

Consultation Paper:

Make Work Pay

Recommendations **9B** and **10**

Early engagement for better employment outcomes

An invitation to give your opinion
on proposed changes to disability
income support schemes





What is this consultation paper (and questionnaire) about?

The Government has asked the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to consult with you and your families, carers, supporters and advocates about two recommendations from the *Make Work Pay for People with Disabilities Report (2017)* which may affect you. We ask you to read this consultation paper to learn about the recommendations and then complete the questionnaire.

The recommendations we are asking you about are Recommendations 9B and 10.

- Recommendation 9B is about proposed changes to the Disability Allowance payment.
- Recommendation 10 is about the idea of 'early engagement' in income support schemes. Early engagement means that if you are able to work and want to work, we will offer you **every possible support at the earliest possible opportunity** to help you get a job.

These recommendations may affect you and your family so it is important that we hear your views about them.

Why are we proposing changes to disability income support schemes?

People with disabilities are less likely to work

People with disabilities aged between 20 and 65 are only half as likely to be in employment as people of the same age who do not have disabilities.

Many people with disabilities want and are able to work

Many people with a disability can and want to work in suitable and meaningful jobs. A survey in 2015 of people who get Disability Allowance found that:

- 58% were unable to work;
- 34% were interested in working part-time (with the right supports); and
- 8% were interested in working full-time (with the right supports).¹

Barriers need to be addressed

The survey also asked people what barriers they faced in relation to work. Apart from their level of disability, people identified a range of significant barriers including lack of transport, the fear of losing social welfare benefits and the lack of necessary supports for work.

Another barrier that needs to be addressed is the Disability Allowance scheme itself. The eligibility conditions for the Disability Allowance scheme emphasise the applicant's incapacity to work. The conditions do not look at the applicant's capacity to work or to take part in education or training.

¹ Full results from the survey are available at the following website:
<http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/DSPReportonDisabilityAllowanceSurvey2015.pdf>

Disability and work

The percentage of people with a disability at work is **half** that of people without a disability at work



36%

people **with** a disability at work



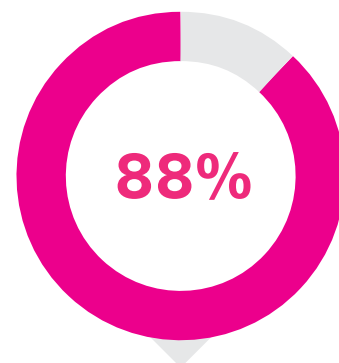
72%

people **without** a disability at work

2.8 million
people of working
age in Ireland



People **with** a disability



People **without** a disability

We need your input

The results of the 2015 Disability Allowance survey made an important contribution to the *Make Work Pay for People with Disabilities Report* which was published by the Government in April 2017. Some of the recommendations of this report have already been put in place. However, the Government feels that more consultation is needed around Recommendations 9 and 10 which could affect you and your family.

In partnership with a Make Work Pay Disability Stakeholders Focus Group, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has designed this consultation process for people with disabilities, their families and their representative and support organisations.

The aim of this consultation document and accompanying questionnaire is to:

- explain what these recommendations might mean for you and your family; and
- give you and your family a chance to tell us what you think of them.

