



Covid-19 Support Factsheet: Income Support Scheme & Social Welfare Payments

25th March 2020

On Tuesday 24th March the Government announced the **National Covid-19 Income Support Scheme** which increases supports to employers and employees. It introduced the new Wage Subsidy Scheme and increased the Pandemic Unemployment Benefit from €203 to €350. It will be in effect for 12 weeks. This document provides a breakdown of the Wage Subsidy Scheme and the Pandemic Unemployment Benefit. It also provides information about supports available for people with no work or reduced hours, those who are sick or who are looking after someone who is sick, and those who cannot work because they are looking after children.

The information set out here may change in the days and week ahead, so please consult the [Department of Social Welfare and Protection](#) website as well as [MerrionStreet.ie](#) for the most up-to-date news and information.

National Covid-19 Income Support Scheme

This section is divided into two parts:

1. The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment
2. The COVID- 19 Wage Subsidy Scheme

1. The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

What is the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

The new payment is available to all employees and the self-employed who have lost employment due to a downturn in economic activity caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Do you need to go to the local Intreo office to claim the payment?

No. The downloaded and filled form must be sent to Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, PO BOX 12896, Dublin 1.

What happens then?

Apply for Jobseekers' within six weeks to ensure you continue to receive a payment (if applicable) after the emergency payment has finished. Once this normal Jobseekers' claim is received, the Department will process these claims and reconcile payments at that time. This will involve backdating increased payments for certain customers. *(Information correct as of 20 March 2020)*

Is the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment different to the Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit?

Yes. This payment is for those diagnosed with Covid-19, or are medically certified to self isolate as a result of Covid-19. Illness benefit for actual Covid-19 absences is paid at a rate of €350 per week. This is available to employees and the self-employed.

How are employers asked to help the process?

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection Regina Doherty is asking employers, if at all possible, to continue to pay workers during this period — at least at the jobseeker rate of €350 per week which is the equivalent of the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

How is that different from the emergency unemployment payment?

Minister Doherty said it will offer continuity for employers and employees relationships, and the employee does not have to do anything if the employer agrees to pay the €350.

Can self-employed receive this payment and if so, how?

Yes, a self-employed person can apply for the Covid-19 payment. They can access it directly from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (rather than the Revenue scheme).

How do I ensure that I still receive my entitlements if I have a child or adult dependant?

Workers who are due a higher payment (e.g. because they have child or adult dependants) should make a claim for standard jobseeker's benefit online at www.mywelfare.ie. They will be moved onto this higher payment as quickly as possible and the employer will cease paying the €203 to the employee.

2. The COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme

What is the Wage Subsidy Scheme?

The Wage Subsidy Scheme is a temporary wage subsidy of 70% of take home pay up to a maximum weekly tax free amount of €410 per week to help affected companies to keep paying their employees. This is the equivalent of €500 per week before tax.

How will it work?

An eligible employer will be supported up to 70% of an employee's take home income up to a maximum weekly tax free payment of €410 (i.e. 70% of take home weekly income of €38,000 per annum).

The scheme will provide support on incomes up to €76,000 or twice average earnings. It will be capped at net €350 for incomes between €38,000 and €76,000.

The employer is expected to make best efforts to maintain as close to 100% of normal income as possible for the subsidised period. Revenue will provide further guidance on operation of the scheme.

Who is eligible?

Employers must self-declare to Revenue that they have experienced significant negative economic disruption due to Covid-19, with a minimum of 25% decline in turnover, and an inability to pay normal wages and other outgoings, in accordance with guidance to be issued by Revenue.

This scheme is open to impacted employers in all sectors. The employee must have been on the payroll in February 2020.

Is this different to the Employer Refund Scheme that was announced on March 15th?

The Wage Subsidy Scheme in has replaced what was announced on 15th March as the Employer Refund Scheme.

What about the self-employed?

Those who are self-employed who qualify will be paid the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350 rather than through the Revenue scheme. They will be eligible on a similar basis as the Revenue scheme for employees.

Information on Supports for Employees Impacted by COVID- 19

People with no work or reduced hours

1. COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

An employer may decide to close their business for this period and send employees home. This is called a temporary lay-off. If an employer cannot pay for this period, the employee can apply for a special new [COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#).

This new payment will be available to all employees and self-employed people who have lost employment due to a downturn in economic activity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The payment has a simple one–page application [form](#) and will be paid for a period of 6 weeks at a flat rate payment of €203 per week.

Please note that you do not need to visit an Intreo office to get this form (and you do not need to sign on at Intreo offices during the coronavirus restrictions).

The form can be downloaded and printed from the above link and posted by Freepost to:

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
FREEPOST PO Box 12896
Dublin 1.

Having applied, an employee will need to keep checking their bank account as payment may issue before the Department formally makes a notification.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is designed to provide income security for a period during which you can apply for a full Jobseekers payment (and receive any additional entitlements backdated).

