

Minister Humphreys seeks feedback from the Labour Market Advisory Council on her plans to support people to return to Work in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

From [Department of Social Protection](#)

Published at 22 October 2020

Last updated 23 October 2020

Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, TD, today held a virtual meeting with the Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC).

Minister Humphreys briefed the Council on her plans to enhance employment services in response to the Covid 19 crisis.

This includes expanding case worker capacity, reviewing contracted service provision, implementing a new work experience placement programme, increasing and expanding training supports, increasing places on State Employment Schemes such as TÚS and CE, extending enterprise/self-employment grants, and enhancing recruitment subsidies.

The Minister sought feedback from the LMAC on the plans and its input into the design of the schemes proposed. In doing so, the Minister said:

“Although we are now back into a period of restrictions we are actively planning to move quickly on the rollout of these vital additional supports as soon as restrictions are lifted.

“In total we plan to spend €2.2bn on employment programme provision in 2021. The Department is working with its stakeholders such as the LMAC to fine-tune its plans and has already started engaging with its partners such as those in the education and training sector and with employers to ensure that we can hit the ground running to provide as many opportunities as possible to as many people as possible as early as possible once restrictions are lifted.

“The LMAC, an expert group of experienced labour market practitioners, worker representatives and employers has already given advice to the Government on how we should do this and today I briefed it on the steps we now intend to take. I have asked the LMAC to provide further feedback and advice to me and will take this into account as we finalise the details of how we will implement the actions set out.”

In total, including funding under the July Stimulus and in Budget 2021, the Government is providing up to €2.2 billion for employment and activation programmes in 2021 primarily by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Further and Higher Education.

In light of the pandemic's economic impact the Department of Social Protection is enhancing the capacity of the Public Employment Service to support employees who have permanently lost their job. The Department has also introduced and continues to develop new measures aimed at subsidising employment, developing work experience opportunities and enhancing the supports and services available to people who may wish to seek to expand their skillset and avail of education, training and employment supports.

Examples of the measures being taken by the Department of Social Protection to increase capacity include:

- An additional 300 staff to work in the Department during 2021 including expanding the capacity of Intreo Centres to provide employment services and supports with the assignment of an additional 100 Job Coaches. Recruitment for these posts has started and it is intended to fill these positions over the next number of weeks.
- The expansion of the footprint of the community based contracted service into 4 new geographical areas where a Local Employment Service does not currently exist.
- In addition to expanding the service footprint the Department has extended the existing Local Employment Service, Job Clubs, JobPath and Employability contracts into 2021.
- In recognition of the challenges facing the labour market in a post Covid-19 environment, there will be a need to have an expanded Public Employment Service in place to offer guidance and advice to those who will be seeking employment. The Department recognises that, given the shock to the labour market and the economy, not all jobs may return once we move on from COVID public health restrictions. To this end the Government is investing in expanding the Public Employment Services, through increasing the capacity in the Intreo Centres as well as through contracted service providers to ensure that these supports are available when they are required, in 2021.
- Young jobseekers can now benefit from the JobsPlus scheme after being unemployed for 4 months instead of 12 months, which had previously been the case. This means that an employer receives the JobsPlus subsidy once they employ a young person (under 30 years of age) who has been unemployed for just 4 months. This will help make it more attractive to recruit young people who face particular difficulties in securing a footing in employment.

A recent evaluation of these schemes undertaken jointly by the EU Commission's Joint Research Centre and the Department found that participation on this scheme had very positive impacts on employment outcomes and earnings for participants. The JobsPlus evaluation is available [here](#).

- The Department is working closely with the Department of Further and Higher Education to identify training needs and ensure that jobseekers can access the range of schemes. The Department of Further and Higher Education is investing significantly in over 35,000 new places on programmes for unemployed jobseekers as part of the July Stimulus and the Department of Social Protection's case officers and job coaches will work with jobseekers to ensure that they are made aware of and referred to these programmes.

Minister Humphreys and Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, will be announcing further initiatives over the coming period.

Note for Editors

Measures relating to the Minister's discussion with the LMAC include:-

Work Experience Placement Programme

Building on the existing Youth Employment Support Scheme a new funded work experience placement programme is being developed to provide work experience for up to 10,000 jobseekers, of any age, who have been unemployed for more than six months (including periods in receipt of a PUP payment). It is envisaged that the scheme will be formally launched later this year. In the meantime, any employer who is willing to act as a host organisation for these work experience placements can register their interest at WPEP@welfare.ie

Recruitment Subsidies – JobsPlus

Under the JobsPlus Scheme employers receive a recruitment subsidy, paid over two years, of between €7,500 and €10,000 for each person that they recruit from the Live Register.

As announced as part of the July Stimulus Package, the Government has agreed measures to make it easier for employers to help young jobseekers (under 30 years of age) benefit from the JobsPlus scheme.

Young jobseekers can now benefit from the JobsPlus scheme after being unemployed for 4 months instead of 12 months, which had previously been the case. This means that an employer receives the JobsPlus subsidy once they employ a young person who has been unemployed for just 4 months. This will help make it more attractive to recruit young people who face particular difficulties in securing a footing in employment.

Criteria for availability for subsidies available to employers hiring unemployed people under this scheme have also been widened for other age groups meaning more people now qualify for the maximum subsidy of €10,000.

State Employment Schemes

State Employment Schemes are schemes that provide people with an opportunity to work part-time in their community and, in so doing, acquire valuable work experience and skills while receiving an additional payment on top of their normal jobseeker payment. These schemes include the Community Employment, TÚS and the Rural Social Scheme.

The number of places available on these schemes is being increased by 3,000. The Department is currently working with the Community Employment and TÚS sponsors to establish the additional places and it is expected that they will come on stream over the next 4 – 5 months.

Training Supports/Grants

The Department works closely with the Department of Further and Higher Education to identify training needs and ensure that jobseekers can access these schemes. The Department of Further and Higher Education is investing significantly in over 35,000 new places on

programmes for unemployed jobseekers as part of the July Stimulus and the Department of Social Protection's case officers and job coaches will work with jobseekers to ensure that they are made aware of and referred to these programmes.

In addition, the Department is directly supporting jobseekers to access short duration training programmes by increasing the value of the grant it pays to jobseekers to take up a short employment focused course from €500 to €1,000. This is estimated to benefit at least 12,000 jobseekers in 2021.

As announced in Budget 2021, a new €1,000 training grant per person is also being introduced to help people with disabilities access training through the Employability service.

Supports for the Self-Employed

The Department already supports people who wish to enter self-employment through schemes like the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (which enables a person on establishing a business to keep all or part of their jobseeker payment for up to two years while starting the business).

These supports are now being enhanced:

- Budget 2021 provided for self-employed workers on PUP including those in the arts, entertainment industry and taxi drivers to re-commence their self-employment and earn up to €480 gross per month while continuing to receive their full PUP payment.
- The availability of the Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme is being extended to the self-employed who come off PUP or a jobseeker payment. Instead, they will receive a partial jobseeker payment while retaining the income from their employment. It is particularly suited to self-employed people on PUP whose income exceeds €480 a month.
- The Enterprise Support Grant for small/micro enterprises is being extended into next year with a further €12 million. The purpose of this scheme is to enable the payment of a €1,000 'restart' grant to small self-employed business owners who move from PUP to help them with re-opening their business.