



Photo ID required for collecting welfare payments at Post Offices

State must ensure that right person is claiming correct benefits – Hanafin

As the numbers claiming welfare increases significantly, the Department of Social and Family Affairs is introducing stricter identity checks in Post Offices throughout the country for people collecting Social Welfare payments. Minister Mary Hanafin T.D., today (6th April 2009) said that tighter security checks were necessary as part of the crackdown on those claiming a jobseeker payment but not resident in the state.

“People legitimately collecting a social welfare payment should be able to produce valid photographic ID, such as a Driving Licence, Passport or National Identity card. Staff working in Post Offices have to be satisfied that they are giving the right payment to the right person” said the Minister.

Notices will be displayed in all post offices throughout the country in the coming weeks advising customers collecting social welfare payments such as Jobseekers, One Parent Family Payment, Back to Work or Child Benefit payments that they must be able to produce a valid ID to collect their payment. An Post staff must be satisfied that they are making the correct payment to the right person. All claimants should be able to produce valid photographic ID when collecting a payment.

Minister Hanafin also outlined preliminary results of particular fraud investigations in eight areas of the country which have been ongoing



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since the start of March. Over 2,200 claimants were investigated, through house visits or mailshot - of these some 275 have had their claims suspended and are no longer entitled to claim a benefit from the state or are under continuing investigation.

The potential savings from stopping these claims alone would be in region of €2million - €3million.

Of the over 2,200 claims targeted for investigation, the vast majority were in the high risk category of non-Irish nationals claiming a payment. These pose a high risk because of their mobility between countries, they may not in fact be resident in this country. However, risk of fraud is always a factor for a system as large as social welfare, and ongoing investigations cover both Irish nationals and non-Irish nationals.

Minister Hanafin said **“our investigators are tackling welfare fraud on a number of different fronts as we have to ensure that only those rightfully entitled to a payment are in fact receiving it. Inspectors have paid home visits to those who are being paid benefits into their bank account (pre July 2008 claimants) and to those who are more recently being paid weekly through the local post office.**

Inspectors have found evidence that some claimants are no longer resident in the country or money is being paid to an individual, who is not in fact a valid claimant. For this reason, tighter identity checks are being put in place in post offices throughout the country where payments are being made. An



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Post staff can also alert investigators in the Department if there are any difficulties with valid ID not being produced. These reports will also be followed up, along with the ongoing fraud control checks which Social Welfare investigators are conducting.”

Social Welfare Inspectors are also engaged in investigations along the border counties as part of the multi agency checkpoints operated by An Garda Siochana and Revenue Customs and Excise and recently have intensified investigations of cross border movements for new claimants of Jobseeker’s Allowance.

Inspectors are also attached to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). These Social Welfare Inspectors work with the Garda Siochana in joint operations with UK Border & Immigration Agency, UK Benefits Agency and the PSNI to monitor patterns of movement through airports and ports around the country in order to detect and deter immigration abuse.

See table attached for details of investigations conducted in various regions

ENDS



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Location	No of Investigations	Payment suspended	No of Investigations	Payment suspended
	Non-Irish		Irish nationals	
North East	73	15	45	5
North East ¹	985	138		
Galway	95	18		
Athlone	112	15		
Limerick	469	23		
Clare	54	4		
Tipperary	259	32		
Maynooth	92	15		
Thomas Street Local Office ²	88	10		
Total	2,227	270	45	5

¹ Investigations commenced late in 2008, but savings mainly realised in early 2009

² Includes Irish and Non-Irish nationals, figures provided did not show breakdown