NOTE: The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is a temporary payment to help immediately. Those who need it will also need to apply for another social welfare payment:

[Jobseeker's Benefit](#) (for employees) – based on your PRSI contributions

[Jobseeker's Benefit](#) (self-employed) – based on PRSI contributions

[Jobseeker's Allowance](#) – means tested

[Short Term Work Support](#) – based on PRSI contributions

2. Short Time Work Support

If an employer reduces an employee's hours to three days or less per week from their normal full-time hours, they can apply for a payment called [Short Term Work Support](#) which is a form of Jobseeker's Benefit. The employer must also put the employee on short-time working which is a more formal procedure and applies in the following situation:

- Due to a reduction in the amount of work to be done, weekly pay is less than half normal weekly pay or;
- Hours worked are reduced to less than half of normal weekly working hours.

The payment is made in respect of the employee's regular salary for the days that they are no longer working. For example, if the employee's working week has been reduced from a 5 day work pattern to a 3 day work pattern, they can receive support for the other two days.

The employee's rate of payment will depend on your average weekly earnings in the governing contribution year and the change in their work pattern. For example, if the employee is placed on a 3 day work pattern having previously worked five days, they may be entitled to up €81.20 for the two days they are no longer working. This represents two fifths of the maximum weekly rate of Jobseekers Benefit of €203.

People who are sick and cannot work

While sick with coronavirus, an employee may be entitled to sick pay from their employer. This depends on the contract of employment. The employer does not have to pay the employee when they cannot come to work because they are sick with coronavirus, unless it is part of their contract of employment. If the employer does not pay the employee, the employee should apply for [COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit](#) from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

The Government has announced that the rules for Illness Benefit and Supplementary Welfare Allowance will be changed to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus. The changes mean that if an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 and are medically required to self-isolate, they can get income support.

To receive the enhanced payment, you must be:

- Self-isolating on the instruction of a doctor or diagnosed with COVID-19
- Be absent from work and not getting paid by your employer

The personal rate for this payment is €305, as compared with normal Illness Benefit rate of €203. It will be paid for a maximum of 2 weeks where a person is self-isolating but will be paid for the duration of a person's absence from work if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

An employee does not need to satisfy the usual PRSI conditions for Illness Benefit if they are off sick from work with COVID-19. This means that an employee will be eligible for the payment even if they have only recently started working.

How to Apply

Step 1

If you are suffering from COVID-19 or a doctor advises that you self-isolate, the doctor will then complete a medical certificate on your behalf and send this directly to the department.

To receive payment, you will need to provide your doctor with your:

- Name
- PPS Number
- Date of Birth

Step 2

You now need to complete an application form for Illness Benefit (Form IB 1).

There are three ways that you can make an application:

- You can call 1890 800 024 or 01 2481398 between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday to get an application form by post
- Organise someone to pick up a form at your doctor's surgery
- An online application process will be available by the end of March

If you have been medically certified to self-isolate or are diagnosed with COVID-19, the HSE has advised that you do not attend your doctor's office or Intreo Centre.

It is important to complete part 5 of the Illness Benefit form as this contains how you would like to be paid. You do not have to fill in part 7 of the form.

The completed application should be sent via Freepost to:

Social Welfare Services,

PO Box 1650,

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection,

Dublin 1.

Once both the application form and the medical certificate are received, payment will be processed. You should continue to liaise with you doctor in relation to your diagnosis and the length of time you are medically certified unfit to work because of COVID-19.

People who cannot work because they have to look after children

If a place of work remains open over the coming weeks, and the employer expects staff to go to work as usual there may be some employees that cannot do this because they have to look after children, and they are not sick with the virus. Employees in this scenario may ask your employer for paid leave.

The Government has asked employers to be as flexible as possible in allowing staff time off to look after their children or other members of their families. This could include:

- Offering paid compassionate leave
- Allowing them to work from home
- Altering their shifts, so that they can coordinate caring
- Allowing the employee to rearrange holidays
- Allowing the employee to take paid time off that they can work back at a later time

Statutory Leave

If an employer cannot facilitate any of the above, the employee can apply for one of the statutory schemes below.

- [Parental Leave](#) if you are looking after a child up to the age of 12 (or 16 if the child has a disability)
- [Parent's Leave](#) if you are caring for a child up to age 1 who was born after 1 November 2019

Normally an employer needs 6 weeks' notice if an employee wants to take parental or parent's leave, but employers are encouraged to wave this notice period. An employer does not have to pay an employee when on parental or parent's leave.

If an employee is on parent's leave, they can apply for [Parent's Benefit](#). If they are on parental leave or have no other income, they can apply for means-tested [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#) .

Social Welfare Payment

If someone's only income is a social welfare payment and they are medically required to self-isolate or have been diagnosed with COVID-19, they will continue to get their social welfare payment.

If their income is a mixture of both earnings from employment and a social welfare payment (for example, the Working Family Payment) and they are medically-required to self-isolate or are diagnosed with COVID-19, they can apply for the COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit if their employer cannot pay them.

If an employee's income is a mixture of both earnings from employment and a social welfare payment and they lose your job or hours at work are reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they can apply for the new COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment.