



Minister Cullen addresses Social Inclusion Forum and launches first Annual Report on Social Inclusion

Minister for Social and Family Affairs, **Martin Cullen TD**, today (Thursday 15 November) opened the fourth meeting of the Social Inclusion Forum and launched the first Annual Report on Social Inclusion 2006-2007 prepared by the Office for Social Inclusion.

Opening the Forum's proceedings which included sessions and workshops on **children, people of working age, older people and communities**, Minister Cullen said: "Since its inception in 2002, the Forum has provided stakeholders with a significant opportunity at national level for exchanges and discussions on the realities of social exclusion in today's Ireland, and on the adequacy of the policies, and their implementation, for tackling these realities. The effectiveness of the Forum is very much related to the fact that the participants represent or work directly with people experiencing social exclusion. You know what supports they need to enable them meet these challenges."

Minister Cullen added: "The Government wants to make the best social provision we can from income support, to education, health, housing and public services. We also want to ensure that through maintaining economic competitiveness, we retain the wealth and the jobs that make good, sustainable social provision possible. This reality means that we must get the balance right between social and economic development. It involves choosing priorities, because we cannot do everything at once. In your discussions today, therefore, I would appreciate if you could assist us in this task by focusing on what you consider should be the priorities for your particular area of concern over the coming years. It is particularly helpful that your views will be recorded and made available in a detailed report on the Forum proceedings to be published in the coming months."



Minister Martin Cullen TD said that the overall aim of the Government's *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* (NAP inclusion) is to reduce consistent* poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012 and ultimately to eliminate it by 2016. This commitment is underpinned by a number of high level goals, over 150 other targets and actions, and a series of initiatives provided for also in the *National Development Plan*.

Accepting the first annual ***Social Inclusion Report 2006 - 2007*** from the Director of the Office for Social Inclusion, **Mr Gerry Mangan**, Minister Cullen said: "This Annual Report on Social Inclusion is the first step in the development of a comprehensive and efficient monitoring process, and in reporting in a transparent way on the progress which is being achieved in this area. This report has been prepared in co-operation with the relevant Government departments with responsibilities relating to social inclusion and in consultation with the social partners. "

Providing some examples of progress achieved in relation to social inclusion over the past year, **Minister Cullen** said: "Progress in relation to services for older people include some 780,000 additional home help hours provided in 2007 at a cost of €18 million and some 2,000 additional home care packages also provided this year benefiting some 4,000 people at a cost of €30 million. In relation to housing, an €8 million Sustainable Communities Fund was introduced in 2007 to assist local authority funding in this area. In terms of income support for children – child benefit has been increased this year bringing rates to €160 per month in respect of each of the first two children and €195 per month for subsequent and third children. Additional literacy and numeracy tutors are being recruited to provide in-school support and guidance to all teachers in schools in areas of disadvantage; training in 'Reading Recovery' is being rolled out to all urban/town



Department of Social and Family Affairs

primary schools designed to reduce literacy problems in schools and a new Family Literacy Project is being implemented.”

Issued by:

Michelle Hctor, 087 856 3070

Oonagh Duffy, 087 254 9683

* The *Annual Report on Social Inclusion 2006-2007* and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* (NAPinclusion) can be accessed on the website of the Office for Social Inclusion at www.socialinclusion.ie and at www.welfare.ie

* Persons are regarded as being in consistent poverty if their income is below 60% of median income and if they are deprived of two or more goods or services from an index of eleven deprivation items.