

County Longford Public Participation Network (PPN)

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PPN Newsletter July 2023 (Part 2)

New TFI Local Link 426 Longford to Roscommon



NEW ROUTE 426
LONGFORD
↕
ROSCOMMON



save
up to
30%

TFI LEAP CARD/
TFI GO APP



CONNECTIONS TO
REGIONAL BUS AND
RAIL SERVICES



NEW PEAK-TIME
SERVICE



Brought to you as part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan



See timetable [here](#)



SUMMER WALKING SERIES 2023

6pm Monday & Wednesday



31ST JULY

Newtownforbes
Heritage
Trail



2ND AUGUST

Royal Canal
Longford



7TH AUGUST

Commons Trail
Lanesborough



9TH AUGUST

Corlea Bog
Kenagh



14TH AUGUST

Bri Leith
Ardagh Mountains



16TH AUGUST

Derrycassin Woods
Mullinalaghta



21ST AUGUST

Cairn Hill
Drumlish



23RD AUGUST

Newcastle Woods
Ballymahon



sports@longfordcoco.ie or



043 3343493

LONGFORD TRAIL RUN SERIES 2023



AUGUST 2 ROYAL CANAL LONGFORD 5K

AUGUST 9 CORLEA BOG 5K

AUGUST 16 DERRYCASSIN WOODS 5K

AUGUST 23 NEWCASTLE WOODS 5K

RUNS START @ 7.30PM

€8 PER INDIVIDUAL RUN
NO MEDAL OR T-SHIRT

€15 PER INDIVIDUAL RUN
INCLUDES SERIES MEDAL + T-SHIRT

€30 FOR SERIES
INCLUDES SERIES MEDAL + T-SHIRT

Register at

MyRunResults.com



OBOYLE & CO
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT AND BUSINESS ADVISORS



— SPORT IRELAND —

How to stay active and flexible Advice for older adults

Please check [here](#) for details



Longford Sports Partnership
in association with Longford GAA

GAA CÚL CAMP



for children with additional needs



The camp will take place from
10am-12 noon on August
9th, 10th & 11th in Drumlish
Community Centre

The cost of the camp will be
€20 and each attendee will
receive a Cúl Camp Kit
(Includes a bag, t-shirt and half
zip top).

To sign up please contact
sports@longfordcoco.ie as
soon as possible as places are
very limited.

Free Mental Health and Wellbeing Online Workshop

Midlands Louth Meath CHO Recovery Education



Workshop Title
Wells for Wellness and Other Tools

Date & Time
Thur 3rd Aug 2023
10am to 12pm

Explore a variety of Wellbeing tools, appreciate the various dimensions of wellbeing, and begin to plan how to implement these tools in our daily lives.



Book your place at one of our online modules

<http://mlmrecovered.eventbrite.com>

Contact with any queries or to book a place:



Email: derek@mentalhealthireland.ie

Phone: 087 2840901

Email: tara@mentalhealthireland.ie

Phone: 087 052 8058

- It is free to attend our courses
- Our courses are open to anyone (aged 18 and over) with an interest in mental health and wellbeing

Follow us online:

- Midlands Louth Meath CHO Recovery Education



Midlands Louth Meath
Community Healthcare
Organisation

H



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service



HSE Mental Health Services



Mental Health
Ireland

Minister for Health announces full funding for assisted human reproduction treatment from September

Minister for Health,

Stephen Donnelly has today announced that fully publicly funded assisted human reproduction (AHR) treatment will commence in September.

Eligible patients will be entitled to one full cycle of IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) or ICSI (Intracytoplasmic sperm injection) treatment, initially provided in HSE-approved private clinics of their choice ahead of the opening next year of the first public National Advanced AHR Centre.

The Minister has also set out details of eligibility criteria which sets parameters in respect of the ages of the intending parents, the female patient's body mass index (BMI), the number of existing children and the number of previous IVF cycles accessed. Patients with known clinical causes of infertility and patients where there is no known clinical cause will be eligible for treatment.

