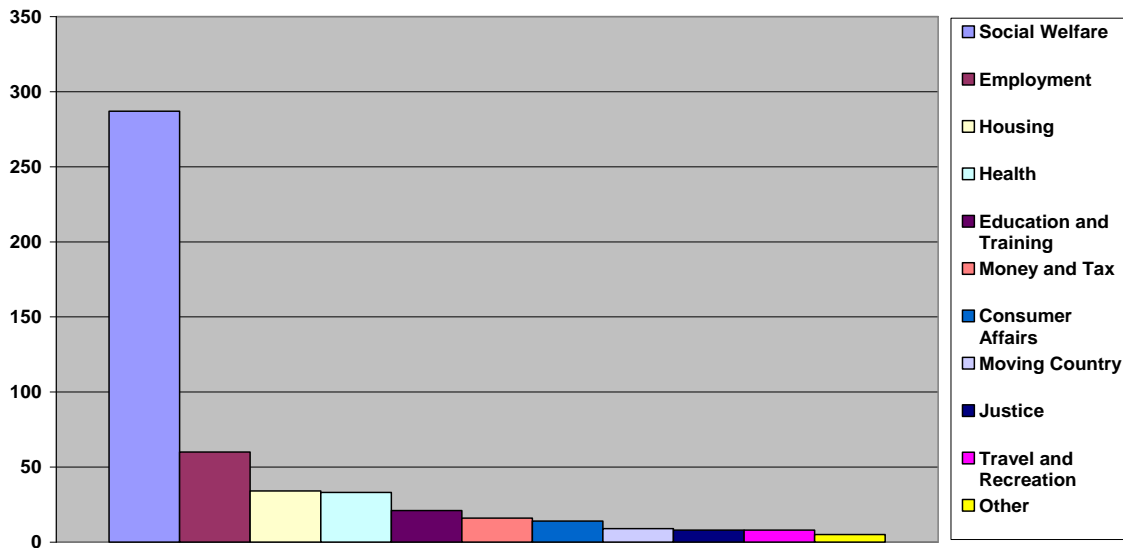


Social Policy Quarterly Report October – December 2010

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) has a statutory role to provide information on the effectiveness of current social policies and services. This quarterly report, covering the period **October to December 2010**, highlights issues of concern to public service users. It is based on **526** social policy returns to CIB from Citizens Information Services (CISs) and the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS).

**Social Policy Returns by Category
Oct - Dec 2010**



Categories	%
Social Welfare	57
Employment	12
Housing	7
Health	7
Education and Training	4
Money and Tax	3
Consumer Affairs	3
Moving Country	2
Justice	2
Travel and Recreation	2
Other	1
Total	100

Cross-Cutting Issues

Lack of information / Inaccurate or Incomplete Information

20% of issues raised by CISs this quarter concerned information deficits across a broad spectrum of services, detailing instances where people were not provided with accurate information or had difficulties obtaining the information they required. Information supplied to a public body going missing was another problem encountered which points to the need for better tracking mechanisms to be put in place. Sometimes a lack of knowledge by the public about schemes and benefits was the problem, which indicates the need for ongoing awareness raising campaigns. Among the area highlighted this quarter were:

- People made redundant and not aware of their entitlements
- Consumers not aware of their rights when changing service providers
- People refused benefits following a means test but no breakdown given by departments of the calculations used
- People refused benefits but no written explanation given thereby making it more difficult for them to make an appeal
- Older people not sure whether they are entitled to the Household Benefits Package or Fuel Allowance
- Those on long-term JA not aware of eligibility for Fuel Allowance
- Those formally self-employed and suffering from a disability being unaware that they may have an entitlement to Disability Allowance
- People on medical cards being unaware of exemptions to Health and Income levies (no longer available following Budget 2011)
- People whose income had fallen being unaware of eligibility for Family Income Supplement (FIS) and Mortgage Interest Supplement (MIS)
- Not being aware that one may get a widow's pension and work
- People on benefit not aware that they may be able to claim reduced rate Qualified Adult (QA) for a spouse who is working
- Those having to retire at 65 and not getting a transition state pension possibly being eligible for Jobseeker's Benefit (JB)
- Those put on short time not being aware that they may be entitled to JB
- People unaware of the ages of children for whom the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BTSCFA) applies
- Tenants unaware of their liability to deduct tax owed by an overseas landlord

Delays

25% of issues reported by CISs concerned delays in processing clients' applications or dealing with their appeals. A number of these related to delays in processing redundancy claims either through the EAT or the courts. In relation to social welfare there were difficulties encountered contacting the Child Benefit, Illness Benefit, Rent Supplement and Household Benefits sections of departments. Delays in processing applications for JA/JB, Carer's Allowance, FIS, OFP, Illness Benefit, Invalidity Pension, Rent Supplement, Education

Grants, Medical Cards and the Companion Travel Pass were also reported. Some delays are attributed to checking Habitual Residence which, from a client's perspective (especially if he/she is Irish or has lived and worked in Ireland for a number of years), is sometimes seen as using the HRC to delay paying entitlements. The government has promised a review of the HRC to make it more use-friendly, both for clients and for deciding officers.

There were complaints about waiting times for specialist appointments in hospitals. There was uncertainty too over how long it takes to process applications for family reunification. People on local authority housing waiting lists for years were also reported.

Social Welfare

Jobseeker's payments

Some instances of people under 25 on JB transferring to JA when their entitlement to JB finished and being put on the lower rate of JA for under 25s were recorded, even though there is an exemption to the age related JA payment when transferring from JB.

Cases of people on reduced rate of JB being worse off than on JA were reported where people who were eligible for JA were not means tested. In one instance a claimant on a reduced JB became worse off once he turned 25 since he would have been eligible for the full rate of JA but no one told him.

Short notice being given when JB is about to run out can cause difficulties for clients transferring to JA because of the delays involved in processing the means tested JA applications. Not being informed about SWA while waiting for a payment is also one of the difficulties encountered.

It is also the case that if someone on JA does casual work for one day the deduction to JA is greater than if the same pay was earned over 3 days.

Fuel Poverty

The Fuel Allowance is a means tested payment. Those who receive the Fuel Allowance also receive a Smokeless Fuel Allowance of €3.90 per week if they live in certain urban areas – even though they may not be using solid fuel. Recipients of the Carer's Allowance or those on Illness Benefit are not eligible for the Fuel Allowance. Those on FIS are only eligible for the Smokeless Fuel Allowance. For JA recipients, only those on long-term JA are eligible for the Fuel Allowance. The complaint of those who are ineligible is that the Fuel Allowance is a means tested payment and therefore should be available to those who have low incomes. Without a Fuel Allowance grants under the Warmer Home Scheme are also not available. In order to address fuel poverty, each case should be based on its merits. (It was announced in Budget 2011 that a standard rate tax

credit will be available on expenditure for energy efficiency up to €10,000 on a list of approved works. However, this measure may only benefit those who are better off as the credit will only be granted in the year following the expenditure. For those on lower income to get the full benefit it would have to be spread over a number of years as the tax they pay in a full year may not be up to €10,000).

Cases of people not being aware of their entitlement to the Fuel Allowance under the presumption that the Household Benefits Package contains the Fuel Allowance continue to be reported.

Self-employed

The exclusion of the self-employed from FIS can cause hardship in cases where income from self-employment has fallen dramatically. In response to a Parliamentary Question (2nd Dec 2010) on this matter the Minister for Social Protection said: “The reasons for not extending the scheme to include the self-employed are twofold. Firstly, it would be impossible to establish satisfactorily their eligibility as their hours of employment would be difficult to establish and certify on an ongoing basis. Secondly, there are arrangements already in place to provide income support to self-employed people on low incomes, such as through Jobseeker’s Allowance and through Farm Assist for low-income farmers.”

Regarding the assessment of means, some self-employed complain that their debtors are included with their assets even though the debts owing could be outstanding for months. Furthermore, if the spouse of a self-employed person is unemployed, his/her means assessment for JA is more rigorously assessed than if assessed as a spouse of someone in paid employment. All the income from self-employed is means tested whereas if the income was from paid employment, €20 per day worked, up to a maximum of €60, is disregarded and only 60% of the remainder is assessed as means.

One Parent Family Payments

Some CISs reported cases of OPF being cut off when claimants were accused of co-habiting, which they denied, and this resulted in financial hardship until their appeal was heard. Investigating such cases is fraught with difficulties. In terms of means testing for OPFP, assessing the family home against someone claiming OPFP when the person is no longer living at the home is also problematic.

A report on financial disincentives to family formation published by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection (26th Oct 2010) showed that there could be a gap of up to €500 a month between a couple with children who did not live together and a couple who did. The report recommended that the One Parent Family Payments, which are paid to 88,000 people around the country, mostly single or widowed mothers, should be replaced by a new parental payment aimed at children living in poverty, regardless of whether their parents are living together or not.

Maternity Benefit

The rate of Maternity Benefit is dependent on the amount of PRSI paid in the relevant tax year. However, if a person was on maternity in that year also, this will impact on the rate received in the current year. The difference between the maximum and minimum payment is €44.20 per week.

Maternity Benefit is not a qualifying payment for the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) whereas JB is. There was a case of someone refused BTEA as she was on Maternity Benefit for part of the year, but had she not been pregnant she would have been claiming JB.

Rent Supplement

In determining Rent Supplement a disregard of €75 applies to any additional household income. However, in the case of income from maintenance any amounts up to €95.23 per week is assessed against Rent Supplement and the disregard only applies to the €75 above this threshold. While this is somewhat anomalous, for anyone in receipt of a Social Welfare payment such as OPFP, rent or mortgage repayments up to a maximum of €95.23 per week can be offset against the amount of maintenance received when calculating one's means for the welfare payment. But, anyone not in receipt of a welfare payment or not able to write off the full amount of €95.23 against their rent is adversely affected by this rule.

Under the means test for the Rental Accommodation Scheme, someone moving from Rent Supplement could be worse off transferring because of differences in the way local authorities calculate means compared to the HSE.

One of the difficulties for Rent Supplement applicants is securing a tenancy while waiting for their application for Rent Supplement to be processed. Some landlords may agree to wait, but given the time lag involved and the fact that Rent Supplement is not backdated to the time of application, unlike other welfare schemes, tenants can find themselves in difficulty unless they can secure an additional Supplementary Welfare payment.

Disability and work

Someone on a Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension can take up work in limited circumstances. The work must be rehabilitative or therapeutic and in the case of Illness Benefit, the person must be in receipt of a social welfare payment for a certain period of time before they can apply for an exemption to work from the Department of Social Protection. There is no option for someone to participate in regular part-time employment and receive a reduced rate of one of the social welfare payments listed above. This closes the door on many workers with partial capacity wishing to remain in employment. The DSP is reviewing this situation and intends to introduce a

partial capacity scheme to allow those with a disability to work part-time and retain part of their social welfare payment.

Employment

Employment Rights

Employees being let go without being paid redundancy, holiday pay or pay in lieu of notice continue to be reported. A lack of awareness about employment rights is an underlying cause of the difficulties experienced by many of these workers, although enforcement of employment rights remains a key concern. One of the issues in relation to the enforcement of judgements in favour of an employee, whether it is for wages or other money due, concerns businesses that close down. An employer may start up a new business but because the judgement was against a company rather than its owner, it can be extremely difficult for an employee to recover monies owed.

The social welfare code and employers too could do more to help employees on short time to maintain the maximum income possible. It may suit an employer to put an employee on shorter hours spread over the working week, but it would be more advantageous to an employee to have fulltime work for a few days and be able to claim JB for the remainder of the week they are off work. If employees voluntarily leaves work because they are put on short time they face being without any unemployment payment for 9 weeks.

Leave entitlement

Organisation of Working Time Act 1997

An employee has no right under employment law in Ireland to be paid by his/her employer while on sick leave, although sick days covered by a medical certificate cannot be counted as annual leave. Nevertheless, illness during the year can reduce the total number of hours worked and therefore affect entitlement to annual leave under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. In 2009 the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled in case C-350/06 that a worker who is on long-term sick leave during the leave year does not lose the right to annual leave. This ECJ ruling that an employee can accrue annual leave while on sick leave is not enforceable by employees in the private sector until the Organisation of Working Time Act is amended. But, under the principle of 'direct effect' it does apply to the public sector and therefore workers in the public sector can accrue annual leave when they are off work on sick leave.

Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004

Provisions under the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004 allow women in employment who have given birth within the previous 6 months to take time off work each day (without loss of pay) to breastfeed. However, since the period of maternity leave has been extended to 26 weeks (at the time of the Act it was 18 weeks), the amount of time off to breastfeed after returning to work has now

effectively been eliminated for many women who are returning to work 6 months after the birth.

Employment opportunities

There are many funded schemes now available to the unemployed. However, obstacles towards taking up training or employment opportunities remain.

JobFit is funded by the Labour Market Activation Fund of the Department of Education and Skills. It's a free 13-week full-time programme of training for unemployed people in receipt of a social welfare payment for three months or more who are qualified to Junior Cert. or below. While participants can retain their social welfare payment, the weeks spent on JobFit are not deducted from the qualifying weeks for JB, which means that a participant on JB faces JA sooner than another person on JB participating on certain other courses where the qualifying weeks for JB are not run down while on a course.

FÁS has a 9 month Work Placement Scheme for graduates and other unemployed persons. Those getting a social welfare payment for at least 3 months may keep it but, it is up to the discretion of a CWO whether the person receives secondary benefits, such as Rent Supplement while on the scheme and this can be a barrier to someone having to relocate to take up a placement. JB can also run out on this scheme.

Garda clearance, which is required for certain jobs, is job specific rather than person specific and the time taken to process applications can be an impediment to taking up work.

Education

Higher Education Grants

Problems accessing HEGs and delays in processing applications were reported by a number of CISOs. Confusing pertaining to One Parent Family Payments and opting for educational maintenance grants or the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) was also reported. If one opts for a maintenance grant, one can continue to receive the One Parent Family Payment but would not be eligible for Rent Supplement, whereas transferring from One Parent Family Payment to the Back to Education Allowance does not affect entitlement to secondary benefits.

Housing

Landlords

Under the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No.2) legislation 2010, a landlord's tax reference number has to be supplied to the Health Service Executive (HSE) in respect of tenancies for which Rent Supplement is paid. The

intention is to ensure that public money is only paid to tax compliant landlords and it is hoped that landlords will comply in order not to lose out on Rent Supplement tenants renting from them. The new law does not prevent landlords refusing to rent to Rent Supplement tenants, which is an issue reported by some CISs.

Currently, Rent Supplement is not conditional on the landlord being registered with the Private Residential Tenancy Board (PRTB). Rent Supplement continues to be paid in respect of unregistered tenancies and for accommodation that does not meet the required standards for registration. The low level of the Rent Supplement is sometimes blamed for the fact that Rent Supplement tenants are forced to rent such accommodation in the first instance. However, proposals for landlords to register their dwellings rather than tenancies with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) and that Rent Supplement would not be paid in respect of unregistered dwellings are being considered by the Minister of Housing.

Registration by landlords is a legal requirement and the PRTB intends to pursue non compliant landlords more vigorously with the introduction of a new computer system that will match those tenants in receipt of Rent Supplement with landlords not registered with the PRTB. However, certain tenancies are exempt from registration, e.g. dwellings where the landlord is also resident or the premises are also used as business premises.

Health

Medical cards

A gap in coverage for medical card holders in terms of them having to pay hospital parking charges is a serious issue for some people. Payment for medical certificates can also be difficult for medical card holders as only the first and final medical certificate to explain work absence are covered. Medical card holders also have to pay for ultra sounds. Those without a medical card and on low income but in the high risk group have to pay for the flu injection.

Long Term Illness Scheme

Those on the Long Term Illness Scheme don't have to pay the 50c prescription charge but those on a medical card, who may have the same long term illness, have to pay. The Long Term Illness Scheme is aimed at those suffering from certain conditions, who are not already medical card holders, to help them pay for certain drugs, medicines and medical and surgical appliances for the treatment of their condition. It is not means tested. The medical card offers a much wider range of health services. However, since the introduction of prescription charges, medical card holders have to pay a contribution to the price of prescription drugs, even those included under the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Currently, a person cannot hold both a Medical Card and a Long Term Illness Book.

