



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Child Benefit Payment Faster And Now More Efficient As Rates Increased Again

- Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs

The waiting time for the payment of Child Benefit is being dramatically reduced from months to hours in a major redesign and modernisation of the social welfare payment system, Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs said today.

Minister Coughlan officially launched the new system in Letterkenny today saying it cut red tape, made for a more efficient system and added that if a baby was born and registered on a Monday, payment is initiated or mother contacted by Thursday.

Previously the manual payment process could take up to 8 weeks to complete. Child benefit payment will issue automatically for a second or subsequent child.

Child Benefit payments will increase next month by six euros for each of the first two children and eight euros for the third and subsequent children, bringing the rates to an all time high of €131.60 a month for each of the first two children, and €165.30 for third and subsequent children.

Noting that the new on-line birth registration is now operational in three Health Boards, including the North Western Health Board and the roll out continues, Minister Coughlan said: "The re-design of the Child Benefit system and the integration of services clearly bring benefits for the customer and staff alike."

"A single interaction between the customer and one public service agency brings significant advantages to the customer in terms of the simplification of the application process and the speed of delivery of service," the Minister added.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has embarked on a Service Delivery Modernisation programme which aims to deliver a high quality, proactive service to customers, using modern systems to facilitate more customer centred services and support e-Government strategies.

"These developments will allow my Department greater flexibility in responding to policy changes and customer needs," Minister Coughlan said.

Of the 60,000 births currently registered annually in Ireland, approximately half will be to first-time mothers who will get an application form generated automatically by the Child Benefit system and most of the balance will receive Child Benefit payments automatically.

The roll-out of on-line birth registration in to all Health Boards will be completed by the middle of this year. Payments to 520,000 customers in respect of more than 1 million children are managed using the new system.

Minister Coughlan added: "The challenge now is to progress the delivery of other services while at the same time responding to changing customer needs while taking advantage of new and emerging technologies."

ENDS

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Department of Social and Family Affairs

NOTE FOR NEWS EDITORS:

The on-line registration of the birth of a child with the Civil Registration Service causes the initiation of a series of related services by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. On the registration of a birth, the Civil Registration System sends an electronic notification to the Department's Client Identity Service (CIS) via the REACH Inter Agency Messaging Service (IAMS). CIS allocate a Personal Public Service Number (PPS NO.) for the baby, notify the mother, set up a relationship with the parents on the central database and electronically notify the Child Benefit system via the Department's internal messaging hub.

In the case of a first child/claim, a partially completed form issues automatically to the parent. This reduces the amount of form-filling required as well as encouraging uptake of Child Benefit entitlement - the child's birth certificate is not required. In the case of subsequent children/claims there is no need for form filling or birth certificate as payments will be made automatically.

For example, where a baby is born and registered on Monday payment is initiated or mother contacted by Thursday where previously the manual payment process could take up to 8 weeks to complete.

As further phases of SDM are implemented, other Departmental services can also be triggered arising from proactive electronic notification of life events from the General Registrar's Office e.g. widow's/widower's pensions claims, bereavement grants etc.

A range of services in other agencies can be triggered by the use of the REACH Inter Agency Messaging Service, for example, to transmit birth records to agencies such as the Central Statistics Office for statistical purposes and to the health service for child and community care purposes.