

Press release

Ministers Humphreys and Burke launch Employment and Youth Engagement Charter

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- Charter will support new pathways to employment among young people
- Call to Irish employers to provide work experience opportunities for young people and people from disadvantaged groups
- 300 employers to be signed up
- Updated Pathways to Work strategy published
- Long Term Unemployment rate now at historic low of 1%

The Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Peter Burke TD, have today launched the Employment and Youth Engagement Charter.

The Ministers launched the Charter in Accenture's Dublin office which was attended by IBEC and employers from across multiple sectors.

The Charter is a key measure under the Government's Pathways to Work objectives to engage companies in delivering activities to support people looking to enter or re-enter the workplace.

Employers are invited to engage with the Charter and sign up to some or all of the six listed commitments.

Commenting on the launch, Minister Heather Humphreys said:

The Charter is a result of consultation with various stakeholders, including IBEC, the Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC) Employer Sub-Group, the National Youth Council of Ireland and the INOU.

Recognising that barriers to recruitment are not limited to young people, the Charter will also cater for groups of jobseekers who may find it hard to get an interview, gain work experience or move into work. They are exposed to the same negative impacts from unemployment. These priority groups include:

- people with disabilities,
- older workers who lost their job later in their career,
- people who have spent some time out of the workplace because of caring or childcare responsibilities,
- minority groups such as members of the Traveller or Roma communities.

“The Employment and Youth Engagement Charter is an important new measure for jobseekers who face real barriers to finding work and building their pathway to employability. Employers are invited to bring positive change to a jobseeker’s life by helping those who are most distant from the labour force to explore the world of work with new opportunities to build their skills and experiences.

“The Charter can serve as a valuable new tool for employers to make their commitment to social cohesion and inclusion, while also contributing to workforce development as workers support jobseekers with the offer of mentoring, work-shadowing, site visits, CV review and interview preparation.

“The Charter is accompanied by practical suggestions and Intreo staff across the country can support employers to fulfil their commitments to the Charter.”

Minister Peter Burke said:

"I welcome the publication today of the Employment and Youth Engagement Charter and the updated Pathways to Work strategy. It is vital that we support young people and other marginalised groups who face difficulties or barriers to entering the labour market and provide them with opportunities to gain the valuable skills they will need in today's workplace.

"The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and its enterprise agencies, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, will continue to raise employer awareness and encourage take up of employment supports such as the expanded JobsPlus subsidy scheme and Work Placement Experience Programme.

"My Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Social Protection to implement the revised actions in Pathways to Work and support jobseekers to find and maintain quality employment."

The new Charter is informed by a consultation undertaken with young people in collaboration with INOU, NYCI and IBEC. The focus groups and an online survey on young people highlighted their desire for work experience and skills development to support employment opportunities. They also spoke of a strong desire for input by employers in gaining employment while in work, with CV development and developing a better understanding of the roles.

The Minister encouraged employers to sign up to the Charter on www.gov.ie/Charter (<https://www.gov.ie/Charter>), email employer@welfare.ie (<mailto:employer@welfare.ie>) or contact their local Intreo Centre to learn more about the Charter.

The Employment and Youth Engagement Charter is one of a number of measures included in the updated Pathways to Work strategy which was also published today, following a Mid-Term Review undertaken by the Labour Market Advisory Council.

This whole of Government employment services and activation framework includes a revised set of commitments and actions which will be delivered for the remaining duration of the strategy (end 2025). Informed by the advice and recommendations of

the Council, the strategy remains relevant and responds to current and medium to longer-term labour market challenges.

The Chair of the Labour Market Advisory Council, John Martin, former Director of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Directorate in the OECD said:

“As demonstrated in the Mid-Term Review, the Pathways to Work strategy, which was launched in mid-2021, has delivered very good outcomes, ensuring that the Irish labour market is now close to full employment. However, the Council is cognisant of the fact that the labour market still faces challenges over the remaining two years of the strategy. Accordingly, the Mid-Term Review proposes some new targets and policy recommendations for consideration by Government. On behalf of the Council, I am pleased that the Mid-Term Review was used to inform the updated Pathways to Work strategy. The Council will monitor progress in the implementation of the updated strategy and looks forward to reporting to the Minister on this later this year.”

Welcoming the publication today, Minister Humphreys said:

“The updated Pathways to Work strategy ensures that we will work effectively across Government to proactively engage with known and emerging labour market challenges such as skills and labour shortages, the green and digital transitions, and increasing the participation of groups that are under-represented in the labour market. Some 50,000 long term unemployed people on the Live Register are being signed up to personal progression plans. Through this, they meet regularly with an Employment Advisor so they can get tailored advice and support that best suits their needs.”

Other measures announced by the Minister today include changes to streamline and improve access by employers to the Department of Social Protection’s JobsPlus, Work Placement Experience Programme and Wage Subsidy Scheme:

- The JobsPlus payment of €7,500 or €10,000 is currently paid monthly over 24 months. On foot of the proposed change, the payment will be made over 18 months
- Personal Progression Plans**

rather than 24 months. This recognises that 18-month employment commitment is a significant period for an employer.

- The eligibility criteria for the Work Placement Experience Programme is being expanded so that young people unemployed for 4 months can avail of the work experience; this makes the initiative more consistent with the EU youth guarantee. The programme will also be opened up to jobseekers seeking apprenticeship roles as a potential gateway to formal apprenticeship.
- The Wage Subsidy Scheme will be amended to streamline, expand and provide for easier access to help more people with disabilities stay into the workforce.
- Over 50,000 Long term Unemployed people on the Live Register are engaging with the Department's Public Employment Intreo Service. Under this, Personal Progression Plans are developed and jobseekers meet with an Employment Advisor either weekly, fortnightly or monthly depending on these circumstances. These measures are designed to support people into the workforce.
- Jobseekers who do not engage with the Intreo service are subject to the sanction of reduced payment. 3,000 people have had a reduced rate applied to their payment for this reason to date in 2024.

Notes:

The Department provides a range of supports to unemployed jobseekers to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to assist them find a pathway to sustainable employment, including:

Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)

WPEP provides an opportunity for jobseekers who have no previous work experience to gain valuable work experience and accredited training over a six-month period.

Jobsplus

The Jobsplus scheme provides employers with grants of between €7,500 and €10,000 as a financial incentive to encourage employers to hire people who are unemployed.

Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)

BTEA is an educational opportunities scheme for people in receipt of certain social welfare payments wishing to pursue second or third level courses of education.

Part-time Education Option (PTEO)

PTEO allows a jobseeker to attend a part-time day or evening course of education or training while they continue to meet the conditions for Jobseeker's payments.

Training Support Grant (TSG)

TSG is a grant of up to €1,000 and funds quick access to short term training or related interventions.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)

BTWEA scheme helps unemployed people and others getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed.

Community Employment (CE)

The CE scheme aims to provide specific employment opportunities for unemployed people on the live register over 12 months and other vulnerable jobseekers.

Tús

The Tús initiative is a community work placement scheme providing short-term working opportunities for unemployed people.

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