

**Minister Burton's opening remarks for the launch of
Pathways to Work at the Digital Skills Academy**

23rd February 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen

This government regards our people as the country's greatest asset. We are launching [Pathways to Work](#) today because we want to offer our unemployed people options, opportunities and hope for the future.

Our road to recovery is most importantly about investing in our people, our human and our intellectual capital if you will.

Let me be clear: no-one who loses their job will be allowed to drift, without support, into long-term unemployment.

We are launching this new policy, Pathways to Work, because we want to engage with every unemployed person to make sure that their first day out of a job is also their first step on the pathway back to work.

We will not repeat of the mistakes of the 1980s and 1990s when unemployment remained high even after economic recovery took hold. This time, our people will be job-ready when the recovery comes.

Unlike previous governments, my colleagues and I are ambitious for people who are out of work. We want to be the catalyst for them to get on the pathway to a new job and better prospects.

To achieve our ambition, we have set the following stretching targets:

The first is to ensure that 75,000 of long-term unemployed people will move into employment by end 2015. A long-term unemployed person is one who has been unemployed for 12 months or more.

The second is that we will reduce the average time spent on the live register from 21 months today to less than 12 months by the end of 2015.

The third is that we will reset the relationship with employers, with more and better contact to ensure they have access to and are offered the right candidates to fill full-time vacancies. We will also involve the private sector in our plans for returning people to work.

This Government's priority is jobs, jobs, jobs. Today I am launching Pathways to Work to ensure that as many job vacancies as possible get filled by unemployed people.

There are grounds for hope in the Irish economy: we see a modest reduction in the live register as well as recent high profile job announcements like Sky and PayPal.

When I see a new employer in town, I want that employer to have confidence that the Live Register is a good place to find the right candidates. And that some of these candidates should also come from those who are long-term unemployed.

Unless we do this there is a danger that unemployment could, as in previous recessions, persist past the economic upturn. The Government is determined not to let this happen.

Look at page 33 in the Pathways to Work document and you will see how the new system will help people like Tom.

Tom is 24 and recently lost his job on a building site in Cork city. Tom left school at 16 and had spells of unemployment at different stages. Tom has no certs. He is confused about what services are available to him.

We can help him from his initial point of contact when he signs on for benefits right through to a one-to-one meeting with a case worker, the creation of a personal progression plan, the referral to work experience, training or upskilling or a job.

In return, we will ask Tom to engage with the new, personalised service at every step of his pathway back to work. This is how we will help unemployed construction workers like Tom to become job-ready. And to help provide the many employers here today with the right candidates as the economy recovers.

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