Given the complex regulatory and clinical issues still to be addressed in respect of certain categories of AHR treatment, public funding of a number of specific services is being commenced on a structured and phased basis.

Therefore, treatment involving the use of donated gametes (sperm and eggs) will not be available in September for heterosexual or same-sex couples or single female patients. This treatment will become available as soon as possible.

Minister Donnelly said: "This Government recognises the difficult circumstances faced by so many people who long to have a child but who are unable to do so without clinical intervention. "That is why a commitment to introduce a publicly funded model of care for fertility treatment is included in the Programme for Government. "Today marks a very important milestone in achieving that objective.

"The service we're announcing is one that involves highly complex issues, and we are committed to ensuring that patient safety and regulation lie at the heart of service provision.

"Work is continuing on the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill which will ultimately allow us to improve accessibility to AHR treatments, while at the same time embedding safe and appropriate clinical practice and ensuring the cost-effective use of public resources.

"I look forward to progressing this Bill and to ultimately expanding advanced AHR services to wider categories so that we can help more people to fulfil their wish of starting a family."

Under the Model of Care for Fertility, people with fertility-related issues should be treated through the public health service at the lowest level of intervention necessary.

In the first instance, people will present to their GP for a consultation and if appropriate they will be referred to their local Regional Fertility Hub, which provides a range of treatments and interventions for both males and females.

From September, where: IVF, ICSI or IUI is clinically indicated, eligible patients will be referred by the Reproductive Medical Consultant in the Regional Fertility Hub for publicly funded treatment in a HSE-approved private clinic of their choice.

Female patients who meet the criteria will be eligible for treatment if they have been referred by their GP to a regional fertility hub before their 41st birthday.

Minister Donnelly added: “In establishing eligibility criteria, we have considered an array of factors to ensure that public money is being used to fund clinically safe care that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of the child and mother.

“In developing these services in a careful, phased manner, I am committed to ensuring that we can expand eligibility criteria as soon as possible.

“Today we are taking a significant first step and I would like to thank all involved in getting us to this stage. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the work of officials in my department, the HSE, clinicians and the private providers who agreed to provide the treatment in their facilities.”

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

Internationally, access to publicly funded AHR services is informed by an array of factors including clinical, political, social, and economic.

The guiding principles in developing access criteria for publicly funded infertility services, whether at secondary or tertiary level and irrespective of whether publicly- or privately provided, need to:

- be equitable and patient centred.
- ensure that the well-being and safety of the child and the mother is central to clinical decision-making.
- ensure that resources allocated are targeted at patients that are deemed clinically appropriate for infertility-related assessment and treatment.
- ensure that care is provided in a clinically safe manner, taking into account the packages of care available.
- ensure that clinical care is planned and delivered based on a reasonable anticipation of a positive outcome.
- ensure that services are developed and built on a population health approach so as to enable and maintain good fertility health within the general population

Eligibility criteria for patients accessing publicly funded IVF, ICSI and IUI treatment:

The eligibility criteria set out below have been developed following extensive clinical consideration and expert consultation, prioritising equitable, patient-centred service that targets resources at clinically appropriate treatment.

- Individuals must be ordinarily resident in the State and referred through their GP to a Regional Fertility Hub. (No self-referring).
- Eligible couples must have no living children from the existing relationship and include at least one partner with no living child.
- Access to publicly funded AHR treatment is available for those individuals who have previously undertaken a maximum of one previous IVF cycle and where all embryos created as part of that cycle have been used.
- A couple/ individual will not be eligible for publicly funded AHR treatment if either partner/individual has had voluntary sterilisation.
- To ensure the welfare of any children resulting from AHR treatment, an assessment will be carried out, based primarily upon a self-declaration form.
- There shall not be more than two intending parents of a child born as a result of AHR treatment and, they shall be in a relationship for at least one year.
- The intending birth mother should be a maximum age of 40 years plus 364 days at time of referral to Hub, while the maximum referring age for males is 59 years plus 364 days.
- The BMI of an intending birth mother must be within the range of 18.5 kg/m² – 30.0 kg/m²

Guidance regarding lifestyle:

Alcohol: Intending birth mother should have no more than one or two standard alcoholic drinks once or twice per week. Males should have no more than three to four standard alcoholic drinks per day, ideally 10 standard drinks or less over a week.

