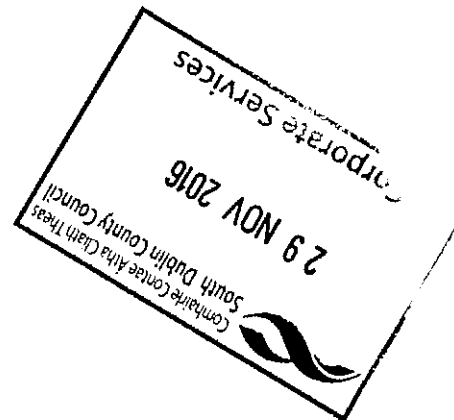




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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Mr Colm Murphy
Meeting Administrator
Corporate Performance and Change Management
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24



Your ref (M04/0916)

25 November 2016

Re Motion "That this Council calls on the Minister for Social Protection and the Minister for Justice and Equality to reinstate full rates of pay for the under 26's on Job Seekers payment"

Dear Mr. Murphy

Thank you for your letter of regarding the above motion passed by South County Dublin Council seeking the reinstatement of full rates of pay for the under 26's on Job Seekers payment.

I know that you wrote also to Minister Varadkar on the matter and that his Department has informed you that any proposal to change social welfare schemes would be a matter for Government to consider in a budgetary context. Your point has been noted and will be duly considered in the context of future reforms to the scheme.

I would just like to add to that that the decision to reduce the rates of pay was not taken in isolation – in fact it was done in the context of all the supports available to young jobseekers.

You are probably aware that reduced rates for younger jobseeker's allowance recipients were first introduced in 2009, were further extended in subsequent budgets and apply to jobseekers under 26 years of age.

These measures were introduced as they were considered necessary to protect young people from welfare dependency by providing young jobseekers with a strong financial incentive to engage in education or training or to take up employment. **Should a young jobseeker on a reduced jobseeker's allowance payment participate on an education or training programme they will receive a higher weekly payment of €160.**

From **September 2017**, if young jobseekers attend an education or training course they will be increased to the full weekly rate of €193. This is **an increase of €33 per week over and above the current rate of €160**, which applies when they participate in education or training. **This means they too will then benefit from the €5 increase which applies to other social welfare recipients. This aims to further encourage young Jobseeker Allowance recipients to take up education or training.**

When the EU Youth Guarantee Recommendation was adopted in 2013, Ireland already had in place many of the elements to meet the Recommendation's objective of ensuring that young people receive an offer of employment, education or training within four months of becoming unemployed. This included services such as Intreo, Youthreach, VTOS, PLC programmes, JobsPlus and JobBridge. Therefore **the main approach in Ireland is, first, to help newly unemployed young people find and secure sustainable jobs. And second, to prioritise access to existing supports for young people who remain unemployed.**

Since January 2015, there is monthly engagement with young people by activation case officers to assist young people to prepare, review and, if appropriate, revise personal progression plans. As part of this process **additional supports may be provided, both through existing schemes and through youth-specific measures, for young people who fail to find work. Most such offers (over 70%) are in existing further education or training programmes.** Others are in existing community-based employment programmes such as CE, Gateway and Tús.

Overall, **over 19,100 opportunities were taken up** on the relevant programmes in 2015. Due to the improving labour market, actual take-up on places in 2015 fell below expected take-up as more young unemployed moved directly into employment. In addition, there are over 24,000 places provided for young people through PLC courses and apprenticeships. These places are not specifically for the young unemployed, but they contribute to the spirit of the Youth Guarantee. **Youth unemployment is now 15.9% (estimated by CSO for September 2016). At its peak in June 2012, youth unemployment was over 31%.**

The most recent Pathways to Work strategy, for the period 2016 -2020, continues to focus on addressing youth unemployment, building on reforms introduced in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and by introducing new measures. A review of the operation and coverage of the Youth Guarantee is being prepared. The review will examine data on processes and outcomes for young people who became unemployed up to the end of 2015. This takes into account economic and labour market developments as well as broader reforms undertaken through the *Pathways to Work* strategies.

I hope that this clarifies the situation to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances Fitzgerald'.

Frances Fitzgerald T.D.

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality