

Update on Payments Awarded for Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Enhanced Illness Benefit

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

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351,400 receive the Pandemic Unemployment Payment this week - a slight reduction on last week

€103.65 million paid out in PUP weekly payments

A further €129.2 million paid out in arrears to 286,000 people

Over half billion Euro injected into economy via PUP arrears and Christmas Bonus

People returning to work should close their claim on start date by logging on to www.MyWelfare.ie

This week, the Department of Social Protection has issued weekly payments valued at €103.65 million, down from €104 million last week, to 351,424 people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP).

The number of people receiving a PUP payment this week represents a decrease of 654 on the 352,078 people paid last week.

The sector with the highest number of people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment is Accommodation and Food Service Activities (102,321) followed by Wholesale and Retail Trade (56,893) and Other Sectors e.g. hairdressers and beauty salons (31,361).

These figures are in addition to the 203,172 people who were reported on the Live Register as of the end of October. All Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payments issued will be in recipients' bank accounts or at their post office today, Tuesday, 1st December.

Also today, arrears totalling €129.2 million have been paid to approximately 286,000 PUP recipients.

People who are due arrears will receive a communication to their verified MyWelfare account.

The arrears have been paid today ahead of the payment of the €390 million Christmas Bonus next week to over 1.6 million social welfare recipients, including approximately 311,270 PUP recipients.

This means that between the PUP arrears and the Christmas Bonus, over half a billion Euro is being injected into the economy.

Commenting on this week's PUP figures, Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys said:

“This week's Pandemic Unemployment Payment figures are showing a steadying off of new claims with some 4,500 people having closed their claim in the past week as they return to work.

“The overall number of claimants has also fallen slightly. This is expected to be followed by a much more significant drop next week as a result of some sectors of the economy reopening.

“While all of these signs are positive, it is not the time to drop our guard.”

Minister Humphreys added:

“As we make arrangements for Christmas, I would strongly appeal to everyone to continue to adhere to the public health guidelines in order to suppress the virus further.

“Let's also remind ourselves of the frontline health workers who will spend Christmas in our hospitals caring for people who have contracted the virus.

“We owe it to them, who have been on the frontline from the very start of the pandemic, to make a special effort to act responsibly over the coming weeks.”

Commenting on the payment of €129.2 million in arrears, Minister Humphreys said:

“I'm particularly pleased that 286,000 people are receiving their arrears payment today, totalling over €129 million.

“When you combine this with the €390 million being paid out in the Christmas Bonus next week, you are talking about an injection of over half a billion Euro into the economy.

“This will be of great benefit to the local economy and I would encourage people to choose to shop local.”

PUP Rates

PUP is paid weekly in arrears with applications received up to close of business on Thursday in any week being processed for payment on the following Tuesday. Applications received after Thursday each week, are processed as part of the following week's claims and paid in the next week after that.

Any person, including any self-employed person, who believes that their payment rate does not accurately reflect their prior earnings, can contact the Department to request a review of earnings and forward all supporting documents, which will be matched with Revenue records. They can contact the Department by:

- Emailing PUPRerate@welfare.ie ; or
- Writing to Pandemic Unemployment Rerate Requests, DSP, Intreo Centre, Cork Road, Waterford or
- Calling the Helpline at **1890 800 024** which is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

People returning to work

In the past seven days, some 6,800 people closed their PUP claim, with over 4,500 stating that they were doing so because they are returning to work. It is expected that many more people will return to work in the coming week.

Minister Humphrey's commented:

“We are all glad that many businesses can now re-open and people can return to work in the run-up to Christmas.

“I know that some people are worried that if they close their PUP claim they will not be able to re-open the claim if their workplace closes again in January.

“I can assure them that this is not the case. Last week I secured Government approval to keep PUP open until March so people who have the opportunity to return to work can do so with the piece of mind that they can still access PUP again if they need it.

“I also know that some people think that if they return to work this week they will miss out on any entitlement to the Christmas bonus payment next week.

“Again, I can assure them that this is not the case. Because PUP is paid on a weekly basis everybody who goes back to work this week and, has been on PUP for at least 17 weeks over the period since March, are entitled to a Christmas bonus.”

The Department continues to remind workers who are returning to work that they **must close their claim for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) on the actual date that they start back at work**, in order to ensure that their claim is processed correctly and to avoid incurring an overpayment that the Department will take steps to recover.

