



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Pathways to Work 2021-2025



Prepared by the Department
of Social Protection

The country has, over the past sixteen months, experienced a labour market shock like no other.

Many people were temporarily laid-off as a result of COVID-19. For many of these people, work has already returned or awaits their return, but for some people their old jobs have been permanently lost.

The purpose of this strategy is to help these people prepare for and secure employment.



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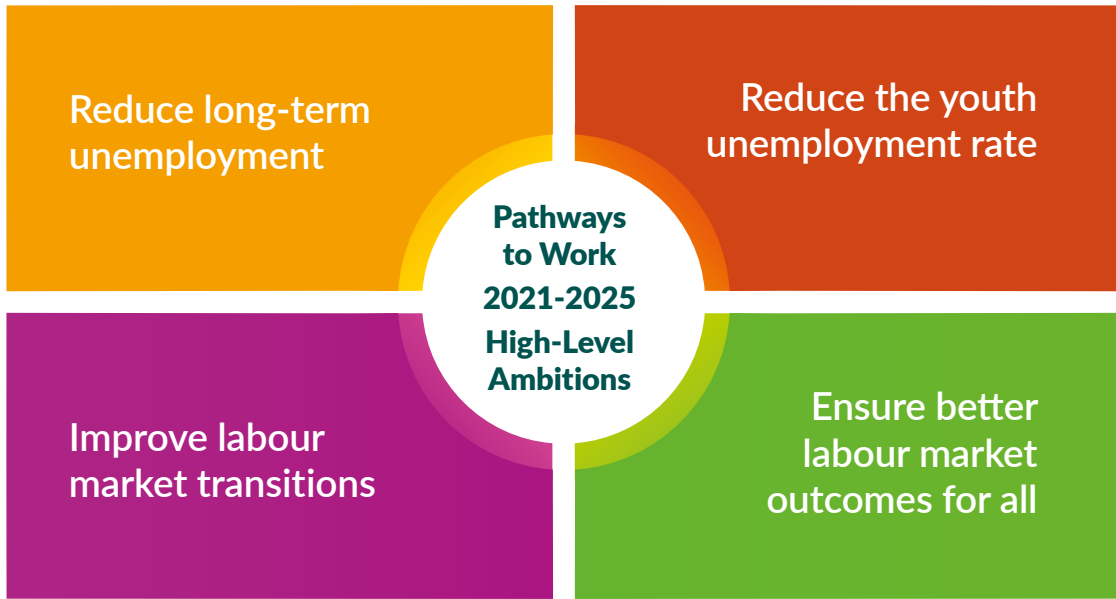
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High Level Ambitions



83 commitments, including

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Expand the caseload capacity of the Public Employment Service by increasing the number of Case Officers by 50%.
- 

Invest in digitalising the Public Employment Service to maximise the reach and efficiencies of blended service delivery.
- 

Assign a dedicated Case Officer to all unemployed people to help support them make the transition back to work.
- 

Pay employers a subsidy of €7,500 - €10,000 when they recruit an unemployed jobseeker.
- 

Deliver 1.6 million Case Officer engagements with jobseekers every 12 months.
- 

Host 150 Job Promotion Events annually.
- 

Launch a new paid Work Placement Experience Programme to benefit 10,000 jobseekers.
- 

Develop a new Employer Relations strategy.
- 

Deliver 10,000 apprenticeship opportunities every year by 2025.
- 

Develop proposals on delivering a basic income guarantee.
- 

Increase the number of places available on State Employment Schemes.
- 

Develop proposals for a new pay-related short-duration jobseeker payment.
- 

Offer 50,000 further education and training place opportunities.
- 

Reserve places on public employment programmes for young people and people from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds.

Taoiseach's Foreword



Ireland has, in common with all societies throughout the world, reeled from the effects of the pandemic. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the unprecedented impact on jobs and employment.

The Government's response has been equally unprecedented, providing critical income and employment supports, such as the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme to cushion this impact on workers and businesses.

We now need to match this extraordinary response to income supports with a similarly unparalleled response to helping people get back to work.

In doing so we want to not just rebuild our economy and society, but to rebuild better and to rebuild fairer.

As set out in the Economic Recovery Plan, this ambitious, forward-looking strategy, *Pathways to Work*, sets out a new model for Ireland's public employment services. It commits the State to 83 specific actions to help people reskill, retrain and most importantly, find and sustain new jobs.

It also commits to developing new models of welfare payments – payments that are not only fairer but that can adapt more easily to the changing nature of work.

I am particularly conscious of disruption to the lives and livelihoods of young people arising from the pandemic, including those who joined the labour force for the first time as they moved from full-time education. That is why under *Pathways to Work* the Government will invest significantly in employment supports for young people, by introducing and ring-fencing places on work placement programmes, by increasing the availability of apprenticeships, traineeships and education places and by offering employers attractive subsidies when they recruit young unemployed people.

Pathways to Work is not just about those who lost their jobs during the pandemic, it is also about helping those who even in pre-COVID times faced disadvantage in the labour market. Employment is vital to individual well-being not just in the financial sense but in terms of social, physical and mental health. That's why this strategy also includes specific commitments to improve labour market outcomes for people facing higher barriers to employment, including people from minority communities, people with disabilities, older people and people, including lone-parents, with extra caring responsibilities.

The Government is determined to drive a jobs-led economic recovery, to build back better, and to build back fairer.

Pathways to Work is a crucial part of our ambition to realise those goals.

Micheál Martin T.D.

An Taoiseach

As our society and economy re-open, our focus now is on supporting people back into employment.



Minister's Foreword



COVID-19 has demonstrated more than ever the importance of providing a strong social protection system for our citizens. From the onset of the pandemic, the Department of Social Protection and our staff across the country responded quickly and decisively to support hundreds of thousands of workers who lost their jobs overnight through no fault of their own.

As our society and economy re-open, our focus now is on supporting people back into employment. Thankfully many businesses are getting back up and running and more people are returning to work each week. While this is very positive, challenges remain.

The journey back to employment will not be the same for all. Unfortunately, some jobs will be permanently lost due to the impact of the pandemic. Through *Pathways to Work*, the Government's ambitious new employment strategy, we want to help and support those people to return to the workforce.

This strategy places a major focus on reducing and preventing long-term unemployment and in particular on supporting young people by giving them the skills and training they need to find a job. Backed by a total of 83 commitments across Government, it sets out our plans to deliver over 1.6 million engagements with jobseekers each year, to provide 50,000 new education and training places, to provide 10,000 new work placement opportunities and to provide 10,000 apprenticeships each year between now and 2025.

In looking to the future, it is important that we build on the experiences gained during the pandemic. That is why we have also committed to bring forward detailed proposals on the development of a new pay related jobseekers' payment and a basic income guarantee.

Delivering on the commitments set out in *Pathways to Work* will be critical to Ireland's overall recovery process as we seek to build a more inclusive and resilient society for all.

Heather Humphreys T.D.

Minister for Social Protection

Executive Summary and Key Deliverables

The Challenge

Over the past sixteen months, this country has experienced a labour market shock like no other.

Many people were temporarily laid-off work as a result of COVID-19. Many of these people have already returned to work, or will return in the near future. But for some people their old jobs are permanently lost. They will join other people who experienced job loss and unemployment prior to the pandemic, as well as others who, while not traditionally considered unemployed (for example people with caring responsibilities or people with disabilities), are not in employment but would like support in getting a job.

This strategy will help all these people prepare for and secure employment.

It sets out how the State will deliver vital employment support to the unemployed. This includes employment advice and guidance, job matching, employment placement programmes, and opportunities

for upskilling. Under this strategy opportunities to secure paid work experience, to take up further education and training places and to pursue self-employment will be provided. This strategy will provide financial supports for recruitment subsidies to help employers hire new workers and to bias their recruitment towards unemployed people, in particular towards young jobseekers.

Intreo, our Public Employment Service, will work with its partners in the Further Education and Training sector, employers and the community and voluntary sector to ensure all unemployed people, those affected by the pandemic and those who lost employment before the pandemic, have the opportunity to secure and sustain employment. This will enable these people to secure their future and the future of their families and communities.

Our Ambition

It is easy to say these things, but in practice, it is much harder to deliver on bold statements.

To ensure a focus on delivery and as a sign of the Government's commitment to ensuring better labour market outcomes for all, this strategy commits to 83 specific actions.

By delivering on these 83 actions, our ambition is to **restore unemployment back to or below its pre-pandemic levels of 2019**, when the economy was close to full employment. Specifically, we aim to:

- **Reduce long-term unemployment.**
Get 75,000 long-term unemployed people into employment by July 2023.
- **Reduce the proportion of long-term unemployed jobseekers** to 2.5% of the labour force in 2025.
- **Reduce the Youth Unemployment Rate** back to, or below, the 2019 average of 12.5% by 2023¹.
- **Improve employment rates of people from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds.**
This will include targeting an increase in employment rates of lone parents from 63% to the EU average of 74% and for people with disabilities from 22% to 33%.
- **Reduce unemployment durations** by reducing the rate at which newly unemployed people progress into long-term unemployment back to, or below, its pre-pandemic level of 16% by 2023.

¹ Youth unemployment is measured as the total number of young people under 25 classified as unemployed in the Labour Force Survey, as a percentage of the total number of persons under 25 in the labour market.



Our Plan of Action and Commitments

Other Government action plans and strategies, including the *Economic Recovery Plan*, have the objective of increasing business investment and employment opportunities.

Stated simply, the goal of *Pathways to Work 2021-2025* is to ensure that as many of these opportunities as possible are filled by people who are unemployed. This includes all unemployed, those whose jobs were lost due to COVID-19, those already on the Live Register pre-pandemic and those in society that face particular challenges in finding and sustaining employment.

Some jobseekers have strong social and family networks that support them in accessing employment opportunities, others do not. The role of *Intreo*, the Public Employment Service, is to work for all and ensure that everybody who is unemployed has the support and help they need to improve their employment prospects.

Pathways to Work seeks to ensure Ireland's labour force is well positioned to respond to future economic, societal and environmental challenges.

To achieve these goals and deliver on our target ambitions, the strategy sets out 83 commitments under five 'Strands of Action'.

- 1 Working for Jobseekers
- 2 Working for Employers
- 3 Working for Work
- 4 Working for All – Leaving No One behind
- 5 Working with Evidence

1 Working for Jobseekers

Help jobseekers prepare for and find employment as quickly as possible.

- **Intreo will act as the one-stop-shop for referrals to all employment supports and services and will operate an open-door policy for all jobseekers.**
- **Expand the caseload capacity of the Public Employment Service by 100,000 jobseekers and increase the number of Department of Social Protection Case Officers by 50%.**
- **Use this capacity to assign a dedicated Case Officer** to all unemployed people.
- **Deliver 1.6 million Case Officer engagements** with jobseekers every 12 months.
- **Deliver a new quality paid Work Placement Experience Programme**, at a total cost of €95 million, to provide 10,000 unemployed people with the opportunity to build on-the-job experience by end-2022.
- **Increase the number of new apprentice registrations to 10,000 per year by 2025.**
- **Provide an extra 3,000 places on State Employment Schemes** at an additional cost of €50 million bringing the total cost of employment schemes per annum to €475 million, to support people, particularly those facing the greatest barriers, in getting back to work.
- **Deliver an additional 50,000 further education and training places** to help more people to have the opportunity to upskill and reskill.
- **Improve access to further education and self-employment opportunities** through increased funding for the Back to Education and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance schemes, with additional funding of €10 million per annum available across both schemes.
- **Increase the maximum value of the Training Support Grant available via Intreo from €500 to €1,000**, with a total cost of €11 million per annum. This will help over 12,500 jobseekers per annum to access relevant and accredited training programmes outside of the formal state provided system of further and higher education.
- **Go digital** by taking advantage of remote and online service capabilities to extend the reach of and efficiencies in service delivery.



2 Working for Employers

Make it easy for employers to recruit workers and bias that recruitment towards unemployed jobseekers, including young people.

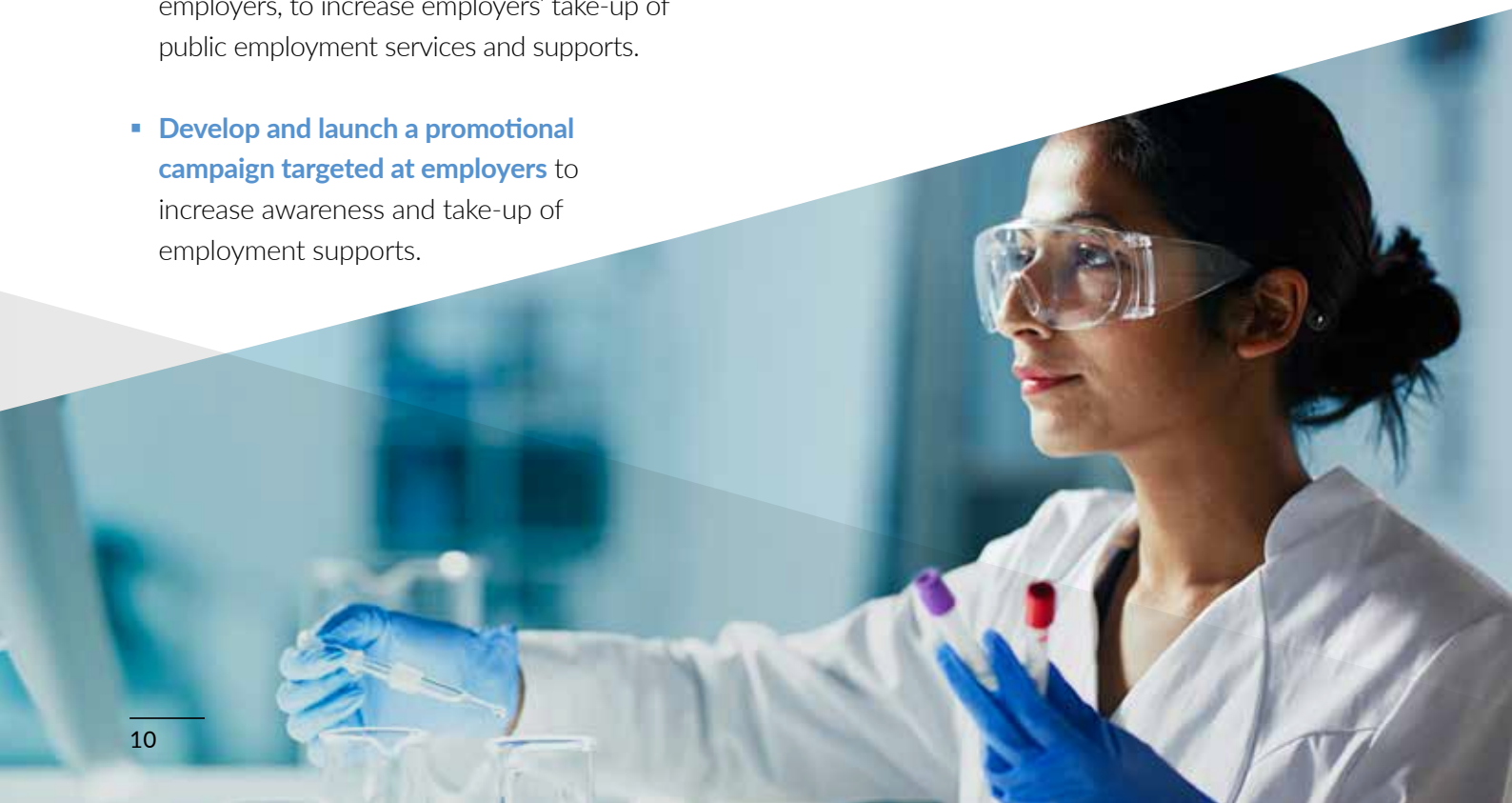
- **Pay employers recruitment subsidies of €7,500 – €10,000 to benefit 8,000 jobseekers** at a cost of €28 million every year, with a particular focus on young unemployed people and people who are long-term unemployed.
- **Host 150 job promotion events** annually across the country to help link employers with workers blending an online and in person approach.
- **As part of this work, host a number of job promotion events to match jobseekers with remote working opportunities.**
- **Recruit 25 additional employer relations specialists** to expand employer facing recruitment capacity within *Intreo*.
- **Deliver, with the Labour Market Advisory Council, a new employer relations strategy** to further strengthen linkages with employers, to increase employers' take-up of public employment services and supports.
- **Develop and launch a promotional campaign targeted at employers** to increase awareness and take-up of employment supports.

3 Working for Work

Ensuring that the welfare system supports – and makes it easy for people to make the transition into – employment.

Specifically, progress the delivery of:

- **A basic income guarantee** modelled on the working family payment to ensure that the system of welfare payments supports people, including people on non-jobseeker payments, to make the transition to work.
- **A new pay-related short-duration jobseeker payment**, building on the experience of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment to reduce income shock on loss of employment.
- **A new short-time work support scheme** that would enable employers to keep their staff on their payroll in the event of a temporary shock to their business.
- **A new statutory sick pay scheme** to provide cover and protect workers' income when they are ill.



Working for Young People

Regardless, of gender, age or background every person who becomes unemployed feels the same shock and sense of disbelief. Everyone who struggles to find a job experiences the same loss of confidence and hope.

It is important therefore that this strategy strives to work for everyone – everyone who is unemployed has the right to expect and receive support from the State.

In general, young people are often the first to be laid-off but are also the most resilient and are often the first to find new work. Having said that, we also have to recognise that a prolonged period of unemployment at a young age can have a permanent scarring effect.

For this reason, the commitments and actions set out in this strategy, while intended for all, are designed with a particular view to helping young people.

In addition, as part of a Reinforced **Youth Guarantee**, we will earmark and reserve specific places on key programmes for young unemployed people.

Specific measures that will help young people include:

- The **Work Placement Experience Programme** – with at least 4,000 places ring-fenced for young people.
- The **JobsPlus recruitment subsidy** – with a subsidy of between €7,500 and €10,000 being available, on an earlier basis than normal, to employers when they recruit young people.
- Relaunching and expanding the **Youth Employment Charter** with employers to promote recruitment through **Intreo** of young unemployed people.
- Increasing the total number of new apprentice registrations to at least 10,000 per annum by 2025.
- Providing **50,000 further education and training** places.
- **Ring-fencing at least 1,000 out of the 3,000** additional Community Employment and Tús places for young people.

Further detail on these and other initiatives are provided as part of **Strand 4 – Working for All**.

Our target, with these initiatives, is to get youth employment back to, or below, its 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

4 Working for All – Leaving No One Behind

Extend targeted employment supports to groups facing additional challenges such as people with disabilities, lone parents and minority groups, including people from the Traveller and Roma communities.

- **Ring-fence 5,000 places on public employment programmes for young people**, including at least 4,000 on the Work Placement Experience Programme and at least 1,000 on State Employment Schemes.
- **Implement the Early Engagement Roadmap for jobseekers with disabilities.**
- **Deliver dedicated recruitment events for older workers and ‘returners’** to help them engage with employers and to encourage their recruitment.
- **Ring-fence 1,000 places on public employment programmes for people from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds**, including those from the Traveller and Roma communities, to help people from these backgrounds build work experience and overcome barriers to employment.
- **Develop a Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan.**
- **Consult with stakeholders from the Traveller and Roma communities** to advise on the development of Traveller and Roma specific employment service supports.
- **Exploit the opportunities provided by the positive experience on remote working during the pandemic to further support access to employment for all**, including those facing challenges in accessing employment.

