



**News Release**

**18<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

**The Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. presents Public Service Excellence Award to the Department of Social and Family Affairs**

The Department of Social and Family Affairs today (18<sup>th</sup> April 2008) received a Public Service Excellence Award from the Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. in Dublin Castle. The Department's winning entry (the Customer Certification Project), is one of 20 award winners selected from 183 entries by an eight-strong selection committee chaired by Professor Mary Daly, UCD.

Customer Certification is currently being used to process applications for Child Benefit payment for children over age 16 who are continuing in full-time education. Certificates, completed by the child's school or college, are submitted to the Department for processing. Previously, each case would have taken between two and six weeks to process by manual input. Now, scanners and forms recognition software to read barcodes, printed characters and handwritten information have been combined with an enhanced existing IT system to process these applications on the day of receipt. The solution implemented is re-usable, and has already been employed for a range of other social welfare services.

Niamh O'Donoghue, Director General of the Department of Social and Family Affairs who attended the awards ceremony commented, "The Customer Certification Project has led to significant time savings and improvements in our service to customers. These applicants for the Child Benefit extension are now notified of the outcome of their claim within two days instead of up to six weeks".



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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The Public Service Excellence Awards, which are presented by the Taoiseach every two years, recognise commitment, creativity and innovation behind important projects that add value to public services used by citizens. The event highlights some of the best examples of excellence and innovation across the public service.

Bernadette Lacey, Secretary General in the Department of Social and Family Affairs, also at the awards ceremony, said, "I am very proud that the Department has received this Public Service Excellence Award. It is particularly satisfying to see the Customer Certification Project in operation and demonstrating its value to the Department and, most importantly, to the Department's customers in a most practical way".

### **ENDS**

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### **Editor's Note:**

#### **List of Award Winning Projects**

1. Department of Social & Family Affairs: Customer Certification Project
2. Department of Education & Science: The DART Programme
3. The Property Registration Authority: Integrated Title Registration Information System
4. Office of the Revenue Commissioners: PAYE Customer Service Reform
5. The Irish Prison Service: An Environmental Strategy for The Irish Prison Service



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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6. The Courts Service: Courts Accounting Project
7. HSE West - Roscommon Mental Health Services & East Galway Mental Health Services: Development and provision of community based mental health services
8. HSE South: Parent Drop-In Service
9. HSE West - Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, Co Galway: First Heartsafe Schools in Ireland
10. HSE - Health Intelligence, National Population Health: Health Atlas Ireland
11. Donegal County Council: Taobh Tíre Library services
12. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council: The Festival of Word Cultures
13. Fingal County Council: Fingal Schools Model
14. Dublin City Council: Safer Ballymun - A Community Safety Strategy
15. Dublin City Council: Free Trade recycling initiative
16. Cork City Council: LifetimeLab SchoolScience Programme
17. Clare VEC - Adult Education Service: Clare Lifelong Learning Network
18. FÁS: Development of a Centre of Excellence for training for Biopharmaceutical/Pharmaceutical Sector
19. Fáilte Ireland: Tourism Learning Network
20. Health & Safety Authority: Safe System of Work Plan (SSWP)