Tax

PRSI

The fact that the tax year starts on the 1st January each year can result in PRSI contributions not being paid for half the year if someone works part time, week on, week off, and the week off coincides with the tax week. (In 2010, the 1st Jan was a Friday). For example, if someone works Friday and Saturday one week and Monday and Tuesday the following week, in 2010 this would be classified as 4 days work one week, 0 days work the next and so on. The same work pattern in a different tax year would result in PRSI contributions being paid every week of the year.

Consumer Affairs

Utilities

For someone who has had their electricity cut off because of inability to pay, having to subsequently pay a reconnection charge of €197 is only making a bad situation worse. One solution put forward by the Commissioner for Energy Regulation is to install pre-pay meters in the homes of those struggling to pay in order to avoid disconnection in the first place. The Commissioner will from January 2011 oblige utility companies to half their reconnection fees. An Oireachtas Energy Committee was told that between 2,000 and 2,500 customers are disconnected each month. CISs and MABS deal with many of these customers.

CISs report that since the ESB and Eircom no longer have retail outlets it is more difficult for customers to discuss their problems. Not everyone, particularly the elderly, find the phone service for customer queries of these utilities user-friendly.

Those not paying by direct debit are sometimes penalised for not doing so. It was reported that a person who wished to transfer a bill into his name following the death of his mother was asked to pay a €300 deposit. In another instance, concern was expressed by a CIS that someone was allowed to transfer a bill into the name of his mother (a widow living in a granny flat) without first checking with her. Some CISs also reported cases of people being switched to a different energy provider without their full knowledge or consent.

Insurance

There were some concerns expressed about the perception given by certain insurance companies that income protection insurance covers lay-offs and redundancies. Normally, income protection insurance only applies in cases of an accident or long-term illness that results in a person having to give up work; it is

only paid after a deferred number of weeks, less any income received from social welfare or sick pay from an employer, and it is taxable. CIB has made submission to the Central Bank in response to a Consultation Paper on Review of Consumer Protection Code, which deals with Credit Institutions and Insurance Providers and their Intermediaries, including Brokers, calling for greater clarity and transparency on the part of providers of financial products and services.

Appendix 1

Selected Cases¹

(Oct – Dec 2010)

Social Welfare Schemes

JA/JB

Client lost his job last October twelve months and claimed JB at the reduced rate of €153.60 per week as his average earnings were below €300 per week. Client turned 25 last December and had he being claiming JA he would have got €196 per week. DSP never informed him of this and he only found out when his JB expired this October. (Co. Offaly CIS)

A woman was on CE and applied for JB when her time on CE was complete. She was informed by Social Protection that she would only be entitled to €153.60 per week due to the fact that her earnings in 2008 were only €222.20 per week. She came to the CIC very worried and stressed as she was struggling to manage on this amount and she was wondering if there was anything she would be entitled to. We informed her of the Jobseeker's Allowance but stressing that it was a means tested payment. She again went to the Social Protection office and they reviewed her application and yes she was entitled to the maximum €196 on JA and a Fuel Allowance. They have agreed to backdate the payment and reimburse the difference. (Co. Kerry CIS)

Client is on Jobseeker's Allowance and has been offered casual work. If the hours she has been offered were over 3 days she would be better off than if they were all on one day, e.g. if she receives €100 for one day she has her JA reduced by €48 while if she receives €100 over 3 days her JA will be reduced by €24. It would be better if there was a flat disregard per week regardless of the number of days one worked. (West Cork CIS)

OFP

Client is lone parent and working full time, claiming One-parent Family Payment but not FIS. If she worked part time (20hrs) rather than current full time (40hrs) and claimed FIS she would lose €38 overall. This disincentive to work leads to a poverty trap. (Co. Offaly CIS)

Child Benefit

EU and Irish clients are receiving survey questionnaires from Child Benefit section. Payments are suspended if the forms are not returned within a certain

¹ *While every effort is made to check for accuracy, the cases submitted to CIB are largely unedited and reflect the client's experience as recorded by Citizen Information Officers.*

number of days. The problem arising is that the department now inform us that it may take up to 4 months to reinstate payment as they have a backlog waiting to be processed. Many clients that we have spoken to are claiming that the letters were returned within the time frame. Unless the letters were registered it is impossible to prove this point. It is important that claims are validated as genuine entitlements and clients appreciate this point but having to wait 4 months for a further payment is unreasonable and leaves many families struggling financially. (Co. Longford CIS)

