

## **MINISTER MARY COUGHLAN IN ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE**

A campaign to end the language of officialese in one of the biggest Government Department's has been launched by Social and Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan.

Simple English will be the hallmark of leaflets, application forms, letters and advertisements from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which administers a social welfare payment to approximately 870,000 claimants every week and benefits about 1.5million people.

“It is troubling that a quarter of Irish adults are reported to have difficulty with simple literacy tasks. This initiative will lead to the implementation of a plain English policy so that the information we provide is accessible by all our customers,” said Minister Coughlan.

“Helping people access information and public services is a proven way to empower people. With this in mind, my Department has constantly sought to improve the service it delivers to its customers – which at some stage will include every citizen of the state.





“Many of the schemes helping people who are ill, unemployed, or disadvantaged can be complex and detailed - and therefore difficult to understand and explain. I hope that this initiative will help people claim their entitlements, “added Minister Coughlan.

Minister Coughlan has today approved funding of €35,000 to the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) for the employment of a development worker. The worker will be employed on a one-year contract.

The development worker will work with the department in developing a plain English policy and a literacy friendly “in house” style, designing literacy awareness training for staff, reviewing and revising leaflets, application forms, letter formats and in initiating research into strategies that complement or replace the use of the written word in communications.

NALA has received more than €180,000 in funding from the Department of Social and Family Affairs over the last three years.

ENDS June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003



## **Note for News Editors**

### **National Literacy Statistics**

In the 1997 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), 25% of the Irish population were found to be at the lowest level of literacy. The IALS found that people needed help most with reading information from government agencies and filling out application forms.

### **National Adult Literacy Agency**

NALA was established in 1980 it is a membership organization with voluntary status, concerned with national co-ordination, training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland. Its mission is to ensure that all adults with reading and writing difficulties have access to high quality literacy provision.

