As you know, the Pandemic Unemployment Payment was introduced to support people who lost their jobs overnight as a result of COVID-19. It was a solidarity payment to protect people’s income at a time of national crisis and I strongly believe that any person who breached that solidarity by claiming a payment that they were not entitled to because they were no longer living in the country should have their payment stopped.

Of the 2,500 PUP claims that have been stopped since March, the vast majority of these, over ninety percent, relate to people who were permanently leaving the country.

I have listened to the concerns expressed in recent days in relation to people whose payment was stopped due to the fact they were travelling abroad on a holiday and I know that there are cases where people may have travelled abroad and genuinely not been aware of the travel guidance or criteria which applied to PUP – and indeed Chair you raised that yourself yesterday evening.

I accept that my department could have communicated more effectively on this issue.

For that reason, I have directed the department to review all cases to date where people who went on holiday and had their payment stopped.

Since the regulations relating to Jobseeker’s were signed on 10 July, the government’s travel advice has changed with the publication of the Green List last week.
On that basis and in line with the government’s travel advice, I have now asked my officials to amend the regulations so that people on Jobseeker’s who wish to travel to any of the countries on the Green List can do so and continue to receive their payment.

For countries that are not on the Green List, persons can travel for essential reasons only.

So far example, if you are going to a non-Green List country, it must be for essential reasons such as a bereavement or for health reasons.

If you inform your Intreo Centre in advance, your payment will not be impacted.

The Pandemic Unemployment Payment was established on an emergency ad-hoc basis under the Social Welfare Act and was paid out as an Exceptional Needs Payment.

My officials advise me that under this scheme there was no provision to receive a payment while out of the country under any circumstances.

As I am currently bringing legislation through the Oireachtas to put PUP on a statutory basis, I intend to sign regulations that will bring the PUP payment in line with Jobseeker’s.

That will mean persons on PUP can travel to Green List countries and their payment will not be impacted. As with Jobseeker’s, persons travelling to countries outside the Green List can only do so for essential reasons.

The government is committed to protecting people and that is why we have extended PUP until next April and we will continue to keep all regulations under review in line with the government travel and public health advice.

ENDS