



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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Tánaiste calls on local employers and businesses in Kerry to give young people an opportunity to work

During a visit to Kerry today (Friday, 6th February 2015), the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton T.D. is calling on local employers and businesses to give serious consideration to offering young jobseekers the chance to get started with a job. The Tánaiste opens a Department of Social Protection Intreo Centre in Tralee which will provide employment and financial supports to jobseekers and employers in the town and its environs.

Earlier this week, the Tánaiste launched two new programmes, First Steps and JobsPlus Youth, both of which are focused to help young jobseekers return to work and training. The programmes are expected to benefit 3,500 young jobseekers this year.

The two programmes form part of Ireland's Youth Guarantee system. The EU-wide Youth Guarantee aims to ensure that young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of entering the labour market. The European Commission is providing co-funding for some elements of the Youth Guarantee plan through the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund.

Speaking ahead of her visit, the Tánaiste said: **"First Steps will offer young jobseekers between 18 and 25 the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and training with the help of dedicated assistance from Department of Social Protection case officers. The target is to provide up to 2,000 work experience placements of six or nine months' duration for young jobseekers during 2015."**

JobsPlus Youth is an expansion of the JobsPlus employer incentive scheme, and will see employers receive cash payments to assist with wage costs when they hire young people from the Live Register. On a national level, it is expected to support 1,500 young jobseekers return to work this year. The Tánaiste said: **"Since it was introduced in July 2013, JobsPlus has proved to be a great incentive and support for employers. Up to the end of January, some 148 jobseekers and 113 companies in Kerry have availed of the scheme. Today I am calling on employers and businesses in Kerry to give serious consideration to participating in either of the two latest programmes we've put in place for young jobseekers – First Steps and JobsPlus Youth."**

"Through the Department's Pathways to Work strategy, we have made a focused effort to reduce youth unemployment. That work has paid off, with a significant reduction in youth unemployment from 31% in 2012 at the height of the crisis to 21.6% at end of 2014. But that is still far too high. While the recovering economy will vastly improve the prospects for many young people leaving school and college, others still find it hard to take that first step onto the

employment ladder. The purpose of First Steps and JobsPlus Youth is to give them that opportunity.”

During her visit, the Tánaiste will meet with representatives of local and national businesses based in Kerry. Confident that the economy is being restored, she is encouraging these businesses to look ahead in a positive manner and focus on what they can do for their local economy and, especially, the young people of Kerry. **“This Government’s top priority is to get Ireland back working again and we are open to supporting enterprises that have a solid base, grow into a vibrant part of our economy. Kerry has much to offer at many levels, including culture, tourism, sport, agri-business and many others. I strongly urge all employers, local businesses and entrepreneurs to engage with officials from my Department based in Tralee and other towns of Kerry. In particular, I would ask you to look at the possibility of offering apprenticeships and traineeships to your young people. Not only will the young men and women gain a skill in an area they have a particular interest in but they will continue that thread of tradition, creativity and workmanship that makes Ireland unique. And, they will be guaranteed a job. Our young people deserve to be given the opportunity”** she said.

The Tánaiste has re-iterated that the Government’s target is to reduce unemployment to below 10% by the end of 2015. This year, the Department of Social Protection will engage over 80,000 jobseekers in direct supports, in addition to supports available to all jobseekers through its Intreo offices and other centres. In total, over €1 billion will be invested in these measures in 2015.

While in Tralee, the Tánaiste will officially open the Department’s Intreo Centre located at Godfrey Place, Tralee. With the roll-out of Intreo Centres throughout the country, the Tánaiste is succeeding in transforming the Department of Social Protection from a passive benefits provider to an active and engaged employment service.

The Tánaiste spoke of the success of Intreo being a key element of the Pathways to Work strategy in its transformative approach to helping people get back to work. The Department’s case officers work closely with jobseekers and create a personal progression plan with them that encompasses the employment and training supports that would be most beneficial to them.

The Government is funding over €1 billion this year on work, training and education places and related supports. In return for those supports, jobseekers are asked to actively engage with the services being provided to them.

PRESS RELEASE ENDS

Note for Editors

The Intreo process consists of five main elements:

An integrated 'one-stop-shop' reception service: This replaces the three previously separate services from FÁS, the Department of Social Protection and the Community Welfare Service (HSE). In practice, this means that the client receives complete information on a more timely basis in one location, and that all follow-on appointments can be scheduled at the same time.

A single decisions process: Previously, clients submitting claims for social welfare payments might have had to wait some time for their claim to be awarded as details of their employment status and income were assessed. While awaiting this payment, clients were entitled, by submitting a separate claim to the Community Welfare Service, to an emergency Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment. The new Intreo process significantly reduces the time taken to decide a claim and those clients who might still require a supplementary payment can have this decision made as part of the single process rather than having to submit a separate claim. As part of the decisions process, a personal profile (known as PEX) is captured for each individual and this profile informs the approach taken at the next stage in the process – activation.

An integrated activation/employment service process: Previously clients had to wait at least three months before an appointment could be made with an employment services officer, and in some cases this appointment had to be triggered by the client themselves. Now, under the new process, all clients must attend a group engagement session – typically within a week or two of registering for jobseekers' payments. Depending on their personal profile, they are subsequently scheduled for follow-on one-to-one meetings with an experienced employment services officer.

The group engagement session is designed to give clients basic information on their entitlements and the services that are available to them in order to help them return to work. Each client is given a fact sheet in preparation for and in advance of the one-to-one meeting. At the one-to-one meeting, the employment services officer/case worker will go into greater detail as to the employment and training supports available and help the client to prepare a Personal Progression Plan (PPP).

Follow-up meetings are then scheduled to monitor progress against the plan and to adjust it, as circumstances dictate. Clients may also be contacted in the periods between one-to-one meetings to check if the client is following the actions agreed under the PPP.

Ultimately clients who, despite the assistance of their case officer cannot make progress on the pathway into employment/further education, may be directed to, and required to, take up a place on a State employment or training scheme.

Social Contract – Rights and Responsibilities: This contract underpins the Intreo approach. It is a record of the commitments being made by the Intreo service and also of the commitments expected of clients who avail of that service. In other words, a social contract to ensure that all parties understand that with rights to supports from the Department come responsibilities to engage with those services. The commitments expected of clients are that they will:

- Co-operate with the Intreo service in developing a Personal Progression Plan.
- Use this plan to strive to secure employment.
- Attend all meetings requested by the Department.
- Provide all information requested by the Department.
- Clients who register for the service will be expected to sign and honour this Record of Mutual Commitments.

- Failure to honour this commitment can lead to a reduction in, and ultimately a cessation of, payments.

Employer Engagement: The Department already offers a suite of services that can assist employers in recruiting staff from the Live Register. These include:

Job advertising and job-matching services (jobsireland.ie)

An internship scheme - JobBridge (jobbridge.ie)

Financial supports for recruiting long-term unemployed people – JobsPlus (jobsplus.ie)

In-work supports to employees – Part-time Job Incentive scheme and Family Income Supplement

WorkAbility services, including wage subsidies and grants, for employing people with a disability.

