

Information correct as of 24 March 2020

National Covid-19 Support Schemes

A summary of some key points to note:

- 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 keep paying their employees. This is the equivalent of €500 per week before tax, based off an annual income of €38,000 per annum;
- Workers who have lost their jobs due to the crisis will receive an enhanced emergency Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350 per week (an increase from €203), reflecting at least 87% of average take-home pay;
- The Covid-19 Illness Payment will also be increased to €350 per week;
- Self-Employed will be eligible for the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350 directly from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (rather than the Revenue scheme);
- Enhanced protections for people facing difficulties with their mortgages, rent or utility bills;

It is initially estimated that these measures will come at a cost of €3.7 billion over a 12 week period.

1. Supports for Employers and Businesses

Government supports for working capital

All banks have announced that they will offer flexibility to their customers, and they may be able to provide payment holidays or emergency working capital facilities.

1. The [SME Credit Guarantee Scheme](#) supports loans up to €1m for periods of up to 7 years.
 - To help SMEs impacted by COVID-19 related issues to have access to sufficient working capital, the government has repurposed the Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) to provide counter guarantees to the banks, mitigating credit risk or need for collateral.
 - The Credit Guarantee Scheme can be used by businesses to obtain loans to support changes they need to make to their business in response to Covid-19.
 - The purpose of the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme is to encourage additional lending to SMEs by offering a partial Government guarantee (currently 80%) to banks against losses on qualifying loans to eligible SMEs. The Credit Guarantee Scheme does not substitute for conventional lending that would otherwise have taken place.
 - Key features of the scheme:

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- o Facilities of €10,000 to €1m
 - o Terms of up to 7 years
 - o Term Loans, Demand Loans, and Performance Bonds
- Applications can be made to AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank (eligibility criteria apply). The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation plays no role in the application or decision-making process.
 - Refinancing of existing debts is excluded as the purpose of this Scheme is to facilitate additional lending. However in cases where new lending is sought along with refinancing, the availability of a guarantee in respect of the new lending element should be of assistance in providing an overall package of support to the business, including consolidation of existing debts Property-related activities are also excluded.
 - Viable micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) can apply to the scheme. (Please see [here](#) for a full list of SMEs that are eligible and not eligible to apply)

More information on this Scheme can be accessed at the below links:

- [FAQs on the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Covid-19](#)
- [DBEI Information on Credit Guarantee Scheme](#)
- [Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland \(SBCI\) information on Credit Guarantee Scheme](#)

2. Microenterprises can access **COVID-19 loans** of up to €50,000 from MicroFinance Ireland. The terms include a six months interest free and repayment free moratorium, with the loan to then be repaid over the remaining 30 months of the 36-month loan period. Loans are available at an interest rate of between 6.8% and 7.8%. Businesses can apply directly at microfinanceireland.ie.

More information on this Scheme can be accessed at [Microfinance Ireland COVID-19 Business Loan FAQs](#)

3. The **€200m SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Scheme** for eligible businesses will be available within the next week. Maximum loan size will be €1.5 million (first €500,000 unsecured) and the maximum interest rate will be 4%. Applications can be made through the SBCI website at sbci.gov.ie.

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More information is available at [SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Scheme FAQs](#)

- 4. A €200m Package for Enterprise Supports** including a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme is available through [Enterprise Ireland](#) for vulnerable but viable firms that need to restructure or transform their business.

Engaging with Revenue if you have concerns about your ability to pay tax liabilities

The Revenue Commissioners have advised:

"On an on-going basis, Revenue engages with viable businesses experiencing temporary cash flow or trading difficulties that affect the timely payment of tax. Revenue works very successfully with businesses that engage early to resolve their tax payment difficulties. Revenue will engage with any viable business that experiences temporary cashflow difficulties, including difficulties arising from exceptional circumstances such as the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak."

For more information, please consult Revenue's [Covid19 Information and Advice for Taxpayers and Agents](#).

Employer COVID-19 Refund Scheme

On 15 March, the Government announced the implementation of exceptional measures, administered through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), to enable workers who are temporarily laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic to claim a special support payment of €203 per week.

Revenue has worked closely with DEASP to provide an option for employers to make this payment to their employees through the normal payroll process. The amounts paid to employees under the scheme are not subject to tax, USC or PRSI.

Employers are encouraged to facilitate employees by operating the scheme. The amounts paid to employees and notified to Revenue will then be transferred into the employer's bank account by Revenue. This reimbursement will, in general, be made on a 'next day' basis. It will ensure a speedy payment process for employees and minimise the hardship for employees who are temporarily laid off. Refunds of income tax or USC that an employee may be entitled to because of being laid off will also be administered by the employer, and will be repaid (to the employer) through the scheme.

The scheme can be operated for all employees for whom a payroll submission was made by the employer in the period from 1 February 2020 to 15 March 2020. Where employees have already

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been laid off and their employer has ceased their employment, they can apply directly to DEASP for the payment.

Who does the scheme apply to?

