



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

---

### **Report On Housing, Poverty And Wealth In Ireland Welcomed - Minister For Social And Family Affairs**

Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today welcomed the publication of the ESRI report '*Housing, Poverty and Wealth in Ireland*'.

This study was based on data from the 2000 Living in Ireland Survey and earlier surveys and was completed in 2003. One of the key findings of the Report is that problems to do with affordability of dwellings are most severe in the private rented sector and have the greatest impact from a poverty perspective in that sector.

"This report has noted that expenditure on rent supplement increased 23-fold between 1989 and 2001. This supplement may be made in respect of rent to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation needs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source," the Minister said.

"There are currently 59,367 Rent Supplements in payment. Expenditure this year is expected to be some €330m., an increase of about €76m or 30% on the €254m spent in 2002," Minister Coughlan added.

"The purpose of SWA Rent Supplement, like other social welfare programmes, is to meet income maintenance needs, not long-term housing needs."

"In recognition of the fact that the rent supplement scheme had, in effect, become a long term housing support for many people the Government set up a working group to rationalise current arrangements for housing support and to ensure that long term housing needs are addressed through providing appropriate solutions rather than through the social welfare system," said Minister Coughlan.

"An inter-Departmental planning group was established to draw up detailed proposals for the implementation of revised arrangements. Discussions have been underway in the planning group for some time in relation to putting in place the most appropriate arrangements to meet the housing needs of people who would otherwise have to rely on a long term basis on supplementary welfare allowance rent supplements.

Arising from the work of this group an action plan is now being finalised – and this will include criteria for determining which categories of rent supplement recipient will be eligible to have their needs addressed by the housing authorities, an implementation timescale and other matters. Discussions between my Department and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in that regard are continuing and I expect to be in a position to seek Government approval for the Action Plan in the near future," said Minister Coughlan.

ENDS May 5<sup>th</sup> 2004

For further information:

Carmel Fields                      Phone: 01-7043860 or 087-2547232

Eddie Walsh                        Phone: 01-7043184 or 087-2549683