



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection

# Statement of Strategy

## 2023-2026



## Foreword by the Minister



I welcome the publication of the 2023-2026 Statement of Strategy which the Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection has presented to me. It provides a framework for the ambitious programme of work to be undertaken over the next three years. This new Strategy will continue to support the implementation of the priorities set out in the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future*.

I know this Strategy is the result of extensive consultation and I would like to thank all those who made submissions.

As a Government, our focus continues to be on the delivery of the wide-ranging commitments contained in the *Programme for Government* on behalf of the people of Ireland. It must continue to respond to the current cost-of-living challenges and also continue to provide support to those fleeing the war in the Ukraine.

Just under 90 million individual payments are made to social welfare recipients each year with about 4 million individual claims being processed. As a Department, our priority is to target our resources to the benefit of society, to reduce poverty and deprivation, to promote active inclusion and to help people gain access to, and sustain, employment. This reflects the fact that the Department, as well as being the largest payment provider in the State, is also the largest provider of employment services. Given the breadth and scale of

its operations, the Department touches, in one way or another, the lives of every person in the State.

We could not do this without the commitment of our staff and service partners including An Post, the Revenue Commissioners, Pobal, Community Employment sponsors and the Intreo Partners - the Local Area Employment Service and the National Employment Service providers. I would also like to acknowledge the input of community and voluntary organisations and advocacy groups who provide crucial support in the delivery of the Department's mandate. I meet many of them at the Pre-Budget forum and the Social Inclusion forum.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the staff of this Department. Their response, not only to the current challenges, but the ongoing development and operation of the range of schemes and services provided, clearly demonstrates the strong public service ethos and agility within this Department.

I look forward to working closely with the Secretary General, the Management Board and the staff of the Department to deliver this Strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heather Humphreys'.

**Heather Humphreys TD**  
Minister for Social Protection

## Introduction by the Secretary General



Over the lifetime of our previous Statement of Strategy, the Department faced unprecedented challenges, first, from the public health crisis caused by Covid-19 and subsequently the ongoing challenges caused by the war in the Ukraine and the increase in the cost of living.

The level of demand for our core services has also increased, with applications across all of our main schemes up on average by over 60% compared to 2021 and by over 20% when compared to pre-pandemic levels. Investment in online and digital service delivery has been critical to enabling us to respond to this demand.

In parallel with managing this operational workload, the Department has actively progressed a reform agenda, most notably in pensions, in working age schemes and in schemes that support families and children, including the free school meals scheme. Overall, significant strides have been made in progressing the commitments under the Programme for

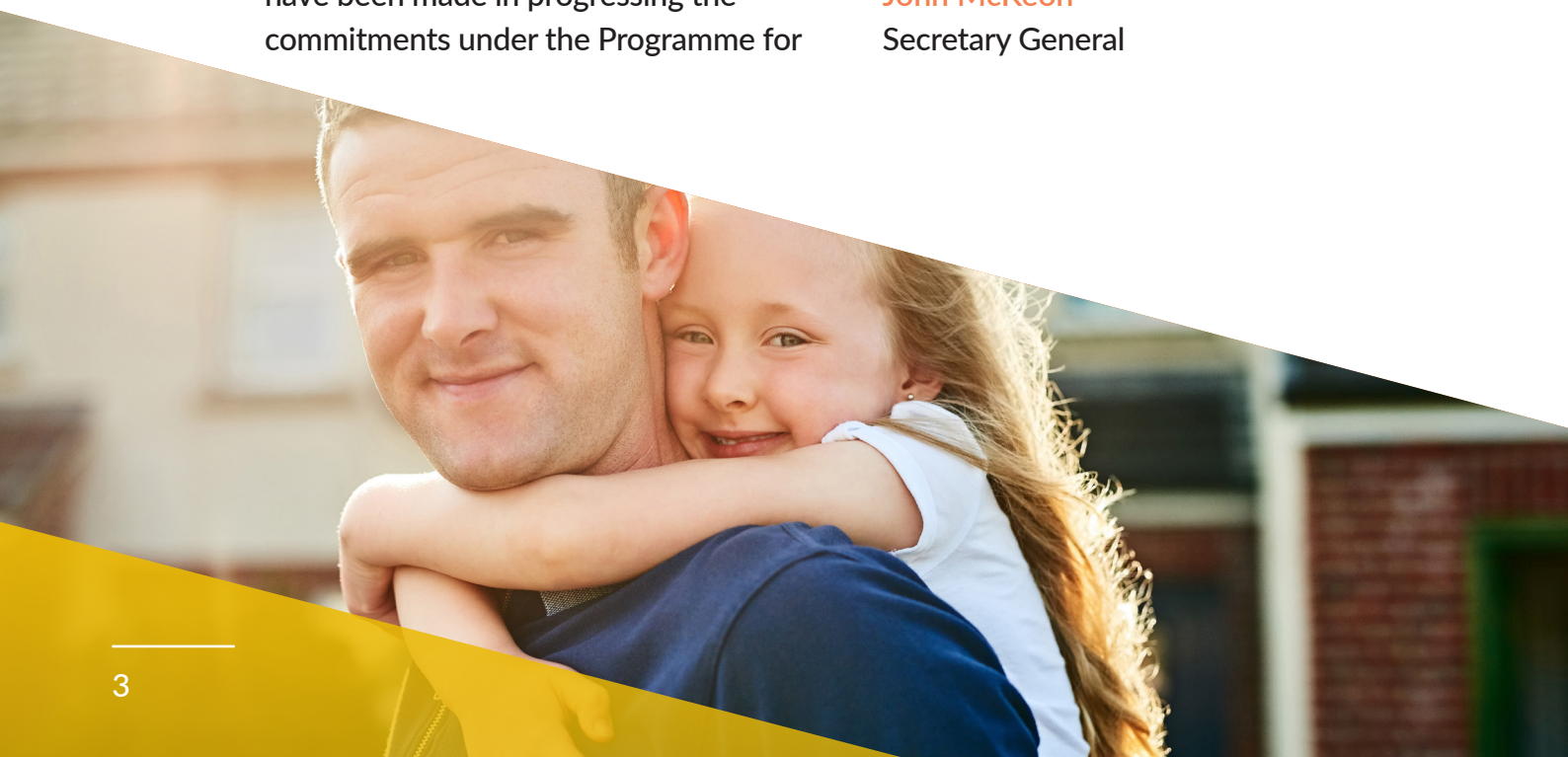
Government. The purpose of this strategy is to build further on those achievements. Towards this end, the Department is committed to organisational excellence and will continue to support sustainable innovation in how we deliver our services while keeping our mission, to promote active inclusion and participation in society, at the forefront of all that we do.

In developing this Strategy, we sought and received feedback from staff, our colleagues in other Government Departments, from key stakeholders and the public. I would like to thank all those who contributed.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of the Department. Their continued dedication, professionalism and willingness to innovate, demonstrate every day, their commitment to the Department's mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McKeon'.

**John McKeon**  
Secretary General



# Our Mission, Strategic Objectives and Values

The Department’s mission is:

To promote active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services.



# Our Mission, Strategic Objectives and Values

**The Department’s overall objective for 2023 to 2026 is:**

To continue putting the people we serve at the centre of all we do: designing, developing, building and providing efficient and effective services and towards this end, to continue developing our staff, structures and processes.

**1**

Put the customer at the centre of policy and service delivery

**2**

Drive cost efficiency and effectiveness

**3**

Develop staff, structures and processes

## As a Department we value:

**Public Service:**

We are dedicated to serving the people of Ireland in an efficient and impartial manner.

**Customer Focus:**

We are totally committed to the positive difference we can make to our customers’ lives and Irish society.

**Total Professionalism:**

We are proud of our professionalism and commitment to quality in everything we do.

**Engaged Staff:**

We believe that our effectiveness as an organisation is dependent on a highly skilled and engaged workforce.

**Innovation:**

We believe that having the attitude and environment to adapt and innovate is core to our future success.

# Strategic Objective 01

## Put the Customer at the Centre of Policy and Service Delivery

### High Level Strategies:

Our approach to delivering on this objective will focus on:

- delivering commitments in *Pathways to Work*, *Roadmap for Social Inclusion*, *Roadmap for Pensions Reform* and the Government's response to the *Commission on Welfare and Taxation*
- promoting active participation in society as well as supporting employment as a way out of poverty
- ensuring continued delivery of the Department's schemes and services to a high standard
- supporting the Department's Agencies in the delivery of their functions
- delivering the Department's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and new Action Plan
- supporting a whole of Government approach to climate action.

### Key Outcomes:

By focusing on, and delivering, our high level strategies, we aim to:

- inform policy through robust research, evaluation and stakeholder engagement
- achieve the goals set out in the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion* – including reduction in poverty rates and improvement in living standards
- maintain and improve the measured service satisfaction levels among the people we serve
- increase labour market participation rates especially among marginalised groups
- improve the employability of unemployed clients and increase engagement with employers
- facilitate service users, including people with disabilities, to access all of the Department's services
- ensure services under all of our schemes are delivered promptly and are of consistently good quality

# Strategic Objective 01

## Put the Customer at the Centre of Policy and Service Delivery

### Key Outcomes continued:

- respond promptly to queries received from customers and their representatives
- increase levels of pension coverage while improving the sustainability of the social insurance system
- reflect increases in carbon taxes in a progressive impact through appropriate changes to welfare rates
- publish the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and Action Plan
- progress changes contained in the Climate Action Plan 2023 and its successor.

### High Level Indicators:

The following indicators will be used to assess progress and performance:

- claim processing standards and processing targets
- the indicators/metrics set out in the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion and Pathways to Work (including Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities)*
- customer satisfaction metrics
- staff engagement and satisfaction metrics
- decision appeal levels and processing times
- progress updates on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and Action Plan
- progress in implementation of the commitments in the Programme for Government on climate action.

# Strategic Objective 02

## Drive Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness

### High Level Strategies:

Our approach to delivering on this objective will focus on:

- providing customers with 'digital by desire' use of online and digital service channels
- migrating schemes and services from legacy IT platforms
- implementing the Department's Compliance & Anti-Fraud Strategy to improve payment integrity
- utilising evidence from data and research to evaluate and inform policy and service development
- sharing information with other Public Sector bodies subject to best practice in data protection
- continuing to work with the Office of Public Works (OPW) to apply green technologies and improve energy efficiency
- applying best standards in IT/Cybersecurity
- assuring the long-term sustainability and adequacy of our income support system
- developing and implementing a Cost and Management Accounting system to inform operations, management decisions and strategies
- implementing robust supplier and contract management processes
- continuing to apply best practice in corporate governance and in financial management.

### Key Outcomes:

By focusing on, and delivering, our high level strategies, we aim to:

- ensure a strong evidence base for policy development
- increase levels of customer self-service through digital channels
- assure availability and resilience of customer service
- improve efficiency of processes and procedures
- enhance payment accuracy/reduce levels of fraud and error
- achieve greater levels of inter-agency cooperation and support service delivery in other public bodies
- improve the timeliness and value of debt recovery
- reduce the Department's carbon footprint.

## Strategic Objective 02

### Drive Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness

#### High Level Indicators:

The following indicators will be used to assess progress and performance:

- service availability and on-time payment metrics
- the range and level of use of online services via MyWelfare.ie, WelfarePartners and MyGovid.ie
- the reported level of payment integrity under control surveys
- the proportion of overpayments recovered
- adherence to operating budget parameters
- satisfaction of other public bodies in the quality and efficiency of services provided on their behalf
- retention of ISO 5001/Energy Conservation and Management Certification
- retention of ISO 27001/Information Security Management Certification
- retention of ISSA Quality Service Standards Certification.



## Strategic Objective 03

### Develop Staff, Structures and Processes

#### High Level Strategies:

Our approach to delivering on this objective will focus on:

- implementing the commitments contained in *Our Public Service Framework*, the *Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy* and *Better Public Services - the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy*
- supporting the ongoing development of an inclusive and engaged workforce
- attracting and retaining talented people and striving to increase the diversity of our workforce so that it is more reflective of Irish society today
- providing high-quality, job-specific, and tailored learning and development for all staff
- providing appropriate technological and other tools to assist staff in their work
- working closely with staff representative organisations on all aspects of employee relations
- developing and supporting our *Engagement and Innovation Programme* as a means of engaging staff in developing solutions to organisational challenges
- facilitating staff mobility within the organisation and across the Civil Service
- protecting the Department's customer-focussed culture in a blended working environment
- actively supporting and promoting staff wellbeing through our staff wellbeing unit
- implementing our Customer Service Strategy
- achieving International Social Security Association (ISSA) certification for administration of social protection systems
- completing a strategic workforce planning study over 3/5/10 year time horizons.

#### Key Outcomes:

By focusing on, and delivering, our high level strategies, we aim to:

- promote high levels of staff engagement and performance
- embed equality and inclusion as fundamental values of the organisation both internally and externally
- achieve consistently high customer service standards
- become an employer of choice
- increase the diversity of our workforce.

## Strategic Objective 03

### Develop Staff, Structures and Processes

#### High Level Indicators:

The following indicators will be used to assess progress and performance:

- staff engagement and satisfaction metrics
- number of staff successfully participating in learning and development programmes
- customer satisfaction metrics
- ISSA certification for key functions
- HR metrics such as absenteeism, vacancy rates, etc
- delivery of actions in *Our Public Service Framework*, the *Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy* and *Better Public Services - the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy*.



Department of Social Protection staff at the Pregnancy and Baby Fair

These strategies and goals must be delivered in a complex operating environment characterised by a wide range of multi-faceted and inter-related factors.



## Achieving our Strategic Objectives within this environment will be supported by these enablers:

### People and Structures:

- strong culture and values supported by open communication within the organisation
- commitment to innovation across the organisation
- availability of wellbeing supports for staff
- established stakeholder engagement structures and processes
- established staff engagement structures and processes
- close engagement and co-operation with staff representative organisations
- strong supplier relationships
- well developed education and training programmes to strengthen knowledge, capabilities and leadership throughout the organisation
- robust risk and crisis management processes
- support and leadership from wider Public Service Reform and Renewal programmes.

### Technology and Processes:

- ongoing investment in cyber security to strengthen the Department's technology defences
- ongoing investment in and of modern technologies
- use of shared services, such as NSSO, OGP, OPW, AGO, CSSO and OGCI
- increased use of the online platforms, mywelfare.ie, mygovind.ie and welfarepartners.ie
- greater use of cost and management accounting techniques to inform business decision making
- investment in energy efficiency technologies and in sustainability initiatives
- application of recognised best practice standards such as ITIL, ISSA, and ISO (including SO 27001 and ISO 5001).

## Achieving our Strategic Objectives within this environment will be supported by these enablers:

### Governance:

- adherence to Corporate Governance Framework code of practice for governance of state sponsored bodies and Public Financial Procedures on an ongoing basis
- integrated risk management and business planning process
- three lines of defence approach via Internal Audit Unit and the Audit and Risk Committee
- data privacy and security policies, standards and guidelines
- use of external advisory bodies, such as the Labour Market Advisory Council, to challenge and advise the Department on policies and services
- structured engagement with stakeholders (e.g., Advocacy/Non-Governmental Organisation) and the use of customer insights from surveys to provide a customer view of performance
- progress towards achievement of the 2030 energy efficiency targets
- external service audits via ISO and ISSA.



Pre-Budget Forum Attendees

# Appendix A

## 2021 Output Measures and Targets

[37]

Social Protection

[37]

III.

Details of Programmes - Objectives, Outputs and Financial & Human Resources

PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE

A - SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES, SERVICES, PAYMENTS TO SOCIAL INSURANCE FUND

Key Outputs and Public Service Activities

		2021 Outturn (2021 Target)	2022 Output Target (2022 TPU Output Target)	2023 Output Target (2023 TPU Output Target)
Pensions	Average no. of weekly payments	651,008 (653,735)	670,800 (1,700)	686,486 (3,040)
	Average no. of monthly payments	44,190 (44,100)	44,200 (0)	45,510 (0)
	% of contributory claims to award within processing time standards	94 (90)	90	90
	% of State Pension Non Contributory claims to award within processing time standards	89 (75)	75	75
Working Age - Income Supports	Average no. of weekly payments*	282,873 (401,986)	285,284 (19,650)	262,981 (26,044)
	Average weekly Live Register	172,840 (302,100)	217,220 (14,314)	175,500 (19,950)
	Average no. of weekly Pandemic Unemployment Payment claims +	263,470 (184,500)	28,560 (0)	0 (0)
	% of claims to award within processing time standards	92 (90)	90	90
Working Age Employment Supports	Average no. of weekly payments	34,969 (54,205)	59,256 (0)	35,077 (2,735)
	Average no. of weekly Covid-19 Part Time Job Incentive payments ++	581 (1,200)	930 (0)	0 (0)
Illness, Disability and Carers	Average no. of weekly payments	527,760 (415,108)	431,487 (274)	372,283 (595)
	Average no. of annual Carer's Support payments	125,626 (129,930)	128,300 (157)	130,830 (385)
	Average no. of weekly Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit payments +++	4,320 (400)	813 (0)	0 (0)
	% of Illness Benefit, Invalidity Pension and Occupational Injury Benefit claims to award within processing time standards	75 (90)	90	90
	% of Disability Allowance claims to award within processing time standards**	94 (75)	75	75
	% of Carer's Allowance claims to award within processing time standards***	94 (75)	75	75
	% of Domiciliary Care Allowance claims to award within processing time standards	72 (90)	90	90
	Average no. of weekly payments	50,556 (54,480)	49,738 (93)	51,127 (196)
Children	Average no. of monthly Child Benefit payments	1,208,686 (1,220,070)	1,193,769 (17,361)	1,208,171 (26,014)
	% of Child Benefit claims to award within processing time standards	79 (90)	90	90
Supplementary Payments	Average no. of Rent Supplement payments	18,320 (17,660)	12,555 (57)	10,230 (92)
	Average no. of Household Benefits payments	478,480 (465,038)	483,745 (0)	507,900 (0)
	% of Household Benefits & Free Travel claims to award within processing time standards	100 (90)	90	90
Control	No. of control surveys completed and published	2 (2)	2	2
	% of debtors receiving a weekly social welfare payment making debt repayments ****	51 (85)	85	85
	% of the value of outstanding debts being repaid ****	45 (60)	60	60
Appeals	No. of appeals awaiting decision at year end	6,553 (7,500-8,500)	7,500-8,500	7,000-8,000
Payment Services for Other Departments	No. of customers with Local Property Tax deductions from their payment	24,076 (25,300)	25,000	25,000
	No. of Magdalen Commission customers in payment	414 (430)	430	430

TPU = people arriving from Ukraine seeking refuge under the Temporary Protection Directive

\*Parent's Benefit included from 1st January 2021.

\*\* From 1st January 2021, the processing time standard for Disability Allowance has been amended from 75% in 12 weeks to 75% in 10 weeks.

\*\*\* From 1st January 2021, the processing time standard for Carers Allowance has been amended from 70% in 12 weeks to 75% in 11 weeks. From 1st January 2022, the processing time standard for Carers Allowance has been amended from 75% in 11 weeks to 75% in 10 weeks.

\*\*\*\* Excluding new claimants with debts and new debts raised (under one month). The number of those who are in receipt of a DSP payment and not repaying a debt in 2021 is impacted by the number of customers in receipt of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and by the temporary suspension of debt recovery processes due to COVID-19. Debt recovery processes have resumed and the percentage of customers repaying debts will increase in line with this.

+ The Pandemic Unemployment Payment closed to new applications from January 2022, and closed effective from end March 2022.

++ PTJH Covid scheme was linked to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment timeline.+++ Covid-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit scheme closed with effect from 30 September 2022.

# Appendix A

## 2021 Output Measures and Targets

Legislation:	<b>2021 Outturn</b>	<b>2022 Output Target</b>	<b>2023 Output Target</b>
	Social Welfare Act 2021	Social Welfare (Budget) Bill	Social Welfare (Spring) Bill
			Social Welfare (Budget) Bill
Publish Documents	<b>2021 Outturn</b>	<b>2022 Output Target</b>	<b>2023 Output Target</b>
	Annual Report 2020	Annual Report 2021	Annual Report 2022
	Gender Recognition Act 2015 : Annual Report for 2019 (prepared in accordance with section 6 of the Act)	Gender Recognition Act 2015 : Annual Report for 2020 (prepared in accordance with section 6 of the Act)	Gender Recognition Act 2015 : Annual Report for 2021 (prepared in accordance with section 6 of the Act)
			Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund as at 31 December 2020
<b>Context and Impact indicators</b>			
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
1- No. of payments	77.8m	77.2m*	93.9m
2- No. of claims decided - weekly paid schemes**	706,656	766,771	842,779
3- No. of telephone calls answered	6.5m	8.1m	7.2m
4- Pension Coverage:***			
Defined Benefit scheme members	500,810	518,119	534,765
Defined Contribution scheme members	381,430	411,044	437,190
Personal Retirement Savings Accounts	298,532	312,299	330,151
<b>Context and Impact Indicators from CSO SILC:</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>2021<sup>^</sup></b>
1 % of population at risk of poverty pre social transfers	41.4%	39.2%	41.2%
2 % of population at risk of poverty post social transfers	12.8%	13.2%	11.6%
3 Consistent poverty rate	5.5%	4.7%	4.0%
4 % of retired people at risk of poverty	11.1%	9.8%	11.8%
5 % of retired people in consistent poverty	2.1%	1.1%	2.3%
6 % deprivation rate for retired people	9.4%	8.0%	7.6%
7 % of people aged 18-64 at risk of poverty	12.3%	12.7%	10.8%
8 % of people aged 18-64 in consistent poverty	5.1%	4.5%	3.8%
9 % deprivation rate for people aged 18-64	17.1%	13.9%	13.9%
10 % of people not at work due to illness or disability at risk of poverty	37.5%	33.4%	39.1%
11 % of people not at work due to illness or disability in consistent poverty	18.1%	16.2%	19.2%
12 % deprivation rate for people not at work due to illness or disabilities	43.3%	37.0%	39.6%
13 % of children aged 0 -17 at risk of poverty	15.3%	16.4%	13.6%
14 % of children aged 0 -17 in consistent poverty	8.1%	7.2%	5.2%
15 % deprivation rate for children aged 0 - 17	23.3%	18.9%	17.0%
16 % of people without heating at some stage within the last year	8.6%	9.1%	7.1%
17 % of people unable to keep the home adequately warm	4.9%	3.3%	3.2%
<p>*Payments were made fortnightly from 23rd March 2020 to 2nd November 2020.</p> <p>**Stats exclude SWA weekly payments.</p> <p>For 2020 and 2021 Illness Benefit figures include Enhanced Illness Benefit for COVID-19. COVID-19 PUP and Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) operational data are not currently included as part of the operational activity monitoring procedures. From March to December 2020 1.4m COVID-19 PUP applications were made. In 2021 376,535 COVID-PUP applications were made. Parent's Benefit included from 1st January 2021.</p> <p>*** Figures as per Pensions Authority Report.</p> <p>Source: CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC).</p> <p><sup>^</sup> Please note break in series in 2020 and subsequent years. For further info, see: CSO.ie.</p>			
<b>EQUALITY BUDGETING OBJECTIVES &amp; PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>			
<b>High Level Goal: Promote active inclusion and reduce the proportion of jobless households in society by providing targeted activation and development and employment services</b>			
<b>Key Outputs and Public Service Activities</b>			

# Appendix A

## 2021 Output Measures and Targets

### Key High Level Metrics

- 1 Share of population aged 18-59 years resident in jobless households<sup>1</sup>  
\*to Q2 2022

2021 Output Outturn (2021 Output Target)	2022 Output Outturn* (2022 Output Target)	2023 Output Target
8.9% (<9.5%)	6.8% (<9.5%)	<9.5%

### Context and Impact indicators

- 1- Unemployment rate<sup>2</sup>
- 2- Long-term unemployment rate<sup>2</sup>
- 3- Youth unemployment rate<sup>2</sup>
- 4- Employment rate<sup>2</sup>
- 5- Proportion of population 0-17 years resident in jobless households<sup>1</sup>

	2020	2021	2022
1- Unemployment rate <sup>2</sup>	5.9%	6.2%*	4.8%
2- Long-term unemployment rate <sup>2</sup>	1.3%	1.8%	1.2%
3- Youth unemployment rate <sup>2</sup>	15.9%	16.3%	11.4%
4- Employment rate <sup>2</sup>	66.6%	68.8%	73.5%
5- Proportion of population 0-17 years resident in jobless households <sup>1</sup>	13%	9.5%	8.6%

[1] Figures sourced from the CSO's LFS Households and Family Units, and these figures refer to Q2 each year.

[2] Figures sourced from the CSO Labour Force Survey and are average figures for each year. 2022 refers to Q2 only.

\*Updated November 2022.

## EQUALITY BUDGETING OBJECTIVES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

**High Level Goal:** Increase the take-up level of Paternity Benefit among eligible employees and self-employed people

### Key Outputs and Public Service Activities

#### Key High Level Metrics

- 1 Paternity Benefit claims as a percentage of Maternity Benefit claims  
\*Data to end of Oct 22

2021 Output Outturn (2021 Output Target)	2022 Output Outturn* (2022 Output Target)	2023 Output Target
61% (>60%)	67% (>60%)	>60%

### Context and Impact indicators

- 1- Number of Paternity Benefit claims awarded
- 2- Number of Maternity Benefit claims awarded
- 3- Number of births<sup>1</sup>
- 4- Number of males in employment<sup>2</sup>
- 5- Number of females in employment<sup>2</sup>

	2020	2021	2022
1- Number of Paternity Benefit claims awarded	24,726	26,852	23,040*
2- Number of Maternity Benefit claims awarded	40,275	43,318	34,194*
3- Number of births <sup>1</sup>	55,959	58,443	16,131
4- Number of males in employment <sup>2</sup>	1.226m	1.227m	1.360m
5- Number of females in employment <sup>2</sup>	1.028m	1.112m	1.194m

[1] CSO Vital Statistics. Note that 2022 figures for Number of Births refer to Quarter 1 only.

[2] CSO Labour Force Survey yearly averages.

\*Data to end of Oct 22

### Details of Appropriations-in-Aid

#### B - APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID

##### APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID:

1. Recovery of costs incurred on Vote 37 administering Social Insurance Fund schemes

Subtotal:-

##### APPROPRIATIONS-IN-AID: Other

2. Recovery of Overpayments on Vote 37 schemes raised in previous years
3. Repayment from Social Insurance Fund initially made under Vote 37 in previous years
4. Receipts under "Liability to Maintain Family" provisions in part XII of the SW Act 2005
5. General Registrar Receipts collected by Department
6. Receipts from Additional Superannuation Contributions
7. Receipts from European Social Fund
8. Receipts from National Training Fund
9. Receipts from Pension Authority - Staff Superannuation Contributions
10. Receipts from Dormant Accounts
11. Recovery of Assistance from Insurance Compensation Awards
12. Receipts from Food and Material Assistance (part funded from ESF+)
13. Recovery of overpayments from Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS)
14. Recovery of overpayments from Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS)
15. Miscellaneous

Subtotal:-

Total>

2022 Estimate			2023 Estimate		
Current	Capital	Total	Current	Capital	Total
172,695	-	172,695	173,000	-	173,000
172,695	-	172,695	173,000	-	173,000
45,800	-	45,800	46,500	-	46,500
3,400	-	3,400	3,400	-	3,400
390	-	390	400	-	400
600	-	600	600	-	600
7,550	-	7,550	7,470	-	7,470
-	-	-	-	-	-
5,710	-	5,710	7,090	-	7,090
670	-	670	670	-	670
5,000	-	5,000	5,000	-	5,000
3,170	-	3,170	3,300	-	3,300
3,300	-	3,300	5,700	-	5,700
29,400	-	29,400	2,500	-	2,500
12,700	-	12,700	1,000	-	1,000
700	-	700	700	-	700
118,390	-	118,390	84,330	-	84,330
291,085	-	291,085	257,330	-	257,330

## Appendix B

### Commitments in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future, where the Department of Social Protection has a lead role

- We will improve budgeting for demographic-related costs. Spending in the areas of health and social welfare will be prioritised for improved budgeting. Each Minister will be required to produce service improvement and reform plans in conjunction with Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform. Budget overspends within the budgetary year must be included in Department budgetary plans each year, in line with changes in Budget 2020.
- Protect core weekly social welfare rates.
- Recognise the importance of ancillary benefits and eligibility criteria to vulnerable groups.
- Any changes made in social welfare provisions will continue to be gender and equality-proofed.
- Examine options for a pension solution for carers, the majority of whom are women, particularly those of incapacitated children, in recognition of the enormous value of the work carried out by them.
- Increase the availability of activation schemes, including those run by local employment services.
- We will use the recent research into the cost of disability to individuals and families to properly inform the direction of future policy.
- Develop initiatives that improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities living in rural areas, including through remote working options.
- Fast-track the return to Disability or Invalidity Pension for people where employment opportunities do not succeed.
- Fine-tune and expand targeted employment schemes, such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) and the Ability Programme, to help more people with disabilities stay in the workforce.
- Put in place strong and varied labour-market activation programmes.
- Enhance back-to-work schemes and initiatives to assist in upskilling those who are seeking new employment opportunities after the crisis.
- Review the Back to Education Allowance, to ensure that it can help those unemployed as a result of COVID-19 to access education and training.
- Continue to fund the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Service, Abhaile.
- Maintain the entitlement for the Free Travel Scheme for all individuals aged 66 and over.
- Work with private bus operators and the National Transport Authority (NTA) so that the Free Travel Scheme is available on all publicly licensed bus routes.

- Remove the need for a person aged 16 and 17 years to have two specialist reports before they can apply for legal gender recognition, by providing for self-declaration, with parental consent and by making mediation available on a voluntary basis. These improvements will include the provision of a gender-recognition certificate providing proof of change of name, as well as gender. Commence research to examine arrangements for children under 16. Complete the work of the interdepartmental group tasked with examining legal recognition of non-binary people.
- Ensure that Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) levels are adequate to support vulnerable households, while we increase the supply of social housing (in conjunction with Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).
- Ensure that the increases in the carbon tax are progressive by spending €3 billion on targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition.
- Set out the future distribution of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, based on the principles of fairness and equity.
- Improve jobseeker supports for people aged under 24 over the lifetime of the Government.
- Continue to prioritise and protect supports for lone parents, having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection's Report on the Position of Lone Parents in Ireland (2017).
- Act to reform our child maintenance system and address key issues such as calculation, facilitation, and enforcement, guided by international best practice and in light of the findings of the Murphy Review.
- Maintain the State Pension as the bedrock of the Irish pension system.
- 65-year-olds who are required to or chose to retire early can receive an 'Early Retirement Allowance or Pension' at the same rate as jobseekers benefit without a requirement to sign on, partake in any activation measures or be available for and genuinely seeking work.
- Establish a Commission on Pensions to examine sustainability and eligibility issues with state pensions and the Social Insurance Fund. The Commission will outline options for Government to address issues including qualifying age, contribution rates, total contributions and eligibility requirements.

