



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection**

www.welfare.ie

**Minister Ó Cuív meets voluntary and community
organisations
in pre-Budget forum**

Minister for Social Protection, Éamon Ó Cuív TD, this morning (8th October 2010), met representatives of 29 voluntary and community groups (list overleaf) in his first pre-Budget Forum as Minister for Social Protection. The purpose of this annual Forum, which was held in St Andrew's Resource Centre in Dublin's Pearse Street, is to provide organisations with an opportunity to have an input into the budget process.

In his opening address to voluntary and community groups at the Forum, Minister Ó Cuív said: "When I became Minister for Social Protection earlier this year, I decided to engage on an immediate basis with welfare representative organisations. I did this because your organisations represent various groups in our society including children, young people, older people, carers, the unemployed, people with disabilities, to name just a few.

"I have been fortunate to have had the pleasure of meeting most of you already. I would like to put on record, both as a public representative and Minister for Social Protection, my appreciation for your engagement with me on the work of the Department since I became Minister here and for your involvement in discussions with me on the best ways to provide the best quality of services to the people who avail of our schemes and supports."

The Minister continued: "The forthcoming Budget will be framed in the context of a very difficult exchequer financial situation and will have the aim of securing the long-term sustainability of our fiscal position. Maintaining control



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie

over our financial affairs is vital in the interests of all those who are dependent on the social welfare system. Wise decisions now will reap long-term benefits.

“Before I listen to your views and, in particular, to your proposals about where expenditure should be prioritised next year, I would like to state that at this stage no decisions have been made in relation to social welfare measures for the next Budget. These will be considered over the next two months or so, in the context of the overall requirement to reduce public expenditure generally.

Minister Ó Cuív added: “The economic turmoil has resulted in a deterioration in the public finances with a large gap between the income the State earns and our level of day-to-day public spending commitments.

“In the 2010 Budget, the Government introduced a range of welfare measures to control expenditure. I fully accept that some of the measures taken in the welfare area were not easy for people. However,

- Total spending of approximately €21 billion was provided for my Department in 2010, up by €526 million over the 2009 out-turn. This year we will be spending at least 38% of all current Government expenditure.
- Nearly €9.6 billion will be spent on social insurance schemes, while the PRSI income is only €7.4 billion, leaving a gap of €2.2 billion to be funded; (for many years, PRSI contributions *fully* funded social insurance expenditure).
- Close to €11.4 billion will also be expended on social assistance schemes which are fully exchequer funded.
- A major challenge is the continuing financial impact of the increase in the Live Register and the economic situation generally. Expenditure on Jobseeker’s Benefit and Allowance is estimated at €4.3 billion, or almost



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection**

www.welfare.ie

€580 million ahead of 2009 figures. There are additional knock-on costs in relation to Rent Supplement and other secondary benefits.”

The Minister continued: “Expectations must be realistic. A quick analysis of submissions received by my Department from various groups for this morning’s Forum reveals a total extra demand of around €2 billion for 2011. This is clearly an unrealistic expectation.

“I am determined however to ensure that the interests of people who have to rely on the back-up supports of social welfare will continue to be clearly heard at the Cabinet table.

“In this regard, it is vital that people are facilitated to progress from welfare to employment including work in the community, education or training as quickly and as effectively as possible. I recognise that simply paying people during times of unemployment is not enough. I believe that the unemployed want to work and to participate. Non-participation produces negative results both for individuals and the community at large. For example, it is well documented that the unemployed have more significant longer-term health issues than the community as a whole. It is vital that jobseekers be allowed to participate in one way or another, to re-skill and re-educate themselves to meet the challenges, not only of the current labour market, but also those challenges that will face us as we emerge from the downturn.

“My Department is actively addressing the issues surrounding the movement toward long term unemployment through initiatives such as the Back to Education Allowance and the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive Scheme which I introduced a few months ago.



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

www.welfare.ie

“In addition, the Community Services Programme and the Rural Social Scheme are now operated by my Department since September 1st last. As you know, these schemes were under the remit of my former Department and have proved very successful, both from the point of view of participants and the sponsoring organisations, in ensuring participation for the good of communities. I am actively examining ways to reform and expand these two schemes so that they can play an important role in dealing with unemployment on a nationwide basis,” concluded Minister Ó Cuív.

List of organisations attending the 2011 pre-Budget Forum

1. Disability Federation of Ireland
2. Barnados
3. Retired Workers Committee
4. Inclusion Ireland
5. Saint Vincent de Paul
6. Crosscare
7. Social Justice Ireland
8. Threshold
9. Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
10. Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
11. Carers Association
12. Cúram
13. Children’s Rights Alliance
14. Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA)
15. Irish Rural Link
16. National Association of Widows in Ireland
17. Pavee Point
18. Congress Centres Network
19. Age Action Ireland
20. National Women’s Council of Ireland
21. Care Alliance Ireland
22. TREOIR
23. National Federation of Pensioner’s Association
24. One Parent Exchange & Network (OPEN)
25. Trustus We Care
26. People with Disabilities in Ireland Ltd. (PWDI)
27. Vincentian Partnership for Justice



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection**

www.welfare.ie

- 28. Unmarried & Separated Fathers of Ireland
- 29. One Family

ENDS