



## Ministers of State Kevin Humphreys to officially open new Intreo Centre in Westport

Kevin Humphreys, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection with special responsibility for Employment, Community and Social Support and will today (Tuesday, 26 May, 2015) officially open the latest Department of Social Protection Intreo Centre in Westport.

Speaking at the opening this morning, Minister Humphreys said: **“Intreo Centres are central element of the Governments *Pathways to Work* strategy, and represents a transformative approach to helping people get back to work, providing not just income supports but employment supports too. The Department of Social Protection has transformed from a passive benefits provider to an active and engaged employment service. The proof that this approach is working for people in Co. Mayo is in the Live Register figures, currently 10,520 people, down from 11,753 on the same period last year. The country is now the road to recovery and the unemployment rate is now 9.9% the lowest since the peak of 15.2% in 2012.”**

**“There is a range of financial and other supports available to employers who recruit from the live register we aim to heighten the awareness of these and the existence of a talented pool of people on the Live Register to local employers. Westport Intreo centre now has two dedicated Case Officers who will promote our services to employers as well as working with jobseekers. I would urge all employers in this region to contact the Department, and discuss what we can do for you as an employer.”**

The new Intreo Centre located at James Street, Westport, will provide a one-stop-shop for jobseekers where they can get employment and financial supports in the one place for the first time. The support now being provided through Intreo will be customised to each customer’s individual skills, experience and qualifications. A tailored progression plan is planned and agreed between the jobseeker and their Case Officer. This plan helps jobseekers in deciding the training and development programmes they should pursue to maximise their access to job opportunities. There are some 1,989 people in Mayo currently availing of these supports, which include the Back to Education Allowance, Enterprise Allowance, TÚS, Rural Social Scheme, JobBridge and Community Employment schemes.

Speaking at the opening Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring T.D., said, **“I am delighted to be here at the opening of the Westport Intreo Centre which is a positive step for the local community. The one-stop shop for jobseekers ensures that waiting times are reduced and customer services for users are improved. The unemployment rate is now below 10% and the number of people on the Live Register in Mayo has reduced by almost 10.5% in the last 12 months. The Government, through the Pathways to Work strategy and the Action Plan for Jobs, continues**

**to tackle unemployment, and this new Intreo Centre is one of the key mechanisms through which we are delivering that objective.”**

Minister Humphreys thanked the local staff of the Department for their co-operation and dedication, **“Thanks to Eoin Brown, his management team and staff for their continued hard work and support. I would also like to thank the OPW for their assistance in developing the physical infrastructure in Westport Intreo Centre.”**

**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](http://jobsireland.ie))

An internship scheme - JobBridge ([jobbridge.ie](http://jobbridge.ie))

Financial supports for recruiting long-term unemployed people – JobsPlus ([jobsplus.ie](http://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.