5 Working with Evidence

Delivering services and supports that are informed by evidence and are shown to work.

The experience of COVID-19 has further underlined the need for informing policy decisions with expert advice based on hard evidence. It is intended to build on this by:

- **Based on international best practice, conducting formal evaluations of employment support programmes** to assess their impacts and inform future design so that they deliver improved employment outcomes for participants.
- **Publishing performance and evaluation data** on a quarterly and annual basis so that progress can be tracked and the factors influencing policy-making are transparent.
- **Undertaking a mid-term review** of this strategy in 2023 with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council.

Delivery of high-level targets and key commitments will be monitored over the period of the strategy with annual progress reports, based on outcomes measured by key performance data and qualitative analysis.



01

Introduction

The Public Employment Service
and the Road to Recovery

Context

'Pathways to Work' is Ireland's national employment services strategy; the Government's policy framework for helping people who are unemployed prepare for, secure and sustain employment.

In particular, the goal of *Pathways to Work 2021-2025* is to help ensure that all those jobs that will be created or become vacant in the years ahead are made available to, and that as many as possible go to, people on the Live Register or other people who are unemployed, who would like to work but face disadvantage in finding employment².

It sets out to do this against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic – an event that caused a major shock to the Irish labour market, leading to significant reduction in business activity and employment levels.

Although we are now beginning to recover from those impacts, it is likely that COVID-19 will continue to influence the economic and labour market landscape for some time to come.

The scale and scope of this 'aftershock' is uncertain, but it is clear that some changes to patterns of consumer behaviour that accelerated during the pandemic are now embedded as a 'new norm' and will persist post-pandemic.

Equally changes in how employers organise production – including greater use of digital technology and remote working – are now well embedded and will persist.

While many of these changes, which increase productivity, will ultimately be to the benefit of our economy and our people, they will have implications not just for the nature of work but, in the short to medium-term, for employment levels across virtually every sector of the economy.

This means that some people who were laid-off during the pandemic will not return to their previous employment. These people will need support to find new jobs, in many cases in different sectors, which will require new skills.

This is the unprecedented and evolving context in which this employment services strategy is framed.

The pandemic is not the only backdrop to this strategy. We also have to have regard to the pre-existing challenges, including low participation and employment rates among some groups and a number of other established and emerging developments, such as Brexit, digitalisation and the transition to a green economy.

This complex and evolving situation requires an agile policy response by the State. For that reason, this *Pathways to Work* strategy, although developed with a five-year time horizon, will be subject to a mid-term review in 2023.

² *Pathways to Work 2021-2025* will act as the successor to the Action Plan for Jobless Households (2017-2020).

Pathways to Work: Wider Strategic Framework

Figure 1 below shows the wider strategic policy context on labour market and skills within which this *Pathways to Work* strategy has been formulated. There are three documents of particular importance:

- **The Economic Recovery Plan** sets out the Government’s ambition for a jobs-led economic recovery, and a roadmap to achieving that ambition. *Pathways to Work 2021 - 2025* is central to this plan and sets out the strategy to be followed by Ireland’s national Public Employment Service in delivering on this mission in the years ahead.
- **Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025** sets out how communities around the country will be supported to win their share of business and employment opportunities to help their communities develop and prosper.
- **The National Skills Strategy 2025** is focused on ensuring that our workforce is equipped with the right skills and competencies both to enable, and to take advantage of, these opportunities.

Figure 1: Public Policy Framework for Economic and Labour Market Recovery



*“The focus of this document – Pathways to Work – is to ensure that as many employment and training opportunities as possible are made available, via the **Intreo** Public Employment Service, to people who are unemployed and that they are supported in preparing for and competing for these opportunities in order to secure and sustain employment.”*

This strategy also forms part of Government’s response to international and EU policy developments and commitments, including the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This strategy is also aligned with the more recent *European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*³ and the EU Commission Recommendation for *Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE)*, which sets out an EU wide approach to move to active employment and activation support measures, as economies transition from COVID-19 emergency supports⁴.

³ The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (2021)

⁴ EU Commission Recommendation for Effective Active Support to Employment (EASE)



Delivering a Quality Public Employment Service

Employment provides a route out of poverty and social exclusion and encourages active participation in society. The development and introduction of **Intreo** over the past decade, integrating both income maintenance and employment supports in a ‘one-stop-shop’, represents one of the most far-reaching reforms in employment services policy. This reform has brought Ireland in line with established practices elsewhere in Europe⁵.

Arising, partly from these changes, it is notable that employment recovery from the 2008-2012 global financial crisis was markedly different to that of previous recessions. In particular, the reduction in the number of people unemployed led rather than followed economic growth. Moreover, the reduction in the number of people who experienced long-term unemployment exceeded the reduction

in unemployment generally. This is in marked contrast to the experience in the 1990s when it took a number of years of economic growth before unemployment numbers fell and six years of growth before there was a reduction in long-term unemployment. By comparison, this recovery from the financial crisis shows what can be achieved with determined effort and provides strong grounds for optimism.

However, labour market impacts arising from COVID-19, the consequences of Brexit, as well as the underlying changes to the nature of work all present new challenges. It is timely therefore to consider how the Public Employment Service – **Intreo** – should respond to address the challenges now faced and ensure that the service it provides remains fit for purpose and supports the goal of national economic recovery.

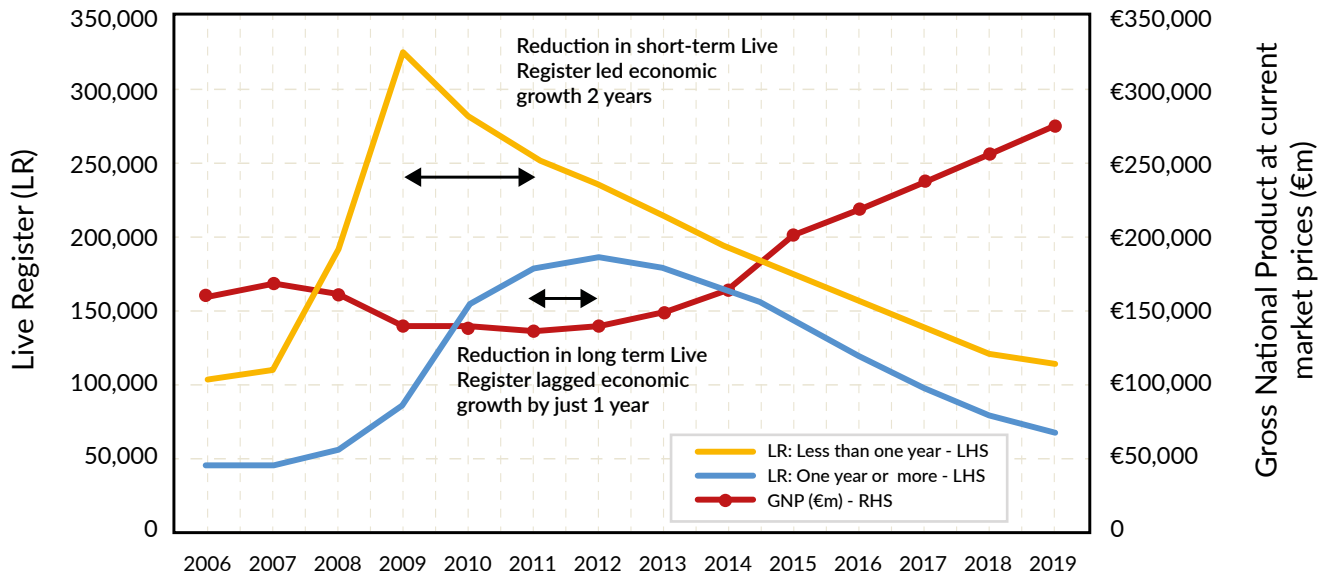
⁵ DPER: Case study on **Intreo**: The one-stop-shop for jobseekers in Ireland (July 2017).



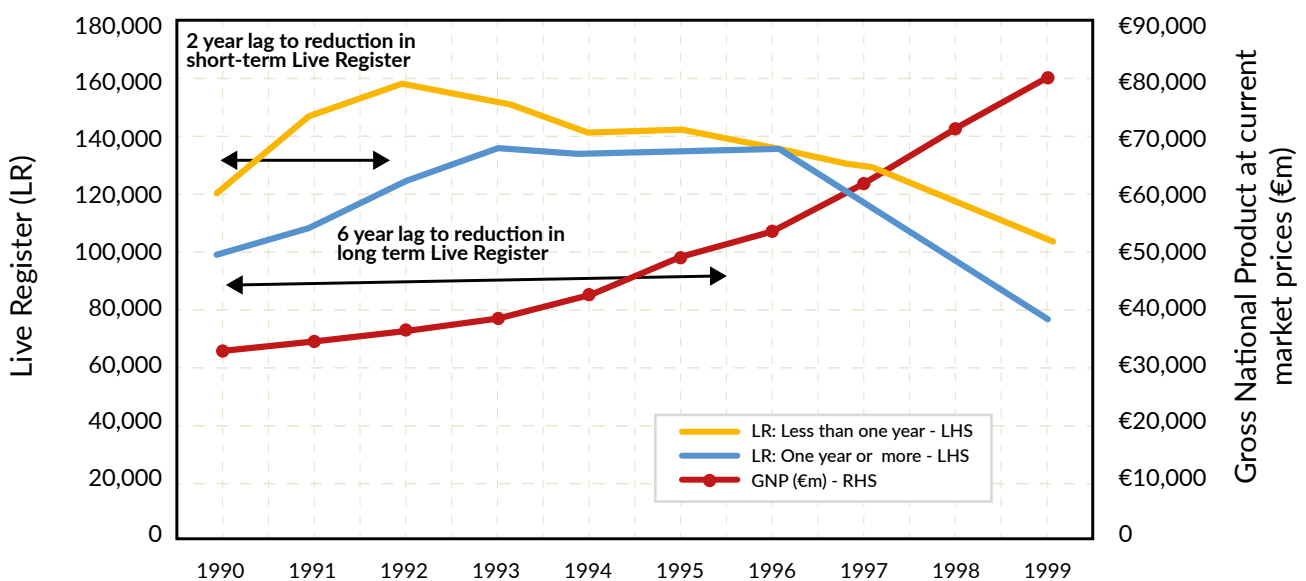
Employment provides a route out of poverty and social exclusion and encourages active participation in society.

Figure 2: Economic Recovery (Live Register Trends vs Gross National Product)

Recovery from Global Financial Crash 2008/2012 – A Jobs Led Recovery



Recession of late 1980s/1990s – A Jobs Lagged Recovery



Data Source: CSO and DSP administrative data.

The External Environment: COVID-19 Shock and 'Aftershock'

The economic and societal challenges of unemployment changed dramatically over the past sixteen months. When the Government commenced the drafting of this strategy early in 2020, following an extensive consultation process in 2019, it did so against the backdrop of close to full employment, albeit with the known threat of Brexit and the ongoing challenges of digitalisation and decarbonisation.

This landscape has now changed in a manner, and to an extent, that could not have been anticipated. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen an unprecedented deterioration in labour market conditions. From a situation where just under 200,000 people were in receipt of jobseeker payments at the end of 2019, the number of people in receipt of State welfare supports – jobseeker payments, wage subsidises or the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) – reached over 1.2m in May 2020 and now stands at approximately 700,000.

While some of this will be temporary and employment in many sectors will recover as COVID-19 vaccines are rolled out, and people use savings accumulated over the pandemic period to catch up on delayed consumption, the scale of the shock both in terms of breadth of sectors affected and the duration of the impact may have a lasting effect – an 'aftershock' – along at least three dimensions.

Three Dimensions of 'Aftershock':

1. Changes to consumption behaviours

Business and consumers have changed behaviours. Some changes may be permanent, in whole or in part. As a consequence, demand for some products and services may not recover to previous levels (for example high street retail or office services). On the other hand, demand in other sectors which have increased during the pandemic, for example delivery services, may remain at levels considerably higher than its pre-COVID-19 norm.

2. Short to Medium-term capacity constraints

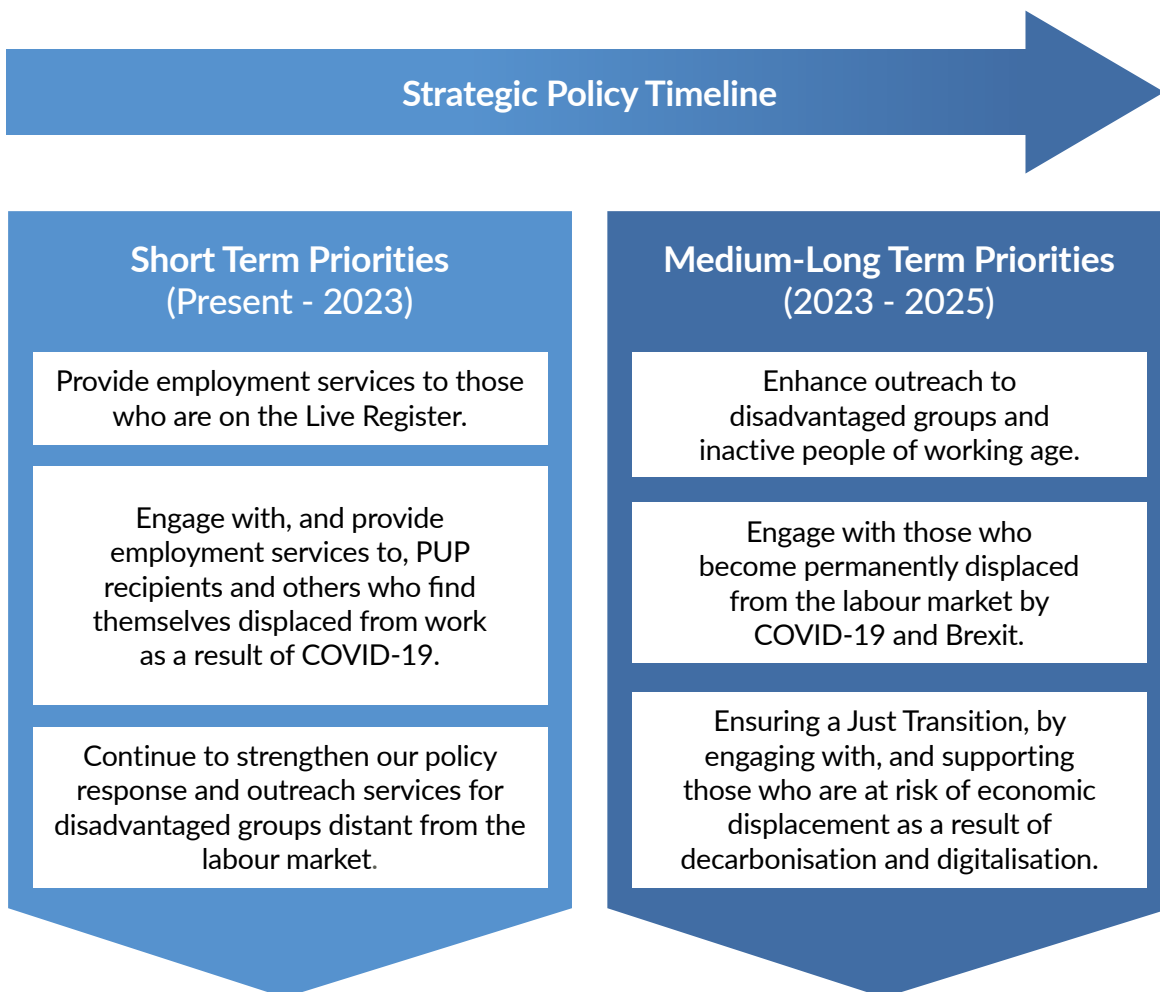
In some sectors, for example international travel and transport, supply constraints related to the imposition of public health restrictions on a global scale and the high level of uncertainty regarding the outcome of the pandemic has led to planned investments in capacity being delayed. Even as the immediate impact of COVID-19 recedes, the experience of the pandemic may lead to a higher level of risk aversion and a slower resumption in investment activity than might otherwise be the case. This means that the capacity of firms in these sectors to expand production in the short to medium-term above 2019 levels may be more limited than anticipated. This may depress demand for labour.

3. Capturing Productivity Gains

Some employers will have reengineered their business processes to enable them to continue to trade via measures such as remote working/social distancing and increased use of online service options during the pandemic. These changes will, in some cases, have led to reduced costs and introduced efficiencies in the face of reduced revenue streams. These cost saving measures will have yielded productivity gains that will now be captured by the employers concerned. While this will improve competitiveness and support higher levels of employment in the future, it will further depress or change demand for labour, at least in some sectors, in the short to medium-term.

For *Intreo*, all of this means that it now needs to shift focus and significantly increase its capacity to support jobseekers and employers in adjusting to and overcoming the aftershock of COVID-19. To help jobseekers whose former job is no longer available to them to move on to new jobs, and to help employers in growth sectors, and in sectors where demand may take some time to recover, to maximise use of labour by facilitating the recruitment of people with as little risk, and as low a hiring cost, as possible and to bias that recruitment towards people on the Live Register.

Figure 3: Short to Medium and Long-Term Strategic Perspective



While the impact of COVID-19 is the clear and present challenge to employment, there are other imminent and medium-term challenges on the horizon which must inform any employment services strategy.

These include, on the demand side, the ongoing impact of Brexit, climate change/ decarbonisation, the changing world of work, digitalisation and ongoing technological advancements.

On the supply side of the labour market, challenges persist with regards to low levels of labour market participation among people with disabilities, lone parents and other groups most distant from the labour market, including those from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds.

It is, in fact, arguable that the impact of COVID-19 has been to accelerate many of the medium/longer term demand side impacts that were already foreseen while, at the same time, making the supply-side participation challenges more acute.

For example, on the demand side the impact of digital working, robotics, artificial intelligence and decarbonisation has already

increased productivity and reduced unit labour requirements in administrative, manufacturing, and food production occupations among others.

This trend, accelerated by COVID-19, in turn reduces, at least to some extent, the opportunities that may entice non-participating people into the labour market and increases competition for the available jobs from people who were already active.

Accordingly, while we must focus on the clear and present challenge of the COVID-19 'shock and aftershock' we cannot afford to lose sight of the other key objective that was initially expected to form the focus of *Pathways to Work*. This being, to increase labour market participation among non-active groups and, in particular, encouraging people who are underrepresented in the workforce – including, for example, people with disabilities, people who are parenting alone, people from ethnic minorities, and people who may have taken time out of the workforce to care for children – to take up training and employment opportunities.



While the impact of COVID-19 is the clear and present challenge to employment, there are other imminent and medium-term challenges on the horizon which must inform any employment services strategy.

Challenges and Actions

While the external environment sets the challenge, how the Public Employment Service adapts to face this challenge will play a significant role in determining the success or otherwise of the State's response.

In the period ahead, Ireland's Public Employment Service, in particular *Intreo*, and the further education and training sector, will face a series of distinct organisational challenges. These can be stated as follows.