Smoking: All intending parents should be non-smoking for at least three months. Recreational/Illegal

Drugs: All intending parents should be non-users of recreational drugs for at least three months.

Model of Care for Fertility

The Model of Care for Fertility was developed by the Department of Health in conjunction with the HSE's National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in order to ensure that fertility-related issues are addressed through the public health system at the lowest level of clinical intervention necessary. This Model of Care comprises three stages, starting in primary care (i.e., GPs) and extending into secondary care (i.e., Regional Fertility Hubs) and then, where necessary, tertiary care (i.e., IVF (in-vitro fertilisation), ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection) and IUI (Intrauterine insemination), with patients being referred onwards through structured pathways.

Phase One of the roll-out of the Model of Care has involved the establishment, at secondary care level, of Regional Fertility Hubs within maternity networks, in order to facilitate the management of a significant proportion of patients presenting with fertility-related issues at this level of intervention. Patients are referred by their GPs to their local Regional Fertility Hub, which provides a range of treatments and interventions for both males and females, including relevant blood tests, semen analysis, assessment of tubal patency, hysteroscopy, laparoscopy, fertility-related surgeries, ovulation induction and follicle tracking.

All Regional Fertility Hubs are in service.

Phase Two of the roll-out of the Model of Care will see the introduction of tertiary fertility services, including IVF, provided through the public health service. Funding was secured in Budget 2023 to support access to advanced AHR treatments, including, crucially, to allow the commencement of Phase Two of the roll-out of the Model of Care.

This investment will facilitate the first steps to be taken towards the provision of a complete publicly provided fertility service, which is the ultimate objective of Government.

In particular, it will allow the historic development of the first National Advanced AHR Centre, delivering IVF, ICSI and IUI through a wholly public clinic and is scheduled to open in 2024. Subject to the provision of additional funding in future, it is envisaged that additional National Advanced AHR Centres will be developed and become operational on a phased basis elsewhere in the country.

The 2023 allocation is also being utilised to support the Regional Fertility Hubs in order to expand the scope of services by introducing the provision of IUI, which can, for certain cohorts of patients, be a potentially effective, yet less complex and less intrusive, type of AHR treatment.

Ministers for Health announce increased rates of funding for State-funded home support providers

- Agreement will advance significant sectoral reform, incorporating travel time - for the first time- for home support providers and ensuring carers are paid the National Living Wage at a minimum.

The Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, and the Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler are announcing today that increased funding has been secured for home support providers, to ensure that carers are paid appropriately and to help address some of the key issues impacting recruitment and retention in the sector.

State-funded home support is delivered directly by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and by service providers in the community and voluntary, and private sectors. Home support services that are not provided directly by the HSE are procured through a tender process. A new Home Support Tender process is currently close to finalisation and due to be in place by August.

As recommended by the cross-departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants, the new HSE Home Support Tender rate announced today delivers on commitments for sectoral reform such as payment for travel time for home support providers, paying carers the National Living Wage at a minimum, and bringing legacy rates in line with the new revised rates of funding.

Making the announcement on the new Home Support Tender, Minister Donnelly said:

“Promoting care in the community for older people and improving access to home support is a priority for me and this Government. I am pleased to announce agreement of a revised rate for State-funded home support services that are delivered on behalf of the HSE by the community and voluntary, and private sectors. The new higher rates will advance significant sectoral reform, and will, for the first time, incorporate travel time for home support providers, reform legacy rates, and ensure carers are paid the National Living Wage at a minimum. This promises to help maintain the high volumes of service delivery and to reduce waiting times for home support. It will ensure that home support carers are paid appropriately, and I am confident that it will help address some of the key recruitment and retention challenges in the sector.”

