



Department of Social and Family Affairs

€300 Million Saved By Anti Fraud Measures

- Mary Coughlan TD Minister For Social And Family Affairs

Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today announced that her department realised savings of €306.18million last year in combating fraud and abuse. Total savings were up by €17million on 2002.

"These savings result from normal reviews carried out by this Department and the work of Departmental staff engaged in investigative work," the Minister said today.

Minister Coughlan added, "My officials have a very focused approach to fraud control and I want to ensure that the budget of this Department is used to benefit those people who are genuinely dependent on a basic social welfare payment every week. I am concerned that there are people who would abuse the tax payers who fund the schemes run by my Department which are aimed at alleviating poverty and helping people who have lost their jobs."

"We will continue to be vigilant and I will be keeping this issue under review," said Minister Coughlan.

Savings in Unemployment Payments realised the most at €119.92million, followed by One-Parent Family Payment at €69million and Illness payments at €53.66million. Over ninety percent of the 7,561 employers who underwent PRSI inspections were found to be compliant. A total of 320,000 claim reviews were carried out during 2003.

A total of 405 cases were forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's office for the initiation of prosecution proceedings – an increase of 65% on 2002. Some 218 cases were finalised in court - of which 11 were served with prison sentences, 17 received suspended sentences, 109 were fined, 12 received community service, 27 received the benefit of the Probation Act and the remainder were struck out, dismissed or bound to the peace.

Total social welfare expenditure for 2003 reached 10.5billion. More than 928,000 people received a weekly social welfare payment, over 534,000 families received child benefit during the year and more than 1.5million people were recipients of Free Schemes including electricity, travel and phone rental.

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