



**Cullen encourages take up of
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance**

€38 million available for back to school expenses

Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today (Wednesday 25 July 2007) reminded families who are dependant on social welfare payments or taking part in approved employment schemes or training courses that they may be entitled to a **Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance** – a social welfare payment from his Department - to assist with back to school expenses. The Minister made the call when meeting this afternoon with representatives from **OPEN** - Ms Frances Byrne, Chief Executive and Ms Camille Loftus, Head of Policy and Research. **OPEN** - *One Parent Exchange and Network* is the national network of lone parent self-help groups and 92 groups currently form part of its network. Applications for the Back to School clothing and footwear allowance have been welcome from parents or guardians for their school-going children since 1 June this year – with Friday 28 September (2007) the closing date for applications. Parents should apply to their local Community Welfare Officer for this allowance. Some **€38 million** is available this year – an increase of **€12 million** over that provided last year.

Under the allowance, eligible parents can receive **€180** for each eligible child aged between 2 and 11 years – **up €60** on last year and **€285** for each child/student aged between 12 and 22 years – **up €95** on last year.
(The 2006 rates were **€120** and **€190** respectively).

Minister Cullen said: "Thousands of families dependant on social welfare payments or in approved training courses or employment schemes may be entitled to this important cash support to help with back to school expenses." The Minister added: "Last year a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 161,451 children and students. I am anxious this year that once again, as many people as possible apply for the allowance. This year this Government is making €38 million available - **up 46%** on that provided last year. We are still a number of weeks away from sending children back to school and I appreciate that summer can be a busy time but I would encourage parents to check with the Community Welfare Officer - based in their local HSE office - to see if they are eligible for the allowance, get their application in and not let the moment pass. The rates of payment are good – they have increased substantially on previous years - and they are there for a reason – to go some way towards the cost of helping families purchase school uniforms and shoes at a time of financial pressure".

Minister Cullen added: "To further highlight the availability of the allowance, my Department will commence a two-week national and local radio advertising campaign on Monday 20 August to highlight the availability of this important financial support. The scheme will also be advertised in the national and local press".

A person may qualify for payment of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance if he/she has a dependant child; is in receipt of a social welfare or health service executive payment; is participating in an approved employment scheme or attending a recognised education or training course and if the household income is at or below certain specified levels. Parents who are getting Family Income Supplement may also qualify.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

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Editor's note:

A couple with one child whose weekly income is at or below €470.80 may qualify for the allowance. A couple with two children whose weekly income is at or below €492.80 may qualify. If they have three children, they can have an income of €514.80 and qualify. (For families with more children, the income limit is increased by €22 for each additional child).

A lone parent with one child could have an income of up to €331.30 per week and qualify for a payment. (For lone parent families, with more than one child, the income limit is increased by €22 for each additional child).

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is administered by the Community Welfare Service of the Health Service Executive on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Parents and guardians who wish to contact the Department of Social and Family Affairs about this allowance can telephone the Department on (LoCall 1890 66 22 44, 9am to 5pm). An information booklet can be ordered by phoning 1890 20 23 25 at any time or by emailing forms@welfare.ie.

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