The delivery of home support hours in communities is increasing, in line with enhanced investment. As of December 2022, 20.8 million home support hours had been delivered nationally during the year. Since Budget 2021 the Government has provided an additional €228 million in funding. In 2023 the overall home care budget is €723 million.

Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler, said:

“This revised rate will give certainty and stability to the sector, and help make caring a more viable career option. Home support is an increasingly important part of the supports we offer to older people to age in place in their communities. I am fully committed to doing everything possible to support older people to continue living at home with dignity and independence with the correct wraparound supports. I am also committed to improving recruitment and retention in the sector. To support this, last year I established the cross-departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Health Care Assistants to examine the significant workforce challenges in the sector. 16 recommendations across the key areas of recruitment, pay and conditions of employment, barriers to employment, training and professional development, sectoral reform, monitoring, and implementation are now in train. The first recommendation was implemented last December, with the authorisation of 1,000 employment permits for non-EU/EEA home support workers.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- In order to allow the HSE to offer an increased rate to home support providers, the Department of Health sanctioned an adjustment of targets in the National Service Plan 2023 for the provision of 23.9 million hours of home support, to a revised target of 22 million hours. This adjustment is to support the delivery of key recommendations of the cross-departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group set up to help address the shortage of care workers, such as payment for travel time, the payment the National Living Wage at a minimum and addressing historic legacy rates.
- The HSE is currently undertaking an evaluation of the applications for the new HSE Home Support Tender which will conclude at the end of July. As an interim measure, the HSE has offered to pay the authorisation scheme rates from 1 July 2023 for all currently contracted home support services covered by previous tenders, as an extension to the current contracts for all service providers that agree to the terms of the authorisation scheme. This will allow time for the conclusion of the tender and the HSE's internal approval process. This offer is subject to the service providers agreeing to the revised terms with effect from 1 July, and until such time as the Authorisation Scheme is formalised in August.
- The HSE has opted for an Authorisation Scheme model which is open-ended, therefore new entrants to the market may apply to join at any stage, periodically.
- The process of finalising the new Home Support Tender is at an advanced stage by the HSE and the new tender is expected to be in place in August.

PRESS RELEASE | Government announces details of the commencement of the provision of GP Visit Cards to over 500,000 more people.

Government announces details of the commencement of the provision of GP Visit Cards to over 500,000 more people.

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly and Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, Paschal Donohoe have today announced details of the commencement of the provision of GP Visit Cards to over 500,000 more people - children aged 6 and 7 and to all of those earning no more than the median income, following agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO). GP Visit Cards permit the holders to access GP care without charges. This measure represents the largest expansion in access to GP care without charges in the history of the State.

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly

stated: "I have long made clear my commitment to making healthcare affordable for all. Today marks a significant milestone as we provide those who can least afford to

pay for access to care with the right to attend a GP at no cost. As I said at the time of the budget last October, this is a gamechanger for our health service. Ensuring that more people can afford to visit their GP gives access to healthcare in the right place - one of the central commitments in the Programme for Government. It also removes the burden on people who may defer GP visits because they simply cannot afford it.

“I am delighted that we will be implementing this expansion in care with the agreement of the IMO. We collaborated successfully with general practice particularly through the period of the Covid pandemic, when GPs displayed an extraordinary commitment to delivering patient care. I look forward to continuing our collaboration as we embark on this historic expansion of free GP access.

“Coupled with the large expansion of the GP training programme I announced recently, in conjunction with the Irish College of General Practitioners, we are building strong and resilient primary care services as we increase our General Practice workforce now while improving access to those services for those who most need them.”

Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, Paschal Donohoe said: “I welcome this new GP agreement which will reduce the cost of accessing vital general practice care for those in our society who often struggle to afford GP visits. It will also enable the delivery of a core Government priority to expand access to medical care in line with Sláintecare. The significance of this milestone cannot be underestimated as it involves the largest expansion in eligibility for free GP care in the history of the State covering up to 500,000 people. This provides access GP care to all children aged 6 and 7 and to all of those earning no more than the median household income. It also represents another important support to people at a time of cost-of-living challenges.”