Rent Supplement

A client called to the centre asking if it was right that her Rent Supplement had been decreased by the amount of money she was receiving as maintenance. She said that the father of her 2 year old child had returned to live in Ireland and he had agreed to pay her €50 a week maintenance for the child. She was astonished to find that her Rent Supplement was reduced by this amount when she declared the maintenance to the CWO. We looked up the guidelines and it states that: "The first €95.23 per week of maintenance payments is assessable in full for the purpose of the Rent Supplement Scheme. The amount of maintenance over €95.23 per week that can be disregarded is €75 per week with 25% of any maintenance in excess of €170.23 (€95.23 + €75) also disregarded". It does not appear fair that those getting more maintenance get to keep more while those who only get a small amount lose it. Why is the disregard not on the initial €75.00 instead of on the €75.00 over the first €95.23? (Co. Wicklow CIS)

Client has just moved from Rent Supplement to RAS and her rent has increased from €24 to €86 per week. The means tests applied by both schemes are completely different and this is causing huge distress to clients who are SW dependent. There is no incentive to move from Rent Supplement to this scheme. (Co. Roscommon CIS)

HRC

Client came back to Ireland because of domestic abuse. Applied for OFP and SWA refused on Habitual Residency grounds. She will have to wait a number of months for an appeal to be heard. While waiting she will have no income. There should be some income support for someone in this situation. (Co. Louth CIS)

HBP

Woman's husband died earlier this year. Deceased husband had been in receipt of Household Benefits Package including free TV license which started in November before death. A few months following death caller received demand for payment for TV license from An Post. She believed that the TV licence would run for the year in the same way that a licence that is purchased does. The demand for payment came as a bit of shock to the woman who was already grieving for her husband. Caller felt that it should be made clear that any benefit including the TV licence only lasts as long as the package is in place. Furthermore a sensitively worded letter acknowledging death of spouse and

explaining loss of TV licence under HBP would have been kinder than simply issuing a demand for payment. (Co. Waterford CIS)

Disability and work

Client has to go on sick leave/Illness Benefit due to illness. She will not be paid by her employer for sick leave. Currently, she is possibly able to work on a part-time basis but cannot do her job in a full time capacity due to the nature of her incapacity which is somewhat degenerative. However, she will not qualify for exemption to work until she has been on Illness Benefit for 6 months, so this means she must give up work completely, and only seek a return to part-time work later once she has the required period on IB. She is considering the possibility of claiming Invalidity Pension, but again as there is a 14 week waiting time for claims to be decided, it means she will have to stay out of work for at least that period before she can consider seeking an exemption to work part-time while on Invalidity Pension. She is finding it depressing to have to stay at home full-time currently, but seems to have no option as an exemption claim cannot be processed in tandem with the Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension claim for the reasons specified above. There seems to be a gap in coverage or no facility for a person to claim an illness payment for a part-time situation except for what is provided for through the exemption scheme which has qualifying time factors. (Co. Roscommon CIS)

A Client rang CIPS to say that she had been diagnosed with MS. She was working as a teacher and her GP recommended that she reduce her hours to part time. She wished to know whether she could receive any payment that would supplement her income as she did not wish to cease full time employment. However, I had to say to her that there was no such illness payment that she could claim on a part time basis. This meant that she was left in the position of having to work full time against her doctor's advice or give up her full time teaching position. (CIPS)

Employment Rights

Enforcement

Client has to go to EAT hearing to have a decision of Rights Commissioner (RC) concerning the Terms of Employment Act implemented. However, decisions by RC re. Payment of Wages Act can be enforced immediately without implementation hearing. Decisions of RC re. Organisation of Working Time Act have to be implemented by the Labour Court but no hearing is required. This complex variety of procedures, for what is essentially the same thing - getting money owed by an employer - is ridiculous. It wastes the time of EAT and LC which are under pressure, and it is extremely inconvenient and bewildering for clients. (Co. Mayo CIS)

