



More Than 7,500 People In Co. Leitrim To Benefit From Budget Welfare Increases

Significant increases in social welfare weekly payments, effective from January, are benefiting 1.5million people, or almost four out of every ten people in the State.

Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan, TD, said today (Wednesday February 2nd 2005) that a special €14 increase is being provided for 550,000 people in receipt of lower payments and qualified adult allowances for 123,000 have been increased by between €7.90 and €10 per week. In addition, a minimum increase of €12 a week is being provided for some 278,000 pensioners on full rates, with proportionate increases for a further 122,000 contributory pensioners on reduced rates.

Minister Brennan, speaking in Leitrim during an official visit to the Local Social Welfare Office in Carrick-on-Shannon, said that 7,628 social welfare clients in Co. Leitrim will benefit directly from the increases in entitlements announced in Budget 2005. These include 1,892 Old Age Pensioners, 994 on Unemployment payments, 390 on Supplementary Welfare Allowance, 1,093 on Disability Benefit/Allowance and 1,139 who are entitled to Widow's and Widower's pensions.

*(Full List for Co. Leitrim is attached)



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Brennan said the Carrick-on-Shannon office, which was built in the early 1960's and renovated and extended in 2000, is now one of the Department's most modern and comfortable Local Offices for both customers and staff. It is planned to decentralise over 200 staff of the Department to Carrick-on-Shannon in the next couple of years.

Minister Brennan said: "The increases of €14 and €12 in all weekly social welfare payments are three to four times ahead of the expected rate of inflation in 2005. We are firmly on target to meet our commitments to increase the state pension to €200 by 2007 and to achieve a rate of €150 in 2002 terms for the lowest rates of social welfare by 2007."

Minister Brennan added: "The projected level of social welfare expenditure in 2005 will be over €12.25 billion, €1 billion more than in 2004. This is more than double what was being spent in 1997. This level of expenditure is a clear demonstration of this Government's commitment to addressing the needs of people with disabilities and their carers, children, the elderly, widowed persons, the unemployed, those who are parenting alone and many others who are disadvantaged. An estimated 970,000 people on average are expected to claim weekly social welfare payments in 2005 and almost 1.5 million people, including dependants, will benefit from these payments. Overall, the €12.5 billion budget of my Department means that for every €3 that will be spent by this Government in 2005, almost €1 will go in social welfare entitlements."

The increase of €12 per week for all pensioners will benefit those in receipt of Old Age Pension (Contributory and Non-Contributory), Retirement Pension, Widows & Widowers Pension aged over 66, Invalidity Pension aged over 65, Death Benefit aged over 66, Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance aged over 66, Carer's Allowance aged over 66, One Parent Family Payment aged over 66.

The €14 increase in lower rates of payment will benefit people in receipt of Widows & Widowers Pension under 66, Deserted Wife's Benefit aged under 66, Invalidity Pension aged under 65, Death Benefit aged under 66, Disablement Pension, Unemployment Benefit & Assistance, Disability Benefit & Allowance, One Parent Family Payment aged under 66, Blind Pension, Pre-Retirement Allowance, Farm Assist, Carer's Benefit, Carer's Allowance aged under 66, Constant Attendance Allowance, Orphans Pension & Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance.



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Customers on long-term payments through the book method will receive their increase in mid-February backdated to January. In some cases (such as Disability Allowance and Old Age Pensions) an advance payment to end-March will also be paid to those customers whose books are due for renewal at the beginning of April.

The increases, which will cost €672m in 2005, apply to full rate payments, with proportionate increases for people on reduced rates.

ENDS

***THE NUMBERS BENEFITING IN THE LEITRIM AREA ARE DETAILED BELOW:**

Old Age Pensions:		1892
Retirement Pension:	651	
Widow's and Widower's Pensions:	1139:	
Invalidity Pensions:	406:	
Death Benefit:		8
Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance:	51	
Carer's Benefit/Allowance:	248	
One-Parent Family Payment	283	
Unemployment Payments:	994	
Disability Benefit/Allowance:	1093	
Disablement Pension:		100
Blind Pension:	36	
Pre-Retirement Pension:		67
Farm Assist:		260
Orphans Pension/Allowance:	10	
Supplementary Welfare Allowance:	390	
Total benefiting in this area:	7628	