



NEWS RELEASE

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Minister Hanafin - Over 15,000 people avail of new mobile phone benefit from Government

Almost €100million being spent helping families keep in touch

A scheme which gives pensioners a payment towards their mobile phone costs has proved hugely successful in its first year of operation. The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin TD, today said that over 15,500 people are now benefiting from the Telephone Allowance, paid by the Department, which goes towards their mobile phone costs.

The Telephone Allowance was extended to include mobile phones in April 2007. Previously the Allowance applied to fixed line phones only, with a credit made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs direct to the telephone company on the customer's behalf. Now people have a choice to opt for landline or mobile allowance.

Of the 15,500 people who are availing of the Telephone Allowance for mobile phone costs, some 4,000 are over 66 years of age.

Urging more pensioners and those in receipt of certain social welfare payments to consider using new technologies to keep in touch with family and friends, Minister Hanafin said "**carrying a mobile phone can increase an older persons sense of safety and security and could be of vital assistance in an emergency. This is particularly relevant where the older person is living alone. Having the choice to either put the allowance towards their land line or**



embrace the new world of technology which is part and parcel of life today is something that everyone should consider.”

Minister Hanafin went on to point to the social benefits associated with having a telephone **“to keep in touch with friends and family and with mobile phones, there is the additional option of keeping in touch by text messages. This, again, is an important issue in preventing social isolation for those living alone.”**

The monthly value of the Telephone Allowance is €25.90 (worth over €300 per year). A person who opts to receive the Allowance for a mobile phone receives their payment on the 1st Tuesday of each month to an account in a nominated financial institution or at a post office using a social welfare services card.

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