Minister Donnelly added: “The Government is committed to ensuring that cost is removed as a barrier to accessing healthcare. This expansion will allow up to half a million additional people to access GP care without charges. This is a landmark day on our journey towards providing universal healthcare for all our people.”

The agreement with the IMO will put in place a series of capacity supports to allow GPs to recruit additional staff, as well as increases in fees to take account of the likely increase in demand for services. The total financial package will amount to approximately €130 million in a full year.

Under the terms of the Agreement, applications for GP Visit Cards for all children aged 6 & 7 will open on 11 August 2023. Approximately 78,000 children who currently access GP care on a private basis will benefit from this measure.

The expansion of income limits for the general population to permit those earning no more than the median income will benefit up to 430,000 individuals.

The first phase of this income-based expansion will commence on 11 September 2023 and the second phase will commence on 13 November 2023.

ENDS

Note to editors:

The extension of GP Visit Cards to children aged 6 & 7 will commence on 11 August. The extension of cards to those who earn the median household income or less will commence on 11 September, and will be completed in two phases, 11 September and 13 November.

The Government reached agreement with the IMO on these extensions last week. Implementing the expansions by agreement will make the process much smoother and allow the delivery of significant financial support to general practice to recruit the capacity necessary to meet additional demand.

In total, approximately 500,000 additional individuals are estimated to become eligible under this expansion, 78,000 children aged 6 and 7 and 430,000 individuals earning up to the median income.

When will the expansion commence?

- As this is the largest expansion in eligibility for GP care without charges ever undertaken, it is necessary to phase its introduction to avoid the creation of logjams in the application process.
- Applications for children aged 6 & 7 will open on 11 August 2023.
- Applications for the first group under the median-income expansion will commence on 11 September 2023.
- Applications for the full group under the median-income expansion will commence on 13 November 2023.

What will the new income thresholds be? Who will be in the first group?

- The weekly income threshold for a **single person living alone** will increase from €304 to €361 in the first phase, and then to €418 in the second.
- The weekly income threshold for a **single person living with family** will increase from €271 to €322 in the first phase and to €373 in the second.
- The weekly income threshold for a **couple with or without dependent(s)** will increase from €441 to €524 in the first phase and to €607 in the second. An allowed amount per dependent is added to the threshold for a **couple with dependent(s)**
- Similarly, the weekly income threshold for a **lone parent** will increase from €441 to €524 in the first phase and to €607 in the second.
- The income thresholds for **those over 66** will, following the changes, be the same level as for those under 66 – the thresholds for those aged under 66 are currently lower than the thresholds for those aged over 66.

- The eligibility criteria for over **those over 70** will not change

How can people apply?

- Applications for GP Visit Cards for children aged 6 and 7 will be processed by the Health Service Executive (HSE) PCRS in the same way as the current under 6 applications, via their online portal (<https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/gp-visit-cards/under-6s/>).
- The HSE will also open a dedicated portal for those applying for GP Visit Cards on the basis of income. This system will allow the processing of the large volume of applications expected and ensure applicants receive their Cards in as timely a fashion as possible.
- Applicants will make a declaration of their income and outgoings. The same expenses (housing costs, transportation, etc.) as are currently set against income in Medical or GP Visit Card applications will continue to apply. Where necessary, the HSE may seek additional information and copies of documents to support applications.
- There will be an information campaign ahead of the opening of applications to provide further information to the public.

Details of the agreement with the IMO

- The Agreement with the IMO includes a total financial package amounting to €130 million.
- The package is made up of:
 - Enhanced capitation rates for children aged 6 & 7, reflecting the move to a universal service for this age group;
 - Enhanced capitation rates for other children up to the age of 12 to bring them into line with the fees for children aged 6 & 7;
 - An increase of 10% in the capitation rates payable for patients aged from 13 to 69 years of age;
 - Capacity supports to enable the expansion and retention of staffing within general practice;
 - Additional support for the GP Out of Hours services; and
 - Improvements in payments relating to the provision of contraception services under the GMS.
- The agreement also includes provision to permit the expansion of the Chronic Disease Management Programme to include hypertension and women who suffered from gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia.

