



Social Welfare Appeals Office Annual Report 2006 Published

The **Social Welfare Appeals Office**, an independent office of the Department of Social and Family Affairs has published its **Annual Report**. The Report contains statistical data on the work of the Appeals Office during the period **2006**.

Of the **13,800 people** who made appeals to the Social Welfare Appeals Office during that year, 12% were withdrawn and of the remainder, 46% were decided in favour of the appellant and 42% were 'disallowed'. Appeals Officers dealt with 65% of appeals through oral hearings while the remainder were decided summarily. During 2006, oral hearings were held at 59 venues around the country, excluding the Office's Dublin headquarters, and Appeals Officers made 171 week-long visits throughout the country hearing appeals.

Commenting on the Report's publication, **Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs** said: "I welcome the continued commitment of the Social Welfare Appeals Office to provide an accessible and independent review mechanism for people who wish to appeal against decisions made by my Department in regard to their statutory entitlements. While every effort is made by my Department to deliver entitlements to people in accordance with the legislation, it is understandable that not everyone will agree with the decisions made on their claims."

To access a copy of the Annual Report, please see the publications section of the following website: www.socialwelfareappeals.ie



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Notes for Editors:

- The Social Welfare Appeals Office is an independent office of the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The office is located in D'Olier House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2.
- The Office deals with appeals on decisions made in regard to entitlement to benefit under the Social Welfare Acts and questions regarding the insurability of employment. It also provides an appeals service to the Health Service Executive relating to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.
- The Annual Report 2006 provides a detailed statistical analysis of the Office's performance in processing appeals during that year, including trends in:
 - appeals received :13,800 appeals were received in 2006 compared with 13,797 in 2005.
 - appeals finalized: 14,006, comprising 1,707 appeals which were withdrawn, 3,199 which were given the benefit of a revised decision by the Deciding Officers in the Department of Social and Family Affairs and 9,100 which were determined by Appeals Officers.
 - reviews by Deciding Officers: part of the appeals procedure involves a review by the Deciding Officer, who made the original decision, prior to the appeal going before an Appeals Officer. NS Frequently, new evidence becomes available in the course of an appeal and a revised decision is warranted. NS There were 3,199 such revisions in 2006.
 - appeal outcomes:12% of appeals were withdrawn and 23% were revised by Deciding Officers. 46% of appeals had a favourable outcome compared to 47% in 2005.
 - appeal processing times: it took an average of 21 weeks to conclude an appeal. However, many cases take longer due to legal matters, medical considerations, additional investigations etc. If the 25% most protracted appeals are disregarded, the average falls to 13.8 weeks.[Note: The appeals system is quasi-judicial in nature and due process must be followed. There is very limited scope for fast-tracking cases.]
 - oral hearings: 65% of appeals determined by Appeals Officers were dealt with by way of an oral hearing compared to 67% in 2005.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

The Report details meetings and consultations held during 2006 with Appeals Officers and with the Department. This dialogue has proved to be an effective means of resolving difficulties and anomalies in the interpretation of legislation or policy.

The Report also provides a number of case histories which serve to give an understanding and an insight into the appeals process. (A large number of case histories are published on the Appeals Office website available at www.socialwelfareappeals.ie)

Details of court proceedings and judgements during 2006 are also published in the Annual Report.

Press Release Ends