



Minister Announces Increase From This Week Of Four Extra Weeks Paid Maternity And Adoptive Benefit That Will Benefit More Than 43,000 Women

Extra 4 Weeks Will Allow Mothers To Have Full 6 Months Paid Leave To Care For Baby And Option Of 16 Weeks Unpaid Leave

The Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D., today announced an increase of four extra weeks in the entitlement to paid Maternity and Adoptive leave will begin from this Thursday, 1st March.

The increase of four weeks will extend the length of paid Maternity and Adoptive Leave to a total of 26 weeks, or six months, with the option of taking an additional 16 weeks of unpaid leave. Up to now paid Maternity Leave was 22 weeks, with the option of an additional 12 weeks unpaid leave.

Based on the increase in the numbers of women claiming the benefit over the last two years, and the growth in Ireland's population, it is estimated that at least 43,000 women will qualify for the extended leave during the 12 months between March 2007 and March 2008.

Minister Brennan said: "Overall funding for paid Maternity Leave has more than trebled in recent years, increasing from €58 million in 2000 to an estimated €235 million this year. Over the same time the length of paid Maternity Leave has increased from 14 weeks in 2000 to 22 weeks in 2006. Now we are further improving this important entitlement by extending it to 26 weeks, while also



Department of Social and Family Affairs

increasing the amount of unpaid leave mothers can take. Funding of €27 million has been set aside to fund the extra four weeks which is set to benefit more than 43,000 women in the next 12 months and tens of thousands more in the years ahead.”

Minister Brennan added “Considerable progress has been achieved in significantly advancing the rights of mothers to paid and unpaid leave. Now with these latest increases mothers of new born babies will be entitled to a full six months paid leave with an option to access a further 16 weeks unpaid leave. This will result in mothers being in a position to take off the best part of a year from when their baby is born to dedicate to those important early months of their child’s growth and development. As a government we will continue to examine how these important entitlements can be further enhanced. Adequate Maternity Leave is a central element of the Government’s overall strategy on childcare, in addition to childcare payments, such as the EUR1000 Early Childcare Supplement for all children under six years, and an extensive range of crèche and other supports.”

Minister Brennan said that the extending of Maternity and Adoptive Leave entitlements was in addition to recent Budget changes to the ceiling on reckonable earnings applied to Maternity and Adoptive Benefit which has now been increased from EUR332 to EUR350 per week. This has raised the maximum rate of payment (based on 80% of reckonable earnings) from EUR265.60 to EUR280 per week. The minimum rate of payment has been raised from EUR182.60 to EUR207.80 per week. These improvements and increases are being implemented at a total cost of over €11 million.

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