Measures taken to support GP capacity in the 2023 Agreement

- The 2023 Agreement with the IMO provides a package worth €30 million specifically to support capacity in general practice.
- It will permit GPs to retain staff and recruit additional staff to meet demand.
- There will also be additional support of €2 million to support the GP Out of Hours services.

GP Training Places

At the start of June, the Minister for Health announced that General Practitioner (GP) training places were to increase by one third by 2024, and large expansion in the Non-EU GP Training Programme.

- Number of GP Training Places to increase from an intake of 258 in 2022 to 350 in 2024 – a 35% increase
- The total number of trainees undertaking the four-year programme will increase from the current 932 to 1,300 in 2026 – a 45% increase
- Capacity on the Non-EU GP Training Scheme to increase from 50 to 250 by the end of 2024 – a 400% increase

Examples of household income thresholds

These examples are by way of illustration only. Everyone's circumstances are different – the application process will take applicants through their own income and expenses to assess eligibility.

Worked example 1 – single person, renting, no children

	Current	New
Base threshold	304	418
Weekly rent	300	300
Allowable commuting cost	50	50
Net eligibility threshold	654	768

Under the old threshold, this person could earn no more than €654 per week to be eligible. Under the new threshold, this person could earn up to €768 per week.

Worked example 2 – Couple, 2 children, with mortgage, single income

	Current	New
Base threshold	441	607
Weekly mortgage	300	300

Allowance for 2 dependents	114	114
Net eligibility threshold	755	1,021

Under the old threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of no more than €755 per week to be eligible. Under the new threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of up to €1,021

Worked example 3 – Couple, 3 children, renting, dual income

	Current	New
Base threshold	441	607
Weekly rent	375	375
Allowance for 2 dependents	114	114
Childcare	200	200
Net eligibility threshold	1,130	1,296

Under the old threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of no more than €1,055 per week to be eligible. Under the new threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of up to €1,221

Worked example 4 – Couple, no children, with mortgage, dual income

	Current	New
Base threshold	441	607
Weekly mortgage	300	300

Allowance for 0 dependents	0	0
Childcare	0	0
Net eligibility threshold	741	907

Under the old threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of no more than €741 per week to be eligible. Under the new threshold, this couple could have combined earnings of up to €907.

Physical Activity for Health Programme

Do you have a chronic condition? Are you over 18 years of age?

If so, we have the programme for you. Longford Sports Partnership through Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland will be offering health and wellness classes in your community over the coming months. These classes or programmes will be specifically for adults with chronic conditions. For example, we will have walking, Pilates and step class programmes among others and all with education about your condition and its management.

For more detail contact PAFH@longfordcoco.ie

For further information please click [here](#)

BENCHMARKING OF WORKING AGE PAYMENTS SUBMISSION

We provided [input on the issue of the potential application of a benchmarking approach to working age payments](#). Our priority for any reform of Ireland's social protection system is that it should address income adequacy. As such, all rates of social protection payments should be benchmarked against a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL).

SIF 2023 PREPARATORY WORKSHOPS REPORT

The [Social Inclusion Forum 2023 Preparatory Workshops Key Messages Report](#) outlines key issues and suggested solutions emerging from the in-person and online preparatory workshops organised by Community Work Ireland and EAPN Ireland. As highlighted by participants, many of the issues that impact on poverty for different groups and communities are interconnected and need a response across Government, something some saw as lacking.

