



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta  
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Employment Affairs  
and Social Protection

# Your Guide to our Schemes and Services: Families and Children



April 2018

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# About this guide

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The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection supports families as they go through various stages of family life.

In this guide, you will get an overview of some of the main ways in which this Department can support you as you welcome your child, or children, into your family and watch them grow.

This guide also provides information to help you to access supports should you ever need to, at the more difficult times that may arise in your family's life – if your baby is born prematurely; or your child requires support in respect of an illness or disability; or where you are required to provide ongoing care for your child.

*Information contained in this booklet is intended as a guide only, and you should contact the Department via your local Intreo centre or social protection office to discuss your individual circumstances.*



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# Supports for New Parents

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## What is Maternity Benefit?

Maternity Benefit is a payment for employed and self-employed people who satisfy certain social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions on their own social insurance record.

It is paid for 26 weeks (156 days). You must take at least 2 weeks maternity leave (and not more than 16 weeks), before your baby is due. At a minimum, you must begin your maternity leave on the Monday before the week in which your baby is due.

Immediately after the end of your 26 weeks paid Maternity Benefit, it is possible to take a further 16 weeks of unpaid maternity leave. You will be entitled to a credited social insurance contribution for each week of unpaid leave you take (up to the maximum of 16).

**Note: If you are already on certain social welfare payments then you may get half-rate Maternity Benefit.**

## How do I qualify for Maternity Benefit?

Maternity Benefit is paid by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to people who have a certain number of paid Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions on their social insurance record. PRSI contributions can be from both employment and self-employment. The PRSI classes that count for Maternity Benefit are A, E, H and S (self-employed). Members of the Defence

Forces who pay PRSI at Class H are insured for Maternity Benefit but it is not payable while they are in service.

**For further information on PRSI requirements for Maternity Benefit, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/maternity](http://www.welfare.ie/maternity)**

## Maternity Leave Certification

**Employee:** All employees must have their maternity leave certified by their employer. You will be required to provide your employer with a certificate from your doctor confirming when your baby is due. Your employer must then complete a form **MB2: Employer Certificate for Maternity Benefit** and return it to you to submit with your Maternity Benefit application.

**Self-employed:** If you are self-employed a doctor must complete a **MB3: Medical Certificate for Maternity Benefit form** to certify the expected due date of your baby and return it to you to submit with your Maternity Benefit application.

If your contract of employment ends within 16 weeks of the end of the week in which your baby is due and you satisfy the social insurance (PRSI) conditions, Maternity Benefit is payable from the day after you finish work, as per your P45.

## Making an Application

You should apply for Maternity Benefit at least 6 weeks before you intend to go on maternity leave (12 weeks if you are self-employed).

The quickest way to apply for Maternity Benefit is online at **[www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie)** if you have a verified **MyGovID** account.

In order to apply online you must have registered for a Public

Services Card (PSC) and linked your mobile phone with this registration. If you do not already have a PSC, you can make an appointment to get one at [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie). You will first need to register with the site. To do this you need a mobile phone and an email address. When you have made your appointment, print the notification and bring it to your appointment along with the required documents (listed in the notification). If you are having difficulty making your application online, you can download the application form **MB1** on our website [www.welfare.ie/forms](http://www.welfare.ie/forms) and return it to the Department.

## What is the rate of Maternity Benefit?

From March 2018, Maternity Benefit is payable at a rate of €240 per week (for 26 weeks).

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## What if my baby is born early?

From 1 October 2017, maternity leave and Maternity Benefit can be extended if your baby is born prematurely. The extension will correspond to the time period between your baby's date of birth and the expected start date of your maternity leave and Maternity Benefit.

If your baby arrives early, you will need to send the Department a letter from the hospital confirming the date of birth and number of weeks' gestation at which your baby was born, before the end of the first 26 weeks of Maternity Benefit. This information is required to ensure that you get your full entitlement.

## Stillbirths and miscarriages

Dealing with the loss of a baby can be a difficult and devastating time for parents and families. If you experience a stillbirth or miscarriage any time after the 24th week of pregnancy (i.e from the beginning of the 25th week) you are entitled to 26 weeks of maternity leave, provided you satisfy the social insurance (PRSI) requirements.

To apply for Maternity Benefit following a stillbirth or miscarriage, you will need to send a letter from your doctor with the Maternity Benefit application form (confirming the expected date of birth, the date of birth and the number of weeks of pregnancy) to the Maternity Benefit Section at the Department.

## Hospitalisation of baby

If it is helpful to you, you can opt to postpone the last 12 weeks of your maternity leave, and Maternity Benefit, if your child is in hospital. To do this, your Maternity Benefit must have been in payment for at least 14 weeks and you must have taken at least 4 weeks of maternity leave after your baby was born. You can postpone your Maternity Benefit for up to 6 months.

To arrange this, you need to apply in writing to the Maternity Benefit Section. Your payment will later resume when you provide written confirmation that your baby has been discharged from hospital and your employer also certifies that you are entitled to resume your postponed maternity leave.

