

Pandemic Special Recognition Payment – HSE & Section 38

Who is eligible?

Employees who, between 1st of March 2020 and 30th of June 2021, worked in an environment which warranted their inclusion in Sequence Group 1 and 2¹ for the Vaccination programme (see attachment). This only applies to those directly employed by the HSE or Section 38 Agencies and those eligible in Vaccination and Testing Centres. (For other healthcare workers covered by the Government Decision (Appendix 1), please see FAQ ‘*I am a non HSE / Section 38 employee*’)

It should be noted that only those who were properly included within the sequence for the Vaccination Programme above, are eligible, and it does not apply to those who may have received a vaccination out of the intended sequence, who would not have fulfilled the criteria.

Subject to eligibility mentioned above, general examples of healthcare workers that will benefit from this measure include:

- Health Care Assistants
- Support Staff employed by HSE/Section 38 employers such as Cleaners / Maintenance / Porters/Catering/Clinical Waste/CSSD
- Ambulance (Paramedics) staff
- Administration staff that meet the criteria, e.g. ED Reception, OPD staff, etc.
- Consultants
- Nurses/Midwives
- Medical Laboratory staff
- Health and Social Care Professionals
- NCHDs
- Swabbers
- Vaccinators
- Health Care Support Assistants (also known as home help / home care / home support)

This list is not exhaustive.

¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/covid-19-vaccine-materials/sequencing-of-covid-19-vaccination-of-frontline-healthcare-workers.pdf>

How much is the Recognition Payment worth?

The Recognition Payment full value is worth €1,000 however the value to each eligible employee is based on your contracted hours between 1st of March 2020 and 30th of June 2021 and will be pro-rated on the following basis:

1. Employees whose contracted hours are equal to or greater than 60% WTE for their grade shall receive €1,000;
2. Employees whose contracted hours are less than 60% WTE for their grade shall receive €600.

What is the minimum period of work required by eligible employees?

Employees who worked less than 4 weeks in total during the period, are not in scope.

How is an employee who was out on Long Covid treated in the context of minimum period?

Eligible employees (including those eligible employees who may be on sick leave with COVID-19 within the eligibility period) who worked within the period whose contracted hours meet the 4 week threshold should be given the payment.

If an eligible employee worked for a number of employers during the period, are they entitled to more than one Recognition Payment?

No. Employees are only entitled to one Recognition Payment.

Do the employee / trainees have to make an application?

1. Eligible Employees working throughout the period in scope:

No application is required in this instance. Service managers, at site location level, must identify and verify the staff within scope to their own payroll departments, via the normal channels, as a net payment, utilising the short-term payments process, normally used. The grade code to be used 2592. Upon acceptance of the payment, the employee confirms their agreement to the full terms and conditions that apply.

2. Eligible Employees who commenced work during the period or moved jobs during the period in scope; Trainees:

Employees who have changed employer during the period, must complete the declaration form. Trainees (eg: supernumerary students) must complete the declaration form and submit to local service manager for sign off, by the 30th June 2022. The details of any payment due will then be submitted to payroll, along with the necessary particulars e.g. bank details etc.

Is the Recognition Payment Taxable or subject to other statutory deductions?

The Recognition Payment is paid tax free and is not subject to other deductions.

Is the Recognition Payment Pensionable?

The Recognition Payment is non-pensionable.

Is the Recognition Payment payable to staff Working-From-Home?

The Recognition Payment only applies where an employee was working in the eligible environment during the period 1st of March 2020 to 30th of June 2021. This environment does not include the employees' home.

Is the Recognition Payment payable to students or Interns?

Yes. Students (e.g. Supernumerary students) and Interns staff are entitled to recognition for periods they worked/trained in a Covid-19 exposed environment.

Is the Recognition Payment payable to Retirees, new starters, leavers and redeployed staff?

