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**Mary Coughlan Minister for Social and Family Affairs  
launches new nationwide information service**

Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs today launched a free confidential phone-in information service for the public on all social welfare and civil entitlements.

The service was pioneered on a pilot basis for three years in the Cork and Kerry regions before it was launched nationwide.

The service, operated from the National Citizens Information Call Centre in Cork, provides free, confidential and impartial advice and complements the existing network of 85 independent Citizen's Information centres nationwide.

Launching the service Minister Mary Coughlan said :” This service will greatly enhance the services already offered by the Citizens information centres, and I would expect that this service will be of particular benefit to people who live in rural areas, who are disabled, lack transport or are in the home as carers or parents.”

”Access to information about the huge range of entitlements offered by my own Department are just one feature of the service. Many people are unaware of their entitlements, and any channel of information that helps people access the services and supports they are entitled to is a welcome addition to society, “ said Minister Coughlan.

”In the first year of the phone in information service approximately 11,000 requests for information were received – that figure rose to 17,000 last year, demonstrating the need for this service, “ added Minister Coughlan.

Information is available by phone on lo-call 1890 777 121, by email at [citizensinformation@comhairleoron](mailto:citizensinformation@comhairleoron) the internet at [www.citizensinfo.ie](http://www.citizensinfo.ie)

Ends  
16<sup>th</sup> May 2003