- Employers who have temporarily laid off staff as a result of the impact on their business of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Employers that keep their staff on payroll and have not ceased the employee(s) with Revenue
- Employees for whom a payroll submission was made by the employer in the period from 1 February 2020 to 15 March 2020
- Employers that are unable to make top-up payments over and above the emergency payment of €350 per week.

Making an application for the Refund Scheme

Employers, or their agents, apply to Revenue to operate the scheme by carrying out the following steps:

- Log on to ROS *myEnquiries* and select the category '**Employer COVID -19 Refund Scheme**'.
- Read the declaration and press the '**Submit**' button.
- Log on to ROS and in '**Manage bank accounts**', '**Manage EFT**', ensure that the bank account details provided are correct.

Key features of the scheme

The employer will make the payroll submission to Revenue on or before each pay date.

Employers should contact their payroll software providers for assistance in respect of payroll to be processed under this scheme.

The employer runs the payroll as normal, entering the following details for each relevant employee:

- PRSI Class set to J9
- A pay amount of €0.01 (there must be some pay entered for the payroll to run)

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- A non-taxable amount of €203. No other payment amounts are made by the employer to the employee and all temporarily laid off employees are granted the €203
- The payroll submission must include pay frequency and period number.

No other payments are made by the employer to the employee for the applicable week(s) and all **temporarily laid off employees** receive the €203 per week.

Income tax, USC and PRSI are not deducted from the €203 payment.

Any Income Tax and USC refunds that arise as a result of the application of tax credits and rate bands can be repaid by the employer and this amount will also be refunded to the employer.

The employee must confirm to the employer that they have not, and will not, claim a payment from DEASP whilst the employer makes this payment through the payroll.

Employers will be asked to advise employees to make a Jobseeker's Benefit claim via the MyWelfare.ie online portal (so that the employee(s) can access qualified dependant payments if appropriate).

Based on the information provided in payroll submissions, Revenue will credit €203 per employee per week to the employer's bank account recorded in ROS. The credit will include the reference COVID Employer Refund. **(The main identifiers include Employer Number Gross Pay of €0.01, J9 PRSI class, Pay Frequency and Employee PPSN, Employment ID).**

Revenue will credit the employer bank account for payroll submissions received before 2:00 PM each day. Depending on the individual bank, the refund should be with the employer on the next banking day.

If the employee(s) resume employment with the employer, or obtains other supports from DEASP, or secures employment elsewhere, the employer will not include the employee(s) concerned in future submissions.

Income Support

An eligible employer will be supported by 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.

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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. There will be severe penalties for any abuse of the scheme.

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. This recognises the impact that Covid-19 is having across all parts of the economy. The employee must have been on the payroll in February 2020.

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.

2. Social Welfare Supports

This section gives a summary of social welfare payments available for people:

- With no work or reduced hours
- Who are sick or who are looking after someone who is sick
- Who cannot work because they are looking after children

The information set out here is likely to change in the week ahead so please consult the [Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection](#)'s website.

People with no work or reduced hours

1. COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

Your employer may decide to close their business for this period and send you home. This is called a temporary *lay-off*. If your employer cannot pay for this period, you 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 can be applied for [online](#) and will be paid for a period of **6 weeks** at a **flat rate payment of €350 per week** for jobseekers.

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If you are getting another social welfare payment, like Working Family Payment, and you have lost your employment, the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment can be paid in addition to this.

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

After you have applied, please keep checking your bank account as payment may issue before the Department formally notifies you.

If you can, when you apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, you should also apply for a normal jobseeker's payment for your situation. If you can't apply for a jobseeker's payment at the same time, you should do so within 6 weeks to ensure you continue to receive a payment (if applicable) after the emergency payment has finished.

NOTE: The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is a temporary payment to help you immediately. You 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 Time Work Support Payment](#) – based on your PRSI contributions

2. Short Time Work Support

If your employer reduces your hours to 3 days or less per week from your normal full-time hours, you can apply for a payment called [Short Time Work Support](#) which is a form of Jobseeker's Benefit.

Your employer can also put you 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, your weekly pay is less than half your normal weekly pay or
- Your hours worked are reduced to less than half your normal weekly working hours.

The payment is made in respect of your regular salary for the days that you are no longer working. For example, If your working week has been reduced from a 5 day work pattern to a 3 day work pattern, you can receive support for the other 2 days.

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Your rate of payment will depend on your average weekly earnings in the governing contribution year and the change in your work pattern. For example, if you are placed on a 3 day work pattern having previously worked 5 days, you may be entitled to up €81.20 for the 2 days you 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 you are sick with coronavirus, you may be entitled to sick pay from your employer. This depends on your contract of employment. Your employer does not have to pay you when you cannot come to work because you are sick with coronavirus, unless it is part of your contract of employment.

If your employer does not pay you, you should apply for 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 you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are suspected of having COVID-19 and are medically required to self-isolate, you can get income support.

Legislation is required to implement these changes and emergency legislation is being prepared, known as the Health (Preservation and Protection and other Emergency Measures in the Public Interest) Bill 2020.