PUBLICATION: 'IRELAND'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU'S ROLE IN TACKLING POVERTY'

We recently published [‘Ireland's Contribution to the EU's Role in Tackling Poverty’](#) to coincide with our conference of the same name, held on 29th May 2023 to mark 50 years of Ireland's membership of the EU. It reflects on EU developments in the fight against poverty and social exclusion since Ireland joined in 1973, assessing how Ireland has contributed and benefitted over that time, in order to draw lessons for the future. *This event was funded with assistance from the Communicating Europe Initiative and the Department of Foreign Affairs.*

VINCENTIAN MESL RESEARCH CENTRE - ANNUAL UPDATE 2023

The Vincentian MESL Research Centre recently published its 2023 [Minimum Essential Standard of Living \(MESL\) update](#). The MESL expenditure data serves as a benchmark to assess the adequacy of social welfare supports and the national minimum wage. The update captures the change in the cost of the minimum basket of goods and services required to enable a socially acceptable minimum standard of living and shows that there has been considerable increase in the cost of a MESL across all household types.

TASC - THINK-TANK FOR ACTION ON SOCIAL CHANGE

TASC recently launched its annual inequality report, [‘The State We Are In: Inequality in Ireland 2023’](#). This report examines inequality in Ireland, the ongoing cost of living problems, and the distributional impact of inflation. It also attempts to chart a way forward.

THE DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is asking the public to take action as services for disabled people are threatened by a crisis in the recruitment and retention of staff in Section 39 funded disability organisations. [Find out more and get involved here.](#)

IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

The Irish Refugee Council recently launched [‘Now I live on the road’](#), a report highlighting the impact of homelessness on people seeking international protection in Ireland and the unsafe conditions people seeking protection have endured since January.

Our Rural Future: Minister Humphreys launches 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

- ***€15 million Fund to revitalise and regenerate rural towns and villages***
- ***Focus on tackling vacancy and dereliction and bringing additional footfall into town centres***
- ***New option for local authorities to acquire land for town regeneration***
- ***Funding for outdoor projects such as plazas, parks, playgrounds, and green spaces***
- ***Grants for towns and villages that wish to develop farmer and artisan markets***
- ***New initiative to support projects on our offshore islands***

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, has today (Friday, 21st July) launched the **2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme** – a €15 million Fund designed to revitalise and regenerate our rural towns and villages.

The Fund will support dozens of projects nationwide with a focus on tackling vacancy and dereliction and bringing additional footfall into the centre of our towns.

Grants will be made available to support the development of outdoor projects such as plazas, parks, playgrounds and green spaces.

Under the initiative, funding will be provided to local authorities to acquire land for regeneration purposes.

Farmer and artisan markets will be supported under the scheme and there will also be funding ring-fenced for projects on our offshore island communities.

Launching the 2023 Scheme, Minister Humphreys said:

“I’m really pleased today to launch the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme which will see €15 million invested to develop dozens of projects right across the country.

“To date, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme has had a hugely positive impact in rural communities in every single county.

“It has supported the regeneration and repopulation of our towns and villages – making them better places to live, work, invest and raise a family.

“This year, there will be a particular focus on tackling issues such as vacancy and dereliction and supporting projects that will bring additional footfall into our town centres.

“I am also keen to support outdoor projects such as new plazas, parks, playgrounds and green spaces.

“And there will be funding available for towns and villages that wish to develop their own farmer or artisan markets which are extremely popular amenities for families and visitors alike.

“I am also pleased to announce that funding will be ring-fenced to support projects in our island communities.”

Priority will be afforded to projects that align with the objectives of *Our Rural Future*, *Town Centre First* and *Our Living Islands* with a focus on:

- Investment in infrastructure to support town and village centre markets.
- Bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use as a multi-purpose community space, or to address remote working needs.
- Investing in the development of parks, green spaces and recreational amenities in town centres.
- A new option to allow local authorities to acquire plots of land to enable development of town regeneration, such as town parks, plazas etc; and
- Refurbishment of existing community centres.

The Minister continued:

“Our Rural Future’, the Government’s ambitious policy for rural development, is very much focussed on supporting the regeneration of our rural towns and villages.

“Additionally, the Town Centre First Policy is a cross-government policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres.

