



**GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES IRELAND'S NEW NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR
SOCIAL INCLUSION 2007-2016: *BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY***

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, T.D., the Tánaiste, Michael McDowell, T.D., and the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Séamus Brennan, T.D., today launched Ireland's new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-16: *Building an Inclusive Society*.

Speaking at the launch, the Taoiseach said: "This comprehensive new Plan underlines this Government's commitment to building a fully inclusive society. Together with the National Development Plan and the ten-year social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*, we now have in place an ambitious agenda for social change which will enable us to make a decisive impact on poverty in the years ahead".

Social inclusion has been at the heart of the Government's approach to social and economic development and much has been achieved. The Government has had a strategic process for combating poverty and social exclusion since 1997. This was reviewed in 2002, and a number of key targets were set for social welfare rates. These included targets to increase the lowest adult social welfare rate to €150, in 2002 terms, and to maintain the appropriate combined value of child income supports at 33-35% of the lowest adult social welfare rate. Another important target contained in the 2002 Agreed Programme for Government was to increase the basic State pension to €200 a week. Minister Brennan, in his speech at the launch of the Plan noted that "It is a significant achievement not only for those who have benefited, but for the integrity of this strategic process, that these commitments for combating poverty have been fundamentally met".



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The Tanaiste commenting on the multi-policy approach to tackling social inclusion noted that “The objectives of the plan span many areas of Irish Society. It is a significant example of what can be achieved through joined up thinking and a multi-disciplinary approach to policy making”.

Minister Brennan said: “The Government’s key objective is to build an inclusive society. A society in which everybody has the opportunity and the incentive to participate and share in the benefits of economic and social development. It is about ensuring that the contribution and talents of no individual is overlooked or neglected.

The first strategic plan, which was launched a decade ago, has succeeded in lifting at least 250,000 people, including some 100,000 children, out of poverty and deprivation as a result of targeted policies and supports. This new Plan establishes a series of ambitious targets to which the Government has pledged its full commitment. The new and enhanced institutional structures will underpin its implementation and monitoring. We are confident that this Plan will build on the achievements of the last decade and deliver greater social inclusion and a society in which remaining consistent poverty is rooted out and finally eliminated.”

The NAPinclusion is designed to build on the significant progress made. The Government has identified a number of high level strategic goals in certain key priority areas in order to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty. These targeted actions and interventions are designed to mobilise resources to address long-standing and serious social deficits. They focus on:

- ensuring children reach their true potential;
- supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;



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- providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living;
- building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

In view of the very substantial progress in enhancing income support over recent years, these goals place a renewed emphasis on services, activation measures and supporting good quality employment. This recognises the continuing challenges faced by those in work but on low incomes, as well as the vulnerability of those in households without any employment.

The overall poverty goal is:

- To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

The high level goals, as set out in the attached overview, are aimed at:

- The provision of targeted pre-school education;
- Reducing literacy difficulties and tackling early school leaving;
- Maintaining the combined value of child income support measures at 33%-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate;
- Introducing an active case management approach to support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare;
- Maintaining the relative value of the lowest social welfare rate;
- Continuing to increase investment in community care services for older people;
- Maintaining, and if possible enhancing, the value of the State Pension;



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- Increasing the employment and participation of people with disabilities;
- Delivering increased housing output to meet the accommodation needs of some 60,000 new households, the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities;
- Developing 500 primary care teams to improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards;
- Developing a strategy aimed at achieving the integration of newcomers in our society.

In addition to the high level goals, there are some 154 targeted actions and interventions set out in the Plan designed to ensure that a decisive impact is made on poverty.

In conclusion, the Taoiseach stated that “The Government is committed to building on what has been achieved to date in the development of a more inclusive society. This new Plan, together with the NDP and *Towards 2016*, represents a new phase in this development and puts in place a new and invigorated action plan in the years to come”.

The 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016: *Building an Inclusive Society*' will be available on the following websites:

www.taoiseach.ie

www.socialinclusion.ie

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