



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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Ó Cuív – “radical realignment of services for jobseekers”

Éamon Ó Cuív, TD, Minister for Social Protection welcomed the staff of the Community Welfare Service from the HSE to the Department of Social Protection from today, 1 January 2011. He also confirmed that he has assumed responsibility for the policy direction and funding of the employment services and community employment services programmes of FÁS from his colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan TD today.

Minister Ó Cuív said: “This development marks another important milestone in the process to radically realign the services provided to jobseekers ranging from income support to assistance to get back in to employment. While FÁS will continue to provide these services on my behalf at this stage, I am fully confident that all the practical arrangements will be completed during the coming year for the full integration of these services in my Department. This will enable one of the most radical realignments of social welfare provision in the history of the State.”

The Minister confirmed that he had signed the Commencement Order bringing the relevant provisions of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 into effect from 1 January 2011. This Act provides for the transfer of responsibility for the employment services and community employment services programmes of FÁS from the Department of Education and Skills to the Department of Social Protection. The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 which was enacted before Christmas, provides for the integration of FÁS staff with the Department of Social Protection and this integration programme will be implemented over the year ahead.

Minister Ó Cuív explained: “FÁS will continue to provide employment and community services under my direction and reporting to my Department. The relevant staff and resources, such as buildings, will be fully integrated with the staff and structure of my Department over the coming months to provide a more complete service to our customers. FÁS and my Department have been working closely together and considerable progress has already been made on a number of measures to enhance the delivery of services to people on the Live Register. ”

When the integration programme is complete, FÁS will cease to have any role in the provision of employment and community employment programmes and will focus on the provision of training services. This means that, as well as income support, the Department of Social Protection will now focus on assisting people to find employment and to prepare themselves for entry into



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the labour market by accessing training, career advice, work experience and job placement.

The main objective of the transfer will be to ensure that all people of working age are given the support they need to find employment as quickly as possible or to develop the skills and aptitudes required to progress towards employment by undertaking appropriate education, training or work experience. This objective will be supported by a case management approach allowing suitably trained staff to interact on a one-to-one basis with individuals on developing pathways to employment with clearly defined milestones and targets.

The Minister added: "The integration of FÁS employment and community services with my Department marks an important step away from a passive model of income support to a proactive model which is clearly focused on progressing people to participation in the work-force. Such an approach not only makes economic sense but also allows our services to be tailored to meet the individual needs of each customer and to respect and enhance their dignity as individuals."

The staff of the Community Welfare Service will also transfer from the HSE to the Department of Social Protection from today 1 January 2011 with a view to enhancing the quality of services provided to the public. Minister Ó Cuív commented: "My Department is committed to developing and implementing a case management approach with a focus on the individual and the development of a tailored plan for each person.

"Our vision is one in which skilled and knowledgeable case managers will work with individuals in need, to ensure that they not only receive the appropriate income supports but are also helped to find a way in which they can participate to the fullest extent possible in the community, economy and workforce. The transfer of the Community Welfare Service, facilitated by the provisions of the Croke Park Public Services Agreement, to my Department will provide a huge impetus to the achievement of that vision."

The Community Welfare Service will continue to operate the supplementary welfare service.

PRESS RELEASE ENDS