



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Parents urged to apply now for Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance

Record numbers expected to apply for the funding - Hanafin

Over 140,000 families with school-going children are expected to apply for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance this summer, according to Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin T.D.

This scheme will see parents being assisted with the back to school costs through payments of €200 or €305 depending on the age of their children.

Minister Hanafin urged eligible families to apply in plenty of time, in order to ensure that they receive payment before the new school year starts. **“Probably the furthest thing from most parents’ minds this week is the start of the new school year. But we know that families always find this a pressurised time financially, so I would urge them now to take the time to apply for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, as it can take 6- 8 weeks to process applications and receive payment.”**

The number of children benefitting from the scheme has increased over the past number of years, rising from 161,000 in 2006 to over 200,000 last year. Given increased income thresholds and the increase in the numbers on the Live Register, the numbers likely to benefit this year are expected to be over 250,000 children. Expenditure on the scheme this year is expected to be €68million.

Minister Hanafin said in the changes introduced in the Budget this year **“means that an estimated 18,000 more families will benefit as the income thresholds for entitlement to the scheme were increased by €50.”** This brings the income limits for the allowance for parents with one child to €560 for couples and €407 for those parenting alone.

Another special measure which was introduced in the Budget was an additional allowance of €215 payable to 18 year olds in full time education for whom, the half rate Child Benefit is now applied. Total back to school payment in respects of children aged 18 is €520.



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The scheme is administered on behalf of the Department by the Community Welfare Division of the Health Service Executive, with staff in place now to deal with claims.

A person may qualify for payment of an allowance if they are in receipt of a Social Welfare payment (including Family Income Supplement), or Health Service Executive payment, are participating in an approved employment scheme or attending a recognised education and training course and have household income at or below certain set levels. Minister Hanafin said "**the purpose of the household income limit is to ensure that the allowance is directed at those with the greatest need.**"

ENDS

Notes for Editors

The mobile text service now makes it even quicker for parents to apply for the relevant forms. For those who are eligible, they can now apply by text message to request an application form.

Text - FORM BTSCFA - to 51909 followed by their name and address, or

Application forms are available on the Department's website at <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/bscfa.pdf> or at http://communitywelfareservice.ie/cws_public/application-forms.

There is also a 24 hour LoCall leaflet line number to order forms - 1890 20 23 25

Completed applications should then be returned to the relevant address for your area outlined on the Community Welfare Service website

http://communitywelfareservice.ie/cws_public/

Applications for the allowance can be made between the beginning of June and the end of September each year.

A person may qualify for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear scheme if they are:

- getting a Social Welfare payment (including Family Income Supplement) or a Health Service Executive (HSE) payment

or



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- taking part in an approved employment schemes or training courses:
and
- getting a Qualified Child Increase with their social welfare payment
and
- their household income is within the limits in either of the tables below.

Income Limits for 2009 are:

Couple with:	Income Limit	Lone Parent with:	Income Limit
1 child	560.00	1 child	407.00
2 children	586.00	2 children	433.00
3 children	612.00	3 children	459.00
4 children	638.00*	4 children	485.00*

*Limit is increased by €26.00 for each additional child

RATES OF PAYMENT

The rates of payment are :

- a) €200 in respect of children aged 2 to 11 on the 30th September 2009;
- (b) €305 in respect of children aged 12 to 17 on the 30th September 2009;
- (c) €305 in respect of children aged 18 to 22 on the 30th September 2009 who are in full time education.
- (d) As a special measure introduced in Budget 2009, an additional amount of €215 is payable for children aged 18 ONLY in respect of whom half rate Child Benefit is in payment. Total payment in respect of children aged 18 is €520**



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Further information on the scheme is available on Social and Family Affairs website www.welfare.ie. Links to application forms are available on the Department's website at <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/bscfa.pdf> or at http://communitywelfareservice.ie/cws_public/application-forms.