

# Irish Government support for those affected by COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

By Michael Farrell, PKF-FPM Director

## Overview

Minister Heather Humphreys announced on the 10 March 2020 a range of measures that are aimed at supporting Irish businesses and employees that are impacted by Covid-19 summarised below:

- A €200m working capital scheme for eligible businesses impacted by COVID-19. Loans of up to €1.5m at reduced interest rates, with up to the first €500,000 unsecured. Applications can be made through the Strategic Banking Corporation Ireland website [SBCI website](#).
- Enterprise Ireland have launched a new €200m Package for Enterprise Supports including a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme for vulnerable but viable firms that need to restructure or transform their business. Further details will be available from your Development Advisor and/or their website <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/About-Us/Services/Covid-19/Supports/>
- For sole trader's or micro-enterprises with up to nine employees, Microfinance Ireland have increased their loans from €25,000 to €50,000 as an immediate measure to specifically dealing with these exceptional circumstances. Applications can be made through the [MFI website](#) or through your [local LEO](#).
- The Credit Guarantee Scheme will be available to COVID-19 impacted firms through the Pillar Banks. Loans of up to €1m will be available at terms of up to 7 years.

In addition, the following additional supports are available for firms experiencing trading difficulties and short-term shocks:

- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation will provide a joint First Responder support service through the Intreo Offices (Public employment service) and development agencies, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland in each region to provide tailored supports for impacted firms, with objective of avoiding mass lay-offs and buying time for firms to work through the short-term disruptions.
- Firms that need to reduce hours or days worked can avail of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection Short Term Work Support by contacting their local Intreo Office, see [gov.ie/en/service/c20e1b-short-time-work-support](http://gov.ie/en/service/c20e1b-short-time-work-support).
- The full range of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Local Enterprise Office and Údarás na Gaeltachta grant

supports will be available to firms to help with strategies to innovate, diversify markets and supply chains and to improve competitiveness.

**The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection are also introducing measures to provide income support to people affected by COVID-19 (Coronavirus) with the following three major changes being announced:**

- Current 6-day waiting period for Illness Benefit will not apply to anyone who has COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or is in medically-required self-isolation
- Personal rate of Illness Benefit will increase from €203 per week to €305 per week for a maximum of 2 weeks medically-required self-isolation or for the full duration of absence from work following a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
- Normal social insurance requirements for [Illness Benefit](#) will be changed or the means test for [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#) will be removed

Finally the Irish Government has now urged all employers to support national public health objectives by continuing, as a minimum, to pay employees who cannot attend work due to Covid-19 illness or self-isolation the difference between the enhanced Illness Benefit rate and their normal wages. This may be achieved through the employer considering a range of flexible working arrangements with their employees such as:

- compassionate leave
- allowing the employee to work remotely
- allowing the staff member to 'work-up' any time taken at a future date
- allowing the employee to avail of annual leave entitlements
- rearranging parental leave

For employees who do not receive enhanced illness benefit payment beyond the statutory levels and who still face financial distress, they can apply for additional emergency income support, in the form of [Supplementary Welfare Allowance](#) (based on a means test).

If you would like to discuss any of these measures please contact [m.farrell@pkffpm.com](mailto:m.farrell@pkffpm.com)