



NEWS RELEASE

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Hanafin says funding available for jobseekers targeted at those who most need assistance

Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin T.D., today (*11th November 2008*) said that the Government is targeting the funding available for those who are claiming jobseekers payments, to ensure that those most in need of assistance get support. Minister Hanafin said that all of the agencies and relevant Government Departments are responding in a co-ordinated way to help people move off the Live Register and back into employment, education or training.

Responding to criticism of Budget changes from Labour's Roisin Shortall, Minister Hanafin said "**we have seen a significant increase in the number of people claiming benefits from the Social Insurance Fund and less money available to pay for their claims, our priority must be to assist people who have limited or no household income. Providing for the expected increase in the Live Register alone accounts for an extra €1.25 billion in Social Welfare spending next year.**

It has therefore been necessary to limit the amount of time that people can qualify for a Jobseekers payment without having to satisfy a means test" said the Minister.

As of Budget day, new claimants, and those who had been claiming for less than six months, will be able to receive Jobseekers Benefit for 12 months (down from 15 months). Where the claimant has less than 260 paid contributions, the maximum duration of Jobseekers Benefit will be 9 months (down from 12 months) if the claimant has been in receipt of benefit for less than three months and in respect of all new claimants.



The changes announced in the Budget and currently being debated in the Dáil under the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill seek to address the **“instances where people with a very limited or distant contribution record have been able to qualify for very significant benefits, regardless of their household income. It also addresses situations whereby people have been able to claim benefits for long periods without having to satisfy a means test.”**

Minister Hanafin went onto say that **“people with limited means who will be affected by these changes in entitlement to social insurance benefits will be able to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance or another social assistance payment - such as or the Supplementary Welfare Allowance.”**

In relation to the changes to Rent and Mortgage Interest supplements announced in the Budget, Minister Hanafin said **“all recipients of these payments are expected to make a personal contribution towards their accommodation costs from their own resources. The minimum level of this contribution is currently set at €13 per week. This rate has not been increased since January 2004, despite the fact that the lowest rate of social welfare payment has risen by nearly €70 per week since then. It is also significantly less than the minimum rent paid by local authority tenants – which, for example, is €24.87 in Dublin City & €26 in Limerick County.”**

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