



## An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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### **Minister Burton announces arrangements for review of Domiciliary Care Allowance Scheme**

Minister for Social Protection, Ms Joan Burton T.D. today (27<sup>th</sup> June 2012) announced that a review of the Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) Scheme, signalled by her in May last, will get underway in early July.

Commenting on the forthcoming review, the Minister said: ***"I am very pleased to announce that the review of the Scheme will commence shortly and that Ms Sylva Langford, retired director general in the former Office of the Minister for Children, will be chairing the working group that is being established"***.

The working group will include representatives from the Departments of Social Protection, Health, Children & Youth Affairs and Public Expenditure, as well as the National Disability Authority. It will also include three representatives from key NGO organisations representing parents/guardians of children who are in receipt of the allowance. It will include other members with relevant expertise.

The review will examine the policy objectives and legal provisions underpinning the Scheme. In addition, it will review the Scheme's current administrative, medical assessment and appeals processes, including an examination of the duration of review periods for the Scheme. As part of its work, the Group will research best practice in other countries and will have the Medical Guidelines and the Report of the Expert Medical Group, which underpin the operation of the Scheme, reviewed by a suitably qualified medical expert. As part of the review, a consultation process with parents and representative groups will be undertaken to ensure that parents and their representatives have an opportunity to make their concerns known in relation to the administration of the Scheme.

***"I am very aware of the vital role played by DCA in supporting families with children who need substantial levels of care and attention. Currently, the Allowance supports 24,000 families and some 26,000 children at a cost of €100 million per annum, with an additional €45***



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***million being paid to these families on the respite care grant***", the Minister said.

The number of children now covered by the Allowance represents an increase of over 3,000 since the Department took over responsibility for the scheme from the HSE in April 2009. Spending on the Scheme and the respite care grant, which is automatically paid to all recipients, has increased from €138m to €145m between 2010 and 2011, while expenditure on both payments in 2012 is expected to be in the region of €146m.

Parents in receipt of domiciliary care allowance also qualify for carers allowance and household benefits, subject to fulfilling certain criteria, and some 40% of those on the scheme receive these payments. The Minister noted that: ***"those who receive the carers allowance and household benefit package, in addition to DCA and respite care grant, each receive a total of almost €17,000 per annum from the Department"***.

The Minister also said that, as a separate piece of work, the availability of supports and services for children with disabilities would be mapped to see if there is any opportunity for greater linkage and consistency in the assessment for such supports and services. This work will be led by officials in her Department, in conjunction with other relevant Departments and is expected to be completed in the autumn.

Minister Burton concluded: ***"I am aware of the heroic efforts of parents to support their children. I am well aware of the vital role played by the income supports paid by the Department of Social Protection in enabling people to live with dignity and to support their children and it remains my primary concern to ensure that parents of children who continue to meet the qualifying conditions continue to receive the Allowance"***.

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**