



Over 5,000 nursing home residents to benefit from new stay-in-touch allowance

Minister for Social and family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD

Nursing home residents will be able to keep in touch with their families and families with a new telephone allowance payment from the Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD.

The allowance is being made available to all nursing home residents who have a telephone line in their own name at the nursing home.

It is expected that up to 5,500 people would benefit from this measure which is estimated to cost €1.55million in 2003.

”The telephone allowance was originally introduced to ensure that older people could summons help in an emergency. The qualifying conditions have been subsequently relaxed and led to a change in focus of the scheme to emphasise and encourage social contact and to prevent social exclusion,” said Minister Coughlan.

”The introduction of this allowance to nursing home residents will provide many with a lifeline to the outside world – making contact with their families and friends both easier and cheaper.

”Residents of nursing homes aged 70 and over who do not already have their own telephone line in their nursing home and want to take up the scheme can apply for the allowance through their local social welfare office,” said the Minister.

The Telephone Allowance, part of the Household Benefits package, is generally available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test.

The Allowance is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments. Since May, 2001 it is available to everyone aged 70 or over regardless of income or household composition.

Nearly 280,000 people currently receive the Telephone Allowance. The expected cost for this year is EUR 78 million. The allowance is credited to individual two-monthly Eircom bills. It is worth up to EUR 281.10 per annum including VAT for each client, covering the line and instrument rental fully with a contribution towards call costs.

ENDS
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