

# Rural Social Scheme Operational Procedures Manual

Pobal Rural Social Scheme  
Help Desk  
01-5117241

For assistance with all your Rural Social Scheme  
queries



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí  
Department of Social Protection  
*Helping you build a better life*

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**Note:** *All Implementing Body Managers, RSS Co-ordinators, RSS Supervisors and Administrators should keep on file a copy of each circular issued by the Department of Social Protection and Pobal. As new circulars are issued they should be added to the folder.*

**Disclaimer:** This operational procedures manual is a guideline document and while every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this manual is correct, Pobal accepts no responsibility for error or omissions. If you have any doubt with regard to any issue in the operational procedures manual you should contact the Pobal Helpdesk for clarification.

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## Section 1-Introduction to The Rural Social Scheme

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## **Section 1 - Introduction to the Rural Social Scheme**

The provision of a Rural Social Scheme was initiated by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, Mr Éamon Ó Cuív, T.D., and announced in the Budget of December 2003. The Rural Social Scheme was launched by Minister Ó Cuív on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

The responsibility for the operation of the Rural Social Scheme rests with the Department of Social Protection (DSP). Up until September 2010, responsibility for the operation of Rural Social Scheme rested with The Department of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. Pobal carries out, on behalf of the DSP a payroll function in respect of the scheme and operates a help desk facility where Rural Social Scheme Implementing Bodies (IBs) can contact for assistance with Rural Social Scheme queries. It also has the responsibility to develop and implement Performance Indicators for the scheme. The Rural Social Scheme is managed at a local level, on the Department's behalf, by the Implementing Bodies.

### **1.1 Aim of the Scheme**

The aim of Rural Social Scheme is to provide:

- Certain services of benefit to rural communities by harnessing the skills and talents available among low-income farmers and fisherpersons,
- Income support to low income farmers and fisherpersons who are in receipt of specified, social welfare payments

### **1.2 Terms of the Rural Social Scheme**

Participants will work 19.5 hours per week and the scheme is administered in a farmer/fisherperson-friendly manner. Participants can work their hours in a flexible way, e.g. week on- week off, but this flexibility will at all times be subject to the requirements of the project they are working on. *Participation on the Rural Social Scheme is not intended to be on a permanent basis.* The operation of the Rural Social Scheme is reviewed annually on the 1st of April (new annual renewal date for the contracts effective from 2009). If a participant's application is successful, they will be offered a place on the Rural Social Scheme for an initial period up to the following 31<sup>st</sup> March. Following a participant's initial contract, they will need to complete a renewal form and if they still remain eligible and fulfil all underlying criteria of the scheme and sufficient places are still available on the scheme, they may then be considered for participation for a further term or for inclusion on any waiting list that may be in operation.

### **1.3 Types of work undertaken**

The work to be undertaken by participants on the scheme will fall into the following broad categories:

- Projects relating to maintenance and enhancement of way-marked ways, agreed walks, bog roads etc.;
- Energy conservation work for elderly and less well-off;
- Village and countryside enhancement projects;
- Social care and care of the elderly, community after-school support groups and community pre-schooling support groups;

- Environmental maintenance work – maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities;
- Projects relating to not-for-profit cultural and heritage centres;
- Community Administration/Clerical duties:
- Any other appropriate community-based projects that may be identified during the course of the scheme.

# Rural Social Scheme Operational Procedures Manual

## Section 2- Rural Social Scheme Eligibility & Payments

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## **Section 2 – Rural Social Scheme Eligibility & payments**

### **2.1 Applicant Eligibility Criteria for the Scheme**

#### **2.1.1 Eligibility Criteria for Farmers**

In order for an applicant to be deemed eligible to participate on Rural Social Scheme, they must provide proof that they are actively farming by providing a copy of:

Their application for the EU Single Payment Scheme for the current year, which includes a valid herd number together with a copy of the associated receipt.

**OR For online forms taken from The Department of Agriculture website, the following will be accepted:-**

- A copy of the review and submit page and a copy of the confirmation page for the year prior to participant applying for Rural Social Scheme *e.g. if an applicant joins the scheme in 2011, then only confirmation for the Single Farm Payment Application for 2010 will be acceptable* **AND**
- A copy of the application summary details as above.

