



27 April 2020

Daily briefing on Government measures in response to COVID-19

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Check against Delivery

Introduction and up-to-date Public Health Guidance

Good Morning.

As usual, I will begin by reminding you all of the vital public health advice helping us to slow the spread of the virus:

- Wash hands regularly and thoroughly
- Use good cough and sneeze etiquette
- Observe social distancing measures

I want to thank all of you who spent your weekend complying with the restrictions. Weekends are difficult and especially when we have good weather so I do want to say thank you to everyone who is working to comply with the restrictions. Your efforts are very much appreciated. We have made good progress in slowing the spread of COVID-19 but it is vital that we don't undo the good work now by relaxing our approach too early.

Everything you are doing, you are doing for your community, your extended family and the people most vulnerable to this disease.

We need to continue to observe the restrictions in place. We need to stay safe and stay at home unless we are engaged in essential work, buying essential supplies,

attending medical appointments or taking brief exercise within our 2km limit while maintaining social distancing.

Continuation of HSE services

As I have confirmed previously, the normal activity of the health service is continuing insofar as is possible at this time. We have seen an increase in the number of people attending appointments, but want to reiterate that it is vital to still attend hospitals as directed and to call emergency services in the event of incidents such as heart attack or stroke.

The HSE have a regularly updated list on their website of every hospital and any disruptions or changes they have had to make to normal operations in light of COVID-19, such as visitor restrictions and outpatient appointments.

Unless otherwise indicated, normal services for patients are still available in hospitals.

Business/Industry/Agriculture

Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme

Over 49,400 employers are registered with Revenue for the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme.

Over 347,094 employees have now received at least one payment under scheme.

This does not include additional employees who may receive a subsidy as a result of payments generated today.

Today (27th April), Revenue have generated further payments to employers under the scheme of €68.3 million.

These payments will be in the bank accounts of the majority of the respective employers tomorrow (28th April).

The cumulative value of payments made to employers under the scheme is now over €556 million.

TWSS Eligibility

Last Friday (24th April), Revenue announced that certain employers who hadn't fulfilled their PAYE reporting obligations for February 2020 by the 15th March 2020 will now be able to access the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS).

Employers whose February 2020 payroll submission was made to Revenue before the 1st April 2020 and for whom all previous months' payroll submissions were submitted to Revenue before 15th March will now be able to access the scheme, once they meet all other qualifying criteria.

Employers that were previously unable to access the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme and who now meet the revised criteria are automatically included in the Scheme. To avail of payments under the scheme, they should ensure eligible employees are set to J9 PRSI class on future payroll submissions.

Employers can take employees who were laid off after 29th February 2020 back onto the payroll for the purposes of the Scheme. It is important that any rehired employees who were receiving the COVID-19 related Pandemic Unemployment Payments (PUP) from the Department of Employment and Social Protection (DEASP) cease their claim.

Revenue and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection are sharing information to identify duplicate payments across both schemes.

Further details are available on Revenue's website and gov.ie.

Employees

Today, approximately 591,000 people will receive their weekly payment of €350 under the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment scheme.

These payments will be lodged into their nominated bank account or post office account tomorrow, 28th April.

There are still a small number of people, approximately 2,600, who entered an incorrect PPS Number or IBAN number and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection are contacting these people to obtain the correct information so that the payment can be made.

The number of applications submitted online through www.mywelfare.ie is increasing and this is the easiest and most efficient way of submitting an application.

There is also an online facility to close a claim, for example, where an employer has claimed the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme or where a claim was inadvertently made.

Community Measures & Supports

Community Fora

Over the weekend, the Community Call Fora received approximately 750 calls. They made approximately 350 follow-up calls to people who have contacted them.

Nationally, since the end of March, the Community Call Fora have received approximately 23,000 calls and have made over 10,500 follow-up calls.

Again, we encourage anyone who needs help, knows someone who needs help, or wants to volunteer to give help to contact their local forum.

