

NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

MONEYLENDING PROGRAMME - MR. LIAM EDWARDS

The Minister for Social Welfare, Michael Woods today announced the appointment of Mr. Liam Edwards as National Co-ordinator of the Moneylending Programme. Mr. Edwards, who is based in the Department's Cork Regional Office, has had responsibility since 1991 for the Department's services to voluntary and community groups in the Southern Region. He was a prime mover in the setting up of MABS, the Cork Money Advice and Budgeting Service, which assists families on a weekly basis on managing their budgets and has a monthly turn over of £23,000 on its special accounts scheme which is operated in co-operation with Credit Unions in the city.

A recent evaluation report of the first year of the pilot moneylending projects noted that there was evidence of a decline in illegal moneylending in Cork, where the longest established project operates. The Minister said that he is confident that the Government's concentrated drive against illegal moneylending is helping to turn the tide and will lead to a similar decline of the problem throughout the country.

Annual deductions under the Household Budgeting Facility introduced by the Minister to help families meet the cost of recurring bills such as Gas, Electricity, Telephone and Local Authority Rent already amount to over £2m.