



**Mary Coughlan Minister for Social and Family Affairs
announces €2million increase funding
and targeting of disadvantage in free school meals scheme**

Mary Coughlan TD Minister for Social and Family affairs announced €2million increase in funds for the free school meals projects today saying her priority was to target disadvantage.

A series of new projects throughout the country will be rolled out shortly in the first radical shake up of the free school meals scheme in ninety years.

Hot meals, microwaved meals and cold meals will all feature in the new schemes which will target disadvantaged children in primary and for the first time secondary schools.

”I intend to initially target the children with the worst level of disadvantage. One of the primary means of targeting disadvantage will be by setting up new school meal projects in both secondary schools with the highest concentrations of pupils at risk of early school leaving and their primary feeder schools, “ said Minister Mary Coughlan.

”I will be further reviewing the effectiveness of these new projects looking at issues such as cost effectiveness, nutritional goals and effectiveness of delivery, “ said Minister Coughlan at the launch of the school meals initiative today.

The first of the new pilot projects will be rolled out in September, as the new school year starts. Up to now the schemes could not be operated in county council areas - but the Minister has now lifted this exclusion as part of the radical shake up of the scheme.

The Department of Education and Science will identify the schools that make up these groups on an ongoing basis. The scheme will also target children at risk who are not in specific target schools as well as children with special needs.

”I will also be reviewing the effectiveness of how the new schemes provide hot meals cooked on site, the provision of microwaved meals prepared offsite or the provision of high nutrition cold meals and snacks,” said Minister Coughlan.

ENDS



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