My client won a case under the Payment of Wages Acts. However, as the company no longer trades, the premises is locked and there are no contacts, my client has been told by the sheriff that he will not be able to get the wages owed to him. I called the office of corporate enforcement and they stated that he would have to get a corporate lawyer to see if they could do anything for my client; however, the costs are huge. This is extremely unfair, as my client worked the hours for the wages and the employer was able to shut down the business and start up a new one. As the claim is against the company and not the employer, my client chances of getting money he worked for are slim. There should be a way to get these employers to pay without costing the client more than he was awarded in the first place. (Co Meath CIS)

Sick Leave

Client is on long term sick leave. Under European Court Judgement she should be able to accrue annual leave whilst on sick leave. If she worked in the public sector she would accrue annual leave whilst out. In the private sector, she won't accrue annual leave because the employer can calculate her annual leave entitlement under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 and can calculate leave as a percentage of time actually worked. Until the law is amended, private sector workers are disadvantaged. (North & East Cork CIS)

Education

HEG

Client was stopped Rent Supplement because she opted for the education maintenance grant along with her One Parent Family Payment instead of the Back to Education Allowance when she returned to college. (Co. Sligo CIS)

Housing

Warmer Homes Scheme

The Warmer Homes Scheme is funded by the SEAI and facilitated by local community groups to address fuel poverty. One of the main eligibility criteria is that you are in receipt of a Fuel Allowance. In this particular case, the customer is a carer and is in receipt of Carer's Allowance. She receives the Household Benefits Package but no Fuel Allowance is payable to CA recipients. We believe there is an anomaly in the system here as long term carers are in fuel poverty in the same way as any other long term benefit recipient. The criteria of the Scheme should be addressed to avoid this anomaly. (Co. Donegal CIS)

Landlords

A client in dispute with his landlord over the standard of his accommodation and being unable to resolve the issues by negotiation contacted the PRTB. He was informed that his landlord was not registered and they could not therefore deal

with his complaint. While this is a blatant breach of legislation by the landlord it is compounded by the fact that the Community Welfare Officer is paying a Rent Supplement to this un-registered landlord. (Co. Wexford)

Health

Hospital charges

Customer's husband is in hospital in Dublin. She has been visiting him and has had to pay €8.50 per day for car parking at the hospital. This family is in receipt of Disability Allowance and the amount payable comes to €59.50 per week, a sizeable chunk off the social welfare payment, especially when taking into account the travelling costs of going to Dublin and subsistence whilst there. There seems to be a gap in provision here. Surely there should be a scheme where those on social welfare payments are either exempt from payment or pay reduced fees. (Co. Donegal CIS)

Tax

Home Carer's Tax Credit

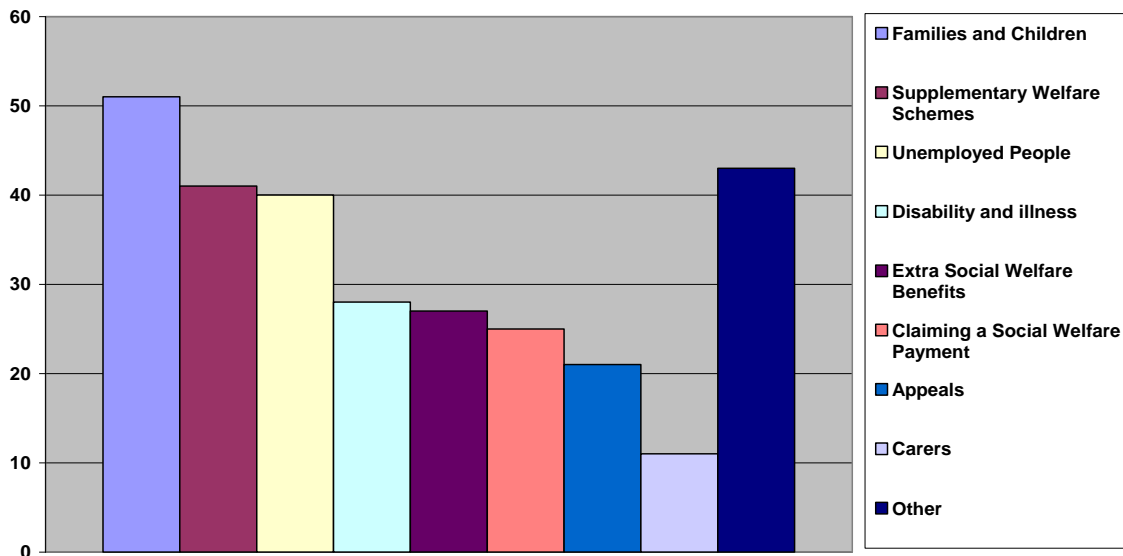
The Home Carer's Tax Credit is only available while a Child Benefit payment is payable - up to 18 years of age. This credit should be available to a parent if the child continues on to Third Level Education and remains in the family home. As only the adjacent level education grant would be available to such students they would still have to be maintained by the parent. (Co. Wexford CIS)

