



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

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Minister Burton launches Department of Social Protection's new fraud initiative

The Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton today (12th September) announced her fraud initiative which aims to achieve fraud control savings of €625 million next year.

Minister Burton published the Department of Social Protection's detailed fraud control plan which places greater emphasis on inter-agency co-operation at national and local level.

The Minister said: "Social welfare fraud is often perceived as a victimless crime. But I am conscious that it undermines public confidence in the entire system as well as being unfair to other recipients of social welfare payments and taxpayers and legitimate businesses."

Other aspects of the fraud initiative include:

- A greater presence of social welfare inspectors on the ground
- Targeting sectors where fraud is more likely to occur
- New ways to recover overpayments to be examined
- Increased penalties for those operating in the hidden economy to be examined
- Greater liaison with employers to ensure good information exchange on labour market trends
- Enhancing the technical and audit capacity of the Department including the rollout of the new Public Services Card



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The Minister indicated her Department would focus on employers as well as individuals. "The provisional target for the number of employer inspections in 2012 and 2013 is in the region of 2,500 to 3,500 each year," she said.

The Minister said there would be a consultation seminar with the relevant stakeholders on this fraud initiative later this year.

The Minister added: "The Department of Social Protection processes in excess of two million applications each year and it makes payments to over 1.4 million people every week. I want to emphasise that the vast majority of people are receiving the entitlement due to them."

The full details of the new plan including case studies of successful investigations carried out by the Department of Social Protection are posted on the Department's website at www.welfare.ie

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