



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Allowance May Be Extended For Mobile Phones – Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs

A monthly allowance paid to nearly 300,000 people including pensioners for a fixed land telephone line could soon be extended to mobile phones.

"I have asked my officials to investigate extending this scheme, as I believe mobile phones are important for the safety of older people especially those living alone.

"With phone numbers for doctors, nurses or family members pre-programmed into a mobile phone their use would greatly ease the fears of anyone concerned about their elderly relatives who live alone.

"Currently 290,000 people are in receipt of the monthly Telephone Allowance, and many of them are elderly.

In October I announced a new deal to open the market to licensed land line phone providers to offer their service to recipient's of my Departments telephone allowance. Under the terms of the deal clients will be able to choose which provider they want and still continue to get full value for their allowance.

The deal also leaves the way open for competing phone service providers to offer extra, perhaps cheaper internet access, better value on calls or extra call credit to allowance clients.

The initiative followed talks between my Department, ComReg and Eircom which will simplify the phone allowance at a standard rate and make it easier to apply through other licensed service providers, and gives a small increase in the telephone allowance for almost 300,000 people.

The Telephone allowance is part of the Household Benefits package and is generally available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test.

The allowance is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments. The Telephone Allowance is worth €20.41 a month plus VAT.

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