

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

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

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**277,700 receive the Pandemic Unemployment Payment this week – down 28,500 on last week**

**Over €160 million paid out in PUP to cover this week and an advanced payment for next week**

**A further 16,600 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](http://www.MyWelfare.ie)**

This week, the Department of Social Protection has issued two weekly payments to recipients of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) covering this week and a second advance payment for next week. These payments are to cover the Christmas period and are valued at over €160 million.

The payment for this week accounts for €81.58 million, down from €89.96 million last week, to 277,671 people in receipt of PUP.

The number of people receiving a PUP payment this week represents a decrease of 28,549 on the 306,220 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 (74,101) followed by Wholesale and Retail Trade (40,406) and Administrative and Support Service Activities (28,099).

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, 22nd December.

As this is a double week's payment, paying for 22nd December and 29th December, the next payment to recipients of PUP will be paid into bank accounts on 5th January, 2021.

## **People returning to work**

In the past seven days, some 21,295 people closed their PUP claim, with 16,593 of these people stating that they were doing so because they are returning to work. These people will also receive their final payment tomorrow in addition to this week's payment and are included in the 277,700 recipients reported today.

The top sectors from which employees closed their Pandemic Unemployment Payment to return to work are Accommodation and Food Service Activities (7,760), Wholesale and Retail Trade (2,503) and Hairdressers and Beauty Salons (2,125).

Similar to last week, Dublin had the greatest number of people closing their claims (4,608), followed by Cork (1,796), Galway (980), Kildare (760) and Limerick (692).

Again, this week, the largest cohort of people who closed their claims to return to work is in the < 25 age group (5,521) followed by the 25-34 age group (3,897) and those aged 35-44 (3,474).

Full details are available at Appendix 8.

## **Speaking today, Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys said:**

“More people have returned to work this week and the total number of people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment has now fallen by 75,000 in the last month.

“Unfortunately the increased number of cases we are seeing means we must all re-double our efforts to contain the virus.

“I know this is a worrying time particularly for workers in the hospitality sector and Cabinet will meet tomorrow to decide on the next steps following the latest public health advice.

“In the meantime, I want to assure all workers that the Pandemic Unemployment Payment remains open for applications and will be available to assist anybody whose job is impacted by further restrictions.

“This will be a Christmas week like no other and we all need to take personal responsibility for our behaviour. Make no mistake - your actions over the next few days will make a difference. We cannot sacrifice all the hard work of the last nine months or put the lives of our loved ones at risk just as vaccines are about to arrive.

“The best Christmas gift that we can give to our family, friends and especially our frontline workers this year is a safe Christmas.

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 [MyWelfare.ie](https://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](mailto:c19employerreports@welfare.ie) or [employer@welfare.ie](mailto:employer@welfare.ie).

### **Self-employed people and PUP**

Minister Humphreys recently 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 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.

### **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 [MyWelfare.ie](https://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 [MyWelfare.ie](https://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](https://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 [MyWelfare.ie](https://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 processes 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 95,233 people under the age of 66 have been medically certified for receipt of the Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit.

Today, some 1,724 people are currently in receipt of an Enhanced Illness Benefit payment. Full details are at Appendices 9, 10 and 11.