



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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Employment schemes to transfer to the Department of Social Protection

Ó Cuív: “Maintaining people’s employability through regular work activity will be important for getting people back into the competitive economy”

The Government’s work opportunity schemes which include the **Community Services Programme** and the **Rural Social Scheme** are set to develop further and expand, on a cost neutral basis, when these two schemes transfer across to the Department of Social Protection early this autumn. Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Social Protection confirmed today that the Community Services Programme and the Rural Social Scheme will soon transfer over to his Department from the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, as part of the Government’s job activation measures.

Between them, both work schemes currently give work opportunities to 5300 individuals. The Rural Social Scheme which involves 2,600 workers is managed by 35 local development companies countrywide. Almost 2,700 people are engaged in the Community Services Programme which is designed to address locally identified gaps in the provision of services within communities and to exploit the potential of community assets and resources. (See editor’s note for more detail).

The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 enables the transfer of these schemes to the Department of Social Protection.

The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 also allows for the transfer of responsibility, and associated funding, for the employment services and community employment programme of FÁS from the Minister for Education and Skills to the Minister for Social Protection. These particular programmes will transfer over in the late autumn. Arrangements are being put in place to give effect to this transfer.

Minister Éamon Ó Cuív said: “Income support and employment scheme initiatives will soon be integrated into one single department. One of the priorities I have been given in my department is to place a particular focus on job activation. I plan to develop and expand these schemes to give more opportunities to people who are out of work and who want to maintain their skills or improve their job prospects. Changing the way we approach our existing resources can unlock the potential of new ways to create locally-based jobs. We must create a better future for people who find themselves without a job; to provide them with work activity in the short term, to up-skill them and give them opportunities to get back into the mainstream workforce as speedily as possible. Maintaining people’s employability through regular work activity will be important for getting people back into the competitive economy.”

Minister Ó Cuív added: “The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 marks another significant step towards integrating income support and unemployment schemes within one single department and gives effect to An Taoiseach’s strategy to deal with the issues around



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unemployment, income and social supports in a more coherent way. There are many needs in communities in terms of provision of after-school services, childcare, services for older people and environmental projects that we could continue to address through these schemes. There is also the semi-economic sector where we have heritage centres, tourist facilities and sports clubs that can generate some financial income, but that will always require some small state support from work schemes.”

Editor’s note:

Rural Social Scheme

The Rural Social Scheme currently provides additional work opportunities and income for certain categories of low income farming and fishing families, in the provision of essential community services and also in the development and maintenance of rural walkways and rural tourism. A spin-off is that the “meitheal oibre” or team-work nature of the Rural Social Scheme tackles the rural isolation that has come with modern mechanised farming practices.

Community Services Programme

The Community Services Programme provides funding to groups that supply services to their local communities. The programme aims to support local community activity which addresses disadvantage, while at the same time providing employment opportunities for people from the following target groups: people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, travellers, stabilised and recovering drug mis-users and ex-prisoners. The activities of the projects funded under the Community Services Programme are very varied and include services for older people, services for people with disabilities, rural transport for isolated rural communities, managing community halls and facilities, rural tourism, community radio, recycling and environmental projects.

ENDS

Department of Social Protection

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