“This year’s Town and Village Renewal Scheme has been closely aligned with these two policies – and it will directly support our towns to be more attractive and economically and socially vibrant.

“I am strongly encouraging local authorities to work closely with communities to put forward projects that are ambitious and will make a positive difference.”

Since the launch of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, over €154 million has been allocated to more than 1,700 projects. The Scheme has made an important contribution to supporting vibrant and sustainable communities in towns and villages throughout Ireland.

The scheme is administered through the local authorities, who are required to work closely with local communities and local businesses to develop and implement proposals.

The Scheme typically funds rural towns and villages with a population of up to 10,000 people. Larger rural towns with a population of up to 15,000 people may be eligible where the application is particularly strong and the project will have a significant impact on the town in question.

The Minister concluded:

“There are still some small towns and villages that have not yet benefited from the Scheme, so I would encourage all of these towns and villages, in particular, to consider applying for funding under the 2023 Scheme.

“This funding represents a real opportunity for communities to access investment in their own towns and villages, and continues to support the delivery of the Government’s ambition for rural Ireland as set out in ‘Our Rural Future’.

“I look forward to receiving high quality proposals from communities across rural Ireland in the coming months.”

Details of the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme can be found [here](#)

ENDS

Contact:

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Photo caption:

Our Rural Future: Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, has launched the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme - a €15 million Fund designed to revitalise and regenerate our rural towns and villages.

Notes to editors:

Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)

The Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) provides funding for projects that make our towns and villages more attractive and sustainable.

The scheme is administered through the Local Authorities, who are required to work closely with local communities and local businesses to develop and implement proposals that can make a lasting impact in revitalising rural towns and villages across the country. Applications for funding are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Local Authorities.

Applications

The closing date for the submission of applications under the TVRS is **10th November 2023**.

Each Local Authority is invited to submit applications of varying scale under the 2023 Scheme as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----------------------------|
| i. | 4 applications | funding €20,000 to €250,000 |
| ii. | 1 application | funding €20,000 to €500,000 |

Where a county has an inhabited offshore island, one additional application for up to €250,000 may be submitted.

Types of activities that may be supported under the 2023 Town and Village Renewal Scheme include:

- Regeneration projects that assist in revitalising our rural towns and villages, in line with the *Town Centre First* Policy, through planned and sustainable regeneration and development projects that will drive greater economic activity and footfall, address vacancy and dereliction and ensure the re-use of heritage and other existing buildings
- There is a new option introduced under the 2023 Scheme for the acquisition of land in town centres which supports local authorities for the development of town regeneration / community focused projects
- Renovation or refurbishment to existing community centres
- Projects to support vibrant and sustainable island communities on Ireland's inhabited offshore islands.
- Projects to support the establishment of town or village centre markets
- Projects to develop town / village centre plazas, public outdoor dining spaces, parks, green spaces (including allotments and community gardens) and recreational spaces/amenities in town centres to make them vibrant hubs for community enjoyment, and to increase footfall for local businesses.
- Projects to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfronts and street facades (including murals) in towns and villages.
- Projects that bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use as multi-purpose spaces.
- Projects that bring vacant properties in town centres back into use as Remote Working Hubs, where there is a demonstrable local need.
- Enhancement of heritage assets (e.g. local museums/tourism attractions focused on historical aspects of the area, heritage sites/buildings, etc.) located in towns and villages, including energy efficiency measures.

Full details of the scheme are available [here](#)

Our Rural Future

Our Rural Future is the whole-of-government policy for rural Ireland for the period 2021-2025. It offers a blueprint for a thriving and inclusive rural Ireland and adopts a more strategic, ambitious and holistic approach to investing in and maximising opportunities for rural areas.

Town Centre First

Town Centre First contains 33 unique actions which will give our towns the tools and resources they need to become more viable and attractive places in which to live, work, visit and run a business. Town Regeneration Officers in all relevant Local Authority areas are being funded by DRCD to drive forward Town Centre First on a local level.

