003 saw the continued support and facilitation of work on customer panels and surveys.

### Touchscreen Surveys

The Department continued to use touchscreen technology to obtain customer feedback. The equipment is available in all 10 regions. The technology is a fast and efficient method of surveying customers. Surveys based on the 12 quality customer service principles were carried out on a quarterly basis during 2003.

An independent review of the Department's customer consultation methods was carried out in 2003.

### Comments and Complaints System

In 2002 the Department introduced a formalised comments and complaints system.

This system:

- ensures that there is consistency in how comments and complaints are dealt with across the organisation;
- includes a customer leaflet "Comments & Complaints" that is available from any of the Department's offices;
- was accompanied by a complaint handling guide for all staff; and
- allows for comments and complaints to be recorded on a computerised system in any of our offices across the country.

The roll-out included a comprehensive training programme for staff. 2003 saw the continuation of the roll-out of this system to all offices of the organisation. This system provides the Department with comprehensive data on areas of concern to our customers. This data is collated and reported for information and attention.

### Customer Panels

A customer panel of Old Age Contributory and Retirement Pensioners was convened during summer 2003. The Panel met on three occasions and was facilitated by the Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) team in a joint venture with Information Services, North Western Region, and the Old Age Contributory & Retirement Pensions scheme area. The panels sought to elicit information from customers in relation to perceptions of service delivery, preferences for channels to interact with the Department, and attitudes as regards transacting claim business through Social Welfare Local Offices (SWLOs).



Members of the Pensions Services Office customer panel, Sligo.

### Customer Surveys

**(i) Carer's Allowance** – A survey of 1,000 Carer's Allowance customers completed in 2003 gave a response rate of 67% which was regarded as a very satisfactory response in the context of this customer group.

**(ii) Disability Benefit** – A customer survey of 1,000 Disability Benefit and Injury Benefit customers was carried out by questionnaire in November 2003. The findings from the survey are being collated.

## OBJECTIVE 2

*To develop the capacity for high quality support to the political process, the maintenance of a high standard of policy development and support for continuous improvement of our business and for innovation.*

### Policy-making process

The Government instituted an Expenditure Review process to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes and reviews and to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between expenditure programmes. Expenditure reviews have been carried out in 16 areas of the Department to date – in 2003, the review on Sickness and Disability schemes was completed.

Many of the recommendations, put forward in the reviews carried out to date, have been implemented. Remaining recommendations are reviewed on an annual basis and will be considered for implementation as priorities and resources allow.

### Review of Business Processes

The new Service Delivery Model (SDM) and associated projects have the potential to radically change how the Department connects not only to its customers but to its partner Departments, Agencies and Offices. Allied to this is the development and refinement of new, automated processes and new working relationships for staff of the Department which capitalise on the available flexibility in working conditions and underline the commitment to change.

Phase 1 of SDM was implemented in November 2002 with the re-design of the Child Benefit system. This required a radical re-engineering of the business processes and a comprehensive training programme to equip the staff to use the system and to multi-skill them so as to be able to handle all aspects of the work as an essential feature of the customer focus underpinning the SDM programme. Specific efficiency gains are starting to be realised from the more streamlined and efficient claim-taking process. It is expected that this will grow as automatic claim processing is extended.

### Fiúntas

In 2003 a total of 105 awards were made under this scheme, of which 42 were team awards. The total expenditure was €89,876.

### Input Suggestion Scheme

A total of 179 suggestions were received during 2003 and of these, some 74 were deemed to be valid by the Input Committee.

In 2003 a total of 21 suggestions submitted between 2000 and 2003 were implemented. Savings arising from suggestions implemented totalled €833,348.

The Department put forward some 21 suggestions to the Central Input Committee for consideration among the final award winners at the Central Input Award Ceremony in the Department of Finance. Of the five categories under consideration for award, DSFA came first in the following three:

- Suggestion generating the most savings;
- Best Customer Service suggestion; and
- Best use of technology.

## OBJECTIVE 3

*To provide secure, reliable and robust ICT systems in support of current policy, service delivery and administrative objectives and to develop new ICT capabilities in line with the Department's strategic direction.*

### IT Services

The primary objective for 2003 was the continued reliable delivery of IT application services to the business areas of the department in support of payment issue to the department's customers and in support of local business administration. This objective was met in all cases. In tandem with this there was also the objective to respond to budget and estimates changes and other mandatory requirements. All commitments made in this regard for 2003 were fully delivered.

A range of infrastructure installation and modification, was also undertaken, including:

- There were 15 offices either moved or refurbished during 2003 and all regions were visited by IS Services staff for installations;

- the Con Colbert House (Kilmainham) Building project was completed. Staff were successfully relocated back to Goldsmith House following refurbishment of that building. This is also the first of the Department's buildings to be fitted out with a wireless infrastructure and CAT6 infrastructural cabling; and
- also opened in 2003 were the integrated offices at Coolock and Dungloe, where DSFA are sharing accommodation with organisations and agencies offering similar services.

## OBJECTIVE 4

*To refine and progress the Service Delivery Model (SDM) as part of the Modernisation Action Programme.*

*To develop organisational structures and work processes to support implementation, and benefits realisation, of the Service Delivery Model.*

### Service Delivery Modernisation Programme

The Department's Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) programme aims to transform delivery of services to customers and respond more effectively to changes in business and customer needs and to e-Government initiatives. Realisation of the programme depends heavily on applying new technologies. A new generation of IT systems has been developed and is being refined and extended on an on-going basis. New organisational structures and work processes are being redesigned to facilitate a service that is more customer centred, integrated, proactive, efficient, controlled and easier to access.

The SDM programme is a continuous development and is being implemented in a number of phases spanning several years. Phase 1 of the programme was successfully implemented in 2002 for Child Benefit and further developed in 2003 in conjunction with the e-enabling of the Civil Registration process. The on-line registration of the birth of a child sets in motion the allocation of a PPS No. for the child and

the automated initiation of the Child Benefit claim process for the first born child in a family and the automated payment for subsequent children in a family.

Phase 2 of SDM was initiated in 2003 for Retirement/Old Age Contributory Pension schemes, related allowances and Bereavement Grant schemes. It is planned to implement Phase 2 on an iterative basis, with the first iteration going live during 2004 and the final iteration in late 2005.

## OBJECTIVE 5

*To increase the Department's capacity to manage the security of its information in line with best practice and legal obligations.*

In line with the recommendations of the Price Waterhouse Cooper Report (March 2002) on DSFA's Information Security Architecture, Business Information Security Unit (BISU) was set up during 2003 to ensure that DSFA's business information is used in a secure environment by security conscious staff. BISU advises business owners and support areas of their responsibility to protect business information assets from a wide range of threats. This will enable each business owner to minimise the risk of damage to their business area's information assets and to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and adherence to best practice.

## OBJECTIVE 6

*To ensure the structure of the Department is optimal to achieve the tasks which must be undertaken.*

### Decentralisation

As part of the major decentralisation programme for the Civil Service announced in December 2003, it is proposed that the Headquarters of the Department, together with 2 of the Department's agencies (The Combat Poverty Agency and Comhairle), comprising

some 1,300 posts will move from Dublin to various provincial locations.

In preparation for the challenge, which the decentralisation programme poses for the Department and its staff, a formal project management structure has been established to manage the planning and implementation of the programme.

## OBJECTIVE 7

*To ensure the optimal relationship between the Department and the agencies with which it does business.*



An Bord Pinsean -  
The Pensions Board

Authority for Pensions

### Pensions Board

The Department works closely with the Pensions Board on the development of policy in relation to occupational pensions generally. The Department is represented on the Pensions Board itself and the various committees, which underpin and support the work of the Board.

The Pensions Board is financed through annual fees paid to it by the pension schemes it regulates. Fees are based on the number of members in each scheme. In 2003 the Board received a temporary recoverable subvention in respect of administrative costs arising from the regulation of the new PRSAs. This subvention amounted to €1.417 million. In addition the Board received €0.5 million to cover the cost of the National Pensions Awareness Campaign.



comhairle

### Comhairle

The Department has a very close working relationship with Comhairle and has a representative on the Board of Comhairle. Work began in 2003 on drafting a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations. It is envisaged that this Memorandum will lead to a closer working relationship between the two organisations at local and regional level. The

Budget allocation for Comhairle in 2003 was €17.011 million and this included €950,000 towards the OASIS project.



### Combat Poverty Agency

A collaborative relationship exists between the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) in the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA). Regular planning meetings take place between the OSI and CPA management. The Department is represented on the CPA Board. The Department funding to CPA in 2003 was €5.304 million.



### Family Support Agency

#### Family Support Agency

The relationship between the Family Affairs Unit and the Family Support Agency is one of continuous and effective cooperation and communication. Regular meetings take place between the two and the Department is represented on the Board of the Agency. The overall allocation for the Family Support Agency for 2003 was €17.28 million.

