



Brennan Urges Applications For Back To School Funding

EUR26M Available This Year For Eligible Families

Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., has today reminded parents that he has approved EUR26 million, under his Department's Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme, to help with the cost of school clothing and footwear for the new school year.

More than 157,000 students benefited from the targeted support scheme last year. Minister Brennan is urging those on social welfare payments who may qualify for the allowance that have not been applying to do so as it is an important support at a time of particular financial strain.

"I'm concerned that many people who would qualify for a payment haven't yet made an application. I want to urge parents who may have an entitlement, and have not already applied, to contact their local Health Service Executive office for funding under the Scheme, as soon as possible," said Minister Brennan.

Minister Brennan said: "I fully appreciate the enormous financial pressure many parents are under when it comes to meeting the cost of uniforms and footwear for the new school year. In an effort to help meet some of the financial strain families, particularly those on low incomes, feel at this time of year, I've approved funding of EUR26 million for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, an increase of EUR8 million on payments under the scheme last year. I am very concerned that tens of thousands of families on social welfare payments who may qualify for the scheme appear not to be applying for the financial support for whatever reason despite all the publicity and promotion the scheme is given. I am appealing to people on welfare or low-income employment to carefully examine the scheme conditions. This scheme is there to help those who genuinely need support in getting their children outfitted for the new school year."

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a targeted payment designed to help people depending on certain social welfare and Health Service Executive



Department of Social and Family Affairs

(HSE) payments, or taking part in approved employment schemes or training courses, 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 HSE. Parents get EUR120 for each eligible child aged between 2 and 11 years and receive EUR190 for each child aged between 12 and 22 years. Parents can apply to their local HSE office for funding under the Scheme up to the end of September.

In a further bid to make improvements to the scheme Minister Brennan has also increased the additional income disregard for entitlement to the scheme from EUR50 to EUR100.

Also for the first time in the history of the scheme people in receipt of the Orphans' Contributory Pension and the Orphans Non-contributory Allowance may also qualify for a payment. This addition to the scheme is estimated to cost EUR0.08 million in 2006.

Last year, a Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was paid in respect of 157,254 children at a cost of EUR16.7 million; 99,195 were aged between 2 and 11 years, 51,242 were aged between 12 and 17 years and 6,817 were aged between 18 and 22 years.

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