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**INACCURATE SPECULATION ON RENTS SUPPLEMENT IN  
THRESHOLD/CÓMHAIRLE REPORT**

A claim in a Threshold/Cómhairle report published today that the Rent Supplement scheme is not working is inaccurate speculation, the Department of Social and Family Affairs said today.

The Rent Supplement scheme is payable to people on social welfare and aims to ensure that applicants pay reasonable rents for their accommodation. Because individual Health Boards are in touch with local market forces, they set the limits on the amount of rent per week or month.

Regulations signed last November maintained the maximum rent levels at their current level until December 2003, a measure designed to restrain landlords from raising rents. There were suspicions that landlords had been increasing rents in response to maximum rents set by health Boards, effectively making the rent limits set by Health Boards the going rent for the market.

Significantly, the regulations do not rescind the discretion allowed to Health Boards to pay rent supplements in exceptional cases, and the scheme is constantly monitored by the Department. The Department is not aware of any case that has resulted in homelessness.

The effectiveness of the Scheme is evidenced by the increase in the number of people now on the scheme. Currently there are 56,900 people on the scheme, at the end of 2002 there were 54,200 people and a year ago there were 45,200. Expenditure by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on the scheme has increased – it was €252.3million last year and is expected to cost €304million this year



The report also claims that the basis of eligibility for people in low-income households needs to be examined –this is being examined already as part of the SWA review currently in progress.

Comprehensive information about social welfare entitlements is always available community welfare officers and from the Department of Social and Family Affairs through its local offices and on the website – [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

**ENDS**  
**April 9<sup>th</sup> 2003**