## Can I apply for an increase in my payment for my dependants?

Yes. If you have dependants, your rate of Maternity Benefit (excluding increases for dependants) is compared to the rate of Illness Benefit (including increases for dependants) that would be paid to you if you were absent from work through illness. The higher of the two rates is paid to you.

## How the payment is made

Maternity Benefit is paid directly into your bank or building society account (a current or deposit account, not a mortgage account) or you can choose to have it paid directly into your employer's bank account.

**Note:** Some employers will continue to pay an employee, in full, while the employee is on maternity leave and may require the employee to have any Maternity Benefit paid to them. You should check your contract of employment to see what applies to you.

## Taxation of Maternity Benefit

Maternity Benefit is taxable for all claimants. Universal Social Charge and PRSI are not payable.

**For further information on Maternity Benefit, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/maternity](http://www.welfare.ie/maternity) or call (01) 471 5898 or 1890 690 690\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

## What is Paternity Benefit?

Paternity Benefit is a payment to employed and self-employed people who are on paternity leave from work and satisfy certain social insurance (PRSI) conditions.

It is paid for two weeks and is available for any child born or adopted after 1 September 2016.

You can start paternity leave at any time within the first 6 months following the birth or adoption placement. This payment is available to same-sex couples.

**Note:** If you are already on certain social welfare payments then you may get half-rate Paternity Benefit.

## How do I qualify for Paternity Benefit?

Paternity Benefit is paid by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to people who have a certain number of paid PRSI contributions on their social insurance record. The PRSI contributions can be from both employment and self-employment.

The PRSI classes that count for Paternity Benefit are A, E, H and S (self-employed). Members of the Defence Forces who pay PRSI at Class H are insured for Paternity Benefit but it is not payable while they are in service.

If you are an employee, you must notify your employer that you intend to take paternity leave, and of your intended dates, no later than 4 weeks before your leave. You must provide proof of the expected date of birth of your baby. Generally you will need to provide a certificate from your spouse or partner's doctor confirming when your baby is due, or confirmation of the actual date of birth, if you are applying for leave after the birth.

## Making an Application

In order to submit an application for Paternity Benefit, you need to apply at least 4 weeks before the date you intend to start your paternity leave. If you are self-employed you should apply 12 weeks before. In addition to your application to Paternity Benefit you will be required to submit a form **PB2: Employer Certification for Paternity Benefit**, signed by your employer.

If you are self-employed, a form **PB3: Medical Certification for Paternity Benefit**, certified by your Doctor, should be submitted with your Paternity Benefit application.

Applications for Paternity Benefit should be submitted via [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie) and by uploading your supporting documentation with your application. A video detailing the step by step application process is available at [www.welfare.ie/paternity](http://www.welfare.ie/paternity). In order to apply online you must have registered for a Public Services Card (PSC) and linked your mobile phone with this registration. If you do not already have a PSC, you can make an appointment to get one at [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie). You will first need to register with the site. To do this you need a mobile phone number and an email address. When you have made your appointment, print the

notification and bring it to your appointment along with the required documents (listed in the notification).

If you are having difficulty making your application online you can request a paper application form **PB1** by contacting the Paternity Benefit Section. Please find contact number at the end of this section.

A major advantage with applying online is that a high percentage of applications result in a fully automated award of benefit. You can also track the progress of your claim using the **www.mywelfare.ie** facility.

## **What is the rate of Paternity Benefit?**

From March 2018, Paternity Benefit is payable at a rate of €240 per week (for two weeks).

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **www.welfare.ie** for current rates of payment.

## **Can I apply for an increase in my payment for my dependants?**

Yes. If you have dependants, your rate of Paternity Benefit (excluding increases for dependants) is compared to the rate of Illness Benefit (including increases for dependants) that would be paid to you if you were absent from work through illness. The higher of the two rates is paid to you.

## **How the payment is made**

Paternity Benefit is paid directly into your bank or building society account (a current or deposit account, not a mortgage account) or

you can choose to have it paid directly into your employer's bank account.

**Note:**

Some employers will continue to pay an employee, in full, while the employee is on paternity leave. In such cases, the employer will generally require the employee to have any Paternity Benefit paid to them. You should check your contract of employment to see what applies to you.

## **Taxation of Paternity Benefit**

Paternity Benefit is taxable for all claimants. Universal Social Charge and PRSI are not payable.

**For further information on Paternity Benefit, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/paternity](http://www.welfare.ie/paternity) or call (01) 471 5898 or 1890 690 690\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## **What is Adoptive Benefit?**

Adoptive Benefit is a payment to an adopting parent who adopts a child. It is available to both employees and self-employed people.

You must meet certain social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions on your own insurance record. Adoptive Benefit can only be paid from the day your child is placed with you (the date of placement).

Adoptive Benefit is paid for a continuous period of 24 weeks from the date of placement of your child.

You will not get Adoptive Benefit for the full 24 weeks unless your adoptive leave begins on the date of placement. If you begin your adoptive leave after the date of placement, you will lose some of your Adoptive Benefit entitlement.

## **How do I qualify for Adoptive Benefit?**

Adoptive Benefit is paid by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to people who have a certain number of paid PRSI contributions on their social insurance record.

The PRSI contributions can be from both employment and self-employment.