## OBJECTIVE 8

*To develop the role of the manager as the key facilitator in implementing change and improvement. To ensure management processes which foster open and participative management, effective communications, clear setting of tasks and priorities, timely and logical decision making and which encourage decision making and ownership of problems at the appropriate level of management.*

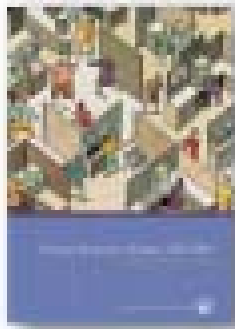
### AP/PO Management Development Programme

The roll-out of an AP/PO Management Development Programme commenced in 2003. An external training company was engaged to deliver the course, which was designed in conjunction with Staff Development Unit (SDU). Consultation on the approach to the programme took place with senior management and a representative group of POs, APs and HEOs took part in focus groups to consider the content of the course.

The course is designed around four main themes, Personal Effectiveness, Leadership, Teamwork and Driving Change. The format of the programme allows for exchange of ideas and views on these issues and a number of case studies are used to illustrate examples of team-working and change management within the Department.

## OBJECTIVE 9

*To implement our Human Resources Strategy 2003-2005 in the context of delivering on the commitments outlined in this Strategy Statement.*



### Human Resources Strategy 2003-2005

The Department's first Human Resources Strategy was published in 2003. The purpose of our HR Strategy is to bring together our various HR policies, integrate them within the overall organisational strategy and, therefore, place Human Resources at the centre of the Department's decision-making.

The Strategy focuses on five broad areas:

- Meeting our Strategic and Business Objectives;
- Ensuring a Positive Working Environment;

- Reaching our Potential through Training and Development;
- Devolution of Authority and Responsibility to Line Management regarding day-to-day HR Functions; and
- Strengthening Partnership, Consultation and Involvement.

The Strategy was prepared following consultation via the Partnership process and having regard to the outputs from a range of staff consultation initiatives undertaken in recent years.

The implementation of the Strategy will be monitored via the Department's Partnership process and updates on progress will be regularly communicated to staff.

### Human Resources

The Department employs more than 4,700 staff and, therefore, continues to be one of the largest employers in the Civil Service.

Basic pay costs amounted to €152.494 million while the cost of overtime was €3.648 million.

During 2003, the turnover of staff in the Department was significantly less by comparison with previous years. There were restrictions in place on the filling of vacancies in accordance with the Government decision on Public Service numbers. During the year, 105 employees joined the Department, of which 65 were new recruits to the Civil Service. 70 of the Department's staff were promoted either internally or through interdepartmental competition.

199 employees left the Department during 2003, including 36 who transferred to other Government Departments on promotion and 48 who moved on lateral transfer. 38 staff retired during the year and 55 staff resigned their positions.

### Career Opportunities

In addition to Civil Service competitions, 12 competitions for internal promotions were held. A number of schemes, which provided opportunities for career advancement and, in some cases, opportunities for study abroad, were also processed.

### Family Friendly Measures

In line with trends in previous years the number of staff availing of family friendly measures increased in

2003. During the year some employees availed of the additional attendance patterns that had been introduced in 2002. At the end of 2003 the following was the position regarding the take-up of the various worksharing options:

Pattern	Number of officers availing of option
4 day week	212
3 weeks on/1 week off	29
3 day week	68
9am-3pm attendance	17
Half attendance	662
<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>

A review of Family Friendly Working Arrangements in DSFA was undertaken during Summer 2003, which analysed the impact of atypical working arrangements on the Department's day to day business activities. A Report was produced in November 2003 based on the experience and views of management across the Department as determined through a survey questionnaire.

### Term Time

Term Time was introduced in 1998 and the number of applications is increasing every year. There were 367 applications for Term Time in 2003 with 27 of these subsequently withdrawn. 343 (93%) of the applicants were female. 32 applications were refused for business reasons. Of the 308 approved applications, 295 (96%) were for child minding purposes. 227 temporary Clerical Officers were hired to cover Term Time and 156 staff members received Higher Duty Allowances.

### Equality of Opportunity

The Equality/Diversity aspects of Human Resource Management now require a particular focus, in the light of the equality legislation of recent years and the development of specific Civil Service policies in this area.

The Department's first Gender Equality Action Plan was published in October 2003. The HR Strategy 2003-2005, published earlier in the year, identified the production of this Plan as a particular priority for the Department. Through this Plan the Department re-stated its commitment to the Civil Service Gender Equality Policy which was launched in 2001. The Plan sets out a wide range of actions across the Human Resources agenda,

aimed at ensuring our HR practices are consistent with that Policy. These areas include:

- Recruitment;
- Placement and Mobility;
- Promotion;
- Training and Staff Development;
- Balancing Work/Family Responsibilities;
- Inappropriate Behaviour, including Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying; and
- Language in Publications.

### Staff with Disabilities

In line with the Civil Service Gender and Diversity Policies and its own published commitments the Department is developing a range of initiatives aimed at increasing staff awareness of equality issues as they apply across the broad HR agenda.

The HR Strategy 2003-2005 included a commitment to progress initiatives aimed at addressing issues affecting staff with disabilities and, specifically, to strengthen the role of the Department's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO). The DLO is based within Personnel and has responsibility to promote the interests of staff with disabilities and co-ordinate the achievement of the Department's objective of ensuring a working environment that meets the particular needs of these employees. Key elements of the role are:

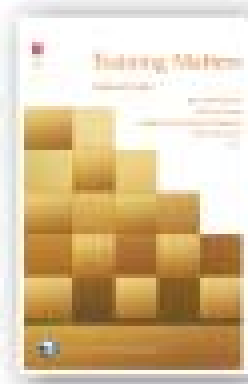
- liaison and co-operation with other areas of the Department, particularly sections that provide relevant supports;
- consultation with staff with disabilities; and
- liaison with other organisations and research regarding best practice in this area.

A Disability Issues Sub-Group was established by the Department's Partnership Steering Committee in April 2003 to examine a range of issues affecting colleagues with disabilities. The subgroup comprised of staff members with disabilities, and staff from relevant support areas i.e. Personnel, Facilities Management and Staff Development Unit. It reported in November 2003 and proposed a number of measures and made recommendations, which the Department is taking on board.

### Employee Assistance Service

The Employee Assistance Service has an important role in HR management. It enables the Department to respond appropriately to situations that may involve employees with personal difficulties and, more broadly, provides an employee support service.

Developments in the Service during 2003 included the appointment of an additional Employee Assistance Officer to be based in Dublin with shared responsibility for staff in Dublin, the North-East and parts of the Midlands. The Department now has four Employee Assistance Officers (two in Dublin and one each in Sligo and Limerick). The expansion of the Service from two to four people in 2002/2003 has made it more locally accessible in line with the Department's commitment to the welfare of its employees.



### Training Services Supplied

A Training, Development and Education Directory is available with details of all courses supplied by Staff Development Unit as well as the material available through the Learning Centre for self-managed learning (i.e. CD Roms, books and videos). To assist people in completing their PMDS Personal Development and Training Plan, both formal courses and self-managed learning options outlined in the Directory are linked to the relevant PMDS Competencies.

Staff Development Unit (SDU) offer a broad range of courses 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.

Two issues of the Department's training magazine – 'Training Matters' – were published during 2003, updating staff on training plans and initiatives around the Department.

### PMDS Personal Development and Training Plans

PMDS Personal Development and Training Plans are the primary mechanism of submitting training requests to SDU. During 2003, SDU received 2504 Year 1 Personal Development and Training Plans and by the end of year had received a total of 4,419 forms since the commencement of PMDS. During 2003, SDU also received 782 annual review forms and 788 Year 2 plans.

### Training Provided

During 2003, 3196 staff attended a total of 479 SDU training courses involving 3681 mandays. Courses delivered include Induction, Management Development, Interpersonal Skills, Writing Skills and Computer and PC Training. In addition, specialised training was provided for particular roles within the organisation (e.g. Service Officers and Inspectors) and for particular business needs.

### Training Strategy

The draft Training and Development Strategy was progressed during 2003 in the context of the development and publication of the Framework for Training and Development in the civil service by the Centre for Management Organisation and Development (CMOD). This framework maps out a strategy for the development of training over the coming 5 years within which each Government Department will develop its own strategy and priorities.

The Department's training strategy will define the scope and responsibility of training and development and a framework within which training plans can be developed and will outline the environment and influences affecting the training function in the future. The strategy is being developed in consultation with the Partnership Committees.



## Training Structures

One of the key actions in the training strategy is the review of the training structures within the Department to ensure the most effective operational arrangements. A working group was established in the last quarter of 2003 to undertake this review and is currently examining a number of options to improve these structures.

## Learning Centre

During 2003, SDU has continued to cater for self-managed learning needs through its Learning Centre facility. 1,232 requests were received for material such as CD ROMs, books and videos on topics relating to personal and interpersonal effectiveness, managing for results, thinking style and problem solving as well as life skills material. The Learning Centre also has an internal website for all HQ staff which contains 150 CD ROM courses.