- Pending the report of the Commission on Pensions and any subsequent Government decisions on its recommendations, the State Pension age will remain at 66 years and the increase to 67 years will be deferred. This will allow full consideration by Government of any permanent changes. The Commission will report by June 2021. The Government will take action having regard to the recommendations of the Commission within 6 months.
- Introduce a Total Contributions approach, aligning a person's contributory pension more closely with the contributions they make. This will include a provision for credited contributions, ensuring that people who take time off work to care for loved ones are not disadvantaged.
- The new Government will introduce a pension auto-enrolment system. Taking account of the exceptional strain both employers and employees are now under, we will seek to deliver gradually an automatic enrolment scheme based on the following principles: Matching contributions will be made by both workers and employers and the State will top up contributions; There will be a phased roll-out over a decade of the contribution made by workers; There will be an opt-out provision for those who choose to opt out; Workers will have a range of retirement savings products to choose from; There will be a charges cap imposed on pension providers.
- Introduce a system to enable people to defer receipt of their state contributory pension on an annual basis, to include actuarial increases in payment as soon as practicable.
- Facilitate those without a full social insurance record to increase their retirement provision by choosing to continue making PRSI payments beyond pensionable age.
- Consideration will be given to increasing all classes of PRSI over time to replenish the Social Insurance Fund to help pay for measures and changes to be agreed including, inter alia, to the state pension system, improvements to short-term sick pay benefits, parental leave benefits, pay-related jobseekers benefit and treatment benefits (medical, dental, optical, hearing).
- Continue to support the annual Social Inclusion Forum as an important means of promoting engagement between people experiencing poverty and exclusion, the community and voluntary sector and Government.
- As we emerge from the COVID pandemic, we must build upon the unity, which was fundamental in our response, to improve outcomes for those who are struggling on low incomes, struggling with caring responsibilities, having to raise their families alone, or living with a disability. Any changes made in social welfare provisions will continue to be gender and equality-proofed. We will do this by rigorous implementation of the new social inclusion strategy, A Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025.

## Appendix C

### Commitments in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future, where the Department of Social Protection has a contributory role

- Legislate to provide for adoptive leave and benefit for male same-sex adoptive couples (in conjunction with the Department of Children, Disability, Equality and Integration).
- We will establish a Commission on Welfare and Taxation to independently consider how best the tax system can support economic activity and promote increased employment and prosperity, while ensuring that there are sufficient resources available to meet the costs of the public services and supports in the medium and longer term (in conjunction with the Department of Finance).
- Extend free GP care to carers in receipt of the Carer's Support Grant (in conjunction with the Department of Health).
- Further develop the integration of digital services in Government and the creation of a single digital unit to drive more public services online (in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform).
- Implement an upskilling and reskilling programme so that workers from sectors that are unlikely to return to full capacity in the following year can avail of the opportunities in other more sustainable sectors. As part of this, we will publish an updated Apprenticeship Action Plan to look at new ways of structuring, funding, and promoting apprenticeships. It will have specific targets for the uptake of apprenticeships by women, people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. We will, by the end of 2020, develop a strong pipeline of apprenticeships and traineeships (including mature apprenticeships) to support our recovery phase and to provide new career paths for people with different interests and abilities. We will embed apprenticeships and traineeships into Irish enterprise (in conjunction with Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science).
- Introduce returnships in partnership with employers, to support women who have taken time out of work to raise their families or care for loved ones, to re-enter the labour market through new education, training, and personal development programmes. (In conjunction with Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science).



- Extend paid parental leave for parents, to allow them to spend more time with their baby during its first year (in conjunction with Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth).
- Investigate the provision of paid leave and social protection provision to victims of domestic violence (in conjunction with D/Justice).
- Promote an awareness and support programme for employers to support the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.
- A balanced scorecard for each area of public policy, focused on outcomes and the impact that those policies have on individuals and communities. Initially, this will be focused on housing, education, and health.
- Explore how Ireland can be at the forefront of protecting citizens' rights with respect to facial recognition technology, access to encryption tools, and net neutrality.
- Drive digital transformation in the public service, with greater integration of digital services. Budget and expenditure plans for each Department must include measures that drive the digitalisation of public services and work within our public services, while maintaining access to those services to all (in conjunction with Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform).
- We are committed to the introduction of personalised budgets, improving the provision of services for people with disabilities through a range of options, including service brokers, and empowering people to choose the supports that most meet their needs. This will be based on the experience of the pilot schemes.
- Set out a pathway for the future implementation of the Temporary Wage Subsidy.
- Work across government to address food poverty in children and ensure no child goes hungry.



