



## **€238 million saved in first six months of this year through Welfare anti fraud crackdown**

### **Hanafin says money available rightly targeted at those who most need our support**

Welfare payments of almost €238 million has been saved through anti fraud and control measures in the first six months of this year, the Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin today outlined.

Over 200,000 claim reviews were undertaken in the first six months of the year. Savings on one parent family payments realised over €80million, followed by unemployment payments of almost €55million and over €37million through illness payments. In addition to these claims 1,615 employers underwent PRSI inspections to check their compliance, with 87% found to be fully compliant.

Minister Hanafin said that the focus of the 50 schemes administered through the Department was **“to ensure that the right money goes to the right person for the time that they need our support. However, we have to ensure that if there are overpayments that this money is recouped, and if there is a deliberate attempt to defraud, that those people will be dealt with through the courts.**

**We are paying benefits and entitlements to an estimated one million people each and every week. With their dependents approximately 1.5 million people are getting support through Department funding. It can be the case that a person’s circumstances change, in that they get a job and are no longer on the Live Register, they marry or are earning over the limit to be eligible for a lone parent payment or that an individual claiming a benefit fails to fully disclose all the relevant information that is asked of them at the time of the initial claim. All of this information is closely tracked and monitored.”** However, Minister Hanafin said people **“should make sure they don’t leave themselves open to proceedings being taken against them by knowingly continuing to get a benefit that they are no longer entitled to.”**

Minister Hanafin went on to say that the prevention of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is an integral part of the day-to-day work of the Department. **“Over 600 staff at local, regional and national level are engaged on a full or part-time basis on work related to the control of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system.”**

In the first six months of this year 205 cases were forwarded to the Chief State Solicitors Office for the initiation of prosecution proceedings. Of these, 134 cases were finalised in



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

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court, one was imprisoned, three received suspended sentences, 81 were fined, two received community service and 19 received the Probation Act. The remaining penalties included cases which were bound to the peace or adjourned with liberty to re-enter.

Specific measures in place to control fraud and abuse include reviewing applications, home visits by regionally based Social Welfare Inspectors, the issue of mail shots to selected customers, database checking and medical reviews in the case of illness payment. Information in relation to marriages and deaths is also cross referenced with the General Register Office, while matching of data with Revenue files takes place for those who have commenced employment.

Minister Hanafin said that this year she hopes that some €525million will be realised through constant vigilance of the schemes and systems in place to ensure that those who are eligible for benefits get the money they are due.

### **Breakdown of Savings/Reviews by scheme - January 2008 - June 2008**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Amount Saved € million</b>	<b>Reviews</b>
Unemployment	54.672	32,974
Illness	37.082	84,829
Old Age Pensions	10.251	2,773
One-Parent Family Payment	80.709	30,059
Free Schemes	22.753	16,925
Child Benefit	13.042	10,065
Employer Inspection	3.216	1,615
Others	15.752	21,418
Total	237.477	200,658

**ENDS**  
**8, August 2008**