



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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Publication of the Social Welfare Appeals Office Annual Report for 2009

The Social Welfare Appeals Office today (Thursday, 10th June 2010) published its Annual Report for 2009. The annual report provides a detailed statistical analysis of the Office's performance in processing appeals during that year.

Commenting on the report, Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Social Protection said: "Almost 26,000 people made appeals on decisions governing social welfare entitlements last year. The Appeals Office provides an independent review mechanism for those who were not satisfied with the outcome of their claim."

Last year some 2.6 million claims were cleared by the Department, with over 2 million people benefiting from a weekly social welfare payment.

"While every effort is made by the Department to deal considerately with all cases in line with the relevant legislation, it is understandable that not everybody will agree with those decisions. The number of people who make an appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office is reflective of the number of people claiming benefits," said Minister Ó Cuív.

During 2009, almost 26,000 people made appeals of which 48% were decided in favour of the appellant. 59% of appeals determined by Appeals Officers were dealt with by way of an oral hearing while the remainder were decided summarily. Oral hearings were held during the year in 60 venues around the country.

In line with government policy, the 2009 Report is being published electronically and in bilingual form and is available online at www.welfare.ie and www.socialwelfareappeals.ie.

- The annual report for 2009 provides a detailed statistical analysis of the Office's performance in processing appeals during that year, including trends in:
 - **Appeals received** – 25,963 appeals were received in 2009 compared with 17,833 in 2008.



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- **Appeals finalised** – 17,787 appeals were finalised comprising 2,887 appeals which were withdrawn, 4,873 which were given the benefit of a revised decision by deciding officers in the Department of Social Protection and 10,027 which were decided by Appeals Officers of the Social Welfare Appeals Office.
- **Reviews by Deciding Officers within the Department of Social Protection** - part of the appeal procedure involves a review by the deciding officer who made the original decision prior to the appeal going before an Appeals Officer. Frequently, new evidence becomes available in the course of an appeal and a revised decision is possible. There were 4,873 such revisions in 2009.
- **Appeal outcomes** - 16% of appeals were withdrawn and 27% were revised by Deciding Officers of the Department of Social Protection. 48% of appeals had a favourable outcome, 35.6% had an unfavourable outcome.
- **Appeal processing times** - it took an average of 24 weeks to resolve an appeal in 2009. However, some cases take longer due to legal matters, medical considerations, additional investigations etc. If the 25% most protracted appeals are disregarded, the average falls to 15.8 weeks. [Note: The appeals system is judicial in nature and due process must be followed. There is very limited scope for fast-tracking cases.]
- **Oral hearings** - 59% of appeals determined by Appeals Officers were dealt with by way of an oral hearing.
- The Report details meetings and consultations held during 2009 with Appeals Officers and with the Decisions Advisory Office of the Department. This dialogue has proved to be an effective means of ensuring consistency in Appeals Officers' decisions and also of resolving difficulties and anomalies in the interpretation of legislation or policy.
- The Report also provides a number of case histories which serve to give an understanding and an insight into the appeals process.

ENDS



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Notes for Editors:

- The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Department of Social Protection. It deals with appeals on decisions made in regard to entitlement to benefits under the Social Welfare Acts and questions regarding the insurability of employment. It also provides an appeals service relating to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.
- It is based in Dublin and has 64 staff members headed by a Chief Appeals Officer.

[View and download the Social Welfare Appeals Office Annual Report 2010 in English](#)

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