Details of the social insurance requirements are outlined on **[www.welfare.ie/adoptive](http://www.welfare.ie/adoptive)**

## **Leave certification for adoption (employees and self-employed)**

You must produce a certificate of placement in relation to your child. In the case of intercountry adoption that took place outside the State, you must produce a declaration of eligibility and particulars of the day of placement or expected day of placement.

## **Making an Application**

You should apply for Adoptive Benefit at least 6 weeks (12 weeks if self-employed) before you intend to start your adoptive leave.

In certain cases, you may apply after your child is placed with you, but if you fail to apply within 6 months of the date your child is placed, you may lose your Adoptive Benefit.

Under the Adoptive Leave Act 1995, you must give your employer at least 4 weeks written notice of your intended adoptive leave.

You must also tell your employer 4 weeks before you return to work and confirm this notice in writing 2 weeks before your expected return.

When you are sending in your application you must supply a Certificate of Placement, as evidence of placement of your child. You can get this from the Registered Adoption Society or the Health Service Executive that arranges the placement.

For a foreign adoption, you must supply a copy of the Declaration of Suitability that you will have received from the Adoption Board.

The Department cannot pay Adoptive Benefit until we receive either the Certificate of Placement or Declaration of Suitability.

To apply, please complete the application form **AB 1** (available on our website at [www.welfare.ie/forms](http://www.welfare.ie/forms)) and return to the Adoptive Benefit section.

## What is the rate of Adoptive Benefit?

From March 2018, Adoptive Benefit is payable at a rate of €240 per week (for 24 weeks).

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## Can I apply for an increase in my payment for my dependants?

Yes. If you have dependants, your rate of Adoptive Benefit (excluding increases for dependants) is compared to the rate of Illness Benefit (including increases for dependants) that would be paid to you if you were absent from work through illness. The higher of the two rates is paid to you.

## How the payment is made

Adoptive Benefit is paid directly into your bank or building society account (a current or deposit account, not a mortgage account) or you can choose to have it paid directly into your employer's bank account.

**Note:** Some employers may continue to pay an employee, in full, while the employee is on adoptive leave. In such cases the employer will generally require the employee to have the Adoptive Benefit paid to them. You should check your contract of employment to see what applies to you.

## Taxation of Adoptive Benefit

Adoptive Benefit is taxable for all claimants. Universal Social Charge and PRSI are not payable.

**For further information on Adoptive Benefit please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/adoptive](http://www.welfare.ie/adoptive) or call (01) 471 5898 or 1890 690 690\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

## What is Health and Safety Benefit?

Health and Safety Benefit is a weekly payment to employed women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and who are granted health and safety leave by their employer.

You are granted health and safety leave from employment if your employer cannot remove a risk to your health while you are pregnant, or breastfeeding, or assign you alternative "risk-free" duties.

The right to health and safety leave from employment is set out under Section 18 of the Maternity Protection Act 1994.

During health and safety leave, you are still considered to be in employment (this means, for example, that you continue to accumulate annual leave entitlement). However, you are not entitled to payment for public holidays that occur while you are on health and safety leave.

## How do I qualify for Health and Safety Benefit?

To qualify for Health and Safety Benefit, you must meet certain criteria and social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

You will qualify if:

- you are a pregnant employee and are exposed to certain risks in the workplace or involved in night work (see note), **or**
- you are an employee who has given birth in the last 14 weeks, **and**
- are involved in night work (see note), **or**
- you are breastfeeding (up to 26 weeks after giving birth) and

exposed to certain risks in the workplace (you can get details of the risks involved from the Health and Safety Authority), **and**

- you have been awarded health and safety leave under Section 18 of the Maternity Protection Act 1994, **and**
- you satisfy the PRSI contribution conditions.

**Note:** Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Pregnant Employees etc.) Regulations 2000, night work is defined as work in the period between the hours of 11pm on any day and 6am on the next following day, where:

- the employee works at least three hours in the said period as a normal course, **or**
- at least 25 per cent of the employee's monthly working time is performed in said period.
- you can get details of the risks involved from the Health and Safety Authority.

## **Making an Application**

To claim, please complete form **HSB 1** (available on our website at [www.welfare.ie/forms](http://www.welfare.ie/forms)) and return to this Department.

You should apply for Health and Safety Benefit as soon as your employer has established and certified that health and safety leave has been granted.

## **What is the rate of Health and Safety Benefit?**

Your employer pays your normal wage for the first 21 days (3 weeks) of your health and safety leave and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection pays Health and Safety Benefit for the remainder.

The weekly rate of Health and Safety Benefit you may get depends on your level of earnings in the relevant tax year.

The standard rate of Health and Safety Benefit is €198 per week. To qualify for the standard rate, your average earnings must be at least €300 per week. However, reduced rates are payable if your earnings were below €300 per week.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## How long is Health and Safety Benefit paid for?

Health and Safety Benefit lasts until:

- The day you become entitled to Maternity Benefit, if you are pregnant.
- 14 weeks from the date on which you gave birth, if you are an employee who has recently given birth and do night work.
- 26 weeks from the date on which you gave birth, if you are breastfeeding.

