



NEWS RELEASE

18 October 2007

**Minister Cullen meets voluntary and community groups
in pre-Budget forum**

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen, TD, today (18 October 2007), hosted a **pre-Budget Forum** for interest groups in the welfare area. Over 30 groups gathered in Dublin to make submissions to Minister Cullen and his officials on welfare changes and improvements which they would like to see included in the forthcoming budget. The purpose of this annual Forum is to provide organisations with an opportunity to have an input into the budget process.

In his opening address, **Minister Cullen** said: "The Government is proud of its investment in social provision. This year, my Department will spend over EUR15.3 billion which is almost 29% of all Government expenditure. Each week, payments are made to over 1 million people benefiting about 1.5 million in all, while Child Benefit is payable to over 560,000 families. The services operated by my Department impact directly on the daily life of almost everyone in this country and this is reflected by the wide spectrum of society represented by your organisations."

Over 30 groups were invited to attend the Forum which was held in St Andrew's Resource Centre in Dublin. The organisations represented the welfare interests of older people, people with disabilities, lone parents, children, unemployed people, carers and family support groups. (See appendix for list of organisations invited



Department of Social and Family Affairs

to attend). At the Forum, groups outlined proposals which they considered would make real and positive changes to the lives of the people they represent.

Minister Cullen said: "My priority as Minister for Social and Family Affairs is to make a decisive impact on poverty. I want to target resources on helping those most in need in order, not alone to raise their standard of living, but to ensure that they can take advantage of the employment and educational opportunities our society now provides."

ENDS

Issued by:

Michelle Hctor, 087 856 3070

Niamh Fitzgerald, 087 2547232



Appendix

ORGANISATIONS ATTENDING FORUM

TREOIR (Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children)

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

Age Action Ireland

Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

Retired Workers Committee

Saint Vincent de Paul

Pavee Point

National Federation of Pensioners' Associations

Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)

National Association of Widows in Ireland

Barnardos

Carers Association

One Family

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)

Unmarried Fathers of Ireland

Cúram

Forum of People with Disabilities

One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)

Inclusion Ireland (National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability)

National Women's Council of Ireland

People with Disabilities in Ireland (PWDI)

ACCORD (Catholic Marriage Counselling Service)

Parental Equality



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Care Alliance Ireland

CROSSCARE (Catholic Social Service Conference)

Family Solidarity

Children's Rights Alliance

Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service (MRCS)

Threshold

Congress Centres Network (ICTU)

Tallaght Welfare Society

Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA)