



MINISTER ANNOUNCES OLDER PEOPLE TO BE GIVEN CHOICE FROM TOMORROW OF HAVING PAID FOR MOBILE PHONES INSTEAD OF FIXED LANDLINES

BRENNAN – “NEW INITIATIVE WILL OFFER OLDER PEOPLE CHOICES, ALLOW FOR GREATER MOBILITY & GIVE INCREASED SENSE OF SAFETY AND PEACE OF MIND”

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan, today announced that welfare customers who qualify for the free Telephone Allowance Scheme - including more than 250,000 who are aged 66 years or over - will from tomorrow (Wednesday, 9th May) be given the choice for the first time of choosing to have a paid for mobile phone instead of the traditional fixed landline.

At present over 300,000* pensioners and welfare customers avail of the Telephone Allowance which contributes almost EUR300 a year towards the rental costs of fixed line phones and calls made.

Minister Brennan said: “The decision to extend the free telephone allowance to include the option of choosing or changing to a mobile from a fixed landline reflects my strongly held view that older people, and people with disabilities, should be given choices that help them to have the lifestyles they want. Many older people are living more active and versatile lives and for those who want it having a paid for mobile will allow for greater mobility and flexibility in their daily life. As well as the greater freedom, mobiles can increase the feeling of safety, security and peace of mind that carrying a mobile with you all the time gives. For example, calls



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to emergency services are available on mobile phones to customers, regardless of their actual credit level. Of course text messaging is also a very simple and cheap way for older people to keep in regular contact with family and friends.”

Minister Brennan said this Fianna Fail led Government has delivered on its pledge to significantly increase incomes, supports and opportunities for older people so that they can have security, dignity and proper recognition in their later years. The State pension for more than 400,000 in retirement has been increased to over EUR200 per week, poverty amongst pensioners has been reduced to below 4%, older people can now earn EUR200 per week and still retain full pensions, and the EUR60 million a year free travel scheme has been opened up to all of Ireland, North and South, and all peak time restrictions have been lifted.

The Telephone Allowance Scheme, costing almost EUR94 million this year, is part of the Household Benefits package, which also includes the free Electricity/Gas Allowance, and free Lifetime Television Licence. The overall Package, which is costing over EUR260 million per year, is available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare payment or who satisfy a means test. It is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments and to all people aged 70 years and over, regardless of their income or household composition.

Currently the Telephone Allowance applies to fixed line phones only with a credit made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs direct to the supplier - the telephone company - on the customer's behalf. The monthly value of the phone allowance to the customers is EUR24.70.



Minister Brennan said that from tomorrow, May 9th, customers will be given the choice by his Department to opt for a direct credit to a telephone company for their landline **or** for a cash payment in respect of their mobile phone.

Customers who opt for a cash payment in respect of their mobile will be paid on the first Tuesday of each month either via An Post or to their bank account.

Minister Brennan said the payment of cash direct to customers with mobile phones is the most effective way to operate the scheme because of the variety of payment options that are available with mobiles and the need to give people choices as to which method they want to use.

Minister Brennan said that about 15,000 customers of his Department with an entitlement to the Telephone Allowance are not currently receiving it as they have no fixed landline and of those, about 2,000 customers already have a mobile phone for which up to now they have had to meet the cost directly themselves.



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• Details of the number of people receiving the Telephone Allowance by county:

Carlow	3,964
Cavan	5,589
Clare	8,428
Cork	37,716
Donegal	13,957
Dublin	80,657
Galway	16,997
Kerry	12,526
Kildare	8,234
Kilkenny	6,066
Laois	4,447
Leitrim	3,325
Limerick	14,471
Longford	3,397
Louth	8,428
Mayo	12,774
Meath	8,187
Monaghan	4,464
Offaly	5,011
Roscommon	5,635



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Sligo	5,611
Tipperary	13,588
Waterford	8,740
Westmeath	6,082
Wexford	10,891
Wicklow	8,171

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