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Department of Social Protection**

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**Minister Burton launches Live Advisor Service to assist
people with speech or hearing difficulties**

The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, today (30th September) launched the Live Advisor Service which has been developed by the staff and directors of Citizens Information Phone Service.

The Live Advisor Service is an instant chat service available between the hours of 9am and 5pm (Monday to Friday) and is targeted specifically towards people with hearing and speech difficulties and to others who have difficulty communicating by telephone. The service can be accessed by logging on to www.ciboard.ie/liveadvisor.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Burton said: *"The Live Advisor, which is an instant chat service, provides the benefit of personal interaction with skilled and knowledgeable individuals enabling customers with hearing and speech difficulties to access customer-focused information on all aspects of public and social services in order to help themselves.*

Minister Burton continued: "The importance of information provision cannot be over emphasised as it is a key element in assisting people to participate in society. From my experience as a public representative, I am very familiar with the fact that people's rights and entitlements can so often stand or fall on the quality of information available to them and on the level of access to information.



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"The objective of the information provider is to bridge the gap between the citizen in need and the wide variety of services that are available to meet those needs. Information services which can direct individuals, particularly those who are marginalised, to their rights and entitlements, are essential."

The changing economic context has resulted in a greater demand for services provided by the Citizen Information Phone Service (CIPS). Live Advisor is now available to help people answer questions on a range of topics including the health service, social welfare and employment queries.

The Citizens Information Phone Service national helpline (076 107 4000 or 1890 777 121) has experienced a dramatic increase in demand for their services. This year, to the end of August, the service has responded to some 115,000 requests for information and advice on public and social services such as social welfare and employment rights queries.

The Citizens Information Phone Service is an important channel of information for citizens that links in with the other supports provided by the Citizens Information Board including citizensinformation.ie, the country wide network of Citizens Information Services, the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service.

Minister Burton concluded by thanking all those who have been involved in the development of the Live Advisor Service and wish them continued success in their future work.

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