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## **Minister Mary Coughlan doubles Social Welfare Grant for Hearing Aids**

Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family Affairs has announced the doubling of grant aid to help people with hearing difficulties.

Thousands of people could benefit from the expanded Medical Appliance Benefit scheme which is operated by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

“People who qualify for a grant will now receive a payment of €700 for one hearing aid and €1,400 for two if required, “ said Minister Coughlan.

”The increased grant will allow people to access digital hearing aids now much more easily, instead of being restricted to analogue devices. The improved technology and larger grant should make a large and significant improvement to the lives of potentially thousands of people with hearing difficulties, “ said Minister Coughlan.

Minister Coughlan said today that the projected cost of the Medical Appliance Benefit scheme for 2003 is €2.75 million. The cost last year was €1.72 million. The increased allocation is mainly due to the grant for hearing aids being doubled this year. People who qualify for a grant will now receive a payment of €700 for one hearing aid and €1,400 if two are required.

The Medical Appliance Benefit is available to people paying PRSI and their dependent spouses/partners who meet certain contribution requirements. The services are delivered by a panel of audiologists under contract with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The Department will pay up to half the cost of the appliance, subject to a maximum of €700 per appliance.

ENDS

17<sup>th</sup> February 2003

