



**€19.5M FUNDING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL EXPENSES -**

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD**

Increased grant aid is available to parents to meet the cost of school clothing and footwear, Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, said today.

She urged parents who may qualify for grants from the enlarged €19.48 million fund to apply to their local health boards before the end of September deadline.

In this school year the overall fund has been increased by ten per cent on what was paid under the scheme last year. In addition, the income limits for Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance have been increased by €16.70 per week for a couple and €11.50 per week for a lone parent on last year's limits.

"The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a targeted payment which comes at a time when parents' minds naturally turn to the cost of the new school year. I urge parents, who think they have an entitlement, to apply for the payment to their local health board" Minister Coughlan said.

"This funding can be a great help to parents with the cost of school uniforms and footwear for the new school year. With this in mind, I've approved funding of €19.48m for this year, an increase of more than €1.76m on what was paid under the scheme last year," said Minister Mary Coughlan.

"This government is committed to helping all our children develop to their full potential. This commitment can be seen in the increased resources committed to targeted supports such as the Back to School Allowance and by the unprecedented increase in resources devoted to Child Benefit.

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is designed to help people depending on social welfare and health board payments with the cost of children's school clothing and footwear. It is also available to people on low incomes who are getting Family Income Supplement. The payment, which is income related, is funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and is administered by the health boards.

Parents will get €80 for each child aged between 2 and 11 years. Parents of qualifying children aged between 12 and 22 years will receive €150 for each child. Parents can apply to their local health board, for funding under the Scheme between now and the end of September.

A couple with one child whose weekly income is at or below €348.10 may qualify for the Allowance. A couple with two children whose weekly income is at or below €367.40 may qualify. If they have three children, they may have income of €386.70 and qualify. (For families with more children, the income is increased by €19.30 for each additional child).



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A lone parent with one child could have income of up to €238.90 per week and qualify for a payment. (For lone parent families, with more than one child, the income is increased by €21.60 for each additional child.)

Last year, a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 172,123 children at a cost of €17.72 million; 109,149 were aged between 2 and 11 years, 55,475 were aged between 12 and 17 years and 7,499 were aged between 18 and 22 years.

### ENDS

**25th August 2004**

### Note to the News Editor

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is payable to parents whose income limits are at or below the following amounts:

<b>Couple with: Income Limit</b>		<b>Lone Parent with: Income Limit</b>	
1 child	€ 348.10	1 child	€ 238.90
2 children	€ 367.40	2 children	€ 260.50
3 children	€ 386.70	3 children	€ 282.10
4 children	€ 406.00*	4 children	€ 303.70**

\*Limit is increased by € 19.30 for each additional child

\*\*Limit is increased by € 21.60 for each additional child

<b>Allowance</b>	<b>Rate Payable</b>
Rate for each child aged 2 – 11	€ 80.00
Rate for each child aged 12 – 17***	€ 150.00

\*\*\* and children aged 18 – 22 if in full time education for whom a Child Dependant Allowance is payable.



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### Breakdown of children by Health Board and Age Group for whom payment was made in 2003

Health Board Regions	Age Groups			Total
	2 – 11	12 – 17	18 – 22	
Eastern Regional Health Authority	43,475	14,221	1,275	58,971
Midland Health Board	7,068	4,014	376	11,458
Mid Western Health Board	8,155	4,659	558	13,372
North Eastern Health Board	8,664	5,108	631	14,403
North Western Health Board	7,760	5,308	881	13,949
South Eastern Health Board	11,207	7,136	854	19,197
Southern Health Board	13,030	8,197	1,407	22,634
Western Health Board	9,790	6,832	1,517	18,139
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,149</b>	<b>55,475</b>	<b>7,499</b>	<b>172,123</b>