



Increases In The Weekly Earnings Ceilings For Maternity And Adoptive Supports To Benefit Almost 14,000 Women

Minister Brennan-Extra Four Weeks Paid Maternity Leave From March Will Allow 43,000 Women Have Full Six Months Off To Care For Baby

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today announced increases in the rates of payment for Maternity and Adoptive Benefit that will directly benefit almost 14,000 women.

Minister Brennan said that the ceiling on reckonable earnings applied to Maternity and Adoptive Benefit has now been increased from €332 to €350 per week. This will raise the maximum rate of payment-based on 80% of reckonable earnings- from €265.60 to €280 per week. In addition, the minimum rate of payment will be raised from €182.60 to €207.80 per week.

It is estimated that some 11,500 women will benefit each week from the increase in the earnings ceiling applied to Maternity Benefit. A further 2,200 women will have their weekly benefit increased following the rise in the minimum rate of payment. Some 60 people will benefit each week from the increase in Adoptive Benefit.

The improvements and increases will be implemented at a total cost of over €11 million.

Minister Brennan said: "Overall funding for paid Maternity Leave has more than trebled in recent years, increasing from €58 million in 2000 to an estimated €235 million this year. Over the same time the length of paid Maternity Leave has increased from 14 weeks in 2000 to 22 weeks in 2006. This will be extended by a further four weeks from March to bring the total paid leave to 26 weeks. Funding of €27 million has been set aside for this extension which it is estimated will benefit at least 43,000 women between March 2007 and March 2008. Considerable progress has been achieved in significantly advancing the rights of mothers to paid and unpaid leave and we will continue to examine how these important entitlements can be further enhanced. Adequate Maternity Leave is a central element of the Government's overall strategy on childcare".

Press Release Ends