**AND** be in receipt of one of the following payments from the Department of Social Protection

- Farm Assist.
- Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Jobseeker's Benefit, **if previously on a FÁS Community Employment Scheme or the Rural Social Scheme in the previous 12 months.**
- Disability Allowance.
- One-Parent Family Payment.
- Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory).
- Note: **Each participant must occupy and farm in their own right a minimum of 1 Hectare of land within the State, which is used solely for the purposes of carrying out an agricultural activity, and they must be permanently resident within 70 miles, by road, of the holding i.e. within daily commuting distance. The land farmed should be listed on the Single Payment Scheme application for the current year. Therefore a participant who farms less than 1 Hectare or resides more than 70 miles from the holding is not eligible on the Rural Social Scheme.** Only one Rural Social Scheme place can be allocated per EU Single Payment Scheme application.
- **All Rural Social Scheme participants must be in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment in their own right (in the case of a spousal swap situation the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant must be in receipt of the qualifying social welfare payment).**
- If an applicant wishes to join the scheme but does not have the requested documentation and is actively farming i.e. has animals or growing crops for feed, they can submit an EU

Single Payment Form to the *Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Single Payment Unit, Old Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois*, and forward a copy of their application along with a copy of the associated receipt to their local Implementing Body.

### **2.1.2 Rules surrounding Children/Siblings of Qualifying Farmers**

This only applies to the children/siblings of a qualifying farmer who certify that they

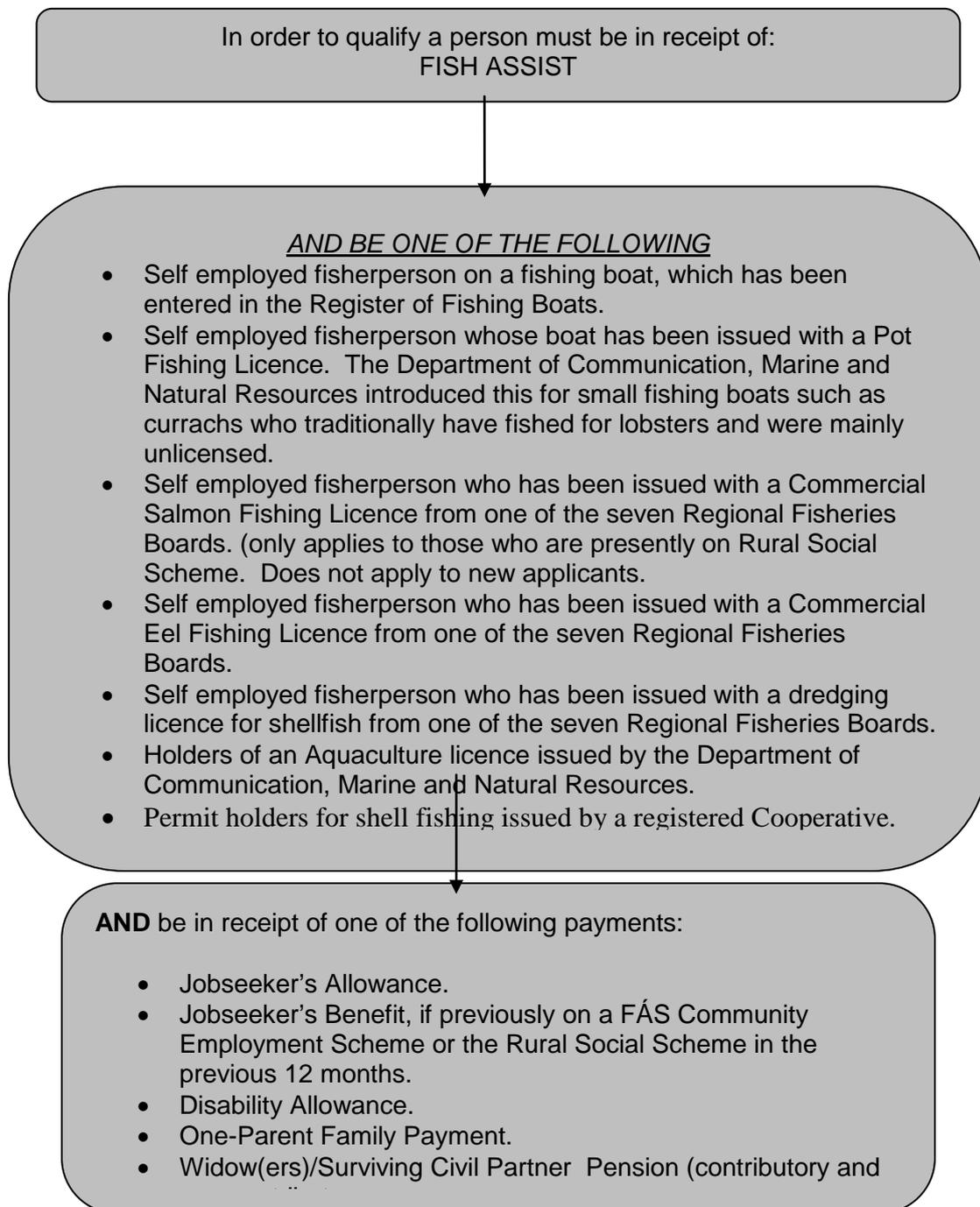
- (i) are resident and or working on the farm **AND**
- (ii) are in receipt of one of the qualifying social welfare payments.

