



## Minister Doherty to Establish Interdepartmental Group to Safeguard Future of Community Employment Social Inclusion schemes

**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2019:** Following the Cabinet meeting this morning, Minister Regina Doherty, T.D., announced that the Government has agreed to her proposed establishment of an Interdepartmental Group to examine the future of Community Employment Social Inclusion schemes with a view to ring-fence Social Inclusion places and allow services within communities to be maintained.

Following an earlier analysis of the Community Employment Programme, a two strand approach was adopted in 2017 and all Community Employment placements were categorised into two strands:

- **Social Inclusion strand** to acknowledge that not all Community Employment places were the same and to provide an opportunity for those who are very distant from the labour market to work and deliver services in their local communities;
- **Job Activation strand** is more directly related to employment opportunities for participants who are long term unemployed with a view to providing them with more labour market relevant work experience.

There are currently just over 21,000 participants on Community Employment schemes with 30 – 40 percent of these placements categorised as Social Inclusion. However, as the number of Community Employment places is benchmarked to the number on the Live Register, it is expected that the number of places on the schemes will reduce unless the current set up is reviewed. Recognising that as unemployment lowers, there will be less demand for activation schemes, Minister Doherty today drew a strong distinction between activation schemes and the Social Inclusion category.

Speaking today, the Minister said:

***“These Social Inclusion placements require a separate focus to ensure that those who are very distant from the labour market and who are interested in working and delivering services in their local community have the opportunity to do so. The work they provide within their communities is essential and work participants may include vulnerable adults who need additional supports – including older unemployed workers, people with a disability, travellers and homeless people.*”**

***“Virtually all participants on these schemes are engaged in some element of service support and delivery - including Meals on Wheels, Tourist Information, Library Assistants, work for Tidy Town Committees, Environmental work, youth work, support in Resource Centres, bus drivers, Childcare and Health and Social Care related services. Community Employment participants are particularly active in the delivery of care of the elderly, services to people with disabilities and working alongside service providers such as the Irish Wheelchair Association, the Centre for Independent Living, and the Alzheimer’s Association.***

***“I want to ensure that we maintain and support this valuable service and the much needed opportunities provided to allow individuals who may not work otherwise to contribute to their local town or village – especially in many rural communities. Therefore, I will be tasking this Group to explore how we deliver and maintain these Social Inclusion services as well as identifying the correct organisational and governance arrangements for the future. Ultimately, we need to ring-fence the Social Inclusion places to ensure that services within communities can be maintained. This will minimise any disruption to the important services being delivered and supported by these participants across the country.”***

The inter-Departmental group will explore the most appropriate organisation arrangements, including which Departments should host the Community Employment Social Inclusion schemes - including Drug Rehabilitation and Childcare schemes,. The Minister expects the work of the group to be completed quickly and intends for a report with recommendations to be presented to Cabinet within the next three months.

Ends.

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