Yes. Retirees, new starts, leavers and redeployed staff are entitled to recognition for periods they worked, subject to the minimum threshold. Any staff member who has left HSE or Section 38 employment, but is within scope, will be required to make contact with the HSE/Section 38 area to provide the necessary details, including the completion of any forms required to change personal details such as bank accounts etc., required to action payment. They must also sign the declaration. This must be submitted to the local service manager by the 30th June 2022. The details of any payment will then be submitted to payroll, along with the necessary particulars e.g. bank details etc.

Employer responsibility to pay

Current employers are responsible for payment of the award to staff who have moved from one health employer to another. Managers must confirm with the previous employer that the employee is eligible for payment, and has not had the provision already applied.

For NCHDs who have moved on rotation the application, approval and payment rests with the current employer.

Is the Recognition Payment payable upon a Death-in-Service?

The Recognition Payment is payable to the Estate of an employee who worked in a Covid-19 exposed environment during the period 1st of March 2020 to 30th of June 2021 to the full value of €1,000.

Appeals and Resolution

Disputes involving interpretation of this Circular or disputes affecting groups of workers will be referred to an agreed joint Management/Union resolution procedure. All appeals must be submitted by the 31st August 2022. No appeals will be considered, if submitted after this date. The outcome of the appeal process, is full and final.

What were the additional risks that were set out in the vaccination sequence groups 1 & 2 for eligible Health Care Workers?

- Direct physical contact with patients/clients, deceased persons, body parts, blood, body substances, infectious material or surfaces or equipment that might contain these (e.g. soiled linen, surgical equipment, syringes)
- Contact that would allow the acquisition or transmission of diseases that are spread by respiratory means, such as:
 - Workers with frequent/prolonged face to face contact with patients or clients (e.g. interviewing or counselling individual clients or small groups; performing reception duties in an emergency/outpatient department, attending to patients/clients in their own homes);
- Where the normal work location is a clinical area such as a ward, outpatient clinic (e.g. ward clerks, patient transport officers);
- Where the normal work location means workers are frequently required to attend clinical settings (e.g. persons employed in food services who deliver meals to patients on a hospital ward, maintenance workers who make repairs on a hospital ward with patients present).

I am a non HSE / Section 38 employee but I am covered by the Government Decision, what arrangements will be put in place to process this payment to me?

The Department of Health have advised the HSE that it shall shortly publish information for those other employees covered by the Government Decision and the process available to their employers to implement this measure for their eligible staff. This shall cover **eligible staff** in:

Recognition Payment Frequently Asked Questions

- Private Sector Nursing Homes and Hospices (e.g. Private, Voluntary, Section 39 etc.)
- Eligible staff working on-site in Section 39 long-term residential care facilities for people with disabilities
- Agency roles working in the HSE;
- Health Care Support Assistants (also known as home help / home care / home support) contracted to the HSE.
- Redeployed members of Department of Defence to work in the HSE
- Paramedics employed by the Department of Local Government, Housing and Heritage.

The Department of Health have advised that it commits to provide information and updates to staff and employer representative groups as this measure progresses.

Will this FAQ be updated?

Yes, based on the feedback received after publication, this will be updated to provide additional clarifications as necessary.

Appendix 1: Government Decision

The Government decision directed the Department of Health to introduce a measure to:

‘Provide a recognition payment of €1,000 (tax free). A pro-rata payment will apply for part time staff. Those public servants eligible for the payment will be:

(a) public service health and ambulance workers;

(b) those seconded or assigned to the HSE, e.g. Defence Forces staff seconded/assigned to HSE testing centres; and

(c) supernumerary students who were required to perform training in clinical sites;

This measure will be ring fenced to staff working ordinarily onsite in COVID-19 exposed healthcare environments within the period between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2021. Eligibility will be based on the criteria used to identify those included in relevant vaccination sequence groups, inter alia this should cover frontline staff who were at increased risk in the course of performing their duties in a clinical setting – for the avoidance of doubt, where a person was working in such a setting, they are in scope

and

the Department of Health will also introduce a measure for making a similar payment to staff in private sector nursing homes and hospices that were affected by COVID-19. This measure will address the specific challenges associated with making payment to these organisations including governance and scope’.