Remember, you can find your local helpline on gov.ie. or you can call ALONE on 0818 222 024.

Children and Families/Education

Supports for groups at risk of educational disadvantage in further and higher education

A working group on mitigating educational disadvantage is supporting on-going responses to this evolving situation.

The group have identified a number of areas requiring specific attention at this time including:

- Continuation of crucial funding sources such as SUSI grants, the 1916 Bursary Scheme, the Student Assistant Fund, Fund for Students with disabilities and other supports.
- Supporting learners without access to sufficient technology.
- Continuation of services offered by access and disability offices and guidance counsellors and counselling services.

As I mentioned last week, the SUSI grant scheme opened for applications for the 2020/21 academic year on 23rd April. By close of business on the first day it had received almost 10,000 applications. The SUSI grant scheme contains flexibility to address matters which may arise due to COVID-19.

It was also announced that funding under strand 1 of the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) which supports access to initial teacher training by National Access Plan target groups will be continued for a further three years. This will ensure that initiatives supported under this fund will continue despite disruptions in education brought about by COVID-19.

Government's Still Here campaign

As I have mentioned here before, we would like to reassure anyone experiencing domestic abuse that local and national helplines and services are still available despite COVID-19. These are difficult times, we know that. We also want you to know that support and assistance is still here for you.

An Garda Síochána have noted an increase of approximately 20% nationally, in calls for help. However, they are aware that many people suffering domestic abuse may not be able to make that call themselves.

The Government has set up a collaborative campaign with frontline organisations to ensure victims are aware of, and can access services. Additional funding and prioritised supports for victims have been provided and new, specially created TV and Radio Ads are now running.

In addition, to help victims find frontline services in their area a new interactive map has been launched on StillHere.ie.

The map helps women and men find details of services close to them and we would encourage anyone who is feeling isolated or trapped to reach out for help.

The map was developed in consultation with community and voluntary groups by the Department of Justice and Equality.

The issue of domestic abuse, and the Still Here campaign, will feature on this evening's "Crimecall" on RTE.

As always, we would encourage anyone in imminent danger to call An Garda Síochána on 999/112. Gardaí have placed an increased focus on tackling the issue of domestic violence during the pandemic.

I would also like to remind you that, if you are seeking help from a violent or abusive relationship, the 2km travel rule does not apply. You can travel to get to safety, and you can travel to seek help. That is an essential journey.

International

Supporting Citizens Abroad

Contact details for all the missions can be found at dfa.ie. A COVID-19 call centre remains in operation from 8am – 8pm Monday to Friday to assist Irish citizens abroad by phone at – country code – 353- 1 613 1733 and at webchat at dfa.ie.

Wellbeing

On Friday, the Taoiseach launched a new cross-Government Wellbeing campaign - In This Together - which aims to help everyone in Ireland to Stay Connected, Stay Active, and look after their Mental Wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 Emergency. The campaign signposts useful advice to help people of every age group to cope with the ongoing restrictions, whether they are looking after children, dealing with self-isolation, preparing for the Leaving Cert, or coping with cabin fever.

In This Together will offer regular videos, ideas and activities for people of all ages throughout the crisis, over social media, through our partners in the media and promoted by the Community Call Forums which have been set up across Ireland. All this information is being made available on gov.ie/Together, on social media, television, radio and newspapers and you can find details of local initiatives through [Gov.ie](https://gov.ie) or your own local authority.

Finally

We are aware of reports on social media that some people are getting fed up of the social distancing measures, feeling confined, stuck in the house or a local area, having to queue up to get into shops.

It is frustrating and we know people's patience and resolve is waning.

We know that every day we are putting out that call for solidarity and community spirit, as well as personal and collective behavioural change, inventiveness and resilience from all of you. This is what is required of each and every one of us at each step to delay the transmission of COVID-19.

We know, that call hasn't fallen on deaf ears so far; we complied with the restrictions and have succeeded in reducing the spread of infection.

For now, we just need to keep going as best we can.

Thank you