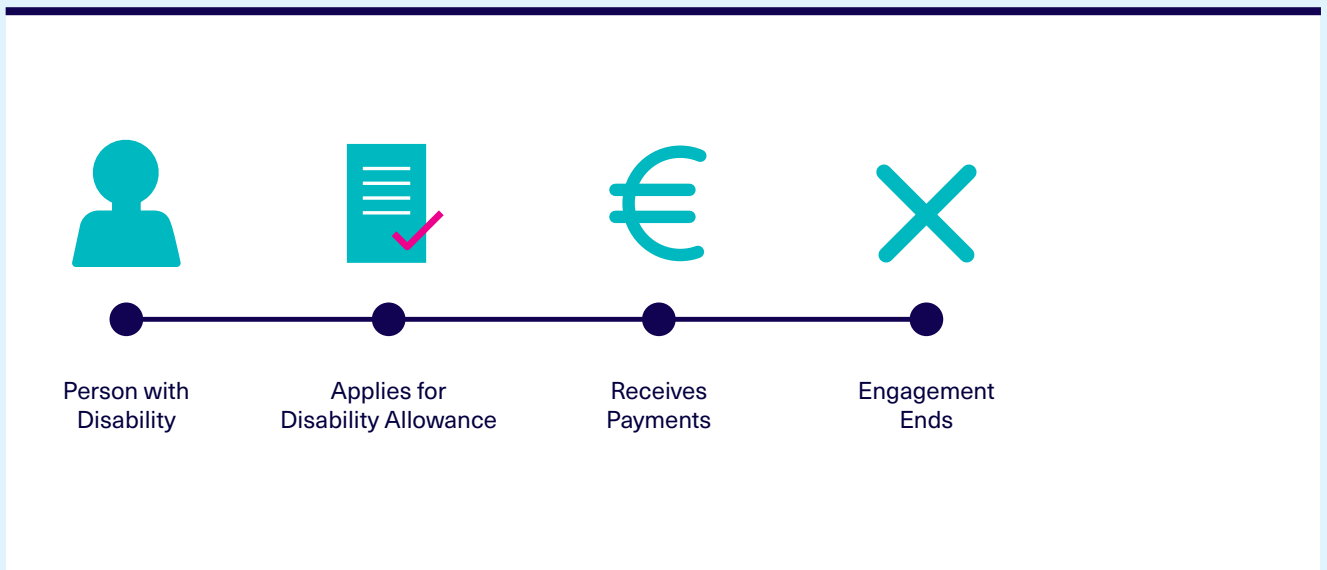
What does 'early engagement' mean?

Early engagement means that people with a disability who are able to work and interested in getting a job are offered **every possible support at the earliest possible opportunity** to fulfil their employment goals. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. 'Every possible support' might include, for example, education, training and social inclusion supports.

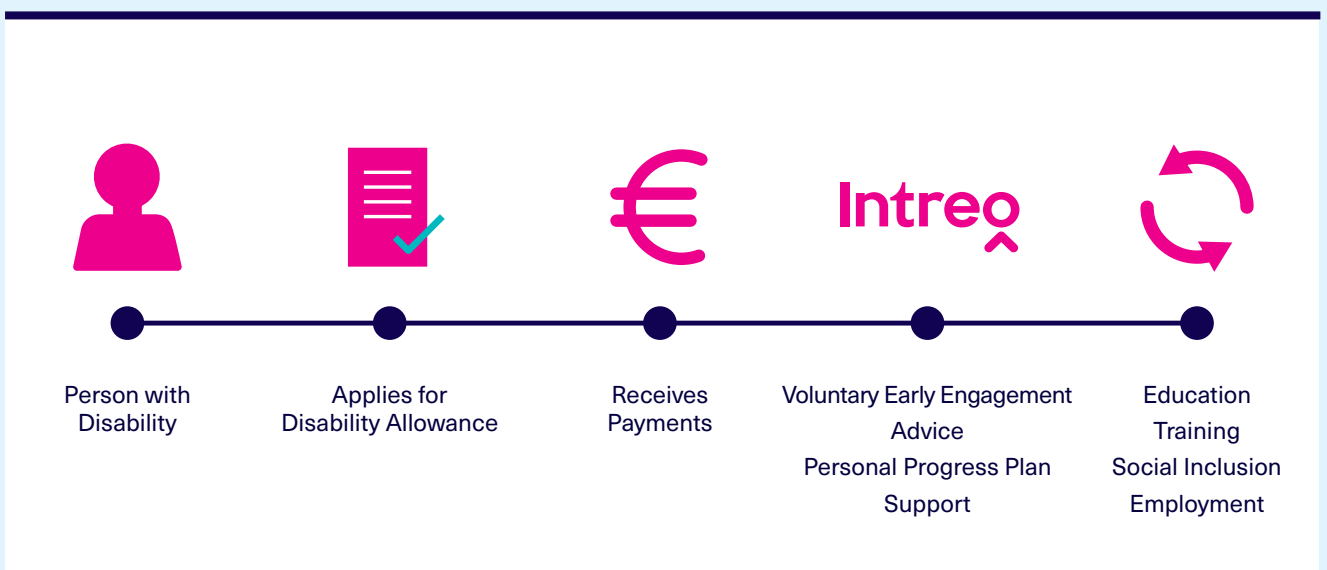
Since 2012, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has transformed the way it delivers social welfare payments and employment and community services to jobseekers and lone parents. This new State Public Employment Service is called Intreo. It is being adapted to meet the needs and employment ambitions of people with disabilities.

