

## Back to Work Enterprise (BWEA)

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BWEA) scheme encourages people getting certain social welfare payments to become self-employed. People taking part in the [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme \(pdf\)](#) can keep a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to 2 years.

From 1 May 2009, the qualifying period required for BTWEA is reduced from 2 years to 12 months provided you have an underlying entitlement to Jobseekers Allowance.

A new Back to Work Allowance Scheme called the Short-term Enterprise Allowance starts from 1 May 2009 - see more about the Short-term Enterprise Allowance in 'Rules' below.

### Rules

#### Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

You can avail of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance if you are:

- Setting up as self-employed in a business that has been approved in advance in writing by a Job Facilitator or Partnership Company

And

- Getting a Jobseeker's Allowance for 12 months

Or

- Unemployed for 2 years and getting Jobseeker's Benefit. However, if you have an underlying entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance and are unemployed for one year you can qualify for the allowance. If you don't have an underlying entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance, you must have a combination of qualifying social welfare payments for 2 years. Signing on for [unemployment credits](#) following your Jobseeker's Benefit will not count towards the qualifying period.

Or

- Getting [One-Parent Family Payment](#), [Disability Allowance](#), [Blind Pension](#), [Farm Assist](#), Incapacity Supplement, [Pre-Retirement Allowance](#), [Invalidity Pension](#), [Carer's Allowance](#), [Widow's/Widower's \(Non Contributory\) Pension](#), Deserted Wife's Benefit/Allowance or Prisoner's Wife's Allowance for at least 12 months

Or

- Getting [Illness Benefit](#) for 3 or more years

Or

- Getting Farm Assist for 12 months, providing that the self-employment is now in relation to the holding and not the continuation of an existing operation.

You may also be considered for the BWEA if you are:

- A [qualified adult](#) of a person eligible to claim the BWEA. This involves the person who is eligible for the BWEA transferring his or her entitlements to their spouse or partner. (In other words, the spouse or partner becomes self-employed and the original claimant becomes the qualified adult on the BWEA). If the original claimant is entitled to credits, he or she can continue to claim them.
- A person released from prison who satisfies the eligibility criteria for the scheme

Periods of time spent in FÁS Training, [Community Employment](#), the [Community Services Programme](#), [Job Initiative](#), CERT, [Teagasc](#), FIT and [Back to Education Schemes](#) are accepted as periods of unemployment.

Time spent on Supplementary Welfare Allowance or in Direct Provision can count towards the qualifying period for BWEA provided you are entitled to a qualifying payment before starting on the scheme.

If you have previously participated in the BTWEA scheme and exhausted your entitlement, you can participate a second time after a period of at least 5 years has elapsed.

More information on the [qualifying periods for Back to Work Enterprise Allowance](#) is available.

### **Short-term Enterprise Allowance**

The Short-term Enterprise Allowance is a new Back to Work Scheme introduced. There is no qualifying period. You can get immediate access to the allowance but you must meet the qualifying conditions.

To qualify you must have:

- An entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit

And

- Either 104 contributions paid in the past 2 years or qualify for statutory redundancy.

The Short-term Enterprise Allowance will be paid to you for a maximum of 1 year. It will end when your entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit ends (that is, at either 9 months or 12 months).

## Rates

### Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

**From 1 May 2009**, new participants will keep the following portions of their social welfare payment, including increases for a qualified adult and qualified children, for a maximum of 2 years:

- 100% for the 1st year
- 75% for the 2nd year.

### Short-term Enterprise Allowance

If you qualify for the Short-term Enterprise Allowance, you will keep 100% of your weekly social welfare payment, including increases for a qualified adult and qualified children. It will be paid to you for a maximum of 1 year. It will end when your entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit ends (that is, at either 9 months or 12 months).

### Secondary benefits

You will also keep any *secondary benefits* (apart from Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement) for as long as you are getting the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or Short-term Enterprise Allowance provided your *household income* is less than €317.43 gross per week. *Household income* includes your spouse or partner's income but allows for PRSI and reasonable travel expenses. Income from the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or the Short-term Enterprise Allowance is **not** taken into account for the purpose of the €317.43 weekly income limit but your income from work is taken into account. You should check with the [Community Welfare Officer](#) in your [local Health Centre](#) to see how your [Rent Supplement](#) or [Mortgage Interest Supplement](#) may be affected by your participation in the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or Short-term Enterprise Allowance.

*Secondary benefits* include:

- [Fuel Allowance](#)
- [Medical Card](#) (the €317.43 weekly income limit does not apply here)
- [Diet Supplement](#)
- [Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance](#)
- Differential Rents (from your [local authority](#))

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or Short-term Enterprise Allowance will be paid directly into your bank or building society account on a weekly basis. The allowance **cannot be paid** into a mortgage account.

You must contact the Department of Social and Family Affairs immediately if your self-employment ends or you take up employment.

### How to apply

To apply for either the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or the Short-term Enterprise Allowance, complete application [form BTW 2](#).

You should return form BTW 2 to the Local Development Company for referral to the Enterprise Officer. If you live in a non-Partnership Area, you should return form BTW 2 to your [Social Welfare Local Office](#) for referral to the Department of Social and Family Affairs' Jobs Facilitator.

The Enterprise Officer or Jobs Facilitator will look at your business proposal and may discuss certain aspects of it with you. You must **not** take up self-employment until you have received written approval from the Partnership Company or the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

If you are accepted on to the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or Short-term Enterprise Allowance, you must [register as self-employed with the Revenue Commissioners](#). You can find further information on self-employment from your [local tax office](#)