The easiest way to close a claim for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment is online via www.MyWelfare.ie. Any worker returning to work with an enquiry about closing their claim, can contact the Department's dedicated income support helpline at 1890 800 024 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

This week, the largest cohort of people who closed their claims to return to work is in the 25-34 age group (1,203), followed by those aged 35-44 (1,024). Full details are available at Appendix 8.

Arrears of PUP being paid this week

This week in addition to the normal weekly PUP payments, the Department of Social Protection has started the process of paying arrears of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment with payments valued at €129.2m issuing to approximately 286,000 people today.

The payments will be paid directly through the Post Office or into the nominated bank accounts of these 286,000 people receiving arrears today, 1st December.

The arrears payment being paid to current recipients of PUP, will be paid as a separate payment into their account today.

For customers who chose to collect their PUP payment at their Post Office, their arrears payment will also be available to be collected there.

This is particularly important for any person who may be due arrears and who has returned to work.

Of the 286,068 people who are receiving arrears in respect of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment today 1st December, 110,448 are no longer in receipt of PUP and will need to check their Bank Account or call into their Post Office.

The quickest way for a person wishing to check the details of their arrears payments is via www.MyWelfare.ie.

Any person with a verified MyWelfare account can check the status of any arrears payment on their MyWelfare account.

People with a basic or unverified MyWelfare account can request a statement of arrears to be sent to them by post.

Cause of Arrears

Arrears in respect of PUP arise under two broad headings.

First, although most claims were paid within a week, there was, due to the large number of claims, an initial time lag in the commencement of payments in some cases. During the month of March, the Department of Social Protection received and processed PUP claims equivalent in number to a three year jobseeker claim-load.

Almost 59,000 people were paid in the first week of the scheme, increasing to 283,000 people in the following week and over 507,000 people in the third week of the scheme.

The focus was on putting claims into payment as quickly as possible and it was not possible to generate arrears payments at the time.

Secondly, arrears may also arise in respect of individual weeks where claims could not be processed due to incomplete applications or application errors by the customer.

Since the introduction of PUP in March, some 820,000 people have applied for payment.

In some cases, they have done so on a number of occasions as they moved in and out of work or where their employer availed of the Revenue Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme.

This resulted in over 1.4 million applications being examined to determine if arrears were due.

In examining all cases, the Department identified weeks where individuals were not paid PUP and it assessed these for arrears.

In addition, it identified weeks where individuals were paid and these have been examined for possible overpayments e.g. due to overlaps with the Revenue Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme or other social welfare payments, such as Jobseekers or Illness Benefit.

The vast majority of arrears cases (more than 280,000) are being paid today.

However, there are a smaller number of cases (fewer than 10,000) where the Department is continuing to examine records and any arrears that may be due in these cases will be paid later this month.

Minister Humphreys commented:

“I am particularly pleased that 286,000 people are receiving their arrears payment today. In total, €232.85 million is being paid in PUP payments this week. This will be of great benefit to the local economy and I would encourage people to choose to shop local and support the local economy.”

A breakdown of the arrears being paid is available at Appendices 12 and 13.

Applying for PUP

To apply for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, the easiest and quickest way is to do so online at www.MyWelfare.ie. When applying, people should provide the name of their employer and details of their last day of employment.

In the interests of the public health advice and observing social distancing people are asked, if possible, not to attend their local Intreo Centre. Instead, they should avail of the online services available through www.MyWelfare.ie. The Minister recently announced following a Government decision that PUP would remain open to new applications until the end of March.

Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit Payment

Since March, a cumulative total of 91,175 people under the age of 66 have been medically certified for receipt of the Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit.

Today, some 1,986 people are currently in receipt of an Enhanced Illness Benefit payment. This is the lowest number of people in receipt of this payment since September 29th. Full details are at Appendices 9, 10 and 11.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

Christmas Bonus Payment

The Christmas bonus payment (an extra week's payment) is normally made to people who are in receipt of long-term social welfare payments and who are entitled to a normal payment in respect of the week that the bonus is paid.

People who are unemployed for less than 12 months do not normally receive this payment

This year as an exceptional measure the Government decided that the bonus payment should be made to people in receipt of PUP or a jobseeker payment for at least 4 months (17 weeks).

In the case of PUP recipients any person, who has received 17 weeks of PUP payments in the period since March (not necessarily continuously) and is due a payment in respect of the week of 27th November to 3rd December will receive their normal PUP payment plus a bonus week payment on 8th December.

This means that anybody who has returned to work on or after the 27th November and has accrued 17 weeks on PUP payments since March will receive a bonus payment next week.