

## **Joint Statement by Minister Burton and Minister Fitzgerald On the Provision of Additional Childcare Places**

The Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton T.D., and Minister Frances Fitzgerald T.D., today, 5 December, announced a new Budget initiative to provide for upwards of 6,000 additional after school places targeted at children in primary school. The associated additional funding for the initiative will be €14 million in a full year.

The places will be targeted at low-income families where the parents are availing of an employment opportunity. Both Ministers emphasised the initiative is part of the Government's overall strategy to support parents in low income families to take up employment.

The additional funding will build on the childcare support schemes which are currently implemented by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It is envisaged that interested childcare providers, both community and commercial, will be paid a subsidy where a parent is referred by the Department of Social Protection under the initiative. It is also intended that, in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, the scope to include primary schools interested in facilitating on-site after school provision, will be pursued.

The Ministers said that officials from both their Departments will be working closely together on the details of the scheme and the estimated costs arising in 2013 will be further reviewed in this context. Work on a pilot scheme will begin in early 2013.

Minister Burton said: "I am delighted we have been able to find the necessary funding of €14 million in a full year to help kick-start this important initiative, which is a small step on the road to improving childcare services for people wishing to take up employment."

Minister Fitzgerald said: "Extending childcare provision has been a key priority for me. I welcome the additional funding which will be additional to my Department's allocation existing allocation for childcare support of €74 million. The initiative shows how Departments are working together to deliver on this Government's agenda to promote employment and to support children's development."

## **Note for Editors**

The subsidised afterschool childcare places will be offered to people who engage with the Department of Social Protection's INTREO service which is designed to help unemployed people get back to work, training or education. INTREO provides a one-stop-shop where Jobseekers can access the employment services (formerly provided by FAS) and the Community Welfare Services (formerly provided HSE) and the income support services provided by the Department itself.

Four pilot one-stop-shops have opened in Sligo, King's Inns Parnell Street, Arklow and Tallaght. Other offices in Ballymun, Kilkenny, Buncrana, Coolock, Finglas and Dundalk will go live before the end of the year. INTREO will then be rolled out to all the Department's offices nationwide by the end of 2014.

## **Existing Childcare Provision**

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs currently implements two childcare programmes, the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) scheme and the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) schemes. The subsidy paid to after school service providers for those qualifying under the CCS scheme is €32 per week.

Between both of these schemes, subsidised childcare is provided to 40,000 children of low income parents. Approximately 1,600 providers, both community and commercial, participate in the CETS scheme.

In addition, the Department administers the free Pre School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme which is availed of by over 65,000 children each year at an annual cost of €175 million.