



13 September 2022

Mr Sam Keenan
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Ref: S0990 PAC33

Dear Mr Keenan,

I refer to your letter of 31 August 2022 requesting an update on the Department's commitment to commence a review of claims for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

The Committee had recommended that the Department provide it with a timeline for completion of the control review by the end of Quarter 1 2022.

The Pandemic Unemployment Payment involves 1.82 million applications in respect of just under 942,000 individuals. This resulted in 1.35 million awarded claims in respect of just under 880,000 individuals. Of these, just under 530,000 individuals only had one PUP claim, while just over 350,000 closed their claim at some point before subsequently returning to PUP. There are 29.6 million payments to be examined. Of these, approximately 80% relate to employees while 20% relate to self-employed persons.

Given the volume of both claims and individual weeks to be examined, a manual review of claims is neither possible nor an efficient use of resources. An automated process which highlights potential instances of overlaps between employment and PUP payments is the preferred approach. Other aspects of the review will involve examining instances where no attributed PRSI contributions have been recorded against claimant records, potentially indicating a lack of employment prior to claiming PUP.

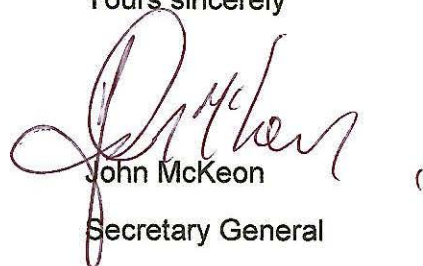
The Department had originally envisaged initiating the development of this review in Quarter 2 2022. This was on the basis that the PUP scheme was to be cease by end Quarter 1. However, the re-opening of the scheme in December 2021 consequent on the public health restrictions introduced at the time resulted in changes to the closing date of the scheme with work to enable this continuing into April and May.

In addition, management resources, including on the Department's IT side, were assigned to supporting the response to the Ukrainian crisis. This included supporting our colleagues in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the development of the Accommodation Recognition Payment scheme.

Work on scoping out an approach to identifying overlaps between employment and payment of PUP has been undertaken over the last six months. Sample reports have been generated with sample testing underway. The results of this testing are being evaluated. Once the approach has been validated, the intention is to proceed to full roll-out. A realistic timeline is that the validation of the proposed approach will be completed by Quarter 4 2022, with development work completed in Quarter 1 2023 and full roll-out in late Quarter 1 / early Quarter 2 2023.

I hope that this is of assistance to the Committee. If there are any questions, I am happy to respond.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John McKeon', is written over the printed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'M'.

John McKeon
Secretary General