- **First, there will be the challenge of scale.** This derives from the demand placed upon the capacity of *Intreo* and the further education sector by the sheer numbers of those displaced from work over recent months. We will need to increase our employment services capacity to match this challenge and ensure that all jobseekers can access employment and training supports. This will require both extra resources and programmes across the full range of employment and training supports and more efficient use of those resources and programmes.
- **Second, is the challenge of embracing digital service delivery.** The Public Employment Service will need to adapt its model of service delivery to take advantage of digital capabilities and to respond to client preferences. This will require innovation in the development of a digital model of service delivery to complement and augment the traditional 'face-to face' model of service delivery. This approach will also help maximise the capacity of the service to respond to the scale challenge.
- **Third, is the challenge of flexibility/ adaptability in responding to changing client profiles.** Many of the people who will avail of the service in coming months and years may have had only limited prior interaction with the Public Employment Service and in many cases this will be their first experience of unemployment. The profile of the people presenting from employment in terms of experience, qualifications, digital literacy, and ability to 'self-serve' will be different to that of people who have been unemployed for some time and are more distant from the labour market. Equally when we look to work with inactive groups to increase participation, we are likely to encounter people who, even if they are highly capable, have limited recent workplace experience and will need more intensive and personalised support in developing relevant workplace skills and confidence. This broad client profile will be challenging to the Service and will require it to be adaptable in tailoring its approach to the profile of individual clients.

- **Fourth, is the challenge of ensuring seamless referral to relevant upskilling opportunities.** Many of the jobseekers who will seek support, in particular those who previously worked in sectors most impacted by the pandemic, (or indeed Brexit, digitalisation or decarbonisation), will require intensive job-seeking and retraining supports in order to facilitate their transition into employment in new sectors (or occupations) on foot of the restricted demand for labour in those sectors in which they had previously worked.
- **Fifth, is the challenge of co-opting employers into working with the Public Employment Service.** A key component to the success of any Public Employment Service is the strength of the linkages it builds with employers. This is critical to anticipating future labour market developments, to developing relevant training programmes and in particular, to ensuring that employers are pre-disposed to offer employment opportunities to clients of the Public Employment Service. It is critically important that the service provided by *Intreo* works for jobseekers, but also works for employers. In fact, if the latter is not achieved then the former is impossible.
- **Sixth, is the challenge of ensuring that the welfare system “works for work”.** Given changes in the nature of work, and in the labour market generally, the question of how the welfare system interacts with the labour market both to assure income adequacy, (whether in employment or unemployment), and ensure a smooth transition from welfare to work, will need to be considered.
- **Seventh, is the challenge of ensuring we follow evidence to prioritise programmes with positive client outcomes.** The broad range of services and tools that are available to support any unemployed jobseeker can create internal and external tensions. Experience demonstrates that once a scheme or programme is created, it can, understandably, take on a life and purpose of its own, and it can be difficult to reallocate resources away from an established scheme to other, perhaps more effective, schemes. For this reason, it is important that the Public Employment Service takes an evidence-based approach to inform how the scarce resources of the State are prioritised in an agile manner and targeted towards schemes and interventions that are shown to work.

▪ **Eighth, is the challenge of retaining a medium/long-term strategic focus.**

While responding to the needs of people displaced by COVID-19 and/or any of the other three challenges – Brexit, decarbonisation and digitalisation – we must also continue to help people who were already struggling to find employment

even when the economy was at close to full employment. We must also remain focused on the medium to long-term goal of increasing active labour force participation and employment rates of people most at risk of poverty and those from minority and disadvantaged groups.

In response to these eight challenges this *Pathways to Work* strategy sets out five strands of action:

Figure 4: The Five Strands of Action of the *Pathways to Work* (2021 - 2025) Strategy



Goals and Objectives: Inputs, Outputs & Outcomes

The remainder of this strategy sets out how the Public Employment Service intends to respond to the external and internal challenges set out above. It sets out a series of actions/commitments that are designed, primarily, to ensure that the experience of unemployment for any person is as short as possible and that any person who wishes to access support to take up new employment – whether they are unemployed, in employment or inactive, can do so.

As part of the development of this strategy, and in order to ensure that it is effective, a series of targets have been identified.

These are in the form of:

Inputs:

The actions that it is proposed to take, e.g. increase the number of employment Case Officers.

Outputs:

The number of services that are delivered as a result of these inputs, e.g. the number of 1-to-1 advisory meetings between Case Officers and clients.

Outcomes:

The impact of the inputs/outcomes on key employment/labour market metrics, e.g. a reduction in the rate at which newly unemployed people become long-term unemployed.

In total this strategy sets out 83 inputs in the form of specific commitments under each of the five strands of action. The full set of commitments is listed in the Appendix together with the target date for delivery and the lead Department/agency with responsibility for its delivery.

In addition, Table 1 overleaf sets out a number of selected Key Performance Indicators – input, output and outcome measures – against which performance of the strategy will be assessed.

The overall target, in terms of outcomes, is to restore these key measures of labour market operation to their 2019 pre-pandemic levels – when the economy was last at close to full employment.

Progress against these measures, and the full list of commitments, will be monitored by the Labour Market Advisory Council and reported quarterly to Government.



Table 1: Selected Key Performance Indicators

	Measure	Objective
Inputs	Increase the number of Case Officers across the Public Employment Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Department of Social Protection Case Officer⁶ capacity by 150 staff (or by 50%). Expand the reach of regional employment services capacity so that it covers the entire State by end 2021.
	Increase the number of training programme places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund 50,000 additional places in further and higher education by end-2021.
	Increase the number of work placement places and job subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a new Work Placement Experience Programme with 10,000 places. Increase number of places on State Employment Schemes by 3,000⁷. Increase funding for JobsPlus recruitment subsidy to €28.3 million (bringing it up to 8,000 places).
	Increase outbound campaigns with employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host 150 Job Promotion Events (virtual or in person) each year, including bespoke events for young jobseekers. Host 2 national work and skills weeks each year.
Outputs	Number of 1-to-1 Case Officer engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct 1,600,000 1-to-1 Case Officer/jobseeker meetings per annum.
	Further Education and Training commencements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support 50,000 long-term unemployed people to commence in Further Education and Training provision by 2025.
	Work / State Employment Scheme placements and job subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10,000 people to commence Work Experience placements by end 2022. 14,000 to commence State Employment Schemes (Community Employment/Tús) placements. 8,000 people to benefit from JobsPlus subsidy by end 2022.
	Employment opportunity awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach 60,000 jobseekers and 5,000 employers through 150 Job Promotion Events and other employment support events per annum.

⁶ References to 'Case Officer(s)' should be read to include Job Coaches and Mediators and employment relations advisors, unless stated otherwise.

⁷ From baseline 2020.

Table 1: Selected Key Performance Indicators (continued)

	Measure	Objective
Outcomes	Long-term unemployment rate (using Live Register)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the proportion of long-term unemployed jobseekers, from 3% of the labour force in 2019, to 2.8% in 2023 and 2.5% in 2025⁸.
	Progression from Long-Term Unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move 75,000 people long-term unemployed and in receipt of jobseeker supports as at 01/07/2021 into employment by 01/07/2023.
	Improve Labour Market Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the rate at which newly unemployed people become long-term unemployed back to or under its pre-pandemic level of 16% by 2023⁹.
	Youth Unemployment Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the youth unemployment rate to below the 2019 average of 12.5% by 2023¹⁰.
	Improve outcomes for people most distant from the labour market, including lone parents and people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase employment rates of lone parents and people with disabilities from 63% to 74% by 2025 and from 22% to 33% by 2026, respectively.

⁸ Jobseekers are PUP or JA/JB recipients on the Live Register, excluding casual claims. The annual percentages are averages taken over 4 quarters, where for each quarter, the end of quarter jobseeker total is calculated as a percentage of the size of the labour force (all persons aged 15 years and over) in that quarter.

⁹ This rate is the percentage of all individuals with new Live Register claims in a period, excluding casuals, who remained on the Live Register as non-casuals for 12 consecutive months after starting a claim. The 16% target is based on the rate for those newly unemployed between March 2018 and February 2019 (i.e. 12 months before the pandemic). This percentage of individuals is higher than the percentage of claims that become long-term.

¹⁰ 2019 average based on quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) data.

The Labour Market Advisory Council - Evidence Based Policy

The Labour Market Advisory Council was established in 2019 to provide advice to Government on employment and labour market issues. The Council's membership brings together representatives and experts from industry, academia, business, trade unions and civil society.

Under its Terms of Reference, part of the Council's remit is to provide the Minister for Social Protection and Government with input to and advice on the development of *Pathways to Work*, as well as in monitoring its implementation and reporting on progress. The Council was consulted during the formulation of this strategy and provided its observations to the Minister. These observations were of considerable assistance during the finalisation of this strategy.

Under this strategy, and as part of this remit, the Labour Market Advisory Council is tasked with assisting with three specific matters.

Monitoring and Review

The Labour Market Advisory Council will independently monitor and review progress under the *Pathways to Work* strategy. Specifically, it will be tasked with conducting and providing the Minister with annual reviews of progress and with contributing to a mid-term review and revision of the strategy in 2023. These reviews will facilitate an evaluation of the delivery and impact of the actions taken and will also enable the reassessment of needs and priorities as Ireland's labour market starts to benefit from the broader economic recovery.

Informing Actions with Evidence

Internationally, there is a standard 'toolkit' available to support unemployed jobseekers ranging from job search advice and assistance through work-placements, reskilling and retraining, recruitment subsidies/incentives, longer term education, and, State Employment Schemes (Tús/Community Employment, etc.). Typically, the deployment of tools from this toolkit is based on an assessment of each individual's needs and evidence of what works in different situations.

There is a significant body of evidence available both in Ireland and from abroad to inform how the service should respond to help people who need support in finding and sustaining employment.

This evidence must be refreshed, kept up to date and complemented by expert insight to aid in its interpretation and application. The Labour Market Advisory Council is therefore being tasked with supporting the Department of Social Protection by providing input to the specification and completion of relevant formal analysis of programme impact.

Building and Enhancing Employer Linkages

Given its broad representation, the Labour Market Advisory Council is being asked to advise the Department of Social Protection on how *Intreo* can further strengthen its approach to engaging with, and building awareness among, employers¹¹. The Council is also being asked to encourage employers to work with *Intreo* to ensure employment opportunities are made available to unemployed jobseekers and, in so doing, to help ensure that the supports available and referrals to education and training are matched to regional employment opportunities and growth areas.

¹¹ An Employer Engagement sub-group has been established to assist with this work.



Welcome to your local Intreo Centre

A new name and a better service.

Employment services and income supports are now available in one place.

Intreo

Seirbhísí Fostaíochta agus Tacaíochta
Employment and Support Services

Intreo

Working for Jobseekers

The Mission of the Public Employment Service

Stated simply, the goal or mission of *Intreo*, or any Public Employment Service, is to help people who are unemployed to find and sustain employment. It does this by working both with jobseekers and with employers.

For jobseekers, the approach is to help them develop and pursue a personal progression plan including steps to identify and compete for suitable employment opportunities, to take-up relevant work experience, to pursue upskilling and training programmes, to set up their own business, to return to full-time education, and to participate in State/community employment programmes.

In doing this, *Intreo* provides support and advice that can help jobseekers overcome barriers to employment and compensate, at least partially, for differences in the social and personal capital/networks that can often prove the difference between finding employment or remaining unemployed.

The evidence on what works best

In general, there is a standard menu or ‘toolkit’ of actions that are available to Public Employment Service providers to help jobseekers find their footing in the labour market. Although opinions vary, the evidence from a significant body of research internationally, also reflected in studies in the Irish labour market in recent years, indicates that those programmes and activities that are closely connected to the ‘open labour market’ are the most effective in helping people secure and sustain employment.

While the results of studies taken at different times and in different jurisdictions can be mixed, overall, they suggest a rough ranking of the available approaches as follows:

- Job search advice and monitoring
- Work placements/experience programmes
- Short duration specific skill programmes
- Recruitment incentives
- Longer duration training/education programmes
- State Employment Schemes¹².

Studies of programme effectiveness in Ireland reflect this rough rank order with work placement, job advice/assistance and recruitment subsidies shown to have the most positive results in terms of employment progression, with longer term education programmes shown to be less effective, at least in the short to medium-term¹³.

It is important to note that these findings reflect *average outcomes* across the full cohort of jobseekers. Therefore, while they should inform the approach to service design, we also need to tailor the approach to the needs of the individual knowing that what works for the average or typical jobseeker will not necessarily work for all. So, for example, referral to education and State Employment Schemes are, and will continue to be, the most appropriate approaches to follow for some jobseekers just as participation in a work experience or short training programme is the best approach to take for others.

¹² For instance, the Community Employment Scheme or Tús.

¹³ Department of Social Protection programme evaluations: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/5683a-labour-market-analytics/>

Therefore, the State needs to make sure that the full toolset of options is available and used to best effect. For this reason, the capacity of, and processes used by, the Public Employment Service and the knowledge and skills of its case workers are critical to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that correct guidance is given to each individual jobseeker.

For many people, **Intreo** is the brand used by the Department of Social Protection for its network of 64 service centres around the country. But it is more than that.

The service offered by **Intreo** encompasses external contracted service providers delivering services in over 150 locations.

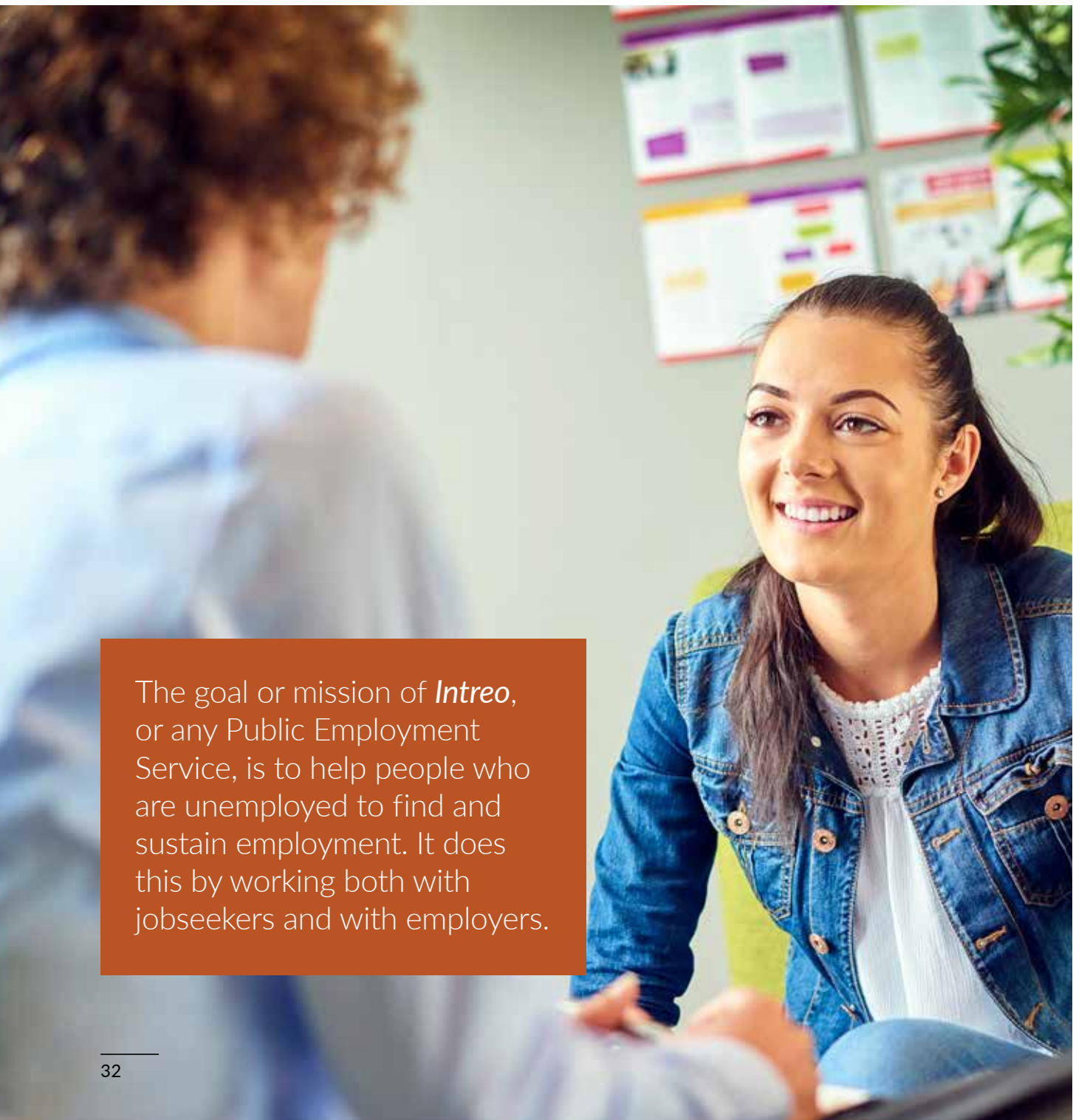
It includes case work and personal advisory services offered by around 1,000 Case Officers directly employed by the Department of Social Protection or funded by the Department through its contracted external service providers. **Intreo** also encompasses employment places and programmes delivered by community groups and it includes services and programmes delivered with the support and co-operation of employers and their representative bodies.

Figure 5: Public Employment Service Network / Ecosystem



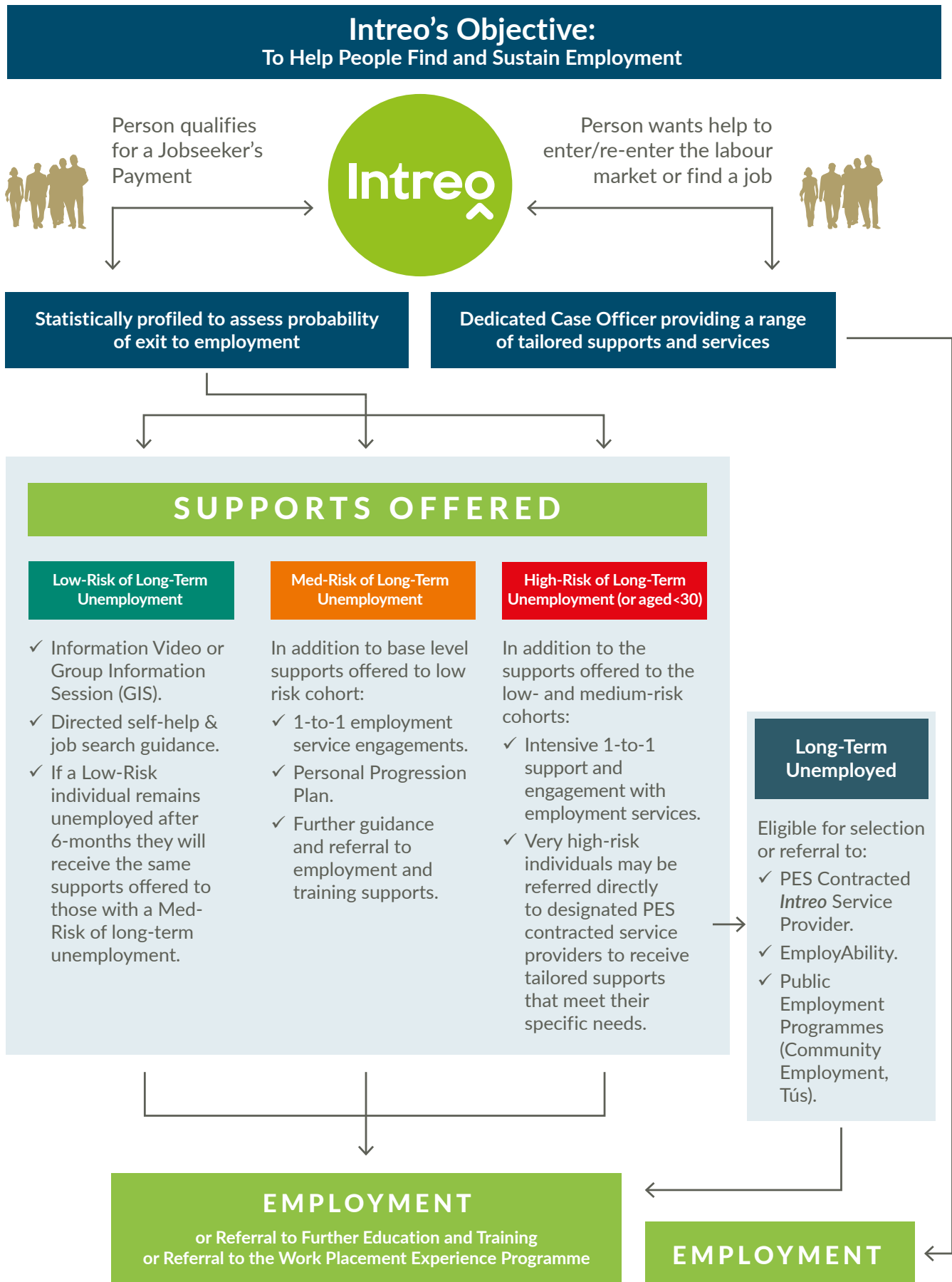
It also includes the range of tools and services delivered through this network of directly delivered and external providers including work placement programmes (such as the new Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP), encompassing the Youth Employment Support Scheme), online job sites and job matching services (e.g. JobsIreland.ie), recruitment subsidies (JobsPlus), job promotion and recruitment

events, Enterprise Support Grants, training placements and training grants, back to education supports and State Employment Schemes. It also encompasses a close network of co-operation with the State's Further Education and Training Services and Local Enterprise Services and with voluntary service providers, all of which, together with *Intreo*, comprise the Irish Public Employment Service network or ecosystem.



