

A Guide to COVID-19 Social Welfare Supports for family carers



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What social welfare supports are available to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) has announced three new schemes to support people who have been affected by COVID-19:

- **Enhanced Illness Benefit:** If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are suspected of having COVID-19 and are medically required to self-isolate, you can apply for an enhanced Illness Benefit of €350. It will be paid for 2 weeks where a person is self-isolating and for a maximum of 10 weeks if a person has been diagnosed with COVID-19. If you have been certified for less than 10 weeks you will be paid for the duration of your certificate.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment:** Flat rate payment of €350 per week available to all employees and the self-employed aged between 18 – 66 years who have lost their job due to COVID-19. The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment will be in place for the duration of the crisis.
- **COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme:** Allows employers to continue to pay their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to keep employees registered with their employers, so that they will be able to get back to work quickly after the pandemic. The scheme will refund employers up 70% of the weekly average take home pay for each employee up to a maximum of €410. If your employer implements the scheme, you will not need to apply for a social welfare payment.



Your questions answered

Q. I'm a family carer and receive Carer's Allowance. I also work part-time for less than 18.5 hours per week. I've just lost my job due to COVID-19. Can I apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

Yes, family carers who lose their employment due to COVID-19 can apply for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350. You will be allowed to keep your Carer's Allowance and receive an additional €350 to compensate for your lost earnings.

Q. Are carers receiving a Half-Rate Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit eligible for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

Yes, family carers in receipt of the Half-Rate Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit are eligible to apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment if they have been laid off due to COVID-19. You will be allowed to keep your Carer's Benefit or Half-Rate Carer's Allowance and receive an additional €350 to compensate for your lost earnings.

Q. What about carers who don't receive Carer's Allowance or only receive the annual Carer's Support Grant?

COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is paid to anyone, including the self-employed, who have lost their employment due to COVID-19. You do not have to have been receiving a social welfare payment before the crisis to apply.

Q. How long will the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment be paid?

The Department had initially stated that it would pay the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment for 6 weeks however on March 24th they confirmed that it will continue to be paid for the duration of the pandemic.

Q. I haven't lost my job but my hours have been reduced due to COVID-19. What should I do?

If your working hours are reduced to 3 days or less per week and you had previously been working fulltime, you should apply for [Short Time Work Support](#) to compensate for your lost hours of work.



Q. I haven't lost my job however I'm worried that if I continue to work, I will be at risk of contracting COVID-19 and/or infecting another vulnerable household member. If I give up work, rather than being formally let go by my employer, am I eligible for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

The Department have confirmed that in order to be eligible for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, a person must be laid off by their employer. People who are not laid off but give up work, albeit for genuine reasons, are not eligible. People who have been medically directed to self-isolate may be entitled to an [enhanced Illness Benefit of €350](#).

Q. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak I earned less than €350 per week. If I apply for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment it means my weekly income will increase. How does this work and will the increase have to be repaid when the crisis is over?

Many people, including family carers who earned less than €350 per week will temporarily see their weekly income increase as a result of receiving the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment. For those who earned more before the crisis, their income will decrease. *Family Carers Ireland* understand that when the crisis has passed the Department may reassess people's means during this period which could result in a reduction or increase in their underlying social welfare payment, if one is received.

Q. How should I apply for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

The quickest and easiest way to apply for the emergency COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is by applying online at mywelfare.ie. You will need:

- A basic MyGov.ie account (all you need is an e-mail address and password)
- Your personal details
- Your bank details (only Irish banks)

Alternatively, you can apply by post by completing the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment application form and returning to Freepost, PO Box 12896, Dublin 1. Instructions and a copy of the application form are available [here](#). You can get an application form posted to you by emailing your request and your name and address to forms@welfare.ie

Q. How long does it take for my application to be processed and the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment to be paid?

Because it's an emergency payment, processing times are typically less than one week. People should check their bank accounts to see if a payment has been made as the Department are unlikely to contact you in advance.

Q. Where will my COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment be paid?

Payment is made by electronic transfer only (into your bank account) and only into accounts held in Irish financial institutions. It will be paid in to your bank account every Tuesday once your application is processed.

Q. Do age limits apply for COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment?

Yes, you must be aged between 18 and 66 years to be eligible for the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

Q. I'm a carer and receive Carer's Allowance but also work as a Care Assistant in a hospital. Because of the crisis, my employer has asked me to work more than 18.5 hours. Can I work more than 18.5 hours and still keep my Carer's Allowance?

No, the normal rules associated with Carer's Allowance, including not being permitted to work/study more than 18.5 hours, still stand.

Q. I'm a family carer for my child who has special needs. I also work. Because the schools and crèches are now closed, I have no childcare while I'm at work. Is there any special leave I can apply for to help us get through this time?

Yes. The [Carer's Leave Act 2001](#) allows employees to leave their employment temporarily to provide full-time care for someone in need of full-time care and attention – called Carer's Leave. You are entitled to take Carer's Leave of at least 13 weeks up to a maximum of 104 weeks. You may be eligible for [Carer's Benefit](#) of €220 per week if you have enough PRSI contributions. If you do not qualify for Carer's Benefit, you may qualify for Carer's Allowance which is a means-tested payment. You can take Carer's Leave even if you do not qualify for these payments.

Q. I currently receive Carer's Benefit but have been told by my GP to self-isolate. Can I claim the enhanced Illness Benefit of €350 along with Carer's Benefit?

No, the enhanced Illness Benefit is not payable alongside Carer's Benefit.

Q. I'm currently on Maternity Leave and receive Maternity Benefit and Half Rate Carers Allowance. I'm due to return to my part-time job next week however my employer's business has shut down due to COVID 19. Can I apply for the COVID-19 Unemployment Payment?

Yes, you can claim the COVID-19 payment from the date you are due to return to work after your Maternity Leave has ended.

Q. Where can I go for more information and support?

Family Carers Ireland has produced an [Emergency Care Plan booklet](#) in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. We are also continuing to offer information, advice and support to family carers through our dedicated Freephone National Careline

1800 240724



You can continue to keep up to date on information relating to COVID-19 by following Family Carers Ireland on social media.