You stop getting Health and Safety Benefit if your health and safety leave ends because:

- You are no longer at risk in the workplace, **or**
- Your employer has removed the risk or given you other work, **or**
- You are employed on a fixed-term contract and that contract expires.

## How the payment is made

Health and Safety Benefit is paid directly into your bank or building society account (a current or deposit savings account, not a mortgage account) each week.

## Taxation of Health and Safety Benefit

Health and Safety Benefit is taxable for all claimants. Universal Social Charge and PRSI are not payable.

**For further information on Health and Safety Benefit please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/healthandsafety](http://www.welfare.ie/healthandsafety) or call (01) 471 5898 or 1890 690 690\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

# Support for Families with Children

## What is Child Benefit?

Child Benefit is a monthly payment for each qualified child normally living with you and being supported by you. It is payable to the parents or guardians of children under 16 years of age. It is paid for children under 18 years of age if they are in full-time education, full-time training or have a disability and cannot support themselves.

Child Benefit is not paid on behalf of 18-year-olds or older, even if they stay in education or training.

## How do I qualify for Child Benefit?

Child Benefit is normally paid to the child's mother or step-mother. If the child does not live with their mother or step-mother but lives with their father or step-father, Child Benefit can be paid to them.

If the child is not living with or being maintained by their parents, the person caring for the child may get Child Benefit.

**Note:** To qualify for Child Benefit you must satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition. This condition affects all applicants regardless of nationality. For more information, please refer to [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

## Making an Application

If your baby is born in Ireland and you are not already receiving Child Benefit for any other children, our Child Benefit Section will automatically commence the process for you. This happens after your child's birth is registered with the General Register Office. Your baby will also be assigned a Personal Public Service (PPS) number at this time. Child Benefit Section will then send you a partially completed claim form by post asking for your signature and payment details.

If you are already receiving Child Benefit, your new baby is added to your existing claim (after the birth is registered) and payment begins automatically from the month after the birth. We will send you a letter confirming your payment.

First time applications for Child Benefit can also be submitted via **www.mywelfare.ie**. In order to apply online you must have registered for a Public Services Card (PSC) and linked your mobile phone with this registration. If you do not already have a PSC, you can make an appointment to get one at **www.mywelfare.ie**. You first need to register with the site. To do this you will need a mobile phone number and an email address. When you have made your appointment, print the notification and bring it to your appointment along with the required documents (listed in the notification).

## Rate

Child Benefit is €140 per month for each child (paid on the first Tuesday of every month).

For twins, Child Benefit is paid at one and a half times the normal monthly rate for each child. For triplets, and other multiple births, Child Benefit is paid at double the normal monthly rate for each child.

Your initial payment is usually made in the month following the birth of your child.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **www.welfare.ie** for current rates of payment.

**For further information on Child Benefit, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/child-benefit](http://www.welfare.ie/child-benefit) or call (074) 916 4496 or 1890 400 400\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## What is Guardian's Payment?

If you are taking care of a child who is an orphan, you may get a social welfare payment. It is not necessary to be a legally appointed guardian. You may get such a payment if the child lives with you and you are responsible for his or her care. The payment is for the benefit of the child.

If the child is attending a full-time education course, is aged between 18 and 22 years of age and is not living with or in the care of a guardian, the payment can be paid directly to the orphan.

The payment can be contributory (based on social insurance (PRSI) contributions payments paid by the parent) or non-contributory (based on a means-test).

You can claim only one of the following:

- Guardian's Payment (Contributory)

- Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)
- Death Benefit/Orphan's Pension awarded under the Occupational Injuries Scheme.

You cannot get one of these payments and also claim a Foster Care Allowance (payable by Tusla).

## How do I qualify for Guardian's Payment?

A child is regarded as an orphan if:

- They are under 18 (or 22 if in full-time education), **and**
- Both parents are dead, **or**
- One parent is either dead or unknown or has abandoned and failed to provide for the child, **and**
- The other parent is unknown or has abandoned and failed to provide for the child.

If either parent, or step-parent, had worked at any time and paid social insurance (PRSI) for 26 weeks, the orphan is entitled to the **Guardian's Payment (Contributory)**. Payment is made to the child's guardian up to the child's 18th birthday, or 22nd birthday if they are in full-time education.

**Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)** is a non-contributory payment for orphans who are not entitled to the contributory payment. The means test for this is based on the orphan's means. Payment is made to their guardian up to the orphan's 18th birthday or 22nd birthday if they are in full-time education.

## Occupational Injuries Benefit Scheme

Under the Occupational Injuries Scheme, **Death Benefit/Orphan's Pension** may be awarded to the guardian of an orphan if the parent, step-parent or person who was supporting the orphaned child or children:

- Died as a result of an accident at work.
- Died as a result of an occupational disease.
- Was getting Disablement Pension assessed at 50% or more at the time of their death.

This payment is not means tested.

## Making an Application

To claim, please complete form **GP 1** (available on our website) and return to this Department.

