



**An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection**

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**Burton – Hidden Economy Activity and Social Welfare fraud,  
“Concerted and active policing of the hidden economy  
sector a key priority for my Department”**

“One of the key priorities for my Department will be a concerted and active policing of the hidden economy sector where there is a prevalence of social welfare fraud and abuse”, said Joan Burton TD, Minister for Social Protection, when attending a meeting of the joint High Level Group of Department of Social Protection and Revenue today.

The purpose of the group is to ensure ongoing collaboration and interaction between the organisations, including in relation to social welfare fraud and tax non-compliance. Minister Burton in conjunction with the Secretary General of the Department and the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners welcomed and highlighted the importance of a focused multi-agency approach in dealing with the hidden economy.

Both the Department of Social Protection and Revenue have identified the risk inherent in hidden economy activity as being a key corporate priority to be tackled in 2011 and plans have been devised to combat both tax non-compliance and social welfare fraud.

The Department and Revenue tackle the hidden economy by a combination of risk analysis, intelligence collation, assurance checks and outdoor operations including audit and investigation.

In addition, Joint Investigation Units (JIUs) between Revenue, the Department of Social Protection and the National Employment Rights Authority play a key role in targeting particular types of hidden economy activity in the employed sectors e.g. construction sector, hospitality sector.

Minister Burton commented: “Policing what is conventionally viewed as hidden economy activity is as much about ensuring a level playing field for compliant businesses as it is about detecting tax non-compliance and social welfare fraud.”

In the context of the Department of Social Protection, Minister Burton has committed to putting in place a strategic fraud and control plan to:

- Ensure a strategic response to high risk sectors and social welfare schemes where fraud and abuse is prevalent.



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- Identify those sectors of the economy and conduct comprehensive investigations where the risk of concurrent working and claiming social welfare payments is most prevalent.
- Ensure an integrated approach to prevention, deterrence, detection of social welfare abuse across the Department's services.

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**