



**€17M FUNDING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL EXPENSES -
Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD**

Increased grant aid is available to parents to meet the cost of school clothing and footwear, Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, said today.

She urged parents who may qualify for grants from the enlarged €16.8 million fund to apply to their local health boards before the end of September deadline.

In this school year individual grants have been increased by twenty per cent for children aged 12 years – and the overall fund has been increased by ten per cent.

"The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a targeted payment which comes at a time when parents' minds naturally turn to the cost of the new school year. I urge parents, who think they have an entitlement, to apply for the payment to their local health board" Minister Coughlan said.

"This funding can be a great help to parents with the cost of school uniforms and footwear for the new school year. With this in mind, I've approved funding of €16.8m for this year, an increase of more than €1.6m on what was paid under the scheme last year," said Minister Mary Coughlan.

"I've also approved an increase of €30 in the rate of payment for children aged 12 years or more - which results in a 50% increase in the payment over the last two years. More than 63,000 children over the age of 12 will benefit from this increase.



"This government is committed to helping all our children develop to their full potential. This commitment can be seen in the increased resources committed to targeted supports such as the Back to School Allowance and by the unprecedented increase in resources devoted to Child Benefit.

For example, since the year 2000 child benefit rates have risen by €71.64 per month for each of the first two children and by €86.20 for the third and subsequent children. A family with two children now receive an annual Child Benefit payment of more than €3,000 and a family with three children receive more than €4, 900," added Minister Coughlan

So far this year approximately 58,000 applications have been received by the Department – representing payments for approximately 115,000 children.

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is designed to help people depending on social welfare and health board payments with the cost of children's school clothing and footwear. It is also available to people on low incomes who are getting Family Income Supplement. The payment, which is income related, is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and is administered by the health boards.

Parents will get €80 for each child aged between 2 and 11 years. As a result of Budget improvements, parents of qualifying children aged between 12 and 22 years will receive €150 for each child, an increase of €30 on last year. Parents can apply to their local health board, for funding under the Scheme between now and the end of September.

A couple with one child whose weekly income is at or below €331.40 may qualify for the Allowance. A couple with two children whose weekly income is at or below €350.70 may qualify. If they have three children, they may have income of €370.00 and qualify. (For families



with more children, the income is increased by €19.30 for each additional child).

A lone parent with one child could have income of up to €227.40 per week and qualify for a payment. (For lone parent families, with more than one child, the income is increased by €21.60 for each additional child.)

Last year, a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 155,811 children at a cost of €15.2 million; 92,794 were aged between 2 and 11 years, 55,365 were aged between 12 and 17 years and 7,652 were aged between 18 and 22 years.

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Note to the News Editor

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is payable to parents whose income limits are at or below the following amounts:

Couple with:	Income Limit	Lone Parent with:	
Income Limit			
1 child	€ 331.40	1 child	€
227.40			
2 children	€ 350.70	2 children	€ 249.00
3 children	€ 370.00	3 children	€ 270.60
4 children	€ 389.30*	4 children	€ 292.20**
<p>*Limit is increased by € 19.30 for each additional child **Limit is increased by € 21.60 for each additional child</p>			
Allowance	Rate Payable		
Rate for each child aged 2 – 11	€ 80.00		
Rate for each child aged 12 – 17***	€ 150.00		
<p>*** and children aged 18 – 22 if in full time education for whom a Child Dependant Allowance is payable.</p>			



**Breakdown of children by Health Board and Age Group
for whom payment was made in 2002**

Health Board Regions	Age Groups				
	2 – 4	5 – 11	12 – 17	18 – 22	Total
Eastern Regional Health Authority	9,689	19,811	14,245	898	44,643
Midland Health Board	2,015	5,212	4,214	465	11,906
Mid Western Health Board	2,029	5,483	4,486	579	12,577
North Eastern Health Board	2,487	5,833	5,146	660	14,126
North Western Health Board	1,818	5,509	5,330	942	13,599
South Eastern Health Board	3,272	7,623	7,039	941	18,875
Southern Health Board	3,738	8,566	7,765	1,504	21,573
Western Health Board	2,338	7,371	7,140	1,663	18,512
Total	27,386	65,408	55,365	7,652	155,811