## What is the rate of Guardian's Payment?

From March 2018 the maximum rate of Guardian's Payment is €181 per week, and the rate of Death Benefit/Orphan's Pension is €184.80 per week.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## Taxation of Guardian's Payment

Social welfare payments made for the benefit of an orphan are taxable. However, these payments are regarded as the beneficial property of the orphan and are, therefore, assessable against their income (if any), not against the income of the guardian.

**For further information on Guardian's Payment, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/guardians](http://www.welfare.ie/guardians) or call (071) 919 3302 or 1890 66 22 44\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## **What is the One-Parent Family Payment?**

One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) is a payment to men and women under 66 who are bringing children up without the support of a partner.

The payment of OFP ceases when the youngest child reaches the age of seven. Where a customer qualifies for OFP, an increase for a qualified child is payable in respect of the other children in the family under 18 years, and between 18-22 years if in full-time education.

Where Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) is in payment for any child in the family, OFP may continue up to the 16th birthday of the child in respect of whom DCA remains in payment or until the youngest child reaches the relevant qualifying age, whichever is later.

Where a person is recently bereaved they can claim OFP for up to two years from the date of death of the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant or until their youngest child reaches 18 years of age, whichever is earlier.

## How do I qualify for One-Parent Family Payment?

To qualify for a One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) you must:

- Be under 66.
- Be the parent, step-parent, adoptive parent or legal guardian of a relevant child (this means a child under the relevant age limit).
- Be the main carer of at least one relevant child. The child must live with you. OFP is not payable if the parents have joint equal custody of a child or children.
- Satisfy a means test.
- Not be living with a spouse, civil partner or cohabiting.

If you are **separated, divorced** or **your civil partnership is dissolved** you must have been living apart for at least 3 months before applying for OFP. You may be required to make efforts to seek maintenance.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **OFP1** (available on our website) and return it, with the supporting documents, to the Department.

If you are widowed, or a surviving civil partner, you should apply within 3 months of your spouse or civil partner's death.

If you are single, you should apply within **3 months** of the birth of your child.

If you are separated, divorced or no longer in a civil partnership, you must have been living apart for **3 months** and you should apply within **3 to 6 months** of the date you separated from your spouse or civil partner.

If you are a prisoner's spouse or civil partner, you should apply when your spouse or civil partner:

- Has been in custody for **at least 6 months** without being sentenced, **or**
- Starts their sentence, which must be for a term of **at least 6 months**.

## What is the rate of One-Parent Family Payment?

From March 2018, the maximum rate of OFP is €198.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)** for current rates of payment.

**For further information on the One-Parent Family Payment, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/one-parent-family](http://www.welfare.ie/one-parent-family) or, contact your Intreo Centre or local Social Protection Branch Office.**

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## What is Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance?

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is a means-tested, annual payment to assist with the cost of clothing and footwear. It is payable in respect of children between the age of 4 and 11 years and children between 12 and 22 years.

Children between 18 and 22 years must be in second level education to qualify.

## How do I qualify for Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance?

To qualify for BSCFA, you or your spouse must be in receipt of a qualifying payment (refer to [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for a list of qualifying payments) **and** the payment must already include an increase(s) in respect of your child/children. You must also satisfy a means test.

## Making an Application

The BSCFA scheme operates between June and September each year.

The Department will automatically pay customers who, according to our records, are entitled to the Allowance in the particular year, given that they already receive a qualifying payment.

Application forms will only be available over the summer months of each year for new applicants if required. Applications for that particular year should be submitted by the end of September.

## What is the rate of Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance?

The rates of payment are €125 for children between the age of 4 and 11 years and €250 for children between 12 and 22 years. Children between 18 and 22 years must be in second level education to qualify.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

**For further information on the BSCFA, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/backtoschool](http://www.welfare.ie/backtoschool) or call (071) 919 3318 or 1890 66 22 44\***

# Supports for Working Families

## What is the Working Family Payment?

The Working Family Payment (WFP), previously called Family Income Supplement (FIS), is a weekly, tax-free payment available to employees with children. It gives extra financial support to families with children, depending on their incomes and family size.

To qualify, you must have at least one child who normally lives with you or is financially supported by you. Your child must be under 18 years of age or between 18 and 22 years of age and in full-time education.

## How do I qualify for the Working Family Payment?

To qualify for WFP, your average weekly family income must be below a certain amount for your family size (refer to [www.welfare.ie/wfp](http://www.welfare.ie/wfp) for further information). It is payable to employees who:

- Work 38 or more hours per fortnight (any combination of hours that reaches 38 hours each fortnight is acceptable). You can combine your weekly hours with your spouse or civil partner or cohabitant's hours to meet this condition. You cannot use time spent in self-employment (or on Community Employment, Gateway, Tús, JobBridge or the Rural Social Scheme) to meet this condition.
- Where the employment is likely to last at least 3 months.

- Have one or more children who normally live with you, **and**
- Earn less than an amount set according to your family size.

**Note:** You must be employed in the Irish State and pay tax and PRSI here. Under EU regulations you may be able to claim WFP if your children are living abroad and dependent on you. Generally, the payment continues for one year (52 weeks) and is not affected by, for example, an increase or a decrease in earnings. However, the Department will review your WFP rate if you start to care for an additional child, or your circumstances change and your One-Parent Family Payment ceases.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **WFP 1** (available on our website) and return it, with the relevant supporting documentation, to this Department.

