



Minister Announces €38m Funding for Back to School Expenses for over 160,000 Students

Brennan Concerned That Tens of Thousands More May Be Entitled to Funding Than Are Currently Claiming It

Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., has approved €38 million under his Department's Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme to help parents with the cost of school clothing and footwear for the upcoming school year which starts in September.

Over the past school year more than 161,000 students benefited from the targeted support scheme, which operates from 1st June to 30th September each year.

Minister Brennan is urging those on social welfare payments who may qualify for the allowance that have not been applying to do so early this year, as it is an important support at a time of particular financial strain.

Minister Brennan said: "I fully appreciate the enormous financial pressure many parents are under when it comes to meeting the cost of uniforms and footwear for the new school year. In an effort to help meet some of the financial strain families, particularly those on low incomes, feel when preparing children for a new school term, I have approved funding of €38 million for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, an increase of over €12 million on payments under the scheme last year. While over 161,000 children were helped last year through the scheme, I am very concerned that tens of thousands of families on social welfare payments who may qualify for the scheme appear not to be applying for the financial support for whatever reason despite all the publicity and



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promotion the scheme has been given in recent years and will again be given this year.

“I am appealing to people on welfare or low-income employment to carefully examine the scheme conditions. This scheme is specifically targeted at helping those who genuinely need support in getting their children outfitted for the upcoming school year.”

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a targeted payment designed to help people depending on certain social welfare and Health Service Executive (HSE) payments, or taking part in approved employment schemes or training courses, with the cost of children's school clothing and footwear. It is also available to people on low incomes that are getting Family Income Supplement.

The payment, which is income related, is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and is administered by the HSE. Parents receive €180 for each eligible child aged between 2 and 11 years and receive €285 for each child aged between 12 and 22 years. Parents can apply to their local HSE office for funding under the Scheme up to the end of September.

A couple with 1 child whose weekly income is at or below €470.80 may qualify for the Allowance. A couple with two children whose weekly income is at or below €492.80 may qualify. If they have three children, they can have income of €514.80 and qualify. (For families with more children, the income limit is increased by €22.00 for each additional child).



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A lone parent with one child could have income of up to €331.30 per week and qualify for a payment. (For lone parent families, with more than one child, the income limit is increased by €22.00 for each additional child.)

Last year, a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 161,451 children at a cost of €23.5 million. A breakdown of the numbers benefiting shows-

- 102,208 were aged between 2 and 11 years,
- 52,011 were aged between 12 and 17 years and
- 7,232 were aged between 18 and 22 years.

* (Full regional and county statistical breakdown below)

Minister Brennan also said that in light of the Governments ongoing commitment to alleviating Child Poverty he is increasing funding for the School Meals Scheme by some €3million for 2007 to include a further 215 schools. At present approximately 1,000 schools are eligible to participate in the two School Meals Programmes, the School Meals (Local Projects) Scheme and the Urban School Meals scheme. In 2006 the expenditure on the School Meals Scheme was some €13.6 million. The increased funding will allow for the current number of participating schools to be increased and the amounts per meal to be reviewed.

Press Release Ends