



NEWS RELEASE

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**Hanafin targets young jobseekers back into
education and training**

Over 50,000 young people who are signing on the Live Register are to receive a letter from the Department of Social and Family Affairs in the coming weeks setting out the options available to them to improve their education, skills and qualifications.

Announcing the new direct mail shot to 18-25 year old jobseekers, Minister Mary Hanafin T.D, said **“returning to education and training in order to improve your skills will be the key to availing of the up-turn in the economy which will inevitably come. Young people should not see signing on the Live Register as their future – they should look to see what supports and opportunities are available for them throughout the country.”**

Young people are advised to look at the options available to them through their local VEC or through the adult education access programmes operated by third level colleges. (*See copy of mailshot attached*)

“We know that people of all skill levels are losing their jobs. Young people who may have opted out of the formal education and training opportunities when the draw of high wages during the boom years was irresistible, are now more likely to remain unemployed if they are not actively upskilling and gaining new expertise.”



Department of Social and Family Affairs

FAS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs are extending the Job Search/National Employment Action Plan to cater for 12,250 cases each month, almost twice as many as were available last year.

In addition, the Government is now providing, through FÁS, a total of 128,000 training and activation places for unemployed people this year. There are also some 147,000 places available in further education programmes in 2009. **“This shows the scale of activity being supported by this Government to ensure that people are best positioned to get back to employment”** said Minister Hanafin.

Minister Hanafin also said that recent changes to the Jobseekers Allowance payment rates for new claimants, who are 18 and 19 years old, are also aimed at incentivising them into full-time training with Youthreach, FÁS or second chance education at second level or through a PLC course. **“This measure was specifically introduced from this month to help young people gain skills which will give them a route into employment and so help them avoid becoming welfare dependent from a young age.”**

ENDS

Appendix - Copy of letter issuing to 18-25 year olds who have been signing on Live Register for 3 months or more.

As a jobseeker the Department of Social and Family Affairs would like to inform you of the range of second chance education opportunities available to help people in receipt of jobseeker payments for a certain duration to improve their



education, skills and qualifications and therefore enhance their employment prospects.

If you are at least 21 years of age and would like to return to education, you may qualify for the Back to Education Allowance. If you are aged 18 to 20 years and out of formal education for at least 2 years you may also qualify.

If you have been awarded statutory redundancy you may access the Back to Education Allowance provided an entitlement to a relevant social welfare payment is established prior to commencing an approved course of study.

What are the study options under the Back to Education Scheme?

You may avail of a full-time second or third level course which leads to a qualification that is recognised by the Department of Education and Science, (courses at Masters level are not covered by the scheme). In order to find out what courses are available contact your local VEC or Third level College. You may access further information on available educational courses on the website www.qualifax.ie.

How much is the Back to Education allowance?

The allowance is paid at a weekly rate equivalent to the maximum personal rate of the relevant social welfare payment that qualifies you for participation in the scheme. The allowance is payable for the duration of the course. It essentially replaces your existing social welfare income and in addition an annual €500 cost of education allowance is paid.

Is there a Part-time Education Option?

Yes you may avail of the part-time education option to attend part-time day/evening courses of education or training and retain your existing Jobseekers



Allowance or Jobseekers Benefit with permission of your local Social Welfare Office. To qualify you must continue to satisfy the conditions of being available for and genuinely seeking employment on an on-going basis.

What is VTOS?

VTOS is the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme which offers a wide range of courses which can lead to qualifications such as Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) certificates. VTOS is funded by the Department of Education and Science and courses are delivered in over 100 locations throughout the country. The main objective of the scheme is to give unemployed people education and training opportunities that will help them find a job or to further educational opportunities thus leading to paid employment. To make enquiries regarding a VTOS course, you should **contact your local VEC or www.vtos.ie**

You can also avail of part-time courses run by your local VEC under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI). BTEI courses are available in a wide range of disciplines at FETAC Levels 1 – 6. **Contact your local VEC for more information.**

FAS

Foras Aiseanna Saothair (FAS) is Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority. Its functions include the operation of training and employment programmes, the provision of a vocational guidance and placement service to jobseekers and a recruitment service to employers. FÁS enhances the skills and competencies of individuals through the provision of tailored training and employment programmes that suit everyone's needs. **For more information contact your local FAS office or locall No. 1800 611 116 or www.fas.ie**



Department of Social and Family Affairs

There are a number of financial assistance schemes available in Ireland to help you to progress through further and higher education. The web-site www.studentfinance.ie provides information on course fees and details on eligibility requirements for free fees.

For more detailed information on the back to education options available to you, visit the website [www.welfare.ie / back to education](http://www.welfare.ie/back-to-education) or you can contact your local Social Welfare Office