The proposed changes under this Bill are:

- You will not have to wait 6 days before you can apply for Illness Benefit. This means Illness Benefit can cover the first week of a COVID-19 diagnosis (or medically-required self-isolation) and any subsequent weeks.
- The personal rate of Illness Benefit will increase from €203 to **€350** per week for up to 2 weeks if you are medically required to self-isolate, or for the duration of your medically-certified absence from work with a COVID-19 diagnosis. The new [Enhanced Illness Benefit for COVID-19 Absences](#) rate will be effective from 9 March 2020 and workers will be entitled to a refund of any arrears due from this date when the legislation is in place.
- The normal social insurance requirements for Illness Benefit will be waived or the means test for [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#) will be removed, if you are medically required to self-isolate or diagnosed with COVID-19
- The amendments will be retrospectively applied from the 9 March 2020.

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

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Your GP may advise you to self-isolate before you have been diagnosed with COVID-19. This means that you have been asked to stay indoors and completely avoid contact with other people. You are entitled to Illness Benefit if you have been medically advised to self-isolate.

Enhanced Illness Benefit will be paid at a higher rate than Illness Benefit and is only available where you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been told to self-isolate by a medical professional because of COVID-19.

People who cannot work because they have to look after children

Your place of work may still be open over the coming weeks, and your employer may be expecting you to go to work as usual. If you cannot do this because you have to look after children and they are not sick with the virus, you can 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 you to work from home
- Altering your shifts, so that you can coordinate caring between you and your partner, or another person.
- Allowing you to rearrange holidays
- Allowing you to take paid time off that you can work back at a later time

Statutory Leave

If none of the above is available to you, and you cannot arrange for paid leave from your employer, you can apply for one of the statutory schemes below. Statutory means that they are set out in law.

- [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

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You normally give your employer 6 weeks' notice if you want to take parental or parent's leave, but you can ask your employer to wave this notice period.

Your employer does not have to pay you when you are on parental or parent's leave. If you are on parent's leave you can apply for [Parent's Benefit](#). If you are on parental leave or you have no other income, you can apply for means-tested [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#).

If you are getting a social welfare payment

If your only income is a social welfare payment and you are medically-required to self-isolate or you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you will continue to get your social welfare payment. This also applies to people on [Community Employment](#), [TÚS](#) and the [Rural Social Scheme](#).

If you are unable to collect your payment from the post offices due to illness or self-isolation, it will be held over until you can next attend a post office or you can ask the DEASP that your payment is transferred to your bank account.

If your income is a mixture of both earnings from employment and a social welfare payment (for example, you are getting the [Working Family Payment](#)) and you are medically-required to self-isolate or you are diagnosed with COVID-19, you can apply for the COVID-19 [Enhanced Illness Benefit Payment](#) if your employer can no pay you.

If your income is a mixture of both earnings from employment and a social welfare payment and you lose your job or your hours at work are reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, you can apply for the new [COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#).

3. Other Supports

- A Finance in Focus grant of €7,200 will be available to Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta clients that want to access consultancy support to undertake immediate finance reviews.
- In addition to their current range of business supports to microenterprises, LEOs can also provide business continuity vouchers from €2,500 to assist in preparing any business continuity issues that arise in the current challenging environment. Visit [LEOs COVID-19 Business Response](#) for further details.
- The Department of Health has prepared [COVID-19 guidance for supply chain workers](#).

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- The government has agreed [support for businesses impacted by COVID-19 through commercial rates deferral](#). The Government has agreed with local authorities that they should defer rates payments due from the most immediately affected businesses, primarily in the retail, hospitality, leisure and childcare sectors, until the end of May.
- **Support for utility bills** The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has issued a moratorium on disconnections of domestic customers for non-payment to the gas and electricity suppliers. The suppliers have arrangements in place for any domestic/residential customers in arrears which are overseen by CRU and have a number of emergency provisions to assist Pay As You Go customers.
- Banking and credit measures: A deferral of up to 3-months on loan repayments will be available to many businesses. In addition, the banks are adopting a customer-focussed approach to these businesses with a wide variety of tailored supports including extensions of credit lines, risk guarantees, and trade finance.
- A small but important change for many businesses is the limit for contactless credit card payments has been raised from €30 to €50.

Useful links for the most up-to-date information

- [HSE information on COVID-19](#)
- [HSE COVID-19 guidance for the business and retail sector](#)
- [Department of Health updates](#)
- [Department of Foreign Affairs travel advice](#)
- [Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(HPSC\) advice and guidance](#) including [guidance for workers dealing with the general public](#)
- [DEASP information for employers and employees](#)
- [HSA COVID-19 advice](#) including [advice for employers](#) and [FAQs for employers and employees on home-working](#)
- [Competition and Consumer Protection Commission COVID-19 information hub](#)
- [FSAI information on COVID-19 and food safety](#)
- [Data Protection and COVID-19](#)
- [CIF Statement on COVID-19 and Construction](#)
- [EU Export Controls for Personal Protection Equipment](#)

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The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation also have a Business Support Call Centre for information on the government supports available to businesses and enterprises affected by COVID-19.

Tel: +353 1 631 2002

Email: infobusinesssupport@dbei.gov.ie