



16 and 17 year olds will continue to get Disability Allowance – Hanafin

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin, T.D., today (30th October 2008) announced that the Government had reflected carefully on the concerns expressed by families and by representative groups since changes to the Disability Allowance scheme was announced as part of the 2009 Budget. **On the recommendation of the Minister, the Government has agreed that the existing arrangements, whereby Disability Allowance is paid to 16 and 17 year olds will continue, pending the completion of a full review of the Disability Allowance scheme.**

According to Minister Hanafin, **"the changes announced as part of the Social Welfare Budget were designed to address concerns raised by a number of bodies about the appropriateness of paying young people a social welfare payment in their own right at the age of 16."**

The Minister pointed out that the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies in particular had argued in a submission to the Department's review of the Disability Allowance Scheme that "at present the age for receipt of DA is 16 years. We deem this to be too young. This does not give an incentive for a child to pursue work/education options. Subsequently a child may fall into the dependency trap too early. Instead parents should receive the Domiciliary Care Allowance for the child until they are 18 years old."

"The Government's motivation in making changes to the Disability Allowance was to address these concerns" the Minister said. "However, since the Budget a number of families have expressed concerns about the change and the fact that they had an expectation that the overall family income would increase significantly once their son or daughter reached the age of 16."

This week the Minister met with six different groups representing people with disabilities and disability service providers (namely the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Inclusion Ireland, Down Syndrome Ireland, People with Disabilities in Ireland, the National Disability Authority and Rehab). At these meetings, the underlying principle of the Budget measure, i.e. that it is inappropriate to pay a social welfare payment to a 16 year old in his or her own right, was not



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seriously contested. The key concern expressed by the groups related to the loss of expected income at short notice to families of young people with disabilities.

Following these meetings, Minister Hanafin recommended to the Government that the Disability Allowance continue to be paid to 16 and 17 year olds pending a full review of the scheme.

"The review will consider a wide range of issues as identified by groups representing people with disabilities and their families, by service providers and by research and analysis of disability and illness benefits by the OECD that is expected shortly. It will also draw on new data published by the Central Statistics Office last week from the National Disability Survey 2006" the Minister explained.

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