## What is the rate of Working Family Payment?

The WFP you receive is 60% of the difference between your average weekly family income (that is, gross taxable earnings less tax, employee PRSI, Universal Social Charge (USC) and any other income your family has) and the income limit which applies to your family.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## How is the payment made?

WFP is paid directly into your bank or building society account (a current, deposit or savings account, not a mortgage account) every week.

Any WFP payment that you qualify for will be paid from the first Thursday after the WFP Section receives your application form,

## **WFP 1.**

Points to Note:

- Your WFP payment is not taxed.
- Your WFP payment is not counted as income if you are considered for a medical card.
- WFP is counted when assessing entitlement to Rent or Mortgage supplement.
- You cannot get WFP if you are taking part in a Community Employment Scheme or other FÁS Schemes (except Job Initiative and Community Service Programme).
- If you are a local authority tenant, contact your local authority to see if your rent will change.

**For further information on the Working Family Payment, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/workingfamilypayment](http://www.welfare.ie/workingfamilypayment) or call (043) 334 0053 1890 92 77 70\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

## What is Jobseekers Transitional Payment?

The Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) is a special arrangement under the Jobseeker's Allowance scheme that aims to support lone parents into the workforce while they have young children.

This payment is available to people who are not cohabiting and whose youngest child is aged between 7 and 13 years inclusive.

If you are no longer entitled to One-Parent Family Payment, and your youngest child is aged 14 years or over, you can apply for the normal Jobseeker's Allowance scheme.

## How do I qualify for JST?

The rules that apply to the Jobseeker's Allowance scheme (JA) and JST are similar. The maximum weekly rate of payment is the same.

In the case of JST:

- You do not have to be available for and genuinely seeking full-time work. This is to allow you to meet your caring responsibilities when you have young children. Childcare supports are available if you do find work.
- You can take part in a course of education and receive JST (and, if eligible, a student maintenance grant from SUSI).
- You do not have to be fully unemployed for 4 out of 7 days. This means that you could work part-time for 5 days and still receive a payment (subject to the means test). This would allow you to work mornings only while your child or children are in school.

You cannot cohabit with another person while you are getting JST.

Note: When your youngest child reaches 14 years of age, the normal Jobseeker Allowance conditions will apply to you.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **JST1** (available on our website) and return it to this Department.

## What is the rate of JST?

From March 2018, the maximum rate of JST is €198 per week.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)** for current rates of payment.

**For further information on the Jobseeker Transitional Payment, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/transitional](http://www.welfare.ie/transitional) or, contact your Intreo Centre or local Social Protection Branch Office.**

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## What is Back to Work Family Dividend?

The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) scheme aims to help families to move from social welfare into employment. It gives financial support to people with qualified children who are in, or take up employment or self-employment and as a result stop claiming a Jobseeker's Payment or a One-Parent Family Payment.

The BTWFD is paid weekly for up to two years. For your first year in employment, it is paid at the rate equivalent to the increases in respect of children that were paid on your Jobseeker or One-Parent Family Payment (up to a maximum of 4 children). In your second year of employment it is paid at half that rate.

## How do I qualify for BTWFD?

You may be eligible for the BTWFD if you have at least one qualified child and are getting one of the following payments:

- Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit for at least 12 months (312 days of unemployment) of which at least 6 months (156 days of unemployment) must have been in the last year.
- One-Parent Family Payment (OFP).
- Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (paid to people who are not cohabiting with children aged between 7 and 13 years).

You must exit one of the qualifying payments or schemes to qualify for BTWFD. If you are not already in insurable employment or self-employment you must take up employment within 4 weeks of leaving your original payment or scheme. The employment must be in the State.

**Note: If you were employed or self-employed and were getting OFP and your OFP has stopped because your youngest child has reached the age limit you may be eligible for BTWFD – if you do not sign onto another primary social welfare payment.**

**BTWFD can be paid with Working Family Payment (WFP) and will have no impact on an individual's WFP entitlement.**

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **BTWFD1** (available on our website) and return it to this Department.

## What is the rate of BTWFD?

BTWFD is based on the standard rate of Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) - €31.80 per week from March 2018.

Under this arrangement, a dividend equal to the IQC rate will be paid for each child, up to a maximum of 4 children, in the first full year of employment. In the second year of employment, the dividend will be half of the IQC rate for each child.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

**For further information on Back to Work Family Dividend, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/BTWFD](http://www.welfare.ie/BTWFD)**

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# Supports for Families with Children who are Ill or have a Disability

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## What is Domiciliary Care Allowance?

Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) is a monthly payment for a child aged under 16 with a severe disability, who requires ongoing care and attention, substantially over and above the care and attention usually required by a child of the same age. It is not means tested.

You can find the definitions for terms such as “severe” or “substantially” in the DCA Medical Guidelines on the Department’s website, [www.welfare.ie/DCA](http://www.welfare.ie/DCA). These guidelines are used by the Department when it is assessing applications for DCA. The guidelines state that the payment is not based on the type of disability but on the impact of the physical or mental disability meaning that the child requires substantially more care and attention than another child of the same age.

