



Department of Social and Family Affairs

One Million Children To Get Child Benefit Increases
Séamus Brennan TD

More than one million children from over half a million families will benefit from Child Benefit increases which come into effect from this week, Séamus Brennan TD, Minister for Social Affairs said today.

"Child Benefit is being increased by €10 a month for the first and second child and by €12 a month for the third and each subsequent child. This will result in Child Benefit of €141.60 a month for each of the first two children and €177.30 for the third and subsequent children. Child Benefit payments have now increased fourfold in the past ten years," Minister Brennan added.

Minister Brennan said: "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 be paid in social welfare entitlements."

"However, we are still confronting the blemish on the Ireland of the 21st century of having children who endure poverty, deprivation and distress. The challenge now is to find ways to channel additional resources directly to support these children and their families, and to do so without delay."



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The Minister said that the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has been commissioned to devise a structure for a second tier of supports, in addition to Child Benefit and other entitlements, aimed specifically at reaching those children most in need and alleviating their plight.

“I look forward to that report delivering recommendations that are practical and hard-headed so that I can move towards an implementation phase without undue delay,” Minister Brennan added.

Increases in Child Benefit will be paid to families who are paid by electronic methods tomorrow. Families who are paid by book payment will get the increase for April and May in a voucher to be picked up at their local post office on the first Tuesday in May. Renewal books being issued in June will include the increase.

The waiting time for the payment of Child Benefit has been dramatically reduced from months to hours in a major redesign and modernisation of the social welfare payment system over the past year. Previously the manual payment process could take up to 8 weeks to complete. Child benefit payment will now issue automatically for a second or subsequent child.

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