



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Unemployed And Carers Given Income Boost - Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs

Approximately 5,000 people will benefit this month from Budget changes to the social welfare code that come into effect this month said Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs today.

This group of unemployed people and carers are in addition to those who benefit from increased child benefit payments which also came into effect this month. Child Benefit payments increased by €6 for the first and second child and €8 for the third and subsequent children – pushing Child Benefit payments to an all time high.

This year's budget spending will almost double the social welfare spend of 1997, despite falling unemployment figures.

"This Government has delivered Budget increases to those who are vulnerable, less well off or disadvantaged benefiting an estimated 970,000 who will claim a weekly social welfare payment. These funds will benefit approximately 1.5million people including their dependents or about four out of every ten people in the State. This means that for every ten euro spent by the Government approximately four euros will be spent on social welfare," said Minister Coughlan.

"This Fianna Fáil led Government has recognised the central role of carers in providing first rate care, and in further recognition of the important role of carers in our society, I am making improvements in the means test for Carer's Allowance, by increasing the weekly income disregard by €40 per week for single and by €80 per week for couples, bringing the disregards to €250 and €500 per week respectively."

These changes will result in an additional 1,750 new carers qualifying for payment of Carer's Allowance and also benefit 2,100 existing carers who are currently in receipt of a reduced payment. Other measures will benefit unemployed people

"This year's Budget ensures that schemes are best focussed to help those in need, to update schemes where other social welfare payments have made original scheme payments outmoded, and that funds from the taxpayers are spent ensuring the best alleviation of poverty, of disadvantage or the provision of supports," said Minister Coughlan.

Social welfare changes this month will result in the abolition of the assessment of Benefit and Privilege for Unemployment Assistance and Pre-Retirement Allowance for persons aged 27 and 28 years. At present, single Unemployment Assistance claimants, aged 28 and under, living in the family home are assessed for a benefit, which is related to the level of their parent's income.

From now on, single Unemployment Assistance claimants aged 27 and 28 years will no longer be assessed with the value of benefit and privilege derived from their parent's income.

"I am also increasing the minimum Unemployment Assistance payment to those claimants whose sole means are derived from the assessment of benefit and privilege from parental income by €8.20 per week from €31.80 to €40," the Minister said.

More people will benefit from the extension of the companion free travel pass to recipients of Unemployability supplement. Recipients of disablement benefit who are



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in receipt of an Unemployability supplement for at least 12 months are currently entitled to a free travel pass.

“This measure will ensure that the Unemployability supplement recipient’s entitlement to free travel is not diminished because a companion cannot afford to accompany them. It will encourage people with disabilities to remain independent and active within the community,” Minister Coughlan said.

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