



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Launches 'Plain English' Cd-Rom Targeted At Saving Time And Ending Confusion Over Information

Pledges Implementation Of 'Plain English' Policy In His Department

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today officially launched 'Simply Put', a plain English CD-Rom produced by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and targeted at saving time and reducing costs by minimising confusion that may arise from information that is unclear. The launch forms part of National Adult Literacy Awareness Week.

Minister Brennan said: "With an estimated 500,000 people in Ireland having poor literacy skills it is important that all organisations present information in an understandable and simple manner. Government departments and agencies, in particular, have a responsibility to provide information which will help people to understand and access their rights and entitlements. This excellent CD-Rom will assist in this task and is targeted at those who work in public, political and non-governmental organisations."

"We, in the Department of Social Affairs are making every effort to follow a 'plain English' policy. Nearly every citizen comes into contact with my Department at some time in their life, either as a child, a pensioner, or maybe someone who is ill or loses their job. Many of our schemes, because they are designed to cover all eventualities, are very detailed and complex. We have been working closely with NALA, over the last two years, to ensure that all our application forms and explanatory booklets are, to borrow the title, as 'Simply Put' as possible. This CD-Rom will save time and reduce costs by minimising confusion and complaints that may arise from information that is not only complex and confusing but can also be misleading," added Minister Brennan.

Minister Brennan paid tribute to all those involved in the production of 'Simply Put': "I believe that this CD-Rom can help to improve and simplify the language and formats used in providing information and is indeed a job well done."

The CD-Rom 'Simply Put' gives advice, editing tips and training in the use of plain English, with the aim of minimising confusion that may arise from information that is



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unclear. This is particularly important considering the estimated 500,000 adults (OECD, 1997) in Ireland who have poor literacy skills.

'Simply Put' is primarily aimed at staff in voluntary and statutory agencies such as Citizens Information Centres, Money Advice and Budgeting Services, VECs, Health Promotion Units, FAS, local authorities, charities and research organisations. The CD-Rom launch forms part of the National Adult Literacy Awareness Week which this year focuses on those who work in the public, political and non-governmental organisation sectors.

Comhairle, the statutory body, operating under the Department of Social Affairs, with responsibility for the provision of information, advice and advocacy services, has provided funding of €20,000 for the production of the CD-Rom.

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