



PRESS RELEASE

27/04/10

“Government commitment to tackling fuel poverty is an opportunity for job creation and activation” – Ó Cuív

The Government today re-affirmed its commitment to making arrangements to assist those most at risk of fuel poverty and it was precisely to have the least impact on vulnerable households that the Government decided to introduce the carbon tax on heating fuels at the end of the heating season (end of April), when temperatures rise and people’s need to burn fuel is reduced dramatically.

An inter-departmental working group will make recommendations as to the precise package of measures including income support that should be put in place to assist those at risk of fuel poverty. The work is being carried out in the context of the Affordable Energy Strategy which is due to be finalised for the Government to consider by the end of June 2010. This will allow for any proposed measures to be implemented when the heating season starts again at the end of September 2010. Before then, the weekly impact of the carbon tax on heating costs will be minimal in the warmer summer months.

“Proper household insulation is absolutely vital in tackling fuel poverty and the recipients of the Fuel Allowance Scheme represent the most deserving households for improved targeting of energy efficiency measures or alleviating measures to address the likely impact of the carbon tax on home heating products. **This challenge of tackling fuel poverty also represents an opportunity for new job creation and for job activation for unemployed people.**”



“As Minister for Social and Family Affairs, my main concern is for the 340,000 recipients of the Fuel Allowance Scheme of the Department of Social and Family Affairs as the cohort of people whose homes are most likely to have inefficient heating arrangements and be poorly insulated. I have also called attention to the potential that the implementation of household energy saving measures hold for both new job creation and activation opportunities for the unemployed. I restate my commitment to maximising such potential under the job activation programmes that will come under my new department.

“I also want to reassure people that assistance continues to be available as usual over the summer months for people with special or additional heating needs through the Heating Supplement and Exceptional Needs Payment Scheme under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme.”

ENDS

Editor’s note:

There are also some 376,000 pensioners receiving the Household Benefits package which provides 2,400 electricity units per annum (or the gas equivalent) over the year and it is estimated that some 140,000 of these households are receiving both Fuel Allowance and the Electricity units/gas allowance under the Household Benefits to assist with heating and other energy requirements. The Households Benefits package cost €184million in 2009.