



Minister Committed to Promoting “Seamless” Transition From Welfare to Work For Jobseekers

New Figures Show That Over 110,000 Welfare Clients Supported in Return to Work in Recent Years

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., said today (Thursday, 28th April 2005) that he is strongly committed to promoting measures that make the transition from welfare to work for jobseekers a seamless and rewarding experience.

Minister Brennan was speaking in Dublin when he launched a new national edition of “Toil and Trouble”, a comprehensive guide explaining, in user-friendly language and in an easy to follow format, all that those intent on setting themselves up in self-employment and running a business need to know. The book is described as “a guide through the maze of self-employment”.

The Minister said: “It is well established that the best form of social and financial inclusion and security comes from having a job. For those on welfare entitlements, particularly the long-term unemployed, returning to work or education can be an anxious and challenging time. We must all redouble our efforts to supply the supports that make that transition as seamless as possible so that it opens up opportunities, fosters self-sufficiency and promotes independence.”

Minister Brennan unveiled statistics that show the extent of investment in welfare to work supports and the numbers who have successfully made the transition:

- More than €1 billion has been invested in the period 1998-2004 to assist people get a foothold in the labour market. This year alone €107 million will be made available in employment supports.
- Since the Back to Work Allowance was introduced in 1993, the support scheme has encouraged over 110,000 long-term unemployed people, lone parents and persons with disabilities to return to work.
- This has been achieved by permitting those on the allowance to retain their social welfare entitlement - on a tapered rate over a three or four year period - when they take up employment or self-employment, as well as secondary benefits.
- An independent evaluation of the scheme encouragingly shows that 78% of those who participated in the scheme had not returned to the live register.
- At present there are almost 11,000 participants in the scheme, with almost 6,500 engaged in a wide range of self-employment options.

Minister Brennan said the Back to Work scheme, administered by the Department’s Social and Family Support Service and through the local network of Facilitators



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working in Social Welfare Local Offices around the country, clearly demonstrated that the right mix of financial and other supports and encouragements delivers a smooth integration into the regular world of work.

The "Toil and Trouble" information handbook, published by the Inishowen Partnership, Co. Donegal in partnership with the Information Service Unit and Social and Family Supports Service of the Department of Social Affairs, brings together details of many of the financial, legal, technical and bureaucratic challenges that inevitably confront people starting up or already running their own businesses.

Minister Brennan added: "The Inishowen Partnership has been very successful in promoting a process of integrated local development and in administering a number of very innovative programmes. I am encouraged that the Partnership's focus for the future will be on integrated actions, which require a combination of skills and talents of local people, state agencies and other key participants - and the pooling in certain cases of financial resources. "Toil and Trouble" will further enhance the service my Department provides to self-employed people and will also provide a valuable aid to anyone in business, and also those who may be thinking of going into business.

"In particular, this guide will give guidance to those on welfare who want to go into business and create opportunity and self-reliance."

The Minister paid tribute to all those involved in the publication - the author Trevor Topping of the Inishowen Partnership, Seamus McGinley, the Department's Facilitator in Inishowen and the Department's Regional Manager, Christy McDonagh, and Joe O'Donnell who heads the Department's Social and Family Support Service in the North West Region.

"Toil and Trouble" is available from Inishowen Partnership, the Department's Information Service Unit, on 01 7043000, and will shortly be made available on the Department's website, welfare.ie.

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