Furthermore, it should be noted that:

- The qualifying farmer of the child/sibling **must** agree to give up their place on the scheme
- The qualifying farmer of the child/sibling must be made aware that by their child/sibling taking up a position on the scheme that they are giving up any entitlement to take a place on the Rural Social Scheme for the duration of the child/sibling's contract on the Rural Social Scheme.
- In addition, the qualifying farmer must give a formal written undertaking that he/she gives their permission to their respective child/sibling to use their Single Payment Scheme Application or a copy of the review and submit page and a copy of the confirmation page for the year prior to participant applying for Rural Social Scheme and *a copy of the application summary details as above*; for the duration of their contract on the Rural Social Scheme. An Rural Social Scheme 'Use of Herd Owner Application Form' needs to be completed.
- **Supervisors should ensure that they receive a copy of the qualifying farmer's application for the EU Single Payment Scheme for the current year** which includes a valid herd number together with a copy of the associated receipt (official proof of postage) or a copy of the review and submit page and a copy of the confirmation page for the year prior to participant applying for Rural Social Scheme and that a copy of the undertaking by the qualifying farmer is attached to the applicant's file.
- Supervisors should be satisfied that the applicant is a child/sibling of the qualifying farmer and that they are resident and/or working on the farm.

**Please note:** This rule only applies to children/siblings of a qualifying farmer.

### 2.1.3 Eligibility Criteria for Fisherpersons



The following people are also permitted to participate in the scheme:

- Dependant spouse/civil partner/cohabitant of a person qualified (who meets the existing underlying eligibility criteria, mentioned above) i.e. the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant of the person who qualifies can avail of a place on Rural Social Scheme instead of the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant.
- Qualified adult dependants of a State Pension (non-contributory) recipient, who themselves are under 66, (who meet the existing underlying eligibility criteria, mentioned above).

### **2.1.4 Rules surrounding those qualifying through Disability Allowance, Widow(ers) Pension (contributory and non contributory), One-Parent Family Payment**

When recruiting a participant in receipt of one of the following:

- Disability Allowance,
- Widow(ers)/Surviving Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory),
- One-Parent Family Payment,

who meets the existing underlying eligibility criteria of the Rural Social Scheme, it should be noted that the person will continue to receive their qualifying payment from the Department of Social Protection, along with a separate Rural Social Scheme top-up payment from the Rural Social Scheme Unit (DSP). Therefore the participants' overall payment will be equivalent to the Rural Social Scheme rate of pay.

**It should be noted that Disability Benefit is NOT a qualifying payment.**

#### **Important:**

- Rural Social Scheme Implementing Bodies should ensure that any participant commencing on the Rural Social Scheme under any of these eligibility categories, can continue to claim their Social Welfare payment and will receive a top-up only from Rural Social Scheme.
- Implementing Bodies should also advise applicants who are qualifying through Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory) or One-Parent Family Payment that the Rural Social Scheme payment will take preference over their social welfare payment. The Rural Social Scheme top-up payment will (in most situations) be less than the minimum payment of €38 per week required to qualify for a class 'A' PRSI contribution - applicants will only qualify for a class 'J' contribution rather than a class 'A' contribution while participating on the Rural Social Scheme. As the entitlements under each of these respective insurance contributions vary quite significantly, applicants should contact the Department of Social Protection before joining the Rural Social Scheme to ascertain what their entitlements will be. However applicants from these categories who receive more than €38 per week top-up from Rural Social Scheme will qualify for a class 'A' PRSI contribution. (See section 2.6 for more details).
- While participating on the Rural Social Scheme, **under no circumstances** should a participant be permitted to sign themselves off their Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory) or their One-Parent Family Payments. Should a participant who qualified through their Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner Pension (contributory and non contributory) or their One-Parent Family Payments sign off on his/her payment, then he/she will no longer be eligible to participate on Rural Social Scheme.

