

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

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

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306,200 receive the Pandemic Unemployment Payment this week – down by more than 42,000 on last week

Almost €90 million paid out in PUP weekly payments

A further 40,000 closed their PUP claims in past 7 days to return to work

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

This week, the Department of Social Protection has issued weekly payments valued at €89.96 million, down from €102.67 million last week, to 306,220 people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP).

The number of people receiving a PUP payment this week represents a decrease of 42,036 on the 348,256 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 (88,659) followed by Wholesale and Retail Trade (45,197) and Administrative and Support Service Activities (28,705).

These figures are in addition to the 194,058 people who were reported on the Live Register as of the end of November.

All Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payments issued will be in recipients' bank accounts or at their post office tomorrow, Tuesday, 15th December.

People returning to work

In the past seven days, some 45,997 people closed their PUP claim, with 40,075 of these people stating that they were doing so because they are returning to work. These people, who will receive their final payment on Tuesday 15 December, are included in the 306,200 recipients reported today. It is expected that more people will return to work in the coming week.

The top sectors from which employees closed their Pandemic Unemployment Payment to return to work are Accommodation and Food Service Activities (17,478), hairdressers and beauty salons (6,858) and Wholesale and Retail Trade (6,693).

Dublin had the greatest number of people closing their claims (10,295), followed by Cork (5,037), Galway (2,395), Kildare (1,752) and Limerick (1,741).

This week, the largest cohort of people who closed their claims to return to work is in the < 25 age group (12,014) followed by the 25-34 age group (9,323) and those aged 35-44 (8,947).

Full details are available at Appendix 8.

Commenting today, Social Protection Minister Humphreys said:

“I very much welcome the significant drop in the number of people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment this week.

“The figure reflects the impact of exiting Level 5 of restrictions – which has seen many businesses re-open and thousands of staff return to the workplace.

“A further 46,000 people have closed their PUP claim in the past seven days and over 40,000 of them have done so because they too are returning to work.

“This is evident in every county and is another positive development. It means that next week’s figure will see another sizeable decrease.

Minister Humphreys continued:

“Everyone is now looking forward to celebrating Christmas and we can do so while continuing to adhere to the public health advice over the festive period.

“Sheer determination and solidarity have brought us to where we are today.

“If we continue to focus on suppressing the virus rather than letting our guard down, we will succeed in making Christmas enjoyable for all.”

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 Department performs checks against Revenue PAYE returns and cases of people returning to work without informing the Department will be identified and followed up.

In addition it is important to note that the PUP scheme remains open and people who return to work in December need not fear that they will not be able to access PUP again if their employment ceases in the New Year.

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.

Any employer who has difficulty re-hiring staff can contact the Department at c19employerreports@welfare.ie or employer@welfare.ie.

Self-employed people and PUP

Last week, Minister Humphreys announced that self-employed people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) who are looking to restart their business can now earn up to €960 over an eight week period, while retaining their full PUP entitlement.

This is an increase from the €480 previously allowed over a four week period and comes following engagement with the Arts sector, including the Music and Entertainment Association of Ireland (MEAI), as well other self-employed sectors.

This new measure allows a self-employed person to take on intermittent jobs or “one-off gigs” without losing their entitlement to PUP.

The measure takes effect immediately.

There is no formal application process and a self-employed person simply needs to inform the Department if they earn over €960 in any eight week period.

Minister Humphreys added:

“I don't want to see people turning down work for fear that it might impact their Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

“I am happy to make this change – which comes into effect immediately - and I want to acknowledge the constructive engagement from the Music and Entertainment Association of Ireland in relation to this matter. I also want to thank my colleagues on the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development.”

MyWelfare.ie – New PPSN application service

The easiest and quickest way to apply for many social welfare payments, including the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, is online at www.MyWelfare.ie. This is a platform which is safe, secure and accessible anytime, anywhere and on all devices. People have the option of applying for Maternity Benefit, Paternity Benefit, Child Benefit, PRSI refunds and Jobseeker's payments as well as requesting a statement or a record of social insurance contributions from the Department.

A new application service to apply for a PPS number is now available at www.MyWelfare.ie for people living in Ireland who are at least 18 years of age and need a PPS Number to avail of social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland. To apply for a PPS Number online, a person will need to have a basic [MyGovID](http://www.MyGovID.ie) account.

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.

Control Measures

The Department conducts a series of pre and post payment checks on all PUP claims. Subject to these checks being cleared the Department then process payments based on the clients' self-declaration.

Subsequently the Department runs post payment checks that includes verifying data against Revenue records, examining cases where the same Bank account is used multiple times, examining cases where employer or members of the public report concerns, use of data analytics to identify and check claims. We also undertake employer inspections.

This work is undertaken by the Department's Special Investigation Unit, which for the past six years, includes over 20 Gardaí on secondment to the Department.

Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit Payment

Since March, a cumulative total of 93,657 people under the age of 66 have been medically certified for receipt of the Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit.

Today, some 1,691 people are currently in receipt of an Enhanced Illness Benefit payment. Full details are at Appendices 9, 10 and 11.