The goal or mission of *Intreo*, or any Public Employment Service, is to help people who are unemployed to find and sustain employment. It does this by working both with jobseekers and with employers.

Figure 6: Typical Intreo Engagement Model



From an individual jobseeker’s perspective, the service delivered by *Intreo* and its partners is shown in outline form diagrammatically in Figure 6 on the previous page and the process for an unemployed jobseeker is further detailed in Box 1.

Box 1: Key Elements of *Intreo* Process for a Person who Becomes Unemployed

Step 1: Income Support:

Jobseekers access income supports via the *Intreo* service through personal attendance at an *Intreo* Centre or online via MyWelfare.ie.

Step 2: Profiling and Assessment:

A statistical profiling tool, which examines 24 characteristics of a newly unemployed jobseeker, is completed when a person applies for an income support and used to predict their likelihood of finding work within 12 months. This tool was developed in conjunction with the ESRI. Profiling facilitates segmentation and the delivery of most intensive engagement to those most distant from the labour market.

Step 3: Group Information Session:

Every new jobseeker is invited to a group information session, typically within 1-2 weeks of registering with the service. This information session provides information on the broad range of supports available and the case management process. Jobseekers are asked to register with the Department’s free online job matching service (JobsIreland.ie).

This site enables jobseekers to complete and upload a structured CV and, in addition to advertising jobs, also has job matching functionality which notifies jobseekers when a job suitable to their skills and experience is posted on the site.

Step 4: Case Officer Engagements and Job Search Assistance:

Jobseekers are invited to regular one-to-one meetings with Case Officers: either with Department Case Officers or, after 12 months of unemployment, Case Officers funded with external service providers. At these engagements, a Personal Progression Plan, which takes account of the individual’s circumstances, is developed, agreed and updated. The Case Officer also outlines available job opportunities, employment programmes and training opportunities and may also provide advice and support with job applications, CV development and interview skills or may refer the client to an external service provider for this purpose. Financial assistance with specific short duration skills training or interview costs can also be provided.

[Steps 5 to 6 do not necessarily follow in sequence but are tailored to individual requirements]

Box 1: Key Elements of Intreo Process for a Person who Becomes Unemployed
Step 5: Employment Schemes/Incentives:

A number of employment schemes are offered. These include schemes that provide a direct link to ‘open-labour market’ employment including the new **Work Placement Experience Programme** and the **JobsPlus** recruitment subsidy. Jobseekers can also be supported to enter self-employment though referral to the **Local Enterprise Office system**, through the provision of an **Enterprise Support Grant** and through participation in the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme** which enables workers to retain their jobseeker payment for a period of two years while setting up their own business.

Step 6: Training Referrals:

As part of the interaction between the Case Officer and the jobseeker opportunities will be identified for a person to take up training and other programmes offered by the **Education and Training Boards, Technological Colleges and Universities. These include Skills to Compete, Springboard and Skillnet Ireland.** The Case Officer will make the referral and provide assistance with completion of necessary application forms. Training Support Grants will also be provided to Jobseekers who identify relevant programmes delivered by private training providers.

Step 7: Support for longer term education:

A person for whom a return to fulltime third or second level education may be appropriate is supported via the **Back to Education Scheme** which is open to applicants who are nine months or more unemployed.

Step 8: State Employment Scheme Referrals:

People who face higher barriers and/or who have been unemployed for some time can be referred to State Employment Schemes such as **Community Employment and Tús.** These provide occupational activity that yield benefits for local communities and can also support upskilling and training (e.g. in childcare) that can provide a stepping-stone to full time employment.

In addition to these steps, jobseekers are matched to job vacancies advised by employers, can receive job and programme alerts, (including alerts in respect of training and State Employment Scheme places), and are periodically invited to job promotion events and seminars.

Service Delivery in a COVID-19 / Post-COVID-19 Environment

The service delivery model just outlined is a well proven approach common in most Public Employment Services around the world. It is an approach that worked effectively in response to the last recession.

While the core elements will remain the same, given the challenges identified in Chapter 1, the approach taken by *Intreo* will have to be adapted in at least seven ways.

1

To respond to the capacity and scale challenge, **Case Officer capacity will increase** to cater for increased client volumes as will the number of employment scheme and programme places.

2

Also reflecting the need to respond at scale, **additional training, work placement and development places, including on State Employment Schemes, will be funded** and the programmes themselves will be adapted to reflect the scale and nature of the employment challenge.

3

To respond to the challenge of digital service delivery, **the use of online and other engagement options will be expanded**. This will respond to changing behaviours and preferences, arising from the greater use of digital channels of service delivery during COVID-19, including across public services.

4

To deal with the challenge of delivering a personalised service and showing flexibility/adaptability and given the need for the service to deal effectively with clients from a range of backgrounds and with a range of capabilities it will **improve client profiling to personalise the service**.

5

To adapt to the external environment, to take advantage of digital delivery and at the same time deliver a personalised service to clients *Intreo* will **adapt its own internal organisation structure, further accelerate the investment in the management and professional development of the critical cadre of Case Officer staff and improve the promotion of its service to jobseekers**.

6

To ensure jobseekers can acquire the necessary workplace skills, *Intreo* will **invest in analysis of labour market needs, co-ordinate activities across, and ensure seamless referral between, *Intreo* and the further education and training sector**.

7

Given the challenge of co-opting employers, *Intreo* will have to **invest further in engagement and the promotion of services with employers**. (see: Chapter 3).

Responding at Scale - Increasing Case Officer Capacity

With just under 1,000 Case Officers currently engaged directly or via contracted external service providers, the average caseload carried by Case Officers in the pre-COVID-19 period (total people on the Live Register and on programmes divided by the total number of Case Officers) was at or about 200 per Case Officer and trending downwards.

Internationally, it is accepted that a total caseload of 150-200 jobseekers per Case Officer is about right subject to an active case-load limit of about 100:1. The difference reflects the fact that many jobseekers will join and leave the Live Register with the need for only minimal engagement with Case Officers.

In Ireland prior to COVID-19, the average 'active' caseload was about 130,000¹⁴ giving a ratio of somewhere between 90:1 and 130:1, and trending downwards. In that context, consideration was being given to scaling back the level of contracted resource capacity.

Given the dramatic change in unemployment levels, it is forecast that the Public Employment Service will face a caseload of in excess of 300,000 by the end of 2021 and into 2022, not counting potential transfers from the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme^{15, 16}. This caseload level, hopefully of a temporary nature, exceeds the current capacity of *Intreo* to respond. For this reason, the Government now commits to increase the capacity of *Intreo* through the Department of Social Protection's *Intreo* offices and contracted services:

Commitment 1:

- ✓ Expand the caseload capacity of the *Intreo* Public Employment Service (contracted and in-house) by 100,000 jobseekers per annum to over 200,000 per annum, through the assignment of an additional 150 directly employed Case Officers within DSP *Intreo*¹⁷.

Commitment 2:

- ✓ Maintain the resource capacity of contracted service provision and increase the funding of local/regional employment services to provide full national coverage.

Commitment 3:

- ✓ In addition to taking referrals of long-term unemployed clients, external service providers will also be asked to work with the most disadvantaged of our short-term (less than one year) unemployed clients.

Commitment 4:

- ✓ Work with Pandemic Unemployment Payment recipients during the transitional phase as temporary COVID-19 State supports are tapered off by providing employment supports to this new cohort of unemployed to assist them back to employment as the economy recovers.

¹⁴ Approximately 90,000 people unemployed for more than 6 months and 40,000 on active labour market programmes.

¹⁵ This estimate is based on Live Register trends and analysis of long-term Pandemic Unemployment Payment recipients at the time of writing.

¹⁶ For further discussion on the unemployment forecasts see the accompanying *Pathways to Work* Technical Paper which examines the current economic context in more detail.

¹⁷ From baseline 2020.

The commitments on the previous page are supported by the recommendations made in 'Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2020' published by the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council, which recommended increased **Intreo** capacity via the provision of additional Case Officers for job search and employment supports to jobseekers. They are also consistent with the recommendations of the Labour Market Advisory Council in its June 2020 report, 'Preparing for Economic Recovery', recognising the need for an extension of contracted external service provision.

Responding at Scale - Increasing Programme Capacity

Increasing Case Officer capacity is a necessary but of itself insufficient response to the challenge of scale. Therefore, while the first objective of any engagement with a jobseeker is to help them return to work and find a job as quickly as possible with an emphasis on job search advice and job matching in the first instance, we will also need to increase service delivery capacity across all employment and training programmes.

This requires action on a number of fronts:

- increasing the number of available training places, traineeships and apprenticeships is required,
- working with employers to introduce the new **Work Placement Experience Programme** to provide more work experience places, and not just for young people,
- expanding eligibility and increasing funding for recruitment subsidies,
- expanding availability of places on Back to Education and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, and
- increasing capacity and funding of State Employment Schemes.



Based on advice from the Labour Market Advisory Council, the Government provided for additional funding across all of these measures as part of the July Jobs Stimulus. These measures are now being built on and extended as follows:

Commitment 5:

- ✓ Fund 50,000 additional places in further and higher education, including via Skills to Compete, Skillnet Ireland, Springboard+ and the Human Capital Initiative.

Commitment 8:

- ✓ Increase the maximum value and funding for the Training Support Grant from €500 per grant to €1,000 to benefit 12,500 jobseekers per annum.

Commitment 6:

- ✓ Increase the total number of new apprentice registrations to at least 10,000 per annum by 2025, in line with a commitment in the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025.

Commitment 9:

- ✓ Increase participation and funding in Back to Education programmes to 7,700 places (demand led).

Commitment 7:

- ✓ Increase the number of places in Work Experience Programmes by 10,000.

Commitment 10:

- ✓ Increase funding and places for enterprise start-ups by jobseekers with a target of support 4,200 jobseekers to start their own business (demand led)¹⁸.

Commitment 11:

- ✓ Increase funding and places on State Employment Schemes, such as Community Employment, to support an extra 3,000 places for those facing labour market disadvantage.

¹⁸ This is in addition to programmes funded and managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Modernising the Service - Embracing Digital Delivery

In order to improve effectiveness and introduce efficiencies, *Intreo* will make better use of the range of available digital channels over the lifetime of this strategy to ensure that the supports and services offered optimise the potential of technology and virtual platforms (as a complement to in-person contacts). This will not only increase the capacity and efficiency of the service but will also respond to emerging client preferences for digitally enabled interaction.

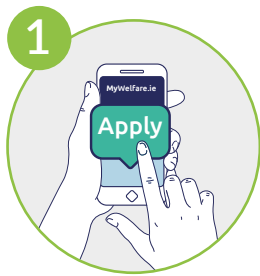
The Department of Social Protection is already well advanced in the delivery of many welfare services online, and has started the process of developing and delivering online options for jobseeker payments and employment services.

The preferred model of employment service delivery is face-to-face, in particular for people who face the greatest difficulties finding jobs. However, initial experience in delivering employment services during the pandemic both internationally and domestically, indicates that online service delivery can also be effective.

For example, since their introduction in this jurisdiction in 2020, online information sessions have been given to a number of employee groups affected by large scale redundancy announcements. A number of online Job Promotion Events have also been held; each receiving positive feedback, most recently the Work and Skills week held in April 2021 with over 7,000 registered attendees.

Case Officers, having been deployed to the processing and support of Pandemic Unemployment claims during the height of the pandemic have returned to case work duties and, while working remotely, are re-engaging with their clients using telephone-based meetings. Case Officers at external service providers have adopted a similar approach. Jobseekers registered with MyWelfare.ie also have the option of preparing and reviewing their Personal Progression Plan online. In addition, an online Group Information video is now available to all jobseekers. *Intreo* has also developed what is known as an 'ideation' or 'strawman' model for a future digitally enabled model of service delivery including video-based engagements and self-service based options (Figure 7 opposite).

Figure 7: Ideation of digital service delivery model



Apply for Jobseeker's
Apply on MyWelfare



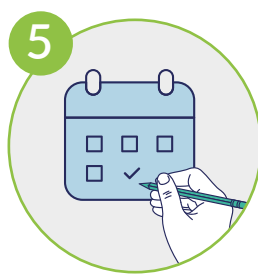
First steps in the process
Notifications of first steps



Watch information videos
Browse return to work resources



Nudges and prompts
Nudges to promote onboarding to employment services



First meeting scheduled
First 1:1 scheduled
Application awarded



First 1:1 meeting
Agree Personal Progression Plan
Access training and education supports



Ongoing support
Ongoing Engagement with Employment Services



Found a job



Let DSP know
Close claim and complete exit questionnaire



Need to come back?
Return to MyWelfare to apply again

- Create a single place on MyWelfare for all customers to access and use
- Enhance content to make it more engaging and reduce duplication of data entry where possible
- Support more interaction and engagement from officers to customers providing greater support to the customer

Under this strategy this work will be accelerated, while re-instating face-to-face engagements between case workers and jobseekers. The objective is to deliver a blended service mixing in person and online meetings and engagements. For example,

initial meetings and periodic (e.g. quarterly) review meetings could take place 'in-person' between a client and a Case Officer, with intervening meetings to be held via online video conferencing channels.

To deliver on this objective the Government commits to:

Commitment 12:

- ✓ Restore face-to-face engagements between Case Officers and jobseekers as soon as possible in a safe manner compliant with all public health guidelines.
-

Commitment 13:

- ✓ Build on progress to date and further develop online service delivery mechanisms via JobsIreland.ie and MyWelfare.ie.
-

Commitment 14:

- ✓ Through commitments 12 and 13 develop and deploy a blended online and in-person employment service delivery process.
-

Commitment 15:

- ✓ Remodel *Intreo* centres as appropriate to incorporate self-service capacity.
-

Commitment 16:

- ✓ Continue to develop and deliver online seminars and Job Promotion Events to support jobseekers and employers during the job search and recruitment process.
-



Flexibility and Adaptability - Delivering a Personalised Service

The service delivered by **Intreo**, including the external service providers, consistently scores well in customer satisfaction and tracking research. This is positive and reflects well on the capability and professionalism of the employment services staff.

However, the labour market is not static. The range of jobs, the complexity of employment relationships and working arrangements, as well as the profile of jobseekers is constantly changing. Many of the roles and occupations now in the labour market did not exist ten years ago. The average level of educational attainment of jobseekers has increased dramatically over that period, expectations in

terms of service standards, and use of digital and self-service technology – together with the capability and readiness of many people to self-serve online – has increased exponentially.

Informing the personalisation of service

Central to all of this, and ultimately the key competency of a good Job Coach/ Case Officer and employment service, is the tailoring of the service offer (guidance, placement, training, etc.) to suit the needs of individual jobseekers. This comes from good training and experience but can also be informed by profiling methodologies and statistical assessment tools.

Since 2012, *Intreo* has used a statistical profiling tool developed with the ESRI to assess the likelihood of an unemployed jobseeker securing employment during the next 12 months (known as Probability of Exit (PEX)). Profiling facilitates a first level segmentation of new clients into those who have a Low, Medium or High probability of finding work and this then informs the initial engagement frequency.

Although experience indicates that this is very accurate in predicting outcomes, it is a static evaluation based on 24 characteristics (age, gender, family circumstances, prior work experience, educational qualifications etc.) that while useful in an initial segmentation, provides little guidance to a Case Officer regarding a person's underlying competencies or interests. Public Employment Services in some other countries, and some of the external service providers in Ireland, supplement the profiling of people based on observable characteristics with a structured personal questionnaire to assess these 'softer' aspects of a person's profile.

The Department of Social Protection is currently engaging with the ESRI in a body of research to update and recalibrate the Probability of Exit (PEX) profiling model to reflect our experience over the past eight years.

In addition, it is intended to research the development and implementation of a holistic profiling tool for use by Case Officers/ Job Coaches to promote consistency in approach across the cadre of Case Officers/ Job Coaches and assist them in forming an understanding of what might work best for each of their clients.

Accordingly, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 17:

- ✓ Review and update the existing Probability of Exit (PEX) segmentation model.

Commitment 18:

- ✓ Explore and, if appropriate, develop a holistic diagnostic tool to support *Intreo* Case Officers in their assessment of individual jobseeker needs.



Adapting the organisation, investing in staff and promoting the service

All of these developments present challenges to *Intreo* and its network of partners. Within *Intreo* there has been significant investment in developing professional and accredited education programmes to support Case Officers to maintain pace with and develop the necessary level of knowledge. A nine month Level 7 programme is in place with the National College of Ireland; existing Case Officers are being supported to complete this programme and all new Case Officers are required to complete this programme. It focuses on the fundamental knowledge and skills required for a Case Officer to effectively engage in a positive manner with the wide range of unemployed jobseekers they encounter: from people with severe social disadvantage to highly qualified older people who find it hard to get an interview.

This is only the first step in moving towards a model of continuous professional development that will bring Case Officers up to date and enable them to maintain pace with the changing nature of the labour market. It will need to be enhanced through the development and implementation of shorter duration/continuous personal development courses delivered on an ongoing basis tailored around specific topics such as online recruitment and job applications and modern CV and interview techniques.

Accordingly, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 19:

- ✓ Invest in and embed continuous professional development as a core feature of Case Officers within *Intreo*.

Commitment 20:

- ✓ Extend the requirement to secure Level 7 accreditation, or equivalent, for case work to the Department's external service providers.

Re-organising to tailor support and sharpen focus

As part of the approach of delivering a tailored service, and responding to the challenge of scale, the service model itself also needs to be changed to take the full load of dealing with all jobseekers off the highly experienced and trained Case Officers so that they can concentrate their time and their capability on those people that need their help the most. This will involve moving to a 'Case Officer/Job Coach' model where some tasks are assigned to Case Officers and other tasks to Job Coaches.

