

Update on payments awarded for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Enhanced Illness Benefit - 18 May 2021

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

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Over 363,000 people receive the Pandemic Unemployment Payment this week, a decrease of almost 13,500 on last week

Over €107 million in PUP weekly payments to be paid into bank accounts today

Almost 26,000 close their PUP account to return to work. 22,000 of these people will receive their final payment this week and will not be included in next week's data

1,558 people currently in receipt of Enhanced Illness Benefit

As restrictions begin to ease, people returning to work should close their claim on their first day back in work by logging on to www.MyWelfare.ie

Employers who experience difficulties in re-hiring staff can notify the department at C19employerreports@welfare.ie

Public reminded about Scam Phone Calls and Scam Texts from callers claiming to be from the Department of Social Protection

This week, the Department of Social Protection has issued weekly payments valued at over €107 million to 363,167 people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP).

This represents a decrease of 13,498 people compared to last week.

The figures published today are in addition to the 177,969 people who were on the Live Register at the end of April.

All COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payments issued will be in recipients' bank accounts or at their Post Office today, Tuesday 18 May.

Dublin is the county with the highest number of people who are receiving PUP this week at 118,925. It is followed by Cork (35,754) and Galway (19,862).

The sector with the highest number of people receiving PUP this week is Accommodation and Food Service activities (96,404), followed by Wholesale and Retail Trade (59,545) and Administrative and Support Service Activities (31,860).

The Construction sector has seen the largest decrease in the number of people receiving PUP this week with 3,081 fewer people receiving the payment compared to last week.

The payment week for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment runs from Friday to Thursday and payments are paid on the following Tuesday. Individuals who have closed their PUP on Monday 17 May, as they have returned to work, will receive their final PUP payment on Tuesday 25 May.

People returning to work

The department continues to remind workers who are returning to work that they must close their claim for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment 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 past seven days saw 25,920 people close their PUP claim stating that they were doing so because they are returning to work. Dublin had the greatest number of people closing their claims to return to work (6,578), followed by Cork (2,987) and Galway (1,408).

As PUP is paid weekly in arrears approximately 22,000 of these people will receive a final payment this week.

The sectors with the largest number of employees closing their Pandemic Unemployment Payment claims to return to work are Other Sectors, for example: hairdressing and beauty salons (8,930), Wholesale and Retail Trade (4,739), and Construction (3,033). Some 2,396 people in the Accommodation and Food Service activities sector closed their claims to return to work.

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.

Speaking today on the latest PUP figures, Minister for Social Protection Heather Humphreys said:

“The slow and gradual reopening of the economy is once again reflected in this week’s Pandemic Unemployment Payment figures.

“As the PUP is paid weekly in arrears, the full impact of the reopening of sectors such as retail will not be evident for a number of weeks to come.

“However, all the indications are that people are returning to work in large numbers with almost 26,000 closing their PUP in the past week.

“I want to pay tribute to the thousands of employers across the country who have reopened their businesses this week, ensuring that their staff and customers can return in a safe manner.”

“I also want to draw particular attention to the fact that as people return to work, employers may be able to avail of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) to assist with payroll costs.

“This is an important support to help employers re-employ staff and restore salaries. It also acts as an effective bridge back to employment for people who were on PUP.

"As eligibility for the EWSS is based on employer turnover, most employers who have been closed due to the Pandemic will be eligible for the subsidy. Further information is available at revenue.ie.”

The Minister continued:

“Finally, I want to remind anyone who requires the PUP as an income support that it remains open – and will be paid at its current rates – until 30 June.

“The government will set out its future plans in early June.

“In doing so, we will take into account the trajectory of the virus, progress on the vaccine roll-out, progress in terms of people returning to work and of course the continued impact of the pandemic on the economy over the period ahead.”

Control Measures/Re-hiring Workers

The department conducts a series of pre and post payment checks on all PUP claims which include continuing eligibility checks. Subject to these checks being cleared the department then processes payments based on the clients’ self-declaration.

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 an employer or members of the public report concerns, and the use of data analytics to identify and check claims. It also undertakes employer inspections.

This work is undertaken by the department’s Special Investigation Unit, which includes over 20 Gardaí on secondment to the department.

As the industry reopens the department’s inspectors will be conducting control reviews and matching records against employer payroll data from the Revenue Commissioners to help ensure people close their claim as they return to work. To avoid incurring an overpayment people returning to work should close their claim and can do so easily at www.MyWelfare.ie.

The department notes the concerns expressed in recent days regarding employers facing difficulties in re-hiring staff. Experience from 2020 showed that about 400,000 people closed their PUP claim once the economy partially reopened. This is clear evidence that the vast majority of people want to, and will take up employment, once it is available to them.

However, any employer who faces difficulties in re-hiring staff can notify the department at C19employerreports@welfare.ie and we will follow-up with on the cases concerned.

Self-employed people and PUP

Self-employed people in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) who are looking to maintain their business can earn up to €960 over an eight-week period, while retaining their full PUP entitlement.

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 – PPSN application service

The easiest and quickest way to apply for many social welfare payments, including the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, Enhanced Illness Benefit and Jobseekers' payments 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 Jobseekers' payments as well as requesting a statement or a record of social insurance contributions from the department.

The application service to apply for a PPS Number is 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](#) 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.

COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit Payment

Today, some 1,558 people are in receipt of an Enhanced Illness Benefit payment, compared with 1,564 last week.

Employees or self-employed people who contract the virus or who are medically certified by their doctor to self-isolate are advised to apply for Enhanced Illness Benefit. Unlike the standard Illness Benefit, the Enhanced Illness Benefit is paid from the first day of illness. The quickest and easiest way to apply for Enhanced Illness Benefit is through www.MyWelfare.ie.

Full details on Enhanced Illness Benefit including sector and county breakdown as well as age profile are at Appendices 9, 10 and 11.

Scam Phone Calls and Scam Texts

Customers and members of the public are reminded about scam phone calls and text messages they may receive from individuals claiming to be an official of the department. These calls and texts display a range of numbers, including some which may appear to be from the department's phone numbers. The department would like to remind all its customers

that it will never seek personal information from customers via text message and will never ask a customer for their bank details over the phone.

Any person who receives such a call or text is asked not to disclose any information and to report it to the Gardaí immediately.