



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

### **More Than 9,000 People In Co. Longford To Benefit From Budget Welfare Increases**

#### ***Longford Welfare Office Responsible For Expenditure On National Schemes Of €1.2 Billion***

Significant increases in social welfare weekly payments, effective from January, are benefiting 1.5million people, or almost four out of every ten people in the state.

Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan, TD, said today (Wednesday February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005) that countrywide a special €14 increase is being provided for 550,000 people in receipt of lower payments and qualified adult allowances for 123,000 have been increased by between €7.90 and €10 per week. In addition, a minimum increase of €12 a week is being provided for some 278,000 pensioners on full rates, with proportionate increases for a further 122,000 contributory pensioners on reduced rates.

Minister Brennan, speaking in Longford during an official visit to the Local Social Welfare Offices, said that 9,389 social welfare clients in Co. Longford will benefit directly from the increases in entitlements announced in Budget 2005. These include 2,094 Old Age Pensioners, 1,358 on Unemployment payments, 881 on Supplementary Welfare Allowance, 1,248 on Disability Benefit/Allowance and 1,211 who are entitled to Widow's and Widower's pensions.

\*(Full List for Co. Longford is attached)



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Minister Brennan praised the work of the Longford office which he said was responsible for the expenditure on welfare and support schemes of €1.2 billion out of a total Department budget in 2005 of €12.2 billion. The Longford office is responsible for the management and service delivery of seven of the Department of Social Affairs' schemes which include family and employment supports, carers' allowances and benefits, long term illness and disability payments.

He said there is 290 staff working in the office and that each year they process in the region of 65,000 claim applications for various income and other welfare supports.

The office is also headquarters for the Midlands Region of Social Welfare Services which is charged with responsibility for the delivery of unemployment services, investigation of means for social assistance schemes, employer inspections, social and family support services, information provision and the control and prevention of welfare fraud in the counties of Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois and Roscommon.

Minister Brennan said that Budget 2005 increases of €14 and €12 in all weekly social welfare payments are up to four times ahead of the expected rate of inflation in 2005. "We are firmly on target to meet our commitments to increase the state pension to €200 by 2007 and to achieve a rate of €150 in 2002 terms for the lowest rates of social welfare by 2007."

Minister Brennan added: "The projected level of social welfare expenditure in 2005 will be over €12.25 billion, €1 billion more than in 2004. This is more than double what was being spent in 1997. This level of expenditure is a clear demonstration of this Government's commitment to addressing the needs of people with disabilities and their carers, children, the elderly, widowed persons, the unemployed, those who are parenting alone and many others who are disadvantaged. An estimated 970,000 people on average are expected to claim weekly social welfare payments in 2005 and almost 1.5 million people, including dependants, will benefit from these payments. Overall, the €12.5 billion budget of my Department means that for every €3 that will be spent by this Government in 2005, almost €1 will go in social welfare entitlements."

The increase of €12 per week for all pensioners will benefit those in receipt of Old Age Pension (Contributory and Non-Contributory), Retirement Pension, Widows & Widowers Pension aged over 66, Invalidity Pension aged over 65, Death Benefit aged over 66, Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance aged over 66, Carer's Allowance aged over 66, One Parent Family Payment aged over 66.



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The €14 increase in lower rates of payment will benefit people in receipt of Widows & Widowers Pension under 66, Deserted Wife's Benefit aged under 66, Invalidity Pension aged under 65, Death Benefit aged under 66, Disablement Pension, Unemployment Benefit & Assistance, Disability Benefit & Allowance, One Parent Family Payment aged under 66, Blind Pension, Pre-Retirement Allowance, Farm Assist, Carer's Benefit, Carer's Allowance aged under 66, Constant Attendance Allowance, Orphans Pension & Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

The increases, which will cost €672m in 2005, apply to full rate payments, with proportionate increases for people on reduced rates.

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**\*THE NUMBERS BENEFITING IN THE LONGFORD AREA ARE DETAILED BELOW:**

Old Age Pensions:	2094
Retirement Pension:	563
Widow's and Widower's Pensions:	1211:
Invalidity Pensions:	496:
Death Benefit:	8
Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance:	95
Carer's Benefit/Allowance:	365
One-Parent Family Payment	703
Unemployment Payments:	1358
Disability Benefit/Allowance:	1248
Disablement Pension:	129
Blind Pension:	25
Pre-Retirement Pension:	87
Farm Assist:	113
Orphans Pension/Allowance:	13
Supplementary Welfare Allowance:	881
Total benefiting in this area:	9389