Differences between the current system and the proposed system of social welfare payments

Current system:



Proposed system:



How would early engagement work in practice?

When people with disabilities apply for a disability income support payment, they would get advice from the Intreo service. If they wanted to progress to employment, they would work with Intreo to develop their own personal progression plan. This would be different for each person. For example, it might include support for education and training. It might also involve a referral to the EmployAbility service whose role is to help bring people with disabilities closer to employment.

The service would be provided on the following basis:

- **Engagement will be voluntary**

You can choose not to use the service if you think it is not right for you. This would not affect your entitlement to a payment.

- **Engagement will encourage new recipients of disability income support payments to use the Intreo service and supports**

If you are awarded a disability income support payment for the first time, we will invite you to attend your local Intreo centre. Here you can discuss your work ambitions and what supports and services you might need to achieve them. The date when this will start has not yet been decided.

- **Engagement will focus on your needs**

The process will look at how best to support your education, training and social inclusion needs according to your disability level. If you wish, you will be able to bring a family member or friend with you for support when meeting an Intreo adviser. The Intreo adviser would help you to develop a personal progression plan according to your capacity. The plan might include education or training, or it might look at other ways to help improve your long-term work prospects.

- **Engagement will be effectively resourced**

Intreo service staff and supporting organisations will receive training in disability awareness and have access to information about suitable services

and supports to help you find suitable employment. There would be regular reviews of progress towards your employment goals.

- **Engagement will be joined up**

There will be agreements between Intreo and other service providers to make sure that engagement is as seamless as possible. This will help you to achieve your employment ambitions.

- **Engagement will address barriers to work faced by people with disabilities**

These may be barriers within the welfare system itself or in the wider workplace and society.

Early engagement will:

- Be voluntary
- Actively encourage new recipients to use supports
- Focus on your needs
- Be effectively resourced
- Be joined up between services, and
- Address barriers to work

Are there any existing employment supports for people with disabilities?

Since 2016, people with disabilities who want to explore their employment ambitions can make an appointment with an adviser in one of the 62 Intreo centres around the country and develop their own personal progression plan. There are also specialist services such as EmployAbility which can link people with potential employers. However, in practice few people with disabilities ask for the service and they are missing out on an important opportunity to avail of supports and services.

How will the proposed changes affect young people with a disability?

At present, income supports for children and young people with a disability are structured as follows:

- **Domiciliary Care Allowance** (DCA) is a monthly payment of €309.50 to parents of children with a severe disability. The scheme is not means tested. A parent may also be eligible for Carer's Allowance. This is subject to a means test. Parents also get a Carer's Support Grant of €1,700 a year. In addition, the child gets a Medical Card which is not means tested. Currently, DCA is paid to around 34,500 people.
- **Disability Allowance** (DA) is a means-tested payment for people with a disability who are aged between 16 and 66. Anyone claiming this payment must have a medical assessment which concludes that their disability is expected to last for at least one year. DA is currently paid at €193 a week (€198 from March 2018). A care provider may also be eligible for Carer's Allowance, subject to a means test. Currently, about 132,700 people get DA.

The Make Work Pay (MWP) group has said that giving the Disability Allowance to young people from age 16 would not give them an opportunity to develop their full employment potential. Instead, the group said that the State should actively encourage young people to avail of education, training and other supports so that they can fulfil their employment ambitions, similar to others their own age.

The MWP group recommended that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection change the Disability Allowance scheme for new entrants aged 18 to 22 to encourage them to take part in education, training and social inclusion activities, according to each young person's capacity.

The MWP group further recommended (Recommendation 9A) that the start date for the DA payment should be 18 years, not 16 as at present. We have produced a separate consultation paper and questionnaire about Recommendation 9A and we encourage you to read this and share your views with us. You can download these documents at www.welfare.ie/makeworkpay

When would the proposed system start?

No decision has yet been made as to when the proposed system would start. The Government wants to get your views before considering any changes to the two schemes. It would then discuss and decide on changes, if any, before it would introduce them.

Please complete the questionnaire on Recommendations 9B and 10.

You can find a link to the questionnaire at www.welfare.ie/makeworkpay