Under this model, Case Officers will conduct the initial diagnostic of most jobseekers presenting to the service and will help them to develop their Personal Progression Plan. Once this is done, Job Coaches will then provide jobseekers assessed as having a higher probability of finding employment with the ongoing career development and guidance service with the ultimate goal of securing employment by working with them to implement and monitor their

Personal Progression Plan. During 1-to-1 interviews, Job Coaches will explore a range of employment options and supports with the jobseeker and advise them on selection and use of options. Coaches will also refer jobseekers for other interventions – such as education/training – where appropriate. Case Officers will continue to be involved, will carry their own case load (focusing on people most distant from the labour market) and will meet with all jobseekers, and in particular those assessed to have a higher level of need, on a periodic basis.

Moving to a Case Officer/Job Coach model and prioritising the personal development of Case Officers and Job Coaches will sharpen the focus of a service that is already well regarded to ensure that it maintains pace with developments in the labour market. In addition, in order to ensure that management teams in *Intreo* centres can devote as much time and energy as possible to employment service delivery, it is proposed to accelerate the development of online options for jobseeker claims and payments, and, in parallel, further progress what is known as a ‘front-office/back office’ model of operation. This will mean that the management overhead of managing high volume claim processing transactions will reduce, enabling local and regional managers to concentrate more time and energy into the management of employment services during the next critical 12/24 months.

Allied to this, it is intended to introduce transparency to the reporting and publication of performance metrics. In addition to enabling the national targets for outputs and outcomes to be assessed at a regional and local level it will also ensure that the efficacy of the Public Employment Service can be assessed dispassionately and feed into the future design and development of the service. This is already done in the case of certain contracted services but is not mirrored across all aspects of service provision.

In summary, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 21:

- ✓ Develop and progress a Case Officer / Job Coach model of case work within *Intreo*.

Commitment 22:

- ✓ Accelerate development of online claim options and further progress the ‘front-office/back-office’ model of operation to free *Intreo* centres up to focus more attention on employment service delivery.

Commitment 23:

- ✓ Translate national targets for *Intreo* performance into regional and local measures and report performance on a quarterly basis.

Reaching Out – Promoting and Encouraging use of the Service

Although jobseeker engagement with employment services in Ireland is, as it is in nearly all OECD countries, a necessary qualifying condition for receipt of a jobseeker payment, *Intreo* operates as far as possible in a customer-focused manner.

Once initial contact is made at the time a person applies for a jobseeker payment *Intreo* seeks to put itself at the service of, and to develop a collaborative and supportive relationship with, the client. A relationship in which engagement with the service is seen, as it should be, as a positive opportunity to access professional help and support with the ultimate aim of finding a job. This is not to say that conditionality is not applied and that in the very small number of cases where jobseekers do not engage with the service and it is clear that they are not seeking to find work or improve their prospects of finding work, that access to jobseeker payments will not be restricted. However, this is not, as is sometimes presented, the overriding ethos or culture of the service. It is important therefore to both reinforce in the internal culture of “customer service” and the external recognition of this culture and approach by properly and effectively communicating and promoting the *Intreo* service.

In order to place an emphasis on the positive and collaborative nature of the service and to promote citizen access to and use of the service, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 24:

- ✓ Integrating all Public Employment Service providers under the one-stop-shop brand of *Intreo* to improve end user customer experience of the range of services.

Commitment 25:

Develop and implement a communications plan to promote the services of *Intreo*, including through:

- ✓ Delivering targeted information, across digital platforms, on the range of *Intreo* supports that are available to all.
- ✓ Further developing MyWelfare.ie and existing digital platforms to provide enhanced online access to activation and employment supports.
- ✓ Further developing the Gov.ie (welfare and work) website to provide clear and accessible information and providing equal or ‘joint billing’ to employment services and welfare.
- ✓ Briefing and supporting stakeholder and advocacy groups to communicate and promote the benefits of the service.
- ✓ Greater use of national, local and regional press and radio media services to promote the service.

Commitment 26:

- ✓ Encourage and support jobseekers to register with JobsIreland.ie.

Investing in, and Ensuring Seamless Referral to, Work Skills Training and Education

Given the scale of the challenge faced there is a need to invest in and increase the number of training and education opportunities to assist people without jobs and those in employment to retrain and reskill. There are three key objectives in doing this:

- Helping people who are unemployed obtain the skills necessary to find new work, including those who have lost jobs arising from COVID-19 and those unemployed pre-COVID.
- Ensuring that our labour force is high skilled and adaptable, to support economic resilience and growth.
- Supporting individual workers and jobseekers to take advantage of developments in green and digital sectors to secure their own careers and livelihoods.

Looking to people who are unemployed or inactive, the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is prioritising the reskilling and retraining of those unable to return to their previous employment post COVID-19. It is doing this through **Skills to Compete**, a SOLAS-led initiative, which has three strands of activity.

- 1 Transversal skills development to help employability.
- 2 Build the digital capabilities now required for almost every job.
- 3 Specific NFQ Level 4-6 courses targeting growth sectors and occupations.

Skills to Compete, in conjunction with the recently published National Further Education and Training strategy, “Future FET: Transforming Learning”, offers an immediate and powerful labour market ‘activation’ response to the COVID-19 crisis. These initiatives – which make greater use of digital methods of delivery – offer a package of targeted, modularised education and training, aimed at supporting re-entry into the workforce for those displaced by the pandemic.

These upskilling opportunities will be supported by the Education and Training Board’s (ETB) Information and Guidance Service and **Intreo** Case Officers and Job Coaches. Each Education and Training Board will take account of inputs from regional **Intreo** Divisions and tailor its own Skills to Compete provision to ensure its services are responsive to region specific needs.

This bilateral engagement is complemented at a regional level by inputs from the nine Regional Skills Fora. These Fora comprise representative groups of employers, enterprise agencies, higher and further education providers and **Intreo** and meet regularly throughout the year.

In addition, Skillnet Ireland will also support the implementation of the *Pathways to Work* strategy through its range of employability measures. This includes those that assist under-represented groups in the workforce and by preparing workers to progress in the jobs of the future.

At a national level, inputs into the overall level of provision is co-ordinated by SOLAS taking inputs from both the National Skills Council and the Labour Market Advisory Council. This work is supported in the main by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) of SOLAS, working closely with the Activation and Employment Policy function in the Department of Social Protection, which is a key contributor to the Irish Government's Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES).

In addition, close co-operation between front-line staff at a local and regional level is facilitated not just through regular/routine meetings but also through organised 'tri-partite' seminars between **Intreo**, Further Education and Training and Enterprise Agencies (Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland and IDA).

At a practical level the provision of programmes and the smooth operation of the referrals process is overseen by a high-level interdepartmental group between the Department of Social Protection, the Department for Further and Higher Education, SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Referrals, of unemployed people, to the programmes/courses selected will in the first instance be managed by **Intreo**, which will work closely with the Education and Training Boards to ensure that suitable candidates are identified for each course. Towards this end, **Intreo** Case Officers and Job Coaches already have real-time access, via links between the Department's case management system and the SOLAS Programme Learner Support System (PLSS), to the catalogue of courses offered by SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards and can make referrals directly to the Education and Training Boards via this link. **Intreo** will also use its regular engagements between Case Officers and jobseekers to promote the take-up of courses and will also promote this take-up via communications on its online platforms MyWelfare.ie and JobsIreland.ie.

The Government now commits to retaining and enhancing this close co-operation and in particular to:

Commitment 27:

- ✓ Support 50,000 long-term unemployed people to commence in Further Education and Training provision by 2025.

Commitment 28:

- ✓ Monitor and report on a quarterly basis on the level of Further Education and Training provision, referrals from **Intreo** and take-up rates.

Commitment 29:

- ✓ Continue to support the operation of the National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora.

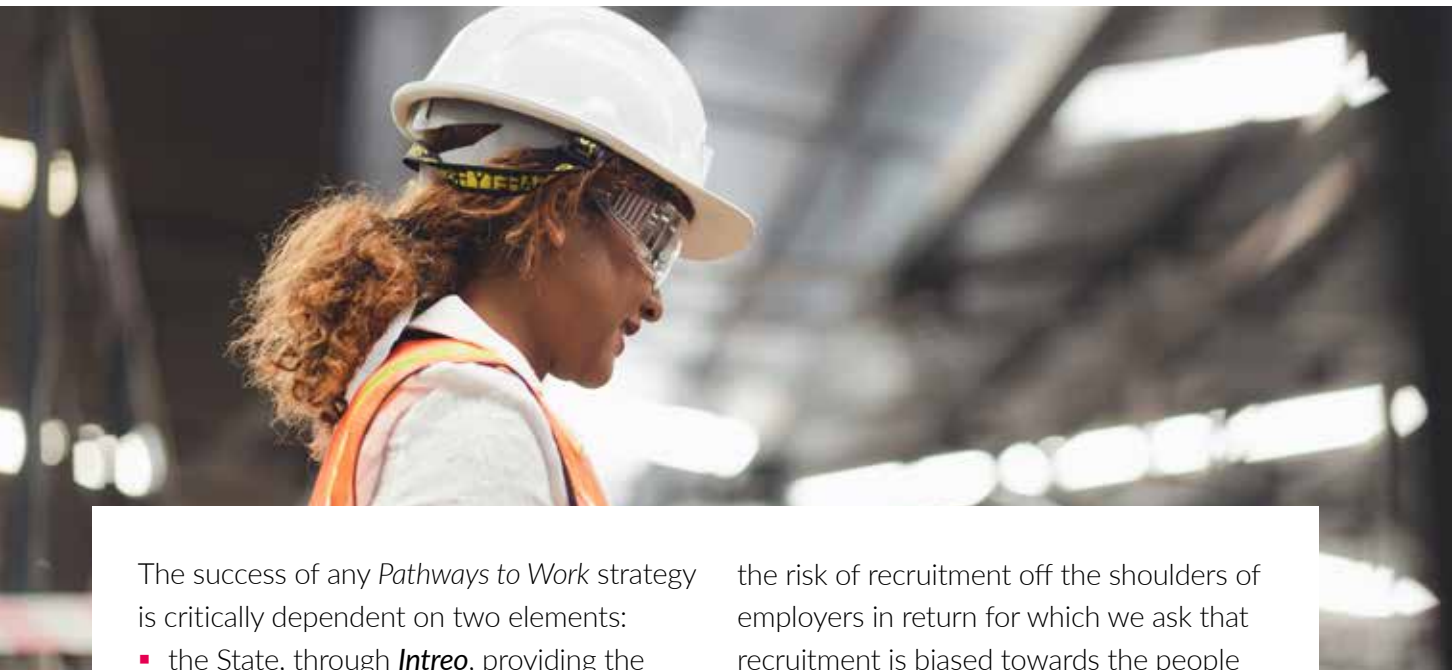
Commitment 30:

- ✓ Invest additional resources in the analysis and planning of labour market developments and skill requirements.



03

Working for Employers



The success of any *Pathways to Work* strategy is critically dependent on two elements:

- the State, through **Intreo**, providing the **Pathway**, and
- employers providing the **Work**.

Accordingly, the effectiveness of commitments in this strategy ultimately depends on the ability and willingness of employers to offer employment both generally but, in particular, to unemployed people on the Live Register.

In a time of recession and economic challenge the ability or inclination of employers to take on new employees can be limited. When revenues are uncertain employers, understandably, seek to maximise productivity and can be reluctant to take on new costs and new workers. Even where they want to expand and recruit new employees, employers may face financial/funding constraints in doing so.

Therefore, the services delivered by **Intreo** have to work not just for jobseekers but also for employers. The job matching and placement services, the work experience and training programmes, and the recruitment subsidies all must make it easy for employers to recruit and, in doing so, take some of

the risk of recruitment off the shoulders of employers in return for which we ask that recruitment is biased towards the people who rely on **Intreo** – the Public Employment Service.

That is the ‘win-win’.

In order to achieve this ‘win-win’ **Intreo** already provides a range of services and supports that deliver benefit to employers who recruit unemployed jobseekers. These include:

JobsPlus

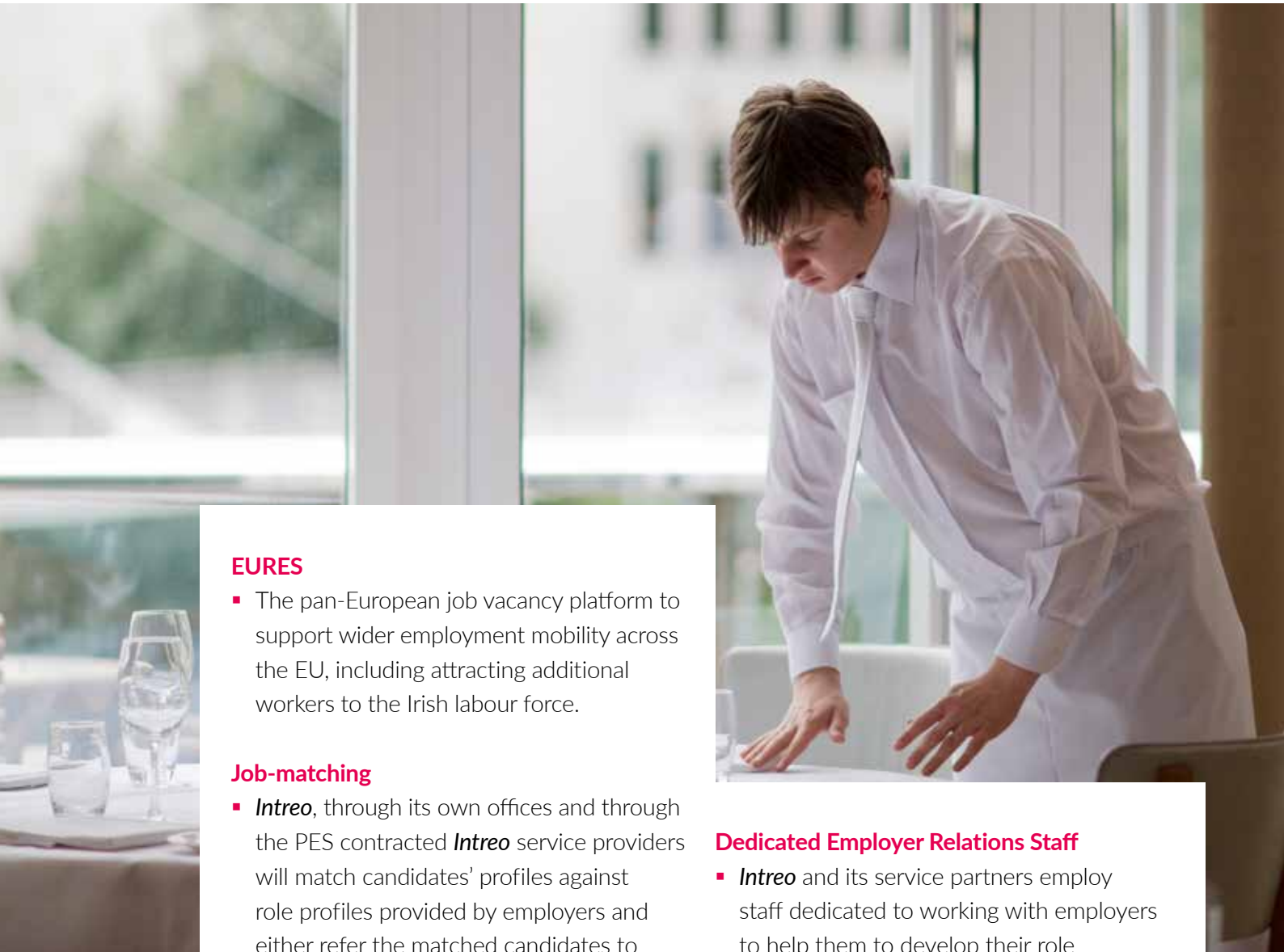
- A recruitment subsidy valued at up to €10,000 for employers who recruit a long-term unemployed person from the Live Register.

Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)

- A new work placement experience programme for those out of work for at least six months with the costs being fully funded by the State.

JobsIreland

- **Intreo’s** free online job advertising and recruitment service for job candidates and employers.



EURES

- The pan-European job vacancy platform to support wider employment mobility across the EU, including attracting additional workers to the Irish labour force.

Job-matching

- **Intreo**, through its own offices and through the PES contracted **Intreo** service providers will match candidates' profiles against role profiles provided by employers and either refer the matched candidates to the employer or short list candidates for interview. **Intreo** and its service partners can also conduct preliminary interviews.

Job Promotion Events

- **Intreo** hosts free Job Promotion Events at which employers can meet potential candidates who are invited to attend based on matching profiles against employer requirements.

Training Courses

- **Intreo** works with the Education and Training Boards to organise training programmes tailored to the specific requirements of employers/groups of employers who have a confirmed recruitment need.

Dedicated Employer Relations Staff

- **Intreo** and its service partners employ staff dedicated to working with employers to help them to develop their role requirements and recruit staff. Many of the **Intreo** employer relations staff have completed the accredited National Recruitment Federation programme to be certified as recruitment experts.

This range of services compares favourably with the services available from any public or private employment service. A key objective of this strategy is to continue to invest in building relationships with employers and to increase employer awareness/take-up of these services.

Accordingly, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 31:

- ✓ Increase the number of dedicated employer relations staff, within *Intreo's* own offices, by 25.

Commitment 32:

- ✓ Develop, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council sub-group on employer relations, a new employer relations strategy.

Commitment 33:

- ✓ Develop and implement a promotional campaign to increase employer awareness and take-up of the available supports.

Commitment 34:

- ✓ Host a series of employer roadshows around the country to showcase examples of how employers can, and have benefitted, from the employment supports available.

Commitment 35:

- ✓ Host 150 Job Promotion Events (virtual or in person) each year to showcase employment opportunities and to facilitate the introduction of employers and jobseekers.

Commitment 36:

- ✓ Host two national *Intreo* Work and Skills Weeks each year (one virtual, one in person), each of which comprising a week of intensive jobs focussed Job Promotion Events and seminars across the country.

Commitment 37:

- ✓ Oblige employers availing of State employment supports to confirm registration with the State's online job portal – JobsIreland.ie.

In order to ensure that the supports in place are continuously reviewed and improved, **Intreo** and the Further Education and Training sector will continue to work with employers and their representative bodies both through the Labour Market Advisory Council and through the National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora to seek input into the design and development of their service offerings. This approach will be supplemented by undertaking a regular employer survey to baseline our knowledge of employer opinions and needs in a systematic manner.

In summary the Government commits to:

Commitment 38:

- ✓ Undertake regular surveys of employers' assessment of public employment and further education and training services to help identify employer needs/opinions and track their satisfaction with the services.

Commitment 39:

- ✓ Continue to invest in and support the work of the National Skills Council and the Labour Market Advisory Council.

The Government is also very conscious that many employers rely on professional service providers to manage their human resources needs, including recruitment.

Against a backdrop of economic recovery, **Intreo** faces increased demand for job-search and guidance service; collaboration with professional recruitment firms/agencies can help to meet this demand. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), for example, notes

that co-operation with private employment service providers offers opportunities to increase access to employment for disadvantaged and diverse groups in the labour market.

While some progress has been made in this space, opportunities for wider engagement with private recruitment firms will be examined to explore:

- pooling of information and use of common terminology so as to improve transparency of labour market functioning,
- exchanging/sharing of job vacancies,
- promotion of State employment supports,
- improving professional practices to meet emerging labour needs.