## Refund of Fees

For the academic year 2002/2003 there are 211 staff members availing of the Refund of Fees scheme. This includes 13 people pursuing Masters Degrees (in Strategic Management, Public Management, European Law, Internet System, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology) and 124 pursuing courses in core study areas which include Social Policy, Human Resource Management, Public Administration, Financial Management, Information Technology (including ECDL) and Irish Language. This also includes funding for short courses of 16 weeks duration or less e.g. ECDL which is being pursued by 59 people.

## Irish Language Training Programme

Two specialised Irish language-training programmes were completed in 2003. The first programme was delivered in Dublin to staff in General Benefits Section, Information Section and Client Identity Services Section. The second programme was delivered in Donegal to staff from the Social Welfare Services Office in Longford and staff from Social Welfare Local Offices, Inspectors and Job Facilitators in the Western and North Western region. The main objective of the training is to equip front-line staff to deliver a quality customer service through Irish. A further programme of training will be provided during 2004 to support the implementation of Official Languages Act 2003.

## Partnership

A key value and guiding principle of the Department is the recognition that effective delivery of our services and management of our work requires a partnership approach between management, unions and staff.

The Department's Partnership Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Secretary-General, is supported by 5 Regional committees and, to date, 35 local or special interest committees. The Steering Committee met on 9 occasions in 2003.

## Review of Partnership in the Department

Partnership has been in operation in the Department since May 1998. In 2003, the Steering Committee, with the support of the regional and local committees, began its review of partnership and how it operates in the Department – the purpose being to establish whether it is meeting its objectives, what could be improved and how to take it forward. All staff in the organisation were asked for their views and a workshop-based seminar was held in Dublin in November which looked at the key themes underpinning the review. Some 60 conclusions and findings emerged from this review process. It is planned that implementation of those recommendations adopted by the Steering Committee will begin in early 2004.

## Key Partnership Achievements in 2003

### Modernisation Action Plan

The Partnership Steering Group played a major role in the Department's Modernisation Action Plan (details of which have been outlined in Chapter 3, above). As required by the Sustaining Progress agreement, the Steering Committee agreed the Department's Plan over a series of meetings and also agreed the Department's first progress report on the Plan. It continues to play its role and engage fully in the verification process.

### Disabilities sub-group

A report on issues affecting staff with disabilities was produced by a partnership sub-group. This was particularly timely, as 2003 was European Year of people with disabilities.

In addition, Partnership also actively participated and assisted in other initiatives including:

- the development of an Internet and e-mail policy;

- preparations for the Department's Customer Charter;
- Training and Development Strategy;
- Gender Equality Action Plan, 2003-2005;
- the attitudinal survey under PMDS; and
- an attitudinal survey on Work Life Balance arrangements.

### Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

PMDS gives the civil service the framework that defines how we can advance towards improved performance, greater job satisfaction and better service.

The implementation of PMDS is a major project, which requires the commitment of significant resources – funding, training and development, management time and staff commitment.

During 2003, twenty trainers located throughout the country delivered training on Phases 2 & 3 of PMDS to some 2,950 staff represented by the Civil & Public Service Union (CPSU).

The implementation of PMDS is being evaluated on an ongoing basis through staff questionnaires and workshops held with staff representatives. Reports are produced on completion of each phase of training.

### Buildings

There were a number of significant developments in 2003.

The refurbishment of Goldsmith House was completed in November. Goldsmith House now provides excellent accommodation for 55 staff.

Significant refurbishment work was also completed in the Department's headquarters, Aras Mhic Dhiarmada.

### Local Offices

New Local Offices were opened in the following locations.

**Dungloe** – 20/1/2003

**Coolock** – 7/4/2003 (This office replaced the old Gardiner Street office)

**Navan** – 3/11/2003

Gardiner Street Local Office closed in April 2003. Originally known as Trinity Church and later named Trinity House, when it became a 'labour exchange' in 1921.

### Health & Safety

A sub-committee of Partnership was formed at which Health & Safety Unit were involved to examine all issues for staff with disabilities. A comprehensive report was presented to the Secretary General and Partnership Steering Committee.



*John Hynes, Secretary-General (centre) with staff at the closing of Gardiner Street local office.*

## OBJECTIVE 10

*Resources will be allocated for the effective and efficient implementation of our objectives as outlined in this Strategy Statement.*

### Project Management

A structure and set of processes to enable prioritisation of projects and tasks has been developed and implemented. A Project Governance committee (PGC) meets on a monthly basis to discuss and decide on project priorities. This group is concerned with the allocation of resources for projects. These processes aim to ensure that a corporate view is taken of competing requirements, and that resourcing decisions are soundly based.

### Staff Resourcing

Various staffing reviews were undertaken in 2003 with a view to re-allocation of resources within Government numbers policy and to meet the business requirements in different areas.

### Training, Development and Education Resources

The organisation of the training resources within the Department reflects the significant staffing numbers (some 4,740) 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 Training Unit provides specialist Information Systems training (ISDDU) for the staff of IS Division and liaises with SDU as required. Training in the roll-out of PMDS has been managed separately under a PMDS Project Manager.

The annual training budget allocation for 2003 was €1.04 million, of which almost €300,000 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 and the Fees Refund Scheme.

## OBJECTIVE 11

*To operate Financial Management systems of the highest quality.*

### 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).

As part of its MIF implementation agenda, the Department is engaged in a major development programme that is aimed at developing a comprehensive management information system integrated with output and outcome measurement. This, when operating in tandem with the Department's existing accounting and financial reporting systems, will enhance performance measurement and accountability, encourage value for money measurement and accountability, encourage value for money approaches and improve the quality of resource allocation and decision making by managers.

Ten projects have been identified as necessary in order to meet the overall MIF objectives.

During 2003 the Department was involved in the identification, scoping and implementation, as appropriate, of these projects.

A key sub-project underpinning the achievement of the phase 2 management information objective is the development of new style comprehensive management reports at the level of business units. Significant progress has been made on this element of the MIF. At this stage, new style monthly one-page reports have been developed for a number of business areas. These new style reports for some selected areas came into operation during 2003 on a pilot basis.

### Change Management Fund

The Change Management Fund managed by the Department of Finance, supports Departments/ Offices in their efforts to implement, in an effective and co-ordinated manner, the strategic change agenda under the SMI programme of modernisation.

In 2003, the Department received some €633,000 from the Fund for a number of key projects, including:

- Performance Management and Development System;
- Management Information Framework;
- diversity awareness training courses;
- modernisation of the payment arrangements for the Family Income Supplement scheme;
- North/South Summer School which is held in partnership with the Department of Social Development in Northern Ireland;
- evaluation of our customer survey methodologies; and
- a team-working, partnership-based project in the Pension Services Office, Sligo.

### Performance under Prompt Payment Legislation

The Department complied with the provisions of Prompt Payment legislation in 2003. In the relatively small number of cases where the statutory time limit for payment was exceeded, the relevant amount of interest was included in the total payment.

In 2003, there were 58 late payments, the value of which amounted to 0.09% of total payments. Prompt payment interest amounted to €1,391.53.

## OBJECTIVE 12

*To ensure Value for Money in all of the activities of the Department.*

### Business Controls, Internal Audit & Audit Committee

As a vital element of the corporate governance processes within the Department, the robustness of its business control infrastructures was subjected to continuous review, audit and enhancement. All significant control and governance issues and recommendations brought to attention by internal and external audit were responded to by management.

The (Mullarkey) Report of the Working Group on the Accountability of Secretaries General and Accounting Officers issued in January 2003, and its recommendations have been actioned by the Department in line with the timetables therein.

The DSFA Audit Committee, which operates under a written charter and whose membership of five includes three external members (including the chairperson), is already part of the Department's corporate governance processes. The Audit Committee met on four occasions during 2003 and provided advice and guidance to the Department in relation to business control, internal audit, risk management and other governance issues.

During 2003, the Internal Audit Unit – which is an independent, objective, assurance and consulting activity – provided audit reports, reviews, questionnaires and other audit activities in respect of many aspects of the Department's business environment including social welfare schemes, head office areas, computer areas and Social Welfare Local Offices.

The Internal Audit Unit provides advice and assurance to Management on matters relating (inter alia) to the Department's systems of business control, to quality of performance and to business risk.



# *appendices*

Annual Report 2003

## Appendix 1

# Status Report on Organisational Targets for 2003

### Clearance Time Target

#### Activity

<b>i New Claims</b>	<b>Standard Clearance Time<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Status Performance</b>
Old Age Contributory Pension	55% in 6 weeks	52% Achieved
Retirement Pension	80% in 5 weeks	54% Achieved
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	80% in 5 weeks	81% Achieved
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	65% in 8 weeks	67% Achieved
Widow(er)'s (Non-Contributory) Pension & One Parent Family Payment (Widow)	75% in 8 weeks	81% Achieved
One-Parent Family – (Unmarried Parent)	55% in 8 weeks	21% Achieved
One-Parent Family – (Separated Spouse)	65% in 13 weeks	30% Achieved
Free Schemes	70% in 7 weeks	58% Achieved
Bereavement (PSO)	80% in 3 weeks	63% Achieved
Bereavement (Longford)	80% in 3 weeks	71% Achieved
Invalidity Pension	70% in 9 weeks	72% Achieved
Family Income Supplement	70% in 3 weeks	65% Achieved
Disability Allowance	70% in 9 weeks	40% Achieved
Carers	70% in 9 weeks	22% Achieved
Unemployment Benefit – All Claims	85% in 2 weeks	65% Achieved
Unemployment Assistance – All Claims	70% in 2 weeks	47% Achieved
Disability Benefit	90% in 1 week	63% Achieved
Occupational Injury Benefit – Interim Disability Benefit	85% in 1 weeks	88% Achieved
Maternity (before commencement of benefit)	80%	80% Achieved
Treatment Benefit	90% in 2 weeks	60% Achieved
Child Benefit <sup>2</sup>	90% in 1 week	
<b>ii Arrears</b>		
PSO (Sligo)	80% in 3 weeks	84% Achieved
Longford SWS	80% in 3 weeks	77% Achieved

<sup>1</sup> Clearance time: elapsed time from date of receipt of claim to date of decision.