Appendix 2

Social Welfare Category

Under the Social Welfare category, 18% of these relate to Family & Children – including Child Benefit, One Parent Family Payments and Family Income Supplement (FIS). 14% relate to Supplementary Welfare Schemes – including Rent Supplement and Mortgage Interest Supplement. 14% relate to Social Welfare Payments for unemployed people – Jobseeker’s Allowance and Jobseeker’s Benefit. 10% relate to Illness and Disability payments. 9% relate to extra social welfare payments, including Fuel Allowance and Household Benefits.

Social Welfare Category 2010(4)

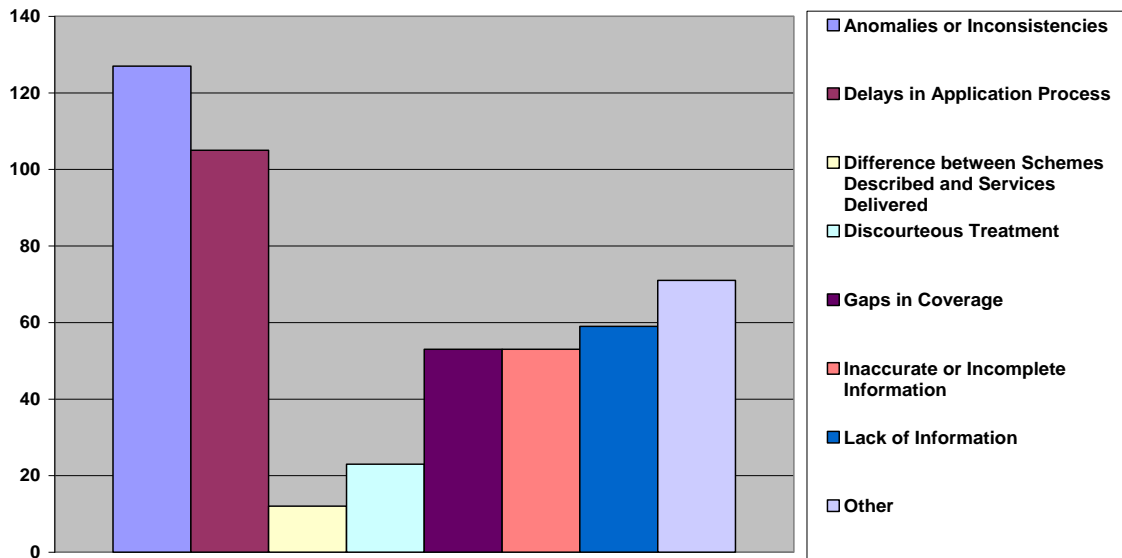


Social Welfare Category	%
Families and Children	18
Supplementary Welfare Schemes	14
Unemployed People	14
Disability and Illness	10
Extra Social Welfare Benefits	9
Claiming a Social Welfare Payment	9
Appeals	7
Carers	4
Other	15
Total	100

Nature of Query

The problems experienced by clients of Citizens Information Services are classified under a number of headings which describe the nature of the social policy issues identified. Anomalies or inconsistencies and delays in applications accounted for the highest number of issues identified.

Nature of Queries 2010(4)



Nature of Queries	%
Anomalies or Inconsistencies	25
Delays in Application Process	21
Lack of Information	12
Inaccurate or Incomplete Information	11
Gaps in Coverage	11
Discourteous Treatment	5
Difference between Schemes Described and Services Delivered	2
Other	13
Total	100