## How do I qualify for Domiciliary Care Allowance?

To qualify, the child must have a severe disability that is likely to last for at least 1 year and:

- Be aged under 16.
  - Live at home with the person claiming the allowance for 5 or more days a week.
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- Meet the medical criteria - see below.
- Be ordinarily resident in the State.

In addition, the person claiming the allowance for the child must:

- Provide for the care of the child.
- Be habitually resident in the State.

## **Medical criteria**

The legislation states that to qualify for DCA a child must have "a severe disability requiring continual or continuous care and attention substantially in excess of the care and attention normally required by a child of the same age".

This care and attention must be required to allow the child to deal with the activities of daily living. The child must be likely to require this level of care and attention for at least 12 months.

The Department's Medical Assessor looks at all of the following before giving an opinion on whether your child meets the medical criteria:

- The history of the case.
- All medical reports received (your GP fills out a medical report and you should include reports from any relevant specialists).
- Your description of the care and attention required by your child. (The form allows you to state what extra care your child needs under a number of headings.)

## Half-rate payment

Children who are being cared for on a full-time basis in residential homes or other institutions are not eligible for the allowance. However, children in residential care who go home may receive a half-rate payment if they are at home for 2 days or more a week. For example, a child who attends residential services from Monday to Friday and goes home at weekends.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **Dom Care 1** (available on our website) and return to this Department. You should apply as soon as you consider that you and your child satisfy the qualifying conditions.

Your G.P./Medical Specialist should fill in **Parts 6** and **7** (the medical section) of the form and attach any reports or other information you have about your child's disability and the impact it has on their care needs.

As part of the decision, a departmental medical assessor forms an opinion on the application for DCA based on the information provided. Your child will not be seen by them in person. You will need to make sure that you provide as much detailed and relevant information as possible when making your application, so that the medical assessor has all the facts available to them when making their assessment.

**Note: If your child has a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), you have the option of having additional form Dom Care 3, completed by a medical professional/specialist dealing with your child. While this is not compulsory, the completed form can provide more detail of your child's medical condition and the specific care needs your child has as a result of their disability.**

## What is the rate of Domiciliary Care Allowance?

The DCA rate is €309.50 per month. This allowance is payable where the child is in your care between 5 – 7 days per week. If the child is in your care for between 2 – 4 days per week the allowance is paid at 50% of the full rate.

There is no restriction on the number of children for whom you may claim DCA. In other words, if you are caring for more than 1 child who qualifies for DCA, you may claim the monthly allowance for each child.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

## What happens when my child reaches the age of 16?

Your DCA payment will stop when your child reaches 16. The last DCA payment will be for the month of their 16th birthday. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will write to you 3 months prior to your child's 16th birthday to remind you that DCA will shortly stop and tell you about the available options.

At age 16, your child can apply in their own right for Disability Allowance (DA). DA is a means-tested payment to people with disabilities who, as a result of their disability, are substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of their age, experience and qualifications. The qualifying conditions for DA are different from the qualifying conditions for DCA, so your child is not automatically entitled to DA because DCA was in payment. The means test for DA only assesses the means of your child and your income is not taken into account.

Your child should apply a few months before they turn 16, to allow time for their application to be processed. If you had an entitlement to a Carer's Allowance, it will only be stopped where, on review, it is decided that your child no longer requires full-time care and attention.

**For further information on Domiciliary Care Allowance, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/DCA](http://www.welfare.ie/DCA) or call (071) 915 7100 or 1890 500 000\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## What is Carer's Benefit?

Carer's Benefit is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

You can receive Carer's Benefit for a total period of 104 weeks for each person being cared for. This may be claimed as a single continuous period or in any number of separate periods up to a total of 104 weeks. However, if you claim Carer's Benefit for less than six consecutive weeks in any given period you must wait for a further six weeks before you can claim Carer's Benefit to care for the same person again.

If you are caring for more than one person, you may receive payment for each care recipient for 104 weeks. This may result in the care periods overlapping or running concurrently.

## How do I qualify for Carer's Benefit?

You may be eligible for Carer's Benefit if:

- You are aged 16, or over, and under 66.
- You have been employed for at least 8 weeks, whether consecutive or not, in the previous 26 week period. You must be in employment for a minimum of 16 hours per week or 32 hours per fortnight. You don't have to meet this condition if you were getting Carer's Benefit in the previous 26 weeks.
- You give up work in order to be a full-time carer. Being a full-time carer means you must be living with or in a position to provide full-time care and attention to a person in need of care who is not living in an institution.
- You are not living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution. However, you may continue to be regarded as providing full-time care and attention, if you, or the person being cared for is having medical or other treatment in a hospital or other institution for a period not longer than 13 weeks.
- You meet the social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.
- The person being cared for is so incapacitated as to require full-time care and attention and is not normally living in an institution. The carer of a child on a DCA does not need to be the person who receives that allowance on the child's behalf.
- You must not take part in employment, self-employment, training or education courses outside the home for more than 15 hours a week. The maximum amount you can earn is €332.50 net per week.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **CARB 1** (available on our website) and return to the Department. The form includes a medical report which must be signed by the person receiving care and completed by his or her doctor, (a medical report is not necessary if you are caring for a child getting DCA).