#### **Note:**

Applicants who qualify under any of these three eligibility categories are strongly advised to check whether their underlying social welfare entitlement will be affected by their participation on the Rural Social Scheme; in particular, where their qualifying payment is means tested, could the additional income push the participant over a qualifying income threshold. Applicants should also be strongly encouraged to check if there will be any impact on their secondary benefits i.e. medical card etc.

It should also be noted if a participant currently on the Rural Social Scheme becomes entitled to Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory) or a One-Parent Family Payment, they should claim their social welfare payment and

immediately inform their Supervisor/Implementing Body of their change in circumstances. The participant will be entitled to receive two payments each week – their social welfare payment and a top-up payment from the Rural Social Scheme. However, the combined value of these two payments will be equal to the maximum payable if the participant was still in receipt of one payment from the Rural Social Scheme.

**2.1.5 Rules surrounding those qualifying through Qualified Adult Dependants of a State Pension (non-contributory), who themselves are under 66, and meet the Eligibility Criteria for Farmers as outlined in 2.1.2 or have an Eligible Fishing Licence number**

A person who is under 66 years and a qualified adult dependant of a recipient of State Pension (non-contributory) - and who meets the existing underlying eligibility criteria of the Rural Social Scheme are eligible to participate on the scheme. Therefore, a person can apply to participate on the Rural Social Scheme on the basis that:-

- (1) they are under 66 years,
- (2) their spouse is in receipt of the State Pension (non-contributory) and
- (3) provided that his/her payments includes an increase for Qualified Adult Allowance (IQA) in respect of the Rural Social Scheme applicant.

**Note:**

Applicants who qualify under this eligibility category are strongly advised to check if their underlying social welfare entitlement will be affected by their participation on the Rural Social Scheme, due to the fact that their qualifying payment is a means tested payment, i.e. could the additional income push the participant over a qualifying income threshold? Applicants should also be strongly encouraged to check if their participation on the Rural Social Scheme will have any impact on their secondary benefits, such as medical card etc.

**2.1.6 Rules surrounding recruiting participants in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit**

When recruiting a participant in receipt of Jobseeker's Benefit (JB), you must ensure that the JB payment is as a direct result of PRSI Contributions from previous participation on a FÁS Community Employment Scheme or the Rural Social Scheme. The end date of the applicant's period on CE/Rural Social Scheme, must be less than 12 months prior to their new commencement date on Rural Social Scheme Section B on the application form which has to be completed by The Department of Social Protection will also cover this.

**2.2 Payment Rates for Participants**

**Please refer to Rural Social Scheme Rates Ready Reckoner on the next page**

RURAL SOCIAL SCHEME RATES 2011							
(MAXIMUM RATES)							
PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	2010	2011	Diff	PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	2010	2011	Diff
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT	216.00	208.00	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT	346.10	332.80	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND HALF CHILD	230.90	222.90	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND HALF CHILD	361.00	347.70	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND ONE CHILD	245.80	237.80	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND ONE CHILD	375.90	362.60	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 1.5 CHILD	260.70	252.70	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 1.5 CHILD	390.80	377.50	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 2 CHILD	275.60	267.60	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 2 CHILD	405.70	392.40	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 2.5 CHILD	290.50	282.50	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 2.5 CHILD	420.60	407.30	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 3 CHILD	305.40	297.40	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 3 CHILD	435.50	422.20	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 3.5 CHILD	320.30	312.30	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 3.5 CHILD	450.40	437.10	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 4 CHILD	335.20	327.20	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 4 CHILD	465.30	452.00	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 4.5 CHILD	350.10	342.10	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 4.5 CHILD	480.20	466.90	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 5 CHILD	365.00	357.00	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 5 CHILD	495.10	481.80	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 5.5 CHILD	379.90	371.90	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 5.5 CHILD	510.00	496.70	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 6 CHILD	394.80	386.80	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 6 CHILD	524.90	511.60	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 6.5 CHILD	409.70	401.70	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 6.5 CHILD	539.80	526.50	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 7 CHILD	424.60	416.60	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 7 CHILD	554.70	541.40	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 7.5 CHILD	439.50	431.50	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 7.5 CHILD	569.60	556.30	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 8 CHILD	454.40	446.40	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 8 CHILD	584.50	571.20	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 8.5 CHILD	469.30	461.30	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 8.5 CHILD	599.40	586.10	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 9 CHILD	484.20	476.20	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 9 CHILD	614.30	601.00	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 9.5 CHILD	499.10	491.10	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 9.5 CHILD	629.20	