

# Signing on

## Introduction

If you lose your job, are made redundant, laid off or if your working hours are reduced you may qualify for a social welfare payment, either Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit. When you apply for a jobseeker's payment you declare that you are available for work, fit for work, genuinely seeking work but unable to find work. This is also known as *signing on*.

**If you work for part of a week**, you may qualify for a jobseeker's payment for the days you are unemployed.

**If you leave work voluntarily or as a result of misconduct**, you cannot get a jobseeker's payment for 9 weeks. However, if you have 'good cause' to leave voluntarily, for example, any changes in working conditions such as a reduction in pay, harassment or abuse from your employer, you may get your payment. The Deciding Officer in your social welfare local office or Intreo centre will decide whether you had good cause to leave voluntarily.

**If you are self-employed** you may get a jobseeker's payment if you closed your business or the amount of work you are getting has sufficiently reduced. Find out more about [self-employed people and unemployment](#).

## The difference between Jobseeker's Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance

To get [Jobseeker's Benefit](#) you must have enough social insurance (PRSI) contributions. Jobseeker's Benefit rates are graduated according to earnings. If you are affected by this, it may be of greater benefit for you to claim Jobseeker's Allowance.

To get [Jobseeker's Allowance](#) you must pass a means test. A means test is when your income is calculated to see whether it falls below a certain level. If it falls below a certain level you can get Jobseeker's Allowance.

You will always be assessed for Jobseeker's Benefit first, unless you have never worked before. When you apply for Jobseeker's Benefit you are asked if you want to be assessed for Jobseeker's Allowance. This means

that if you don't qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit, you will not need to apply a second time to be assessed for Jobseeker's Allowance.

## **Intreo - the integrated employment and support service**

Many Department of Social Protection (DSP) social welfare local offices and employment services offices have been rebranded as Intreo centres. Intreo provides a one-stop shop for employment services and income supports with a range of personalised supports to jobseekers including:

- Information on all the income supports provided by the Department of Social Protection, for example, jobseeker's payments, back to work and back to education payments, one-parent family payments and pensions
- Help and advice on employment, training and personal development opportunities
- Personalised support to help you enter the workforce
- Self-service facilities with information and guidance on employment and training opportunities
- Information on job vacancies through [jobsireland.ie](http://jobsireland.ie)

Intreo will be available in all offices by the end of 2014. Details of new locations are published on [welfare.ie](http://welfare.ie).

## **Signing on for the first time**

To sign on you must go to your social welfare local office or Intreo centre.

1. If you are visiting an Intreo centre you should go to the reception area. You will be met by DSP staff who will check your eligibility for a jobseeker's payment. They will arrange an appointment for you to have your claim processed (within a few days), give you the application form and tell you what documents you need to bring to your appointment.

You can submit your application for a jobseeker's payment online in certain locations.

2. You should bring your completed application form and all other required documents to your appointment. At your appointment, a DSP Deciding Officer will review and process your application. In

many cases a decision on your jobseeker's payment can be made immediately. You will be asked to sign a [Record of Mutual Commitments \(pdf\)](#) which explains your rights and responsibilities while you are getting a jobseeker's payment.

Under the Record of Mutual Commitments you are expected to:

- Co-operate with the Intreo service in developing a Personal Progression Plan
- Use this plan to do your best to secure employment
- Attend all meetings requested by the Department
- Provide all information requested by the Department

You will be issued with a Public Services card (this involves having your photo taken and your signature digitally captured). All jobseekers have to register for a Public Services card if they have not been issued with one already.

3. You will also be given details of a group information session that you must attend. At this information session, you will be told about the full range of support services available from Intreo, including income, training/education and employment supports.
4. Depending on your personal profile, you may be given an appointment for a further meeting with a DSP case officer. At this meeting your case officer will discuss your options with you and agree your Personal Progression Plan to prepare you to find employment. You will get ongoing advice and support to help you meet the goals in your Personal Progression Plan.

If you do not keep to the steps agreed in the Record of Mutual Commitments and the conditions of your jobseeker's payment, your payment can be reduced and eventually stopped altogether.

Visit [welfare.ie](http://welfare.ie) to read [Frequently Asked Questions about Intreo](#) and [Your Pathway to Work](#).

## Checklists

When you apply for Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance you must bring the correct documents with you. Use our checklists to make sure you have the right documents.

- [Checklist for Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- [Checklist for Jobseeker's Benefit](#)

## Getting paid

Your jobseeker's payment is paid weekly by the Department of Social Protection.

You can collect your jobseeker's payment weekly from your nearest post office. You must bring valid photographic identification (photo ID) or your Public Services Card with you to collect your payment. Valid photo ID includes a driving licence, a passport or a GNIB card.

## Signing on every month

You must go to your Intreo centre or social welfare local office, usually every month, and declare you are still unemployed and looking for work. You will be given a date and a time to sign on each month.

In some cases you may sign on more or less frequently. Usually if you live **up to** 10 miles from the nearest social welfare local office you will sign on every 4 weeks. If you live **over** 10 miles from the nearest social welfare local office you will sign on every 12 weeks. People over 62 may not need to sign on every month.

## Other benefits

Supplementary Welfare Allowance provides a basic weekly allowance to eligible people who have little or no income. If your weekly income is below the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your family size, a payment may be made to bring your income up to the appropriate Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate.

If you have claimed any social welfare payment, but it has not been paid and you have no other income, you may qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance while you are waiting for your payment.

If you get Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit or Supplementary Welfare Allowance you may be entitled to other social welfare and health benefits.

If your income is below a certain amount you may get a medical card or a GP visit card.

You may get help with paying your rent. If you are in local authority housing you should contact your local authority and ask for a review of your rent.

You may get help with the cost of uniforms and footwear for your children. The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme operates from 1 June to 30 September each year.

If you have an exceptional or urgent need, for example, help with a funeral bill, you can apply for a range of discretionary payments from the Department of Social Protection's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer). Visit [welfare.ie](http://welfare.ie) for contact details.

## **Where to apply**

You apply for Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance to your Intreo centre or social welfare local office.