By availing of these opportunities, there is the potential to expand the reach of the **Intreo** network. This is particularly important in the post-COVID climate, as the market for employment may become increasingly competitive with more people vying for fewer job vacancies.

Therefore, the Government now commits as follows:

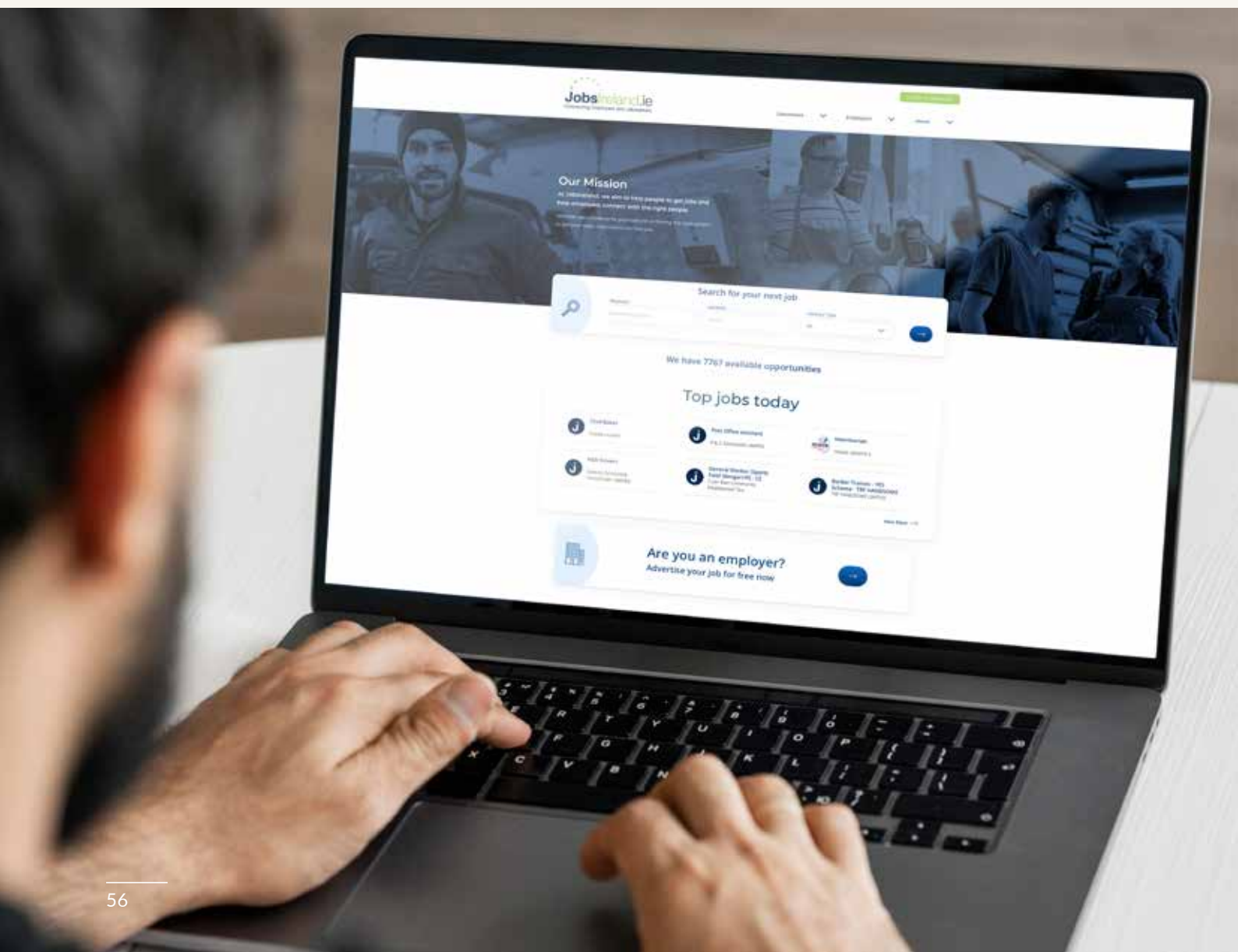
Commitment 40:

- ✓ Increase co-operation with specialist recruitment firms to ensure that **Intreo** and the Further Education and Training sector utilise all available channels for employer contact in order to maximise employment opportunities for jobseekers.

Box 2: Case Study 1: Innovating to deliver Online - Intreo Work & Skills Week 2021

The pandemic has led to new approaches to delivering our services to customers. Traditionally the Department would host an annual **Intreo** Jobs Week, but in 2021 a new approach was taken with the first virtual **Intreo** Work & Skills Week event, running from Monday 19th – 22nd April 2021. The week-long campaign took place online, with participants receiving all the same useful information but in the safety of their own home. The line-up included recruitment promotions, presentations and testimonials from both jobseekers and employers who have used **Intreo** services. In addition, there was a significant focus on skills development and supports for jobseekers with disabilities.

The event was timed to align with the planned and phased reopening of the economy providing employers, jobseekers and those interested in upskilling or reskilling with the information they needed to help them on their career path or to restart their business. The event was exceptionally successful in terms of overall attendance, with over 7,600 unique views over the four days and nearly 4,200 active users in the chat box. Recordings of the various presentations are available to view at [JobsIreland.ie](https://www.jobsireland.ie)





04

**The Welfare System -
Working for Work**

The interplay, and in particular the relativities, between market earnings and welfare benefits is sometimes presented as a key factor in influencing individual decisions regarding participation in employment.

This relates to the balance that must be struck between, on the one hand, assuring income adequacy and dignity to people who cannot work and ensuring, on the other, that there is an economic incentive for people to take up work at fair rates of pay, acknowledging that, in a small open economy, most employers are price takers.

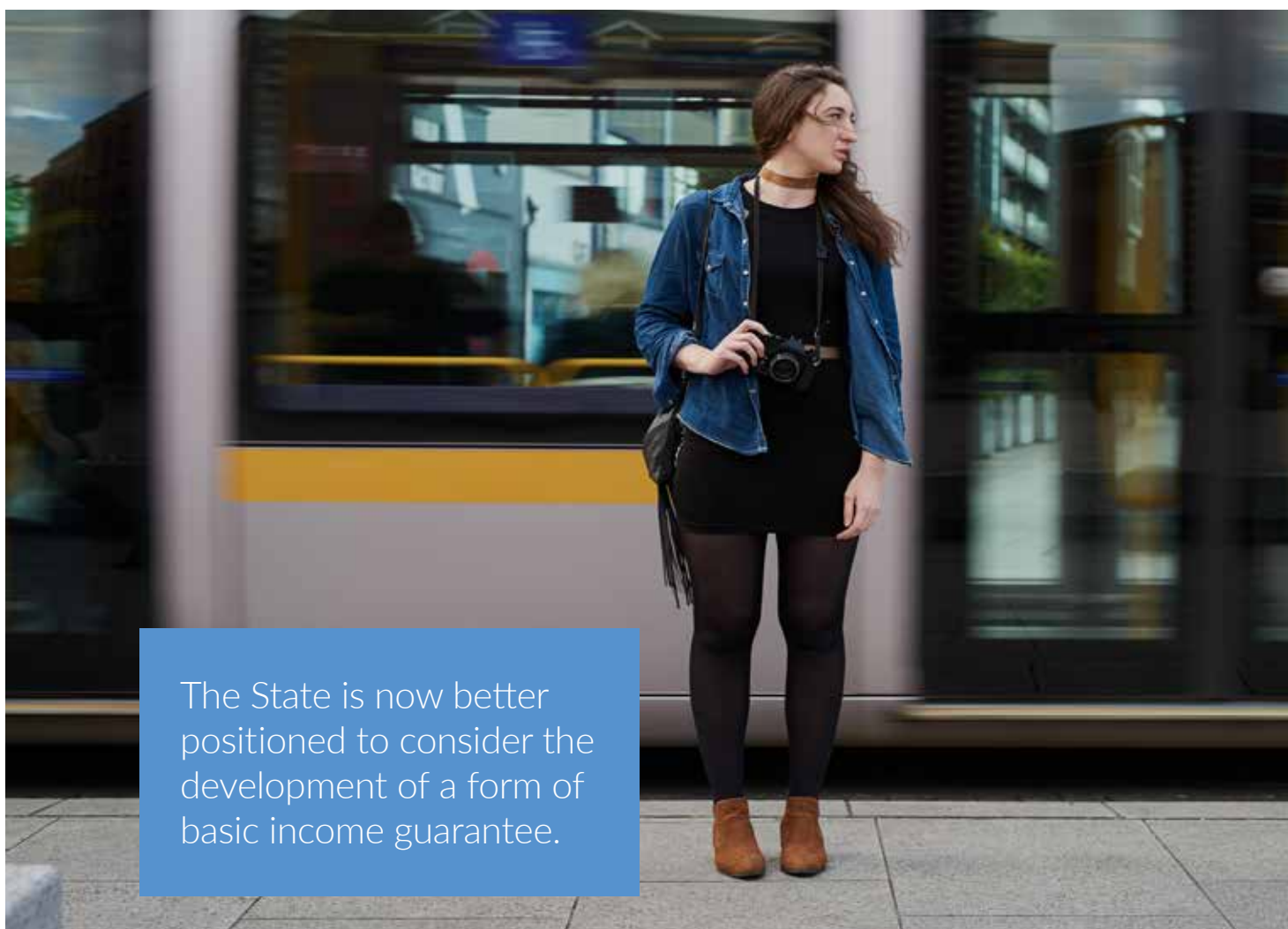
The Irish welfare system which dates back to 1838, evolved significantly over the decades. In particular over the past 20 years it has greatly increased rates of benefit and, in parallel, introduced flexibilities in order to balance these increases in payment rates with an increasing array of exemptions/disregards to maintain the incentive to work.

However, the nature of any system that is based on income, or days of work thresholds/cut-off points, is such that notwithstanding the availability of exemptions/disregards, the jobseeker can face earnings cliffs and the financial returns from working can be perceived as marginal.

This is particularly the case at the margins, in situations where welfare income is certain but hours of work or employment earnings cannot be guaranteed. Add to this the complexity in understanding the array of available 'in-work' benefits (e.g. basic earnings disregards, casual jobseeker payments, the Part-Time Job Incentive scheme, the Working Family Payment, the Back to Work Family Dividend, the Short Time Working Scheme) and it can be easily understood why it might be perceived that the existing welfare system does not support work as best it could.

This need not be the case. For example, the existing approach to means-testing based on income bands and setting thresholds based on 'days of work' was established during a period when real-time information on earnings was not available and, even if it was, could not have been easily incorporated into the calculation of payment rates.

This is no longer an insurmountable barrier. The implementation of PAYE modernisation by the Revenue Commissioners has created a platform that can be used to directly link jobseeker welfare payments to earnings in close to real-time presenting the potential to move away from an 'all or nothing' approach based on 'days of work' thresholds. The modernisation of IT systems in the Department of Social Protection has also provided the capability to utilise this information in calculating and setting individualised rates of payment.



The State is now better positioned to consider the development of a form of basic income guarantee.

It also provides the potential to revert, as was done for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, to an income-related payment, based on latest earnings data, for a short duration (e.g. 6 months) for people who lose their jobs, so cushioning the income shock associated with a sudden loss of employment.

The combination of these developments also means that the State is now better positioned to consider the development of a form of basic income guarantee. In other words, a commitment that people will, whether on welfare, in employment or a combination of both be assured of a minimum basic income and that a person in employment will always receive more than they would if reliant on welfare alone.

A form of this type of arrangement is already in place for the Working Family Payment, under which payments to families with children on low incomes are reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted for changes in earnings.

It is proposed to pilot a working age payment/basic income guarantee in the arts sector in coming months. A social welfare payment such as the Working Family Payment is one of the options that is currently being considered for the arts pilot. Arising from this a working paper on how it might be possible to develop a basic income guarantee through exploiting the ability of modern IT systems to facilitate the near to real time exchange of welfare and tax system data will be prepared for consultation.



Accordingly, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 41:

- ✓ Using the experience from the Pandemic Unemployment Payment to inform the design of any pay-related social insurance based short-term jobseeker payment that may be developed, as provided for in the Programme for Government.

Commitment 42:

- ✓ Pilot a basic income guarantee in the arts sector during 2022.

Commitment 43:

- ✓ Prepare a paper on options to modify the longer term jobseeker assistance payment by utilising the Revenue real time earnings data to adjust payment levels in line with a person's weekly earnings, to guarantee a basic income floor and ensure that in all cases a person's income increases when they work.

Commitment 44:

- ✓ Building on the EWSS/TWSS and drawing on existing international models, explore the possibility of introducing a new Short-Time Work Support scheme to enable employers retain people on their payroll in response to short-duration shocks to employment¹⁹.

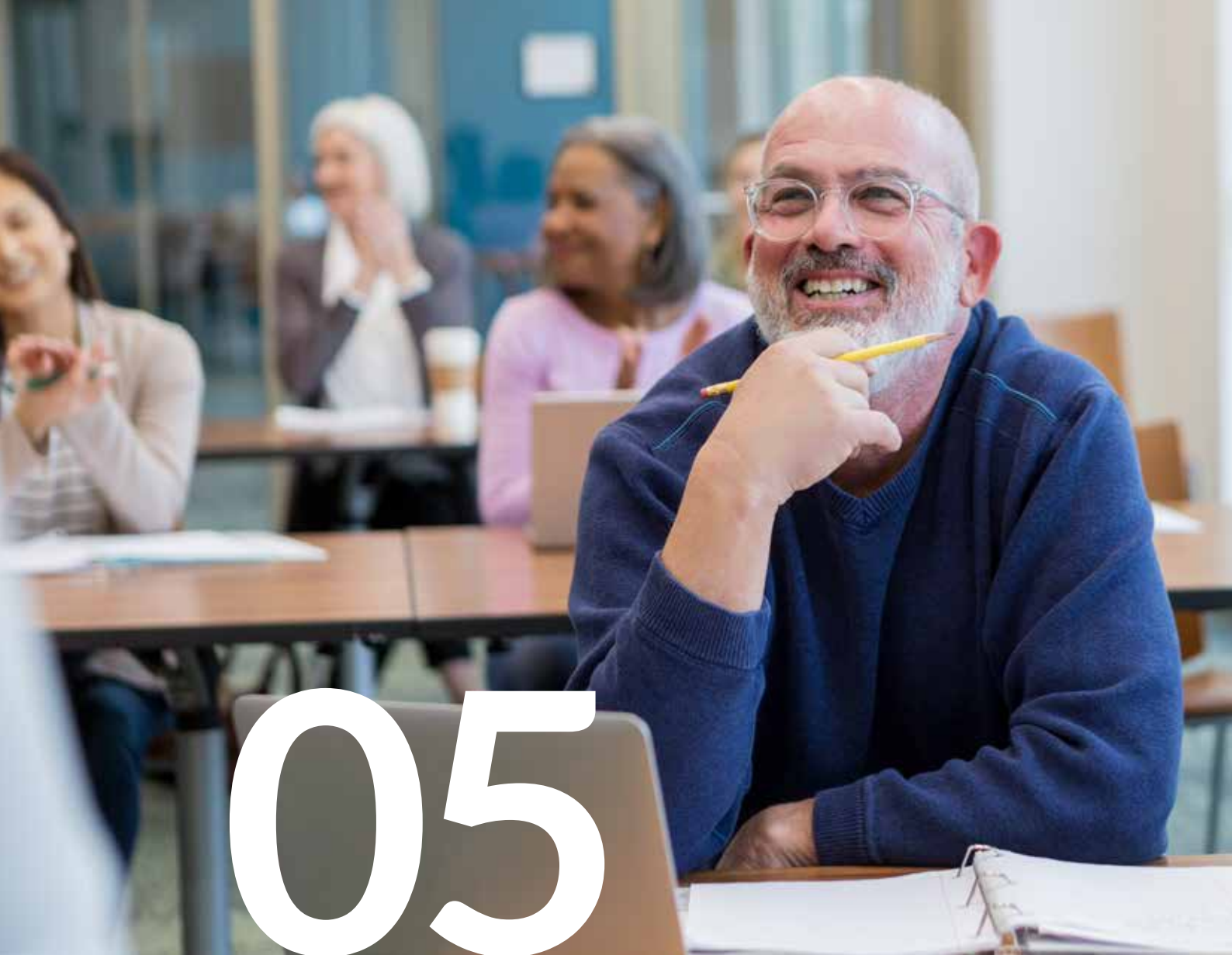
Commitment 45:

- ✓ Introduce, on a phased basis, a statutory sick pay scheme.

Commitment 46:

- ✓ In the short-term, pending these developments, the Department of Social Protection will ensure that each new jobseeker is provided with access to a Benefit of Work statement using the Department's online Benefit of Work calculator.

¹⁹ Consider a range of international short-time work support schemes such as the German 'Kurzarbeit' and the French 'Chômage partiel / activité partielle'.



05

**Working for All -
Leaving No One Behind**

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, it had been intended that this strategy statement would focus, primarily, on ways to increase employment rates among groups with low levels of labour market participation, including:

- Lone parents,
- People with disabilities,
- Qualified adults (Adult dependants of those in receipt of a social welfare payment),
- People from minority groups.

This intended focus was informed by the fact that these groups are shown to have higher rates of poverty and deprivation associated with lower rates of participation and employment compared to the overall population and to similar groups in peer countries (see *Pathways to Work* technical paper regarding the current labour market context).

For similar reasons it was also intended to make a particular effort to increase labour market participation of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs). This focus reflects the fact that young people who do not make a successful transition from education to employment or further education are shown to suffer long-term scarring with a high risk of entrenched long-term unemployment.

Finally, it was also intended to develop specific programmes to encourage older inactive people, for example people who had left employment to take up child-care or other caring duties, to return to the workforce.

COVID-19 has changed the context. However, we cannot afford to neglect our responsibility to those people within our community who before COVID-19, were already facing significant labour market barriers. Accordingly, we now set out our approach to delivering, during the lifetime of this strategy, a Public Employment Service that works for all.

Working for Lone Parents

Ireland is one of the few countries with a separate income support payment for lone parents which does not include any requirement to actively seek work.

The policy intention behind this approach was, and remains, positive, providing financial independence for a lone parent and recognising the benefits of granting a parent time to care for young children.

However, one unintended consequence of this approach is that while it recognises the additional caring responsibilities of people parenting alone, it risks reinforcing a view of those parenting alone as being 'outside' the workforce.

This is a situation that needs to be addressed. Lone parents should be encouraged to see themselves as potential workers and be supported in preparing for, finding and sustaining employment. Therefore, striking the necessary balance between parents' caring responsibilities, and the positive impact parental employment has on a household on both the parent(s) and the child(ren) is key to increasing lone parent participation in the labour market.

State supports for lone parents in accessing quality childcare is key to their participation in the labour market. The Government has

committed to continue investment in the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), which aims to provide financial support to help parents to meet the costs of childcare and increase supply while focussing on inclusion, with additional supports for children and families with additional needs.

There has been significant take-up of the National Childcare Scheme since its establishment in 2019, with this investment and access to childcare provision directly supporting labour market participation amongst parents, including lone parents. By supporting lone parents, the Government also reaffirms its commitment to reduce poverty among children, as set out under the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, 2020 - 2025.

It is important that any changes to the current approach must ensure that stereotypes are not reinforced, and that the changing nature of family structures is considered.