<sup>2</sup> Due to technical problems with the new Child Benefit computer system, it was not possible to accurately report Child Benefit processing times in 2003

## Appendix 2

### Summary of DSFA Budget Package 2004

	2004 €m	COST Full Year €m
1. Increases in Weekly Rates	518.37	518.37
2. Child and Family Income Support	72.50	93.01
3. Pensioners/Widow/ers/Free Schemes	0.73	0.85
4. Carers	8.65	10.71
5. Incentives/Employment and Unemployment Supports	3.56	4.04
6. Agencies/Other	4.09	3.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>607.90</b>	<b>630.00</b>

#### Details of DSFA Budget Package 2004

Proposal	2004 €m	COST Full Year €m
<b>1. INCREASES IN WEEKLY RATES</b>		
<p><b>Personal Rates of Payment</b>            €11.50 increase in the personal rate for Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension/DWB aged 66 or over; €10.00 per week increase for all other pensioners aged 66 or over (65 in the case of Retirement and Invalidation Pension); €10.00 per week increase for all recipients aged under 66. Proportionate increases for all persons in receipt of reduced rates.  <b>[January 2004]</b></p>		
<p><b>Qualified Adult Allowance (QAA) Rates of Payment</b>            €16.10 per week increase for Invalidation Pension QAAs aged 66 or over, €7.70 per week increase for Old Age (Contributory) Pension and Retirement Pension QAAs aged 66 or over; €6.70 per week increase for OACP/RP QAAs aged under 66; €6.60 per week increase for OAP QAAs aged under and over 66; €7.10 per week increase for Invalidation Pension QAAs aged under 66; and a €6.60 per increase for all other QAAs. Proportionate increases for persons in receipt of reduced rates.  <b>[January 2004]</b></p>		
<p><b>Maternity Benefit</b>            Increase the minimum rate of Maternity Benefit by €10.00 per week, from €141.60 to €151.60.  <b>[January 2004]</b></p>		
	<b>518.37</b>	<b>518.37</b>

Proposal	COST	
	2004 €m	Full Year €m
<b>2. CHILD AND FAMILY INCOME SUPPORT</b>		
<b>Child Benefit</b>		
Increase the Child Benefit Lower Rate by €6.00 and the Higher Rate by €8.00 per month. New monthly rates are €131.60 and €165.30 per month, respectively.		
<b>[April 2004]</b>		
<b>Family Income Supplement (FIS)</b>		
Increase all weekly FIS earnings thresholds by €28.00.		
<b>[January 2004]</b>		
Increase the minimum FIS payment by €7.00, from €13.00 to €20.00 per week.		
<b>[January 2004]</b>		
<b>School Meals</b>		
Additional funding for the School Meals programme.		
<b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Adoptive Benefit</b>		
Increase the duration of Adoptive Benefit by 2 weeks, from 14 to 16 weeks, in line with proposed changes in Adoptive Leave legislation.		
<b>[2004 – following implementation of proposed Adoptive Leave legislation by Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.]</b>		
	<b>72.50</b>	<b>93.01</b>
<b>3. PENSIONERS/WIDOW/ERS/FREE SCHEMES</b>		
<b>Pensioners/Rent Supplement</b>		
Increase the pension disregard for Rent Supplement by €3.00, from €23.00 to €26.00 per week.		
<b>[January 2004]</b>		
<b>Widow/er's Non-Contributory Pension</b>		
Extend entitlement to Widow/er's Non-Contributory Pension (aged 66 and over) for a period of 5 years where a recipient takes up residence in Northern Ireland.		
<b>[April 2004]</b>		
<b>Death Benefit Pension</b>		
Increase the rate of payment for recipients aged 80 or over to a rate equivalent to the combined rate of WCP aged 66 or over maximum rate and the over 80 allowance.		
<b>[May 2004]</b>		
<b>Widowed Parent Grant</b>		
Increase the Widowed Parent Grant by €200, from €2,500 to €2,700.		
<b>[Budget Day]</b>		
<b>After Death Payments</b>		
Complete application of After Death Payment arrangements to those schemes/combination of schemes where they currently do not apply.		
<b>[June 2004]</b>		
<b>Free Travel</b>		
Extend the Free Travel Companion Pass to recipients of Unemployability Supplement who are currently entitled to a standard Free Travel Pass.		
<b>[April 2004]</b>		
	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.85</b>



Proposal	COST	
	2004 €m	Full Year €m
<b>4. CARERS</b>		
<p><b>Carer's Allowance</b> Increase the income disregard from €210 (single)/€420 (couple) per week to €250 (single)/€500 (couple) per week, increases of €40 and €80 per week respectively. <b>[April 2004]</b></p> <p><b>Respite Care Grant</b> Increase the Respite Care Grant by €100, from €735 to €835. <b>[June 2004]</b></p>		
	<b>8.65</b>	<b>10.71</b>
<b>5. INCENTIVES/EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS</b>		
<p><b>Special Projects Fund</b> Increase funding by €0.4m for the Special Projects Fund, from €2.1 million to €2.5 million. <b>[2004]</b></p> <p><b>Technical Training and Assistance Fund</b> Increase funding by €0.40 million for the Technical and Training fund, from €2.15 million to €2.55 million. <b>[2004]</b></p> <p><b>Back to Work Enterprise Allowance</b> Reduce qualifying period on Live Register for access to BTWEA by 2 years, from 5 years to 3 years. <b>[March 2004]</b></p> <p><b>Unemployment Assistance</b> Reduce the maximum age where Benefit and Privilege is assessable for UA from 28 years of age to 26 years, in respect of persons who are living in the parental home. <b>[April 2004]</b></p> <p>Increase the minimum UA payment where means are derived from parental income by €8.20 per week, from €31.80 to €40 per week (subject to an underlying entitlement to a reduced UA payment). <b>[April 2004]</b></p> <p><b>Qualified Adult Allowances (QAAs)</b> Increase the upper ceiling for entitlement to tapered QAA payments by €6.84, from €203.16 to €210 per week. <b>[January 2004]</b></p> <p><b>Rent Supplement</b> Disregard FIS for assessment of entitlement to Rent Supplement. <b>[January 2004]</b></p>		
	<b>3.56</b>	<b>4.04</b>

Proposal	COST	
	2004 €m	Full Year €m
<b>6. AGENCIES/OTHER</b>		
<b>MABS</b> Additional funding for the Money Advice Bureau. <b>[2004]</b> Once-off expenditure on upgrade to MABS National Payment System <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Combat Poverty Agency</b> Additional funding for the CPA. <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>International Year of the Family – 10th Anniversary</b> Once-off funding for the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family. <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Family Mediation Service</b> Funding for expansion of the Family Mediation Service (2 centres – 1 in North West and 1 in Midlands). <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Family Resource Centre</b> Funding for the Family Resource Centre Programme including 12 new centres and the roll-out of an evaluation model. <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Marriage/Family Counselling</b> Additional funding for increased grant payments and the continued funding of four special projects. <b>[2004]</b>		
<b>Comhairle</b> Additional funding for Comhairle. <b>[2004]</b>		
	<b>4.09</b>	<b>3.02</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>607.90</b>	<b>630.00</b>