The Department recommends that you apply for Carer's Benefit 10 weeks before you leave employment.

## What is the rate of Carer's Benefit?

From March 2018, the rate of Carer's Benefit is €215 per week.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)** for current rates of payment.

**For further information on Carer's Benefit, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/Carers-Benefit](http://www.welfare.ie/Carers-Benefit) or call (071) 919 3302 or 1890 66 22 44\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## What is Carer's Allowance?

Carer's Allowance is a payment to people on low incomes who are caring full-time for a person requiring full-time care and attention because of age, disability or illness (including mental illness).

## How do I qualify for Carer's Allowance?

To be entitled to Carer's Allowance you must:

- Be living with, or in a position to provide full-time care and attention to a person in need who does not normally live in an institution. However, you may continue to be regarded as providing full-time care and attention if you or the person being cared for, is undergoing medical or other treatment in a hospital or other institution, for a period not longer than 13 weeks.
- Be habitually resident in the State.
- Not live in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution.
- Be at least 18 years old and
- Not be engaged in employment, self-employment, training or education courses outside the home for more than 15 hours a week.

During your absence, adequate care for the person requiring full-time care and attention must be arranged.

The person you are caring for must be:

- Over the age of 16 and so incapacitated as to require full-time care and attention or
- Under 16 years of age and getting a DCA. The person receiving care is regarded as requiring full-time care and attention where:
  - He, or she, is so incapacitated as to require continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself, or continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions, and

- He, or she, is so incapacitated as to be likely to require full-time care and attention for a period of at least 12 months.

## Making an Application

To apply, please complete form **CR 1** (available on our website) and return to the Department. The form includes a medical report which must be signed by the person receiving care and completed by his or her doctor, (a medical report is not necessary if you are caring for a child getting DCA).

## What is the rate of Carer's Allowance?

From March 2018, the maximum rate of Carer's Allowance is €214 per week, if the person you are caring for is under 66.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for current rates of payment.

**For further information on Carer's Allowance, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/Carers-Allowance](http://www.welfare.ie/Carers-Allowance) or call (043) 334 0000 or 1890 92 77 70\***

\* The rates charged for the use of 1890 numbers can vary among different service providers and may be more expensive from mobile phones.

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## What is the Carer's Support Grant?

The Carer's Support Grant is an annual payment made to carers by this Department. It can also be paid to certain other carers providing full-time care.

Carers can use the grant in whatever way they wish. More information about respite care facilities is available on our website, [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

## How do I qualify for Carer's Support Grant?

The grant is paid if you are receiving Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, or Domiciliary Care Allowance.

If you are not getting any of the above payments, you must be:

- Aged 16 or over.
- Ordinarily resident in the State.
- Caring for the person on a full-time basis.
- Caring for the person for at least 6 months - this period must include the first Thursday in June.
- Living with the person being cared for or, if not, be contactable quickly by a direct system of communication (for example, telephone or alarm).

You do not qualify if you are:

- Working more than 15 hours per week outside the home.
- Taking part in an education or training course for more than 15 hours a week.

- Getting Jobseeker's Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit.
- Signing on for credited contributions.
- Living in a hospital, convalescent home or similar institution.

If you are caring for more than one person, a grant is paid for each of them.

## Making an Application

If you are getting Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit or Domiciliary Care Allowance from this Department, you do not need to apply for the Carer's Support Grant. It will be automatically paid to you every June.

If you are **not** in receipt of any of these payments you will need to complete form **CSG 1** (available on our website) in respect of each person you are caring for, and return it to this Department.

## What is the rate of Carer's Support Grant?

A Carer's Support Grant of €1,700 is paid once each year, usually on the first Thursday in June, for each person you are caring for. It is not taxable.

Please refer to the Department's Rates of Payment Booklet (**SW19**) on **[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)** for current rates of payment.

**For further information on the Carer's Support Grant, please refer to the Department's website: [www.welfare.ie/CarersSupport](http://www.welfare.ie/CarersSupport) or call (01) 673 2222**

## MyGovID

MyGovID is a single secure online identity which allows you to access a range of government services more easily.

You can use your account to apply for services such as Paternity Benefit, Maternity Benefit, or Jobseekers Payments on **www.mywelfare.ie** and also to access some of Revenue's online services. More Government services will be coming online over time.

**Visit [www.mygovid.ie](http://www.mygovid.ie) to find out more and register today**

## MyWelfare

**www.mywelfare.ie** is a website owned and maintained by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The site can be used for a variety of purposes including application services, jobseeker's services, to request a copy of your social insurance contribution record and social welfare payment statements and to book appointments for allocation of Public Personal Service (PPS) number and Public Services Cards.

You will need to have a verified MyGovID account to access these services.

**Visit [www.mywelfare.ie](http://www.mywelfare.ie) to find out more**

**For further information on any of the Department supports listed in this Guide, please call our general information line on (071) 919 3302 or 1890 92 77 70\***

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**An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta  
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí**  
Department of Employment Affairs  
and Social Protection