The approach of Government, therefore, is to promote the pursuit of employment – not as an obligation but as an option and to be supportive of parents who pursue this option.

There are three aspects to this approach:

- 1 Ensuring, as discussed in the previous chapter, that the welfare or income support system works for work. This will be addressed in the proposed assessment and development of a Working Age Payment/Basic Income Guarantee model.
- 2 Developing an employment services approach that engages the interest and commitment of lone parents and shows them a pathway to employment.
- 3 Providing the 'wrap-around' supports in terms of housing, healthcare, childcare and early education. While these are largely outside the remit of this strategy statement, other Government policies are in place to ensure that these supports are improved in the years ahead. The key actions from these policies will be reported on as part of the implementation of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion (published in January 2020).

Accordingly, the Government now commits to:

Commitment 47:

- ✓ Ensure that the particular circumstances of lone parents are considered in the assessment of a Working Age Payment/Basic Income Guarantee.

Commitment 48:

- ✓ Increase the number of children in receipt of State supports provided under Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Funding Programmes.

Commitment 49:

- ✓ Ensure progress on healthcare, housing and childcare is monitored and reported as part of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion.



Working for People with Disabilities

The Government's approach to increasing employment rates for people with disabilities is set out in the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2015 - 2024)* and the *Make Work Pay Action Plan* associated with that strategy.

Through the actions set out in those strategy documents the Government intends to deliver on the goal, set out in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, of increasing the employment rate of people with disabilities from 22.3% in 2016 to 33% by 2026 and in doing so to contribute to the realisation of the right articulated in Article 27 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities which recognises:

“the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. State parties shall safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment.”

Already many of the actions committed under those plans have been achieved.

For example, the requirement that work be of a rehabilitative nature in order for a person with a disability to benefit from an earnings disregard when accessing the disability allowance schemes has been removed. The earnings disregard for people with disabilities to access the medical card has been increased significantly and, a fast-track reinstatement process for people who close their Disability Allowance/Invalidity Pension claim to return to work has been introduced. In addition, an online Ready Reckoner has been developed to allow people with disabilities assess the financial benefit of taking up work and additional funding has been provided under the Ability Programme to fund 27 projects test pre-activation processes with young people with disabilities.

This strategy will build on this work.

Again, similar to the position with lone parents there are three aspects to the challenge of increasing participation and employment rates of people with disabilities.

- Ensuring that the welfare system for people with disabilities 'works for work'.
- Ensuring that **Intreo** can engage with people with disabilities in an effective manner that reflects and is sympathetic to the particular challenges faced by people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that the wraparound supports are in place to facilitate the participation and employment of people with disabilities.

The issue of a welfare system that ‘works for work’ has been partially addressed, in the case of people with disabilities, in the ‘Make Work Pay’ plan. Further progress is, however, possible.

As currently structured, the welfare system largely treats people who are disabled in a binary manner – either they are disabled and therefore cannot work (to any significant degree) or they are not disabled. In general, it does not recognise that there is a continuum of abilities/disabilities. Moreover, to the extent that some allowance is made for people who can work the approach adopted is inconsistent. There are two separate long-term disability payment schemes, with slightly different conditionality; each with different rates of payment unrelated to the nature of the underlying disability. Notably, the two different payment schemes take markedly different approaches to facilitating people with disabilities to earn an employment income.

As part of this *Pathways to Work* strategy, the Government intends to undertake a review of these schemes with a view to:

- Integrating, or at least standardising, the conditionality and payment rates of the two schemes; and
- Adjusting payment rates and employment supports to explicitly recognise the different challenges faced by people at different points of the disability continuum.

In doing this, the Government will take account of the report from Indecon on the additional costs incurred by people with disabilities.

The delivery of employment services to people with disabilities needs to be tailored to work for people who may have physical, communicative or cognitive challenges.

Intreo does this at present through;



- Assigning a specially trained Case Officer in each of its *Intreo* centres, or to a group of *Intreo* Centres (in cases of smaller offices), to work with people with disabilities.
- Working with its contractors under the Employability and Ability programme banners to deliver specialist Case Officers to work with people with disabilities and to help them access supports, training and employment opportunities.
- Offering high value financial incentives and supports to employers who hire people with disabilities, including through the Wage Subsidy and the Reasonable Accommodation Fund schemes.
- Working with stakeholders and employers to sponsor tailored employment programmes for people with disabilities.

In general, this work is reactive. While supports are communicated to people with disabilities, this tends to be passive in nature with limited pro-active outreach.

Accordingly arising from the *Make Work Pay* report and as part of the revised (Phase Two) Comprehensive Employment Strategy Action Plan, published by the Department of Justice in December 2019, the Department of Social Protection committed, subject to a consultation process, to implementing an 'Early Engagement' approach for jobseekers with disabilities.

The Department of Social Protection is finalising a new Roadmap to deliver this early engagement employment service to people with disabilities. In line with the approach set out in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy the process of early engagement will follow a number of principles:

Engagement will be voluntary

- A person can choose not to use the service if they think it is not right for them. This would not affect their entitlement to a payment.

Engagement will encourage new recipients of disability income support payments to use the *Intreo* service and supports

- If a person is awarded a disability income support payment for the first time, they will be invited to attend a local *Intreo* centre (this may be delivered by a contractor such as EmployAbility). Here they will be able to discuss their work ambitions and what supports and services they might need to achieve them.

Engagement will focus on the needs of the person

- The process will look at how best to support the person's education, training and social inclusion needs taking account of the nature and impact of their disability. The *Intreo* service adviser will help the person to develop a Personal Progression Plan according to their capacity. The plan might include help with CV development, work placements, education or training, or it might look at other ways to help improve the person's long-term work prospects.

Engagement will be effectively resourced

- *Intreo* services staff and supporting organisations will receive training in disability awareness and have access to information about suitable services and supports to help the person find suitable employment. There will be regular reviews of progress towards the person's employment goals.

Engagement will be joined up

- There will be agreements between *Intreo* and other service providers, including for, example, the Education and Training Boards, to make sure that engagement is as seamless as possible.

Engagement will address barriers to work faced by people with disabilities

- These may be barriers within the welfare system itself or in the wider workplace and society (e.g. physical barriers in the workplace). Through schemes such as the Reasonable Accommodation Fund and the Employment Support Schemes *Intreo* services will work with personal advocates and other service providers to help a person with a disability overcome these barriers.

This Roadmap for Early Engagement will be shared with disability group stakeholders and advocacy groups as part of a consultative process before being finalised.

Subject to the completion of that process it is intended to pilot an outbound proactive process of early engagement to invite young people aged 18-22 with disabilities to participate in an employment services programme in which Personal Progression Plans will be developed and followed through to help young people achieve their employment and career ambitions.

In summary, the Government commits as follows:

Commitment 50:

- ✓ Review the current long-term disability payment schemes with a view to removing inconsistencies/anomalies and ensure that they recognise the continuum of disabilities and support employment.

Commitment 51:

- ✓ Complete the consultation on the Early Engagement Roadmap for young people with disabilities and implement the approach starting in 2021.

Commitment 52:

- ✓ Ensure progress on addressing other ‘wrap-around’ issues identified in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities is monitored and reported on by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the National Disability Authority.

Working for Older Workers and 'Returners'

As we live longer and healthier lives, many people may wish to work to an older age and continue to make a positive contribution to our society through employment. Research shows that older workers bring a wealth of experience and cognitive diversity to the workplace²⁰.

Older workers come from three broad backgrounds.

- 1 Workers already in employment who prolong that employment
- 2 People who return to the workforce following a period when they may have left the workforce to undertake caring duties.
- 3 People who are in the workforce but are unemployed and are seeking to recover employment.

Employment rates of older workers increased significantly in Ireland, and most other OECD countries, in the period leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of global economic growth. This was, however, largely reflected in older workers deciding to prolong their employment with their existing place of work rather than an increase in hiring rates of older workers²¹.

Even this progress, however, is now under threat.

Experience shows that older workers often face barriers and discrimination to accessing the labour market, particularly after prolonged spells in unemployment. This is a particular concern in the aftermath of a recession or employment shock, such as COVID-19. For while the initial impact of such shocks is felt more acutely by young people (related both to the sectors and occupations of employment of young people, and, to the 'last-in first out' approach taken by employers when laying-off staff), the longer term impact is felt by older workers who lose employment.

In other words, where younger people with an employment history, fewer commitments and more up to date education and training tend to be resilient following an economic shock, older workers can struggle to re-find their footing in employment.

²⁰ Harvard Business Review: The case for hiring older workers (2019)

²¹ IZA Discussion Paper 2018 (John Martin): Live Longer, Work Longer: The Changing Nature of the Labour Market for Older Workers in OECD Countries.



Accordingly, the Government is determined to take actions to help older people overcome barriers to participation including through the following measures:

Commitment 53:

- ✓ Undertaking focused engagement with employers to encourage the recruitment of older workers, including the promotion of the JobsPlus recruitment subsidy.

Commitment 54:

- ✓ Tailoring bespoke job promotion and local recruitment events for older workers where reskilling and upskilling options will be outlined and referrals made to the Education and Training Board, as appropriate.

Commitment 55:

- ✓ Developing and operating 'Returner' programmes to encourage and support people who left the workforce and have been outside of the workforce for some time to take up employment.

Commitment 56:

- ✓ Reviewing the eligibility conditions for access to work placement and recruitment subsidy schemes to consider, for example, if higher recruitment subsidies should be made available for the recruitment of older unemployed workers.

Working for Young People with Disadvantage

It is well established that the young people who do not make the transition into employment are at risk of permanent 'scarring'. In other words, their longer-term life outcomes – earnings, education, health and housing – can be permanently affected by a prolonged period of unemployment.

There is significant concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the employment and consequently the life prospects of young people, particularly as it is clear that the effects of the pandemic on the employment of young people has been more acute than for other groups. This reflects the fact that the sectors in which young people work, and

the occupations they are engaged in, are more vulnerable to employment shocks. It also reflects the common practice whereby employers operate a 'last in, first out' policy when laying-off workers.

However, it also has to be acknowledged that, unlike most other countries, the data on employment losses for Ireland includes young people whose primary economic status is that of student (just under 30% of under 25s claiming PUP self-declare as full-time students). In addition, we also need to recognise that young people with good levels of education and an employment history are better positioned than other groups

Box 3: Case Study 2: Career Pathways for Returners Event - March 2020



Intreo hosted the first Career Pathways for Returners Event in Tangent Trinity College Dublin on Friday 6 March 2020.

The event provided attendees with information on work placements, opportunities to upskill or retrain and offered them the opportunity to take the next step in their careers. Speakers addressed more than 150 men and women who attended covering subjects including motivation and reaching your individual potential. The event including testimonials and personal stories of people who had relaunched their careers and the supports that they availed of to do that. Attendees had an opportunity to meet and speak with employers some of these had dedicated Returners Initiatives. The event also facilitated peer to peer network and discussion. The aim is to build on this initiative by helping potential returners realise the scope and scale of opportunities available to them so they can map their route back to work into roles that align their needs, interests and personal potential.

to re-establish their footing in the labour market. Ireland is fortunate in that the level of educational attainment of its young people is, overall, better than that of our peer countries and that our young well-educated workforce will continue to attract business investment in the years ahead.

Nevertheless, the risk of detachment from the labour force remains, particularly for those young people who leave school early, have low levels of education or are not in employment, education or training (the so called 'NEETS'). This is the cohort of young people who were already disenfranchised before COVID-19 or would have become disenfranchised even in a booming economy. It will also include some of those young people who having found employment were displaced by the COVID-19 shock or whose opportunity to make the transition from education to employment was denied because of COVID-19.

This strategy will focus on assisting these cohorts of young people.

Intreo will therefore:

- Implement and operate the new EU Reinforced Youth Guarantee process of intensive engagement with young jobseekers. The reinforced Guarantee builds on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the 2013 Youth Guarantee and integrates the changing labour market landscape and both the green and digital transitions. This new ambitious programme seeks to widen the target cohort to include those aged 24-29. In implementing this, **Intreo** will ensure that those young people profiled as being at a high risk of long-term unemployment, or already unemployed for 3 months or more, will meet with a Case Officer / Job Coach at least once each month to avail of personalised guidance and to explore progression routes to appropriate further education, training and employment supports.
- Offer early access to the JobsPlus recruitment subsidy for young people (those aged under 30) and actively promote take-up by young people of the 10,000 places on the Work Placement Experience Programme. This latter measure in particular reflects international evidence that work-based placements can help break the cycle of 'no work, no experience' and 'no experience, no work' that often puts young people at risk of long-term unemployment.

- Partner with employers, to relaunch the Employer Youth Employment Charter, whereby firms will commit to provide work-placement and traineeship opportunities to young people referred by **Intreo**. The new National Apprenticeship Office will also work with **Intreo** to enhance linkages with, and access to, apprentice jobs.
- Reserve at least 1,000 places for young people on the expanded Tús/Community Employment programme.
- Organise job promotion and recruitment events specifically targeted at people under 30.
- Develop and repeat the successful defence forces 'Skills for Life' programme to offer young people training and work experience within the defence forces.
- As part of this approach the Further Education and Training sector will also expand the Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme offering employers an incentive payment of €3,000 to take on new apprentices.

Finally, young people who are described as marginalised, disadvantaged or vulnerable in the National Youth Strategy will continue to benefit from services available under UBU, Your Place, Your Space, an initiative funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which provides out-of-school supports to young people in their local communities in order to improve their personal and social outcomes, supporting them in improving their employability and engaging with mainstream employment supports.

As part of the charter the Further Education and Training Sector, including the Community Training Centres, will continue to deliver, and expand (as required), programmes designed to:

- Help young disadvantaged people to develop the general work and 'transversal' skills necessary to sustain employment.
- Equip young people with specific skills required by employers.
- Help young people access the expanded range of apprenticeships and traineeships.

In summary the Government now commits to:

Commitment 57:

- ✓ Implement an intensive model of engagement with young people profiled as being at risk of long-term unemployment.

Commitment 58:

- ✓ Providing early access to the JobsPlus recruitment subsidy for young unemployed people under 30 years of age.

Commitment 59:

- ✓ Target that at least 4,000 of the 10,000 Work Placement Experience Programme places will be taken up by young people.

Commitment 60:

- ✓ Reserving at least 1,000 of the additional 3,000 State Employment Scheme places for young people on Tús/Community Employment.

Commitment 61:

- ✓ Tailoring bespoke job promotion and local recruitment events for young jobseekers where reskilling and upskilling options will be outlined and referrals made to the Education and Training Boards.

Commitment 62:

- ✓ Re-launching and promoting the Employer Youth Employment Charter with a target of signing-up 300 employers.

Commitment 63:

- ✓ Developing 'Get Work Ready' work and transversal skills programmes to be delivered via the further education and training sector.

Commitment 64:

- ✓ Expand the Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme to December 2021.

Commitment 65:

- ✓ Repeat and expand the successful Defence Forces skills for life training and experience programme for young unemployed people.



Working for Minority Groups with Disadvantage

One of the balances to be struck in any service organisation is, on the one hand, to recognise the reality of the extra difficulties faced by clients from a background that in society marks them out as somehow being different – whether that be ethnicity, religion, skin colour, addiction, or even where they live – while on the other, not defining them only by reference to that background.

People from all backgrounds should have an equal opportunity to access services and supports and to benefit from those services and supports on the same terms and conditions as every other person. Delivering on this means in some cases, that having that equal opportunity means going beyond the provision of ‘equal access’. It means that the service organisation must take ‘positive action’ to address and compensate for the extra challenges faced by people who face bias or discrimination. Moreover, it must strive to do this in a way that does not further institutionalise that bias or discrimination. *Intreo* is no different.

Members of the Traveller and Roma communities, migrants, asylum seekers, people with a history of addiction, and those with criminal convictions face particular barriers to work, which is reflected in their employment and unemployment levels. *Intreo* and its partner organisations will, within the lifetime of this strategy, develop and deliver targeted support measures that are specific to individual needs of these groups.

These measures will include:

- The provision of English language and integration classes,
- Increased access to further education and training opportunities via the Education and Training Boards,
- Access to paid work internships and apprenticeships, including in the public service,
- Reserved places on State Employment Schemes, such as Community Employment and Tús,
- Extension of the higher level of JobsPlus subsidy to employers who recruit people from minority groups with disadvantage,

Box 4: Case Study 3: Garda Youth Diversion Project - Work to Learn

The Work to Learn Programme is a Garda Youth Diversion Project -based work-experience initiative for young people, originally developed by ‘Ossory Youth’ in Kilkenny in 2015 and is supported by ‘State Street’.

The programme has two target groups, GYDP participants and the wider community, specifically the business community, often the target of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The programme exposes

participants to the world of work and the skills required to operate effectively in it, through a structured and supported process involving preparation, placement and reflection.

The programme challenges the young person involved to undertake a paid part-time job; providing them with a core set of basic work skills, an understanding of the “real” work environment, improved self-esteem and a more positive outlook towards their future.

- The promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable career option to all jobseekers from marginalised groups.

Establishing pathways to education and work will also be underpinned by the policy objectives of the successor strategies to the *National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy (NTRIS)* and the *Migrant Integration Strategy*. As part of this, in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, and to deliver the actions set out above the Government will develop a comprehensive Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan.

Obtaining employment is an important step in the rehabilitation journey of people with addictions and ex-offenders, fostering social inclusion and reducing the likelihood of relapsing into addiction and/or returning to criminal activity.

‘Working to Change’ is a co-designed social enterprise and employment strategy developed by the Department of Justice to increase employment progression prospects for people with convictions.

It sets out a total of 45 inter-connected actions under three strategic areas of focus:

- 1 Social Enterprise employment options
- 2 Mainstream Employment options
- 3 Entrepreneurship

Intreo is committed to engaging further with the Irish Prison and Probation Services and other relevant stakeholders to support the delivery of this ‘Working to Change’ strategy.

A number of initiatives already in place, both in prisons and in the community, help support the goal of supporting a return to employment for ex-offenders on a whole-of-Government basis. These include:

- Education and Training in Prisons: a partnership between the IPS and the Education and Training Boards to provide a high quality, flexible programme of education that helps people in custody cope with their sentence, achieve personal development, prepare for life after release and establish an appetite and capacity for life-long learning.
- Gate and Linkage Services (provided by the Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities - IASIO) a vocational prison-based ‘through-the-gate’ service that works with prisoners to help them develop a plan for release. The focus of the plan is on training, education or employment and to help prisoners to identify and overcome barriers to progression. The Linkage Service provides services to offenders referred by the Probation Service. Linkage Training and Employment Officers provide a desistance-focused guidance and placement service to offenders on Probation Supervision. They also provide re-settlement support to offenders on the Community Return programme.

- Garda Youth Diversion Programme and Projects involving community-based, multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people (aged 12-17) who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk.

In addition, the Public Employment Service will enhance Case Officer engagement with groups most distant from the labour market. As part of this work, we will explore ways in which to the identification, and in turn, monitoring of these cohorts of jobseekers can be improved.

In line with the objectives and actions set out above the Government now commits to:

Commitment 66:

- ✓ Reserve places on public employment programmes for people from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds.

Commitment 70:

- ✓ Consult with stakeholders from the Traveller (and/or Roma) community to advise the Public Employment Service.

Commitment 67:

- ✓ Develop a Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan.

Commitment 71:

- ✓ Implement the Public Appointments Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023, including by supporting engagement with representative organisations and individuals from diverse backgrounds to understand employment barriers and to awareness of public sector employment opportunities among these individuals.