## Appendix 3

# Expenditure on Social Welfare by Payment Type, 2002 and 2003

Type of Payment	2002 €000	2003 Provisional €000	Change %
Old Age (Contributory) Pension	868,529	946,903	9.0%
Retirement Pension	803,413	898,981	11.9%
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	537,308	565,006	5.2%
Pre-Retirement Allowance	87,028	89,077	2.4%
<b>Total Old Age</b>	<b>2,296,278</b>	<b>2,499,967</b>	<b>8.9%</b>
Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension	761,539	826,135	8.5%
Widow/er's (Non-Contributory) Pension	116,493	116,834	0.3%
Deserted Wife's Benefit	88,150	89,235	1.2%
Deserted Wife's Allowance	10,238	10,605	3.6%
Prisoner's Wife's Allowance	12	13	8.3%
One Parent Family Payment	613,035	660,586	7.8%
Widowed Parent Grant (Contributory)	2,971	2,867	-3.5%
Widowed Parent Grant ( Non-Contributory)	113	290	156.6%
<b>Total Widows, Widowers and One Parent Families</b>	<b>1,592,551</b>	<b>1,706,565</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
Maternity Benefit	99,129	107,330	8.3%
Health and Safety Benefit	217	213	-1.8%
Adoptive Benefit	578	532	-8.0%
Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance	11,694	8,895	-23.9%
Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension	4,494	5,805	29.2%
Child Benefit	1,462,793	1,666,530	13.9%
<b>Total Child Related Payments</b>	<b>1,578,905</b>	<b>1,789,305</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
Disability Benefit	385,297	433,410	12.5%
Invalidity Pension	403,617	440,263	9.1%
Injury Benefit	11,842	11,878	0.3%
Disablement Benefit	59,393	60,810	2.4%
Death Benefit	5,558	5,813	4.6%
Disability Allowance	407,585	463,608	13.7%
Medical Care	225	251	11.6%
Carer's Allowance	160,042	183,273	14.5%
Carer's Benefit	5,807	6,943	19.6%
Blind Person's Pension	14,221	14,816	4.2%
<b>Total Illness, Disability and Caring</b>	<b>1,453,587</b>	<b>1,621,065</b>	<b>11.5%</b>

Type of Payment	2002 €000	2003 Provisional €000	Change %
Unemployment Benefit	423,487	477,094	12.7%
Unemployment Assistance	511,985	565,952	10.5%
<b>Total Unemployment Supports</b>	<b>935,472</b>	<b>1,043,046</b>	<b>11.5%</b>
Family Income Supplement	42,423	45,360	6.9%
Employment Support Services <sup>(1)</sup>	168,134	139,407	-17.1%
Farm Assist	58,571	62,806	-
<b>Total Employment Supports</b>	<b>269,128</b>	<b>247,573</b>	<b>-8.0%</b>
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	484,929	587,813	21.2%
<b>Total Supplementary Welfare Allowance</b>	<b>484,929</b>	<b>587,813</b>	<b>21.2%</b>
Treatment Benefits <sup>(1)</sup>	60,796	63,348	4.2%
Rent Allowance	666	675	1.4%
Free Schemes <sup>(1)</sup>	296,043	340,514	15.0%
Miscellaneous <sup>(1)</sup>	69,646	68,489	-1.7%
Equal Treatment – Insurance payments	17	5	-70.6%
Equal Treatment- Assistance payments	-	-	-
Redundancy and Insolvency <sup>(2)</sup>	58,713	98,182	67.2%
<b>Total Miscellaneous Payments and Grants</b>	<b>485,881</b>	<b>571,213</b>	<b>17.6%</b>
Administration – Insurance Schemes	177,458	184,042	3.7%
Administration – Assistance Schemes	242,636	242,987	0.1%
<b>Total Administration</b>	<b>420,094</b>	<b>427,029</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9,516,825</b>	<b>10,493,576</b>	<b>10.3%</b>

(1) See Additional Expenditure Details in Table A4.

(2) These schemes are administered by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

## Appendix 4

# Legislation Enacted in 2003

A number of primary and secondary legislative initiatives were introduced in 2003 as follows:

### 1 Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2003 (No 4 of 2003)

The Act provides for:

- the introduction of a range of social welfare improvements announced in Budget 2003,
- changes in the means test for certain social assistance schemes, and
- changes in PRSI (Benefit-in-kind),
- miscellaneous amendments to the Pensions Act 1990.

The Act was signed into law in March and took effect from April 2003.

### 2 Civil Registration Bill 2003 (No 35 of 2003)

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- rationalise the procedures for registering births, stillbirths and deaths,
- give an tArd-Chláraitheoir responsibility for the overall policy for the Civil Registration Service, including maintaining standards of service,
- assign responsibility for the management, control and administration of the Civil Registration Service at local level to Health Boards,
- streamline the existing procedures governing the registration of adoptions,
- establish new Registers of Divorce and Civil Nullity,
- reform the procedures governing the notification and registration of marriages, and
- facilitate the future linking of life-events.

The Bill was published in July 2003.

### 3 The Social Welfare Act 2003 (No 41 of 2003)

The Act provides for:

- increases in the rates of social insurance and assistance payments and improvements in the Family Income Supplement announced in Budget 2004,
- increases in the annual earnings/income ceilings in respect to the payment of PRSI contributions, and
- changes to the social welfare code.

The Act was signed into law in December 2003 and takes effect from January 2004.

The following Regulations listed below were signed into legislation by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs during the course of 2003:

#### S.I. No. 74 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS) (ALIGNMENT OF TAX YEAR WITH CALENDAR YEAR) REGULATIONS, 2003

These Regulations provide for the continuation of the transitional arrangements, necessary to preserve entitlement to social insurance-based benefits, consequent on the alignment of the income tax and calendar years with effect from 1 January 2001.

Article 4(1) provides that in the Benefit year 2003 (i.e. the period 6th January 2003 to 4th January 2004), 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 2001 and ending 31 December, 2001, i.e. the transitional contribution year. It should be noted that Regulations provide for the application of 14 additional contributions (paid or credited as appropriate) in respect of the transitional year.

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. Accordingly, for the purposes of Maternity and Adoptive Benefits, Article 4(2) provides that in the 2003 Benefit Year, the Income Tax Year 5th April 2001 to 31st December, 2001 will be applicable.

Article 4(3) provides that, for the purposes of determining entitlement to Health and Safety Benefit in the Benefit Year 2003, the appropriate Governing Contribution Year will be 5th April 2001 to 31st December 2001.

Finally, Article 4(4) provides that, for the purposes of determining entitlement to Treatment Benefit in the Benefit Year 2003, the appropriate Relevant Contribution Year will be April 2001 to December, 2001.

**S.I. No. 75 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSURABILITY) (AMENDMENT) (CREDITED CONTRIBUTIONS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide that an employment contribution will be credited to an insured person for each week during which he or she avails of carer's leave, under the terms of the Carer's Leave Act, 2001, maternity leave under the terms of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994 or adoptive leave under the terms of the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995, where he or she is not entitled to receive Carer's Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Maternity Benefit or Adoptive Benefit.

The Regulations also provide that employment contributions will be credited to insured persons who avail of additional unpaid adoptive leave under the terms of the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995. This arrangement is similar to the provisions which apply to additional unpaid maternity leave.

**S.I. NO. 77 OF 2003 OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES (REVALUATION) REGULATIONS, 2003**

This regulation provides for a revaluation percentage of 4% for 2002.

**S.I. NO. 78 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002, (SECTIONS 121 (3), (4), (5) AND (6)) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This order provides for the commencement of sections 121(3), (4), (5) and (6) of the Pensions Act, 1990 as inserted by the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 as follows:

Those sections require employers to remit contributions in respect of PRSAs to the relevant custodian account of the PRSA provider within a specified time limit and to provide statements to employees at least once a month showing the amount remitted on his or her behalf.

**S.I. NO. 119 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 5, IN SO FAR AS THAT SECTION INSERTS SECTIONS 126 TO 130, 146 AND 147 OF PART XI OF THE PENSIONS ACT, 1990) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This order provides for the commencement of section 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002, only in so far as it inserts sections 126 to 130, 146 and 147 of Part XI into the Pensions Act 1990. These sections are commenced so as to provide for the establishment of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman and appointment of the Pensions Ombudsman by the Minister.

**S.I. NO. 120 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002 (SECTIONS 45 TO 49) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of sections 45 to 49 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002.

Section 45 amends section 80 of the Principal Act and protects an employee from dismissal in the event of him/her making a voluntary or compulsory report to the Pensions Board concerning the state and conduct of an occupational pension scheme or PRSA.

Sections 46 to 49 amend the Pensions Act 1990 to include PRSAs in those sections of the Act which relate to compulsory and voluntary reporting provisions.

**S.I. No. 121 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT)(CARERS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Social Welfare legislation currently provides that a person in receipt of Carer's Benefit may engage in employment or self-employment outside the home, subject to a maximum of ten hours per week and an income ceiling of €95.23. These Regulations increase the income ceiling to €150 per week, with effect from 3 April, 2003.

These Regulations also provide for increases in the income disregarded for the purposes of the Carer's Allowance means test. In the case of a single person, the increase is €19 per week, bringing the total amount of the disregard to €210. In the case of a married person, the disregard is increased by €38 per week, a new total of €420. This measure takes effect from 3 April, 2003.

**S.I. NO. 128 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002 (SECTIONS 29 AND 37) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This order provides for the commencement of sections 29 and 37 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002. Section 29 amends section 43 of the Pensions Act, 1990, to provide a mechanism to identify schemes whose funding is likely to fall below the Minimum Funding Standard in the three and a half year interval between Actuarial Funding Certificates and to provide for corrective action in such cases. Section 37 requires additional information in the annual report regarding the funding position of a scheme.

**S.I. No. 129 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2003 (SECTION 24)(COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 24 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 which provides, by way of a Schedule, for amendments to the Pensions Act, 1990.

Paragraph 1 of the Schedule is a technical amendment.

Paragraph 2 provides that where a pension scheme would not satisfy the Funding Standard, transfer payments for people who leave that scheme for any reason may be reduced so that those who remain in the scheme are not disadvantaged against those who leave.

Paragraph 3 clarifies the power vested in the Pensions Board under which the Board may extend the time limit for submission of an Actuarial Funding Certificate (AFC) as set out in Section 43 of the Pensions Act.

Paragraph 4 amends Section 49(3) of the Pensions Act 1990 to ensure it can be used by the Pensions Board to respond to the current funding challenges facing defined benefit schemes as a result of a fall in the value of pension assets.

Paragraphs 5 & 15 amend Sections 58A and 121 of the Pensions Act, 1990 to make it clear that where details of the remittance are included in the employee's payslip this will satisfy the requirement relating to the provision of a statement in relation to employees. The amendment also defines the word

“month” as the interpretation will differ depending on employers pay cycles.

Paragraphs 6, 7 & 8 comprise a technical amendment to make clear that all or any of the equality officers who are staff of the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations have jurisdiction to decide disputes under Part VII of the Pensions Act.

Paragraph 9 removes a provision inserted by the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 relating to a PRSA provider's accounts.

Paragraph 10 is a technical amendment.

Paragraphs 11, 12 & 13 amend Sections 111, 113 and 116 which require PRSA providers to issue certificates and statements to PRSA contributors at specified times and in specified circumstances. These Sections are being amended to require the PRSA provider, in preparing those documents, to comply with the advice of the PRSA/Scheme Actuary and with the guidance of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland (SOAI). Paragraph 11 also extends the information which may, by Regulations, be required to be provided before the conclusion of a PRSA contract.

Paragraph 14 amends Section 119(3) to require a PRSA actuary to comply with specified guidance when preparing his determination under Section 119(1).

Paragraph 16 amends the Second Schedule, which deals with the calculation of the preserved benefits which must be provided to members who leave a pension scheme. As currently stated, the Second Schedule provides for the double counting of a benefit entitlement in certain circumstances. This is inadvertent, and results in the provision of an inappropriate preserved benefit.

Paragraph 17 amends the Third Schedule, which sets out the details of the funding standard which applies to all defined benefit schemes. Certain cross-references between the Third Schedule and the sections of the Act are incorrect, and result in gaps in the scheme of benefits to be funded.

**S.I. No. 170 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT)(No. 1) (MEANS ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provides for the standardisation of the assessment of maintenance payments across the social assistance schemes by extending arrangements currently applicable to One-parent Family Payment to Old Age and Widow(er)'s (Non-Contributory) Pensions, Unemployment Assistance, Pre-Retirement Allowance, Farm Assist and Disability Allowance. The amount of maintenance to be disregarded will be such amount as does not exceed a person's annual housing costs together with 50% of any amount in excess of those housing costs.

These Regulations provide that for the purposes of this disregard the maximum amount of a person's annual housing costs shall be 4,951.98, which mirrors the amount applicable in the case of One-parent Family Payment.

The 2003 Act also provides for the abolition of the assessment of benefit and privilege provision in certain circumstances in the case of a person who has attained a prescribed age. These Regulations provide that, for the purposes of claims to Unemployment Assistance and Pre-Retirement Allowance, the assessment of benefit and privilege will no longer apply to persons aged 29 years or over.

**S.I. No. 209 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 12) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 12 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 with effect from 27 May, 2003.

Section 12 provides for an amendment to the definition of "transaction" contained in Section 223 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993 in relation to the Personal Public Service (PPS) Number to clarify its use by agencies in relation to public service business.

It further provides for the introduction of the concept of a Public Service Identity, which will act as a secure and unique identifier for public service customers. The Public Service Identity comprises a person's name, address, date of birth, sex etc. and his or her PPS Number.

**S.I. No. 210 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2003 (SECTIONS 13 AND 15) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Sections 13 and 15 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003.

Section 13 provides that, with effect from the commencement date, Rent Supplement, under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme, shall be payable only where a person is lawfully in the State. It also provides that Rent Supplement shall not be payable where a person has made an application for asylum and such application is awaiting final decision by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the authority of the Health Boards to pay Rent Supplement in cases of urgency is not affected by the provisions of Section 13.

This Order comes into effect from 27 May, 2003.

**S.I. No. 234 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES) (PRESCRIBED DISEASES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for the addition of three further diseases to the list of prescribed diseases for the purposes of the Occupational Injuries Benefit (OIB) Scheme.

The three additional diseases to be included are:

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome;
- Lateral Epicondylitis; and
- Latex Allergy (in respect of work in human healthcare).

The Regulations also provide that, for the purposes of the OIB scheme, exposure to the following shall be added to the list of prescribed causative agents in relation to Occupational Asthma:

- Glutaraldehyde; and
- Latex in respect of work in human healthcare.



**S.I. No. 235 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS)(AMENDMENT) (NO.2) (MEANS ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 8 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provided for regulations to standardise the treatment of certain non-cash benefits in the assessment of means for certain Social Assistance schemes.

Regulations currently provide for the assessment of the non-cash benefit of the housing costs of a beneficiary which are paid by a liable relative, and of Direct Provision Accommodation, as provided under a scheme operated by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the assessment of means for the purposes of the One-parent Family Payment Scheme.

Direct Provision Accommodation is currently assessed as benefit and privilege for the purposes of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme.

These Regulations will now standardise the assessment of such non-cash benefits in the means test for the purposes of One-parent Family Payment, Unemployment Assistance, Pre-Retirement Allowance, Disability Allowance, Widow's and Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance and Farm Assist.

The Regulations also provide that the rate of assistance payable to a person immediately before the commencement of these Regulations will not be reduced as a result of the new provisions.

**S.I. No. 269 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 16) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 16 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002, in so far as it relates to Item 4 of Part 4, Item 1 of Part 7 and Item 3 of Part 8 of the Schedule to the Act, with effect from 1 July 2003.

These items provide for amendments to the Births and Deaths (Ireland) Act, 1863, the Marriages (Ireland) Act, 1844 and the Registration of Marriages (Ireland) Act, 1863 and are designed to facilitate electronic registration of births, deaths and marriages in Ireland and electronic production of certificates.

The new sections to be inserted in the relevant Acts relate to the keeping of registers, the reproduction of certified copies of entries made in the registers and the use of such copies in court proceedings.

**S.I. No. 323 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT)(NO.3)(COMPENSATION PAYMENTS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that any moneys received by way of compensation awarded to persons who have contracted Hepatitis C and to persons who have disabilities caused by Thalidomide will be disregarded in the assessment of means for the purposes of determining entitlement to social assistance payments.

These Regulations replace the existing provisions, and extend the disregard to include any moneys received by way of compensation, awarded by the Hepatitis C and HIV Tribunal or by a Court of competent jurisdiction, to persons who have contracted HIV through contaminated blood products.

**S.I. No. 324 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE)(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that any moneys received by way of compensation awarded to persons who have contracted Hepatitis C and to persons who have disabilities caused by Thalidomide will be disregarded in the assessment of means for the purposes of determining entitlement to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

These Regulations replace the existing provisions, and extend the disregard to include any moneys received by way of compensation, awarded by the Hepatitis C and HIV Compensation Tribunal or by a Court of competent jurisdiction, to persons who have contracted HIV through contaminated blood products.

### **S.I. NO. 341 OF 2003 PERSONAL RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNT (OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 119 of the Pensions Act 1990 provides that a PRSA actuary shall determine the extent to which a PRSA provider has complied with Part X of the Pensions Act. Section 119 was amended by the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 (2003 Act) to require a PRSA actuary to comply with any guidance specified in regulations when preparing that determination. These regulations so specify.

Section 119 was also amended by the 2003 Act to provide that a PRSA provider must sign a declaration that he has given the PRSA actuary all the information requested and that it is accurate. These regulations prescribe the form and manner and content of that declaration and provide that it should be included in the determination of the PRSA actuary.

The regulations also provide that the determination should also include a statement by the PRSA Actuary, if such is the case, that the PRSA provider has complied with the advice of the PRSA actuary and Society of Actuaries in Ireland Guidance, as required under the Pensions Act.

### **S.I. NO. 342 OF 2003 PERSONAL RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (DISCLOSURE)(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 111 of the Pensions Act 1990, as amended by the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2003, provides that the Minister may make regulations to provide for the disclosure of additional information relating to the consequences, including financial consequences, of replacing an existing PRSA contract or a retirement annuity contract with another PRSA contract. These regulations provide that this information must be provided before the initial statement of reasonable projection is issued and that it must be provided in the form of a declaration to be signed by the PRSA provider and the person concerned. Sections 111, 113 and 116, as amended by the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2003, provide for the issue of a Preliminary Disclosure Certificate, a Certificate of Comparison and a Statement of Reasonable Projection respectively. These Regulations provide

that all of these documents must be prepared in accordance with the advice of a PRSA actuary and any guidance notes issued by the Society of Actuaries in Ireland for that purpose.

### **S.I. NO. 359 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002, (SECTION 125) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This order provides for the commencement of Section 125 of the Pensions Act 1990 as inserted by the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002.