Commitment 68:

- ✓ Explore the feasibility of introducing Traveller (and/or Roma)-specific Group Information Sessions over the lifetime of the strategy.

Commitment 69:

- ✓ Engage with community representative bodies to produce Traveller (and/or Roma)-specific employment service engagement tools.

Commitment 72:

- ✓ Consider making the higher level of the JobsPlus subsidy available to all employers who recruit an unemployed person of Traveller or Roma ethnicity.

Commitment 73:

- ✓ Further develop specific Community Employment schemes for Travellers and Roma.
-

Commitment 76:

- ✓ Supporting, through *Intreo*, the progression and work placement of young people on the Garda Youth Diversion Programme.
-

Commitment 74:

- ✓ Consider making the higher level of the JobsPlus subsidy available to all employers who recruit an unemployed person with a recent criminal record or a history of addiction.
-

Commitment 77:

- ✓ Deliver a bursary programme, as set out in the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025, to fund up to 100 apprentices per annum who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.
-

Commitment 75:

- ✓ Continuing the prison 'in-reach' programmes and supporting through *Intreo* the progression and work placement of ex-offenders on the Work to Change programme.
-

The background of the top half of the slide is a blue-tinted photograph of a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook is open, showing a page with a bar chart on the left and a line graph on the right. A silver pen is resting on the bottom right corner of the notebook. The overall aesthetic is professional and analytical.

06

Working with Evidence – Governance and Reporting

Informing Policy with Evidence

Ensuring that this strategy is implemented effectively requires its approach to be informed by evidence and that there is a strong monitoring and reporting framework to identify and address any slippage in delivery.

Internationally, there is a standard ‘toolkit’ available to support unemployed jobseekers ranging from job search advice and assistance through work placements, reskilling and retraining, recruitment subsidies/incentives, longer term education, and, State Employment Schemes (Tús and Community Employment). Typically, the deployment of tools from this toolkit is based on an assessment of each individual’s needs and evidence of what works in different situations.

Thankfully, there is a significant body of evidence to inform how the service should respond to help people who need support in finding and sustaining employment. For example, under previous *Pathways to Work* strategies detailed evaluations were undertaken of the JobBridge scheme, the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme, the Back to Education Allowance scheme, the Momentum Programme (SOLAS), the JobsPlus scheme and the JobPath service.

In general, the results from these evaluations reflect international experience that job search advice and assistance services, work placement, and specific skills training schemes are shown to have positive impacts on employment and earnings outcomes whereas the impact of longer term education programmes is, on average, negated by the long ‘lock-in’ effect.

These evaluations while informative also need to be interpreted carefully as they reflect average outcomes at a particular point in time. Given that jobseekers come from a variety of backgrounds and face different challenges that may vary over time it is important that this evidence is refreshed, kept up to date and complemented by expert insight to aid in its interpretation and application. The Labour Market Advisory Council is tasked with supporting the Department of Social Protection by providing input to the specification and completion of relevant formal analysis of programme impact.

For 2021, it is intended to commence a process of detailed econometric and user feedback reviews of State Employment Schemes (Community Employment and Tús). These reviews will inform future development of these schemes. Further evaluations of other programmes and schemes will follow each year.

In addition to these quantitative evaluations of impact, it is also intended to continue the practice, also initiated under previous *Pathways to Work* strategies, of conducting twice yearly detailed surveys of *Intreo* and JobPath clients and to extend these surveys to encompass all external service providers.

Targets and Deliverables

Each of the commitments identified in this document is set out in tabular format in the Appendix, each with a timeline for delivery and an identified responsible lead Department.

As part of the quarterly reporting process (see Governance and reporting in section 6.3) progress against each of the 83 commitments set out in this strategy statement will be published.

In addition, a number of key quantitative performance targets are being set to inform evaluation and review of this strategy and ensure that actions/commitments are directed to achieve results that matter.

As outlined in Chapter 1, these performance targets are in the form of:

Inputs:

The actions that it is proposed to take, e.g. increase the number of employment Case Officers.

Outputs:

The number of services that are delivered as a result of these inputs, e.g. the number of 1-to-1 advisory meetings between Case Officers and clients.

Outcomes:

The impact of the inputs/outcomes on key employment/labour market metrics, e.g. a reduction in the rate at which newly unemployed people become long-term unemployed.

Table 1 (Chapter 1) sets out the set of key performance indicators that will be used. Progress against these indicators will be published on a quarterly basis and the metrics and targets themselves will be reviewed every year to take account of prevailing labour market conditions.



Governance, Reporting and Review

The Department of Social Protection will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this strategy and will report on progress to the Cabinet Committee on the Economy and its Senior Official's Group.

External oversight will be entrusted to the Labour Market Advisory Council. As part of this work, the Council will monitor the delivery of individual actions against the agreed timelines and will assess the further development of metrics, statistics and a programme of evaluations over the lifetime of this strategy.

The Labour Market Advisory Council will be asked to provide an annual report to the

Minister for Social Protection in Quarter 3 of each year providing its view on progress, remedial actions that may need to be taken and any new actions that it considers should be included²².

The Minister will forward this report together with her response to the Government and to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection in Quarter 4 of each year at which time it will also be published on the Department of Social Protection website.

A formal review of the strategy will be undertaken with the Labour Market Advisory Council in Q1 and Q2 2023 and an updated strategy will be published in Q4 2023.

In summary, to ensure effective governance of this strategy the Government commits to:

Commitment 78:

- ✓ Implement, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a formal analysis of programme impacts, starting in 2021 with an analysis of the Community Employment Scheme.

Commitment 79:

- ✓ Continue the approach of twice-yearly surveys of client experience and extend these surveys to encompass all external service providers.

Commitment 80:

- ✓ Report progress against the Key Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis.

Commitment 81:

- ✓ Publish an annual review and report on progress against all commitments, to be prepared by the Labour Market Advisory Council, in Q4 of each year.

Commitment 82:

- ✓ Undertake, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a formal review of this strategy and publish a revised, updated strategy, in 2023.

Commitment 83:

- ✓ Conduct a data audit exercise on a subset of DSP administrative data to assess their comprehensiveness, consistency, reliability and range with a view to facilitating longitudinal analysis of outcomes.

²² These annual reports will commence in 2022 with a review of the strategy's progress in 2021.

Appendix



Table of Commitments

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
1	Expand the caseload capacity of the <i>Intreo</i> Public Employment Service (contracted and in-house) by 100,000 jobseekers per annum to over 200,000 per annum, through the assignment of an additional 150 directly employed Case Officers within DSP <i>Intreo</i> ²³ .	DSP	100 by end-2021, further 50 by end-2022
2	Maintain the resource capacity of contracted service provision and increase the funding of local/regional employment services to provide full national coverage.	DSP	Ongoing
3	In addition to taking referrals of long-term unemployed clients, external service providers will also be asked to work with the most disadvantaged of our short-term (less than one year) unemployed clients.	DSP	Q4 2021
4	Work with Pandemic Unemployment Payment recipients during the transitional phase as temporary COVID-19 State supports are tapered off by providing employment supports to this new cohort of unemployed to assist them back to employment as the economy recovers.	DSP	Q3 2021
5	Fund 50,000 additional places in further and higher education, including via Skills to Compete, Skillnet Ireland, Springboard+ and the Human Capital Initiative.	DFHERIS	Q4 2021
6	Increase the total number of new apprentice registrations to at least 10,000 per annum by 2025, in line with a commitment in the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025.	DFHERIS	Commence Q2 2021 / Ongoing
7	Increase the number of places in Work Experience Programmes by 10,000.	DSP	Commence Q3 2021
8	Increase the maximum value and funding for the Training Support Grant from €500 per grant to €1,000 to benefit 12,500 jobseekers per annum.	DSP	Ongoing
9	Increase participation and funding in Back to Education programmes to 7,700 places (demand led).	DSP	Ongoing

²³ From baseline 2020.

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
10	Increase funding and places for enterprise start-ups by jobseekers with a target of support 4,200 jobseekers to start their own business (demand led) ²⁴ .	DSP	Ongoing
11	Increase funding and places on State Employment Schemes, such as Community Employment, to support an extra 3,000 places for those facing labour market disadvantage.	DSP	Ongoing
12	Restore face-to-face engagements between Case Officers and jobseekers as soon as possible in a safe manner compliant with all public health guidelines.	DSP	When country moves to Level 1 under the COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead
13	Build on progress to date and further develop online service delivery mechanisms via JobsIreland.ie and MyWelfare.ie.	DSP	Q1 2022
14	Through commitments 12 and 13 develop and deploy a blended online and in-person employment service delivery process.	DSP	Q2 2022
15	Remodel Intreo centres as appropriate to incorporate self-service capacity.	DSP/OPW	Q1 2023
16	Continue to develop and deliver online seminars and Job Promotion Events to support jobseekers and employers during the job search and recruitment process.	DSP	Ongoing
17	Review and update the existing Probability of Exit (PEX) segmentation model.	DSP	Q4 2021
18	Explore and, if appropriate, develop a holistic diagnostic tool to support Intreo Case Officers in their assessment of individual jobseeker needs.	DSP	Q3 2021

²⁴This is in addition to programmes funded and managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
19	Invest in and embed continuous professional development as a core feature of Case Officers within <i>Intreo</i> .	DSP	Ongoing
20	Extend the requirement to secure Level 7 accreditation, or equivalent, for case work to the Department's external service providers.	DSP	Q4 2021 (As part of revised contract arrangements)
21	Develop and progress a Case Officer / Job Coach model of case work within <i>Intreo</i> .	DSP	Q3 2021
22	Accelerate development of online claim options and further progress the 'front-office/back-office' model of operation to free <i>Intreo</i> centres up to focus more attention on employment service delivery.	DSP	Ongoing
23	Translate national targets for <i>Intreo</i> performance into regional and local measures and report performance on a quarterly basis.	DSP	Q3 2022
24	Integrating all Public Employment Service providers under the one-stop-shop brand of <i>Intreo</i> to improve end user customer experience of the range of services.	DSP	Q4 2021 (As part of revised contract arrangements)
25	Develop and implement a communications plan to promote the services of <i>Intreo</i> , including through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering targeted information, across digital platforms, on the range of <i>Intreo</i> supports that are available to all. ▪ Further developing MyWelfare.ie and existing digital platforms to provide enhanced online access to activation and employment supports. ▪ Further developing the Gov.ie (welfare and work) website to provide clear, accessible information and providing equal or 'joint billing' to employment services and welfare. ▪ Briefing and supporting stakeholder and advocacy groups to communicate and promote the benefits of the service. ▪ Greater use of national, local and regional press and radio media services to promote the service. 	DSP	Ongoing
26	Encourage and support jobseekers to register with JobsIreland.ie.	DSP	Q3 2022

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
27	Support 50,000 long-term unemployed people to commence in Further Education and Training provision by 2025.	DFHERIS	Q4 2025
28	Monitor and report on a quarterly basis on the level of Further Education and Training provision, referrals from <i>Intreo</i> and take-up rates.	DSP, DFHERIS	Ongoing ²⁵
29	Continue to support the operation of the National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora.	DFHERIS	Ongoing
30	Invest additional resources in the analysis and planning of labour market developments and skill requirements.	DSP	Q2 2022
31	Increase the number of dedicated employer relations staff, within <i>Intreo's</i> own offices, by 25.	DSP	Q2 2022
32	Develop, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council sub-group on employer relations, a new employer relations strategy.	DSP	Q2 2022
33	Develop and implement a promotional campaign to increase employer awareness and take-up of the available supports.	DSP, DETE	Q1 2022
34	Host a series of employer roadshows around the country to showcase examples of how employers can, and have benefitted, from the employment supports available.	DSP, DETE	Q1 and Q2 2022
35	Host 150 Job Promotion Events (virtual or in person) each year to showcase employment opportunities and to facilitate the introduction of employers and jobseekers.	DSP, DETE	From 2022
36	Host two national <i>Intreo</i> Work and Skills Weeks each year (one virtual, one in person), each of which comprising a week of intensive jobs focussed Job Promotion Events and seminars across the country.	DSP, DETE	From 2022
37	Oblige employers availing of State employment supports to confirm registration with the State's online job portal – JobsIreland.ie.	All departments, in particular DFHERIS and DETE	Q3 2022

²⁵ Quarterly reporting will commence in Q1 2022 with respect to the previous six months.

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
38	Undertake regular surveys of employers' assessment of public employment and further education and training services to help identify employer needs/opinions and track their satisfaction with the services.	DSP, DETE	Q4 2022
39	Continue to invest in and support the work of the National Skills Council and the Labour Market Advisory Council.	DSP, DFHERIS	Ongoing
40	Increase co-operation with specialist recruitment firms to ensure that Intreo and the Further Education and Training sector utilise all available channels for employer contact in order to maximise employment opportunities for jobseekers.	DSP, DETE, DFHERIS	Q4 2022
41	Using the experience from the Pandemic Unemployment Payment to inform the design of any pay-related social insurance based short-term jobseeker payment that may be developed, as provided for in the Programme for Government.	DSP	Q3 2023
42	Pilot a basic income guarantee in the arts sector during 2022.	DTCAGSM, DFIN, DPER, DETE, DSP	Q1 2022
43	Prepare a paper on options to modify the longer term jobseeker assistance payment by utilising the Revenue real time earnings data to adjust payment levels in line with a person's weekly earnings, to guarantee a basic income floor and ensure that in all cases a person's income increases when they work.	DSP	Q3 2023
44	Building on the EWSS/TWSS and drawing on existing international models, explore the possibility of introducing a new Short-Time Work Support scheme to enable employers retain people on their payroll in response to short-duration shocks to employment ²⁶ .	DSP, DFIN	Q4 2022
45	Introduce, on a phased basis, a statutory sick pay scheme.	DETE	Commence 2022
46	In the short-term, pending these developments, the Department of Social Protection will ensure that each new jobseeker is provided with access to a Benefit of Work statement using the Department's online Benefit of Work calculator.	DSP	Q3 2021

²⁶ Consider a range of international short-time work support schemes such as the German 'Kurzarbeit' and the French 'Chômage partiel / activité partielle'

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
47	Ensure that the particular circumstances of lone parents are considered in the assessment of a Working Age Payment/Basic Income Guarantee.	DSP	Q3 2022
48	Increase the number of children in receipt of State supports provided under Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Funding Programmes.	DCEDIY	Ongoing
49	Ensure progress on healthcare, housing and childcare is monitored and reported as part of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion.	DSP, DCEDIY, DoH, DHLGH	Ongoing
50	Review the current long-term disability payment schemes with a view to removing inconsistencies/anomalies and ensure that they recognise the continuum of disabilities and support employment.	DSP	Q1 2023
51	Complete the consultation on the Early Engagement Roadmap for young people with disabilities and implement the approach starting in 2021.	DSP	Q3 2021
52	Ensure progress on addressing other 'wrap-around' issues identified in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities is monitored and reported on by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the National Disability Authority.	DCEDIY	Ongoing
53	Undertaking focused engagement with employers to encourage the recruitment of older workers, including the promotion of the JobsPlus recruitment subsidy.	DSP	Start Q2 2022 and ongoing thereafter
54	Tailoring bespoke job promotion and local recruitment events for older workers where reskilling and upskilling options will be outlined and referrals made to the Education and Training Board, as appropriate.	DSP	Start Q3 2022 and ongoing thereafter
55	Developing and operating 'Returner' programmes to encourage and support people who left the workforce and have been outside of the workforce for some time to take up employment.	DSP, DETE	Start Q1 2023 and ongoing thereafter

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
56	Reviewing the eligibility conditions for access to work placement and recruitment subsidy schemes to consider, for example, if higher recruitment subsidies should be made available for the recruitment of older unemployed workers.	DSP	Q2 2022
57	Implement an intensive model of engagement with young people profiled as being at risk of long-term unemployment.	DSP	Q4 2021
58	Providing early access to the JobsPlus recruitment subsidy for young unemployed people under 30 years of age.	DSP	Ongoing
59	Target that at least 4,000 of the 10,000 Work Placement Experience Programme places will be taken up by young people.	DSP	Q4 2022
60	Reserving at least 1,000 of the additional 3,000 State Employment Scheme places for young people on Tús/ Community Employment.	DSP	Ongoing
61	Tailoring bespoke job promotion and local recruitment events for young jobseekers where reskilling and upskilling options will be outlined and referrals made to the Education and Training Boards.	DSP	Q3 2022
62	Re-launching and promoting the Employer Youth Employment Charter with a target of signing-up 300 employers.	DSP	Q2 2022
63	Developing 'Get Work Ready' work and transversal skills programmes to be delivered via the further education and training sector.	DSP, DFHERIS, SOLAS	Q2 2022
64	Expand the Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme to December 2021.	DFHERIS	Q3 2021
65	Repeat and expand the successful Defence Forces skills for life training and experience programme for young unemployed people.	DoD	Q3 2021
66	Reserve places on public employment programmes for people from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds.	DSP	Ongoing 2021
67	Develop a Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan.	DSP, DCEDIY, DETE, DFHERIS, SOLAS	Q2 2022

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
68	Explore the feasibility of introducing Traveller (and/or Roma)-specific Group Information Sessions over the lifetime of the strategy.	DSP	Q4 2022
69	Engage with community representative bodies to produce Traveller (and/or Roma)-specific employment service engagement tools.	DSP	Q4 2022
70	Consult with stakeholders from the Traveller (and/or Roma) community to advise the Public Employment Service.	DSP	Q2 2022
71	Implement the Public Appointments Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023, including by supporting engagement with representative organisations and individuals from diverse backgrounds to understand employment barriers and to awareness of public sector employment opportunities among these individuals.	DSP	Ongoing
72	Consider making the higher level of the JobsPlus subsidy available to all employers who recruit an unemployed person of Traveller or Roma ethnicity.	DSP	Q2 2023
73	Further develop specific Community Employment schemes for Travellers and Roma.	DSP	Q4 2023
74	Consider making the higher level of the JobsPlus subsidy available to all employers who recruit an unemployed person with a recent criminal record or a history of addiction.	DSP	Q2 2023
75	Continuing the prison 'in-reach' programmes and supporting through <i>Intreo</i> the progression and work placement of ex-offenders on the Work to Change programme.	DSP	Ongoing
76	Supporting, through <i>Intreo</i> , the progression and work placement of young people on the Garda Youth Diversion Programme.	DSP	Ongoing
77	Deliver a bursary programme, as set out in the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025, to fund up to 100 apprentices per annum who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.	DFHERIS	Q1 2022

No.	Commitment	Lead Department(s)	Due Date
78	Implement, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a formal analysis of programme impacts, starting in 2021 with an analysis of the Community Employment Scheme.	DSP	Commence 2021
79	Continue the approach of twice-yearly surveys of client experience and extend these surveys to encompass all external service providers.	DSP	Ongoing
80	Report progress against the Key Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis.	DSP	From Q4 2021
81	Publish an annual review and report on progress against all commitments, to be prepared by the Labour Market Advisory Council, in Q4 of each year.	DSP	Ongoing, commencing 2022
82	Undertake, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a formal review of this strategy and publish a revised, updated strategy, in 2023.	DSP	Q4 2023
83	Conduct a data audit exercise on a subset of DSP administrative data to assess their comprehensiveness, consistency, reliability and range with a view to facilitating longitudinal analysis of outcomes.	DSP	Q4 2022





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