Section 125(1) provides that existing Retirement Annuity Contract (RAC) policyholders will be permitted, by mutual agreement and subject to Regulations to transfer assets from an RAC to a PRSA. Section 125(2) provides that where a Defined Contribution scheme is to be terminated and its assets transferred to a PRSA or PRSAs, the employer must provide to members all relevant information relating to the termination of the trust and the conclusion of the PRSA contract at least three months before the trust is terminated.

### **S.I. NO. 389 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 3 (IN SO FAR AS IT RELATES TO THE INSERTION OF SECTIONS 121 (EXCEPT IN SO FAR AS THAT SECTION IS ALREADY IN OPERATION), 123, 124(1) AND 125 OF THE PENSIONS ACT 1990)) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This order provides for the commencement of sections 121, 123 and 124(1) of the Pensions Act 1990 as inserted by the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002.

Sections 121(1), (2), (7), (8), (9) and (10) provide that where an employer does not operate a pension scheme, or operates one which limits eligibility or imposes a waiting period of more than six months, then such an employer must –

- Provide access to a PRSA for his employees;
- Notify employees that they have a right to contribute to a standard PRSA;
- Allow a PRSA provider or intermediary reasonable access to employees at their workplace;

- Allow reasonable paid leave of absence to enable such employees to set up a standard PRSA, subject to work requirements; and
- Make deductions from payroll at employees' request.

Section 123(1) prohibits single member schemes whose only purpose is to facilitate payment of additional voluntary contributions by that member. Section 123(2) provides that if an employer does not provide an option to pay additional voluntary contributions then the requirements of section 121 apply to his or her employees.

Section 124(1) facilitates transfers of PRSA assets to defined benefit or defined contribution schemes.

Section 125(1) provides that existing Retirement Annuity Contract (RAC) policyholders will be permitted, by mutual agreement and subject to Regulations, to transfer assets from an RAC to a PRSA.

Section 125(2) provides that where a Defined Contribution scheme is to be terminated and its assets transferred to a PRSA or PRSAs, the employer must provide to members all relevant information relating to the termination of the trust and the conclusion of the PRSA contract at least 3 months before the trust is terminated.

#### **S.I. No. 391 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSURABILITY) (AMENDMENT) (NO.1) (CREDITED CONTRIBUTIONS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that an employment contribution shall be credited to an insured person in respect of a day of proven unemployment. For the purposes of such credited contributions, a day is not treated as a day of unemployment unless a person proves that s/he is capable of work and available for employment, unless otherwise exempted.

These Regulations provide that in addition to the above, a person must now also prove that s/he is genuinely seeking work in order to qualify for credited employment contributions.

These Regulations ensure that job-seeking requirements are now the same for all on the live register.

#### **S.I. No. 395 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 16) (No.2) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 16 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002, in so far as it relates to Item 2 of Part 4, Item 3 of Part 5 and Item 5 of Part 7 of the Schedule to the Act, with effect from 8 September 2003.

In addition and in so far as it relates to the District of Cork only, this Order also provides for the commencement of the following items of the Schedule to the Act, with effect from 8th September 2003:

Item 3 of Part 4, Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of Part 5 and Item 2 of Part 6.

These items provide for amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Acts and the Marriages (Ireland) Acts.

The commencement of some of these provisions is necessary to enable the electronic registration of births and deaths in the Civil Registration Office in Cork from the 8th September, 2003 and to allow for the capture of additional information at the time of registration.

The commencement of the remaining provisions is required to facilitate the administration of the Civil Registration Service on a national basis.

#### **S.I. No. 396 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) (No.4) (CHILD BENEFIT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 11 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provided for the award of Child Benefit in the case of a second or subsequent child in certain defined circumstances.

These Regulations detail the circumstances under which an award of Child Benefit may be made without referral to a Deciding Officer for decision. These are that:

- the person qualified to receive benefit on behalf of the child/children is currently in receipt of Child Benefit in respect of at least one child;

- details of the birth registration have been notified to the Minister by An t-Ard-Chláraitheoir; and
- the information provided is sufficient to validate the identity of the child/children and the qualified person.

#### **S.I. NO. 397 OF 2003 PENSIONS OMBUDSMAN REGULATIONS, 2003**

Sections 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted a new Part XI (sections 126 to 144) into the Pensions Act to provide for a Pensions Ombudsman. These Regulations provide for certain matters in relation to his operation and jurisdiction.

#### **S.I. NO. 398 OF 2003 PENSIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 5 (EXCEPT IN SO FAR AS THAT SECTION IS ALREADY IN OPERATION) AND SECTIONS 8 AND 58) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

Section 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted a new part XI into the Pensions Act 1990 to provide for a Pensions Ombudsman. Section 8 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 amends section 3 of the Pensions Act 1990 to allow the Pensions Ombudsman bring and prosecute proceedings for a summary offence under the Act in relation to a breach of specified provisions. Section 58 amends the Ombudsman Act 1980 so as to ensure that matters within the remit of the Pensions Ombudsman will not be capable of being dealt with by the public service Ombudsman under the provisions of the Ombudsman Act 1980.

#### **S.I. No. 399 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2003 (SECTION 23) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 23 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 with effect from 2 September 2003.

Section 23 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provides for amendments to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 1997 to bring the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman, as established under the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002, within the scope of the FOI Act.

The amendment also provides that the provisions of the FOI Act will not apply to any examination or investigation carried out by the Pensions Ombudsman in accordance with the Pensions Act.

#### **S.I. NO. 426 OF 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE)(AMENDMENT) (NO.1) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that any moneys received by way of compensation awarded to persons who have contracted Hepatitis C or HIV and to persons who have disabilities caused by Thalidomide will be disregarded in the assessment of means for the purposes of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme.

These Regulations replace the existing provisions, and extend this disregard to include any moneys received by way of compensation awarded by the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

#### **S.I. NO.427 OF 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT)(NO.5)(COMPENSATION PAYMENTS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that any moneys received by way of compensation awarded to persons who have contracted Hepatitis C or HIV and to persons who have disabilities caused by Thalidomide will be disregarded in the assessment of means for the purposes of social assistance payments.

These Regulations replace the existing provisions, extending this disregard to include any moneys received by way of compensation awarded by the Residential Institutions Redress Board.

#### **S.I. NO. 429 OF 2003 OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES AND PERSONAL RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (TRANSFER) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These regulations provide for transfer payments from an occupational scheme to a PRSA and from a PRSA to an occupational pension scheme.

**S.I. No. 452 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (EMPLOYERS' PAY-RELATED SOCIAL INSURANCE EXEMPTION SCHEME) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for amendments to the Employers' PRSI Exemption Scheme in relation to employers who, on or after the commencement of these Regulations, take on an employee who, on the date of commencement of employment, was in receipt of a payment under the Back to Work Allowance scheme.

In such cases employers are exempted from the employer portion of the PRSI contribution in respect of that employee for a period of up to two years. These provisions will apply only to an employee who had not previously been in receipt of a payment under the Back to Work Allowance Scheme.

The Regulations also provide that the exemption will not apply while the employer is in receipt of a Jobstart subsidy in respect of an employee or where the employee is no longer entitled to or in receipt of the Back to Work Allowance payment.

**S.I. No. 453 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT)(NO.6)(QUALIFIED CHILD INCREASE) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 5 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2003 provided for the extension of entitlement to an increase for a qualified child in full-time education who is aged between 18 and 22 years to recipients of certain short-term social welfare payments. This provision will apply to people who have been in receipt of such short-term payment for more than 26 weeks.

These Regulations provide that periods in receipt of other Social Welfare payments may be included when calculating the 26 week period. Periods during which the applicant was entitled to or in receipt of another Social Welfare payment, which does not form part of the current claim, will only be taken into account where not more than 13 weeks has elapsed between any two successive claims.

**S.I. No. 454 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE)(AMENDMENT) (NO.2) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Section 5 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provided for the extension of entitlement to an increase for a qualified child in full-time education aged between 18 and 22 years to recipients of Supplementary Welfare Allowance. This provision will apply to people who have been in receipt of the Allowance for more than 26 weeks.

These Regulations provide that, for the purposes of Supplementary Welfare Allowance, periods in receipt of other Social Welfare payments may be taken into account when calculating the 26 week period. Periods during which the applicant was entitled to or in receipt of another Social Welfare payment will only be taken into account where not more than 13 weeks has elapsed between any two successive claims.

**S.I. No. 455 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 16) (No.3) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of the following items of the Schedule to the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 in so far as it relates to the Districts of Skibbereen and Mallow:

Item 3 of Part 4, Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of Part 5 and Item 2 of Part 6.

These items provide for amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Acts and the Marriages (Ireland) Acts.

The commencement of these provisions is necessary to enable the electronic registration of births and deaths in the Civil Registration Office in Skibbereen from the 25th September, 2003 and in Mallow from the 29th September, 2003 and to allow for the capture of additional information at the time of registration.

**S.I. No. 472 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2003 (SECTION 11) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 11 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 with effect from the 8th September 2003.

Section 11 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003 provides for the award of Child Benefit in certain defined circumstances without recourse to a Deciding Officer.

**S.I. No. 501 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 16) (No.4) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of the following items of the Schedule to the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 in so far as it relates to the Districts of Killarney, Tralee and Castlegregory:

Item 3 of Part 4, Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of Part 5 and Item 2 of Part 6.

These items provide for amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Acts and the Marriages (Ireland) Acts.

The commencement of these provisions is necessary to enable the electronic registration of births and deaths in the Civil Registration Offices in Killarney, Tralee and Castlegregory from the 28th October, 2003 and to allow for the capture of additional information at the time of registration.

**S.I. No. 550 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

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 €30.

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. 643 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 11 & 16) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Section 11 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 and Part 3 of the Schedule to the said Act.

Section 11 provides for Regulations to permit the return, subject to certain conditions, of PRSI contributions paid in respect of payments to Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) and other personal pensions made in a personal capacity outside the payroll system.

Part 3 of the Schedule to the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 provides that contributions made by employees or proprietary directors to PRSAs or other personal pensions will be exempt from payment of a health contribution in line with the arrangements which will apply in respect of PRSI.

Regulations may be made to enable the return, subject to certain conditions, of health contributions made outside the payroll system in respect of payments to such pensions by employees or proprietary directors.

**S.I. No. 661 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2003 (SECTIONS 16, 17, 18, 20 and 21) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of Sections 16,17,18,20 and 21 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003.

Sections 16, 17 and 18 of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2003 give effect to the provision in Budget 2003 for the application of PRSI to benefits-in-kind granted to employees from 1st January 2004.

Sections 20 and 21 of the Act provide for amendments to the Health Contributions Act 1979 and the National Training Fund Act 2000 to facilitate, in the main, the assessment of non-cash remuneration for both the Health Contribution and the Training Levies. In addition they also provide for the naming of persons who default on the Health Contribution and Training Fund levies.

**S.I. No. 696 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 9) (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Regulations currently provide that, where the weekly income of a recipient of One-parent Family Payment exceeds the threshold of €293, the recipient may receive a transitional One-parent Family Payment payable at half-rate, for a period of twelve months.

These Regulations revoke the entitlement to such half-rate payments in circumstances where the weekly income threshold is exceeded.

Existing recipients of the transitional payments will not be affected by these Regulations and will continue to receive the transitional payments for the remainder of their 52-payment term.

These Regulations come into operation on 19 January 2004.

**S.I. No. 697 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

The Social Welfare Act, 2003 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 less with effect from 29 December 2003,
- Disablement Pension payable in lieu of such Gratuities, with effect from 2 January 2004, and
- Injury Benefit payable to persons under the age of sixteen with effect from 29 December 2003.

**S.I. No. 698 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSURABILITY) (AMENDMENT) (No.1) (REFUNDS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

Where a person makes a contribution towards a pension product defined in Section 29C of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993, in any contribution year commencing after 1 January, 2003, the amount of PRSI paid on the portion of the pension contribution that is allowable as a deduction for income tax purposes (the allowable pension payment) may be refunded.

Section 29C provides for the refund of such PRSI contributions and these Regulations outline the circumstances in which a refund of PRSI is made in such cases and the basis for calculating the amount of PRSI contribution to be refunded. The new articles inserted into S.I 312/96 are as follows:

Sub-article 72C(3) provides that, where an insured person makes application in writing to the Minister or the Collector General, PRSI contributions made by that person as part of that person's earnings paid in respect of a pension product shall be refunded.

Sub-article 72C(4)(a) provides that, subject to sub-article (6) where an insured person's reckonable earnings are less than or equal to the prevailing employee PRSI contribution ceiling, any PRSI contributions made on the amount of earnings paid in respect of an allowable pension payment shall be refunded.

Paragraph (b) deals with cases where the insured person's reckonable earnings exceed the employee ceiling, but when reduced by the amount of the allowable pension payment is lower than the ceiling. In this instance, the amount to be refunded will be the amount of PRSI contributions paid on the difference between that person's reckonable earnings less the allowable pension payment and prevailing employee ceiling.

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

Sub-article 72C(5) provides that, subject to Sub-article (6), the refund due to a self-employed person who makes an allowable pension payment will be the amount of the allowable pension payment multiplied by the rate of Class S (i.e. self-employment) PRSI contribution) paid.

Sub-article 72C(6) provides that in the case of a person who, in the contribution year in question, is both an employed contributor and a self-employed contributor, the amount of refund due will firstly be calculated in respect of his or her reckonable earnings as an employed contributor and, subject to the employee PRSI ceiling, and any balance will be refunded at the self-employed rate.

Sub-article 72C(7)(a) provides that, in cases where a person's reckonable earnings when reduced by the amount of allowable pension payment exceeds the employee ceiling, no refund 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.

**S.I. No. 699 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT, 2002 (SECTION 16) (No.5) (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER, 2003**

This Order provides for the commencement of the following items of the Schedule to the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 in so far as it relates to the District of Sligo:

Item 3 of Part 4, Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of Part 5 and Item 2 of Part 6.

These items provide for amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths (Ireland) Acts and the Marriages (Ireland) Acts.

The commencement of these provisions is necessary to enable the electronic registration of births and deaths in the Civil Registration Office in Sligo from the 18th December 2003 and to allow for the capture of additional information at the time of registration.

**S.I. NO. 716 OF 2003 OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES AND PERSONAL RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (OVERSEAS TRANSFER PAYMENTS) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These regulations provide for transfer payments from occupational pension schemes and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) to an overseas arrangement that provides for retirement benefits.

**S.I. No. 724 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) (No.7) (INCREASE IN RATES) REGULATIONS, 2003**

The Social Welfare Act, 2003 provides for increases in the maximum rates of social insurance payments arising from Budget 2004.

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 2004.

In addition these Regulations also provide for an increase in the minimum Family Income Supplement payment by €7 per week from €13 to €20.

The Regulations also provide for increases in the minimum weekly rate of Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit with effect from January 2004.

**S.I. No. 725 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED PAYMENTS PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) (No.8) (GRADUATED RATES) REGULATIONS, 2003**

The Social Welfare Act, 2003 provides for increases in the maximum rates of social insurance payments arising from Budget 2004. These Regulations provide for increases in the reduced rates of Disability Benefit, Unemployment Benefit and Health and Safety Benefit.

These Regulations also provide for an increase in the earnings threshold for the purposes of payment of reduced rates of Disability, Unemployment and Health and Safety Benefit. The thresholds are being increased from €88.88 to €150 and these Regulations provide for new earnings bands in respect of which the reduced rates are payable.



These measures will take effect from the first week in January 2004.

**S.I. No. 726 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSURABILITY) (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for a number of technical amendments to S.I. No. 312 of 1996, the Consolidated Contributions and Insurability Regulations, to provide for benefits-in-kind to be assessable for PRSI purposes, as announced in Budget 2003.

**S.I. No. 727 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE) (AMENDMENT) (NO.3) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for the continuation until 30th June 2005 of the levels of maximum rent, as set out in Schedule C, in respect of which Rent Supplement is paid. Health Boards may, in respect of sub-divisions of their functional areas set levels below that provided for in these Regulations. These Regulations also provide for:

- The disregard of any amount received by way of Family Income Supplement for the purposes of assessing means for Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement. This measure comes into operation on 5 January, 2004.
- An increase from 23 to 26 in the amount of pension income disregard for the purpose of Rent and Mortgage Interest Supplement. This measure comes into operation on 5 January, 2004.
- An increase in the minimum contribution payable by a recipient of Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement. The minimum contribution is being increased from 12 to 13. This measure comes into operation on 5 January, 2004.
- Amendments to the amounts payable in respect of Diet Supplements. This measure comes into operation on 1 January, 2004.

**S.I. NO. 728 OF 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATED SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE ALLOWANCE) (AMENDMENT) (NO.4) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for amendments to the conditions of entitlement to Rent Supplement under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme.

These Regulations provide that a person shall not be entitled to Rent Supplement unless that person has been in rented accommodation, accommodation for homeless persons or an institution (including a prison or place of detention) for not less than 183 days in the preceding 12 month period.

The new provisions will not apply in any case where a person is:

- homeless (in accordance with the Housing Act, 1988);
- assessed as having a housing need (in accordance with the Housing Act, 1988);
- a tenant in accommodation provided by a voluntary housing body;
- aged 65 years or over;
- in receipt of disability allowance, invalidity pension or blind pension.

These Regulations also provide that, where a second offer of accommodation has not been accepted in any 12 month period, Rent Supplement shall not be payable for a further 12 months.

Article 31 of the Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance Regulations, which provides for payments in cases of exceptional need, is not affected by these Regulations.

These Regulations come into operation on 31 January, 2004.

**S.I. No. 729 of 2003 SOCIAL WELFARE (RENT ALLOWANCE) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2003**

These Regulations provide for increases in the amount of means disregarded in the case of people affected by the decontrol of rents and the minimum rent for the purposes of the Rent Allowance scheme with effect from 1st January 2004.

## Appendix 5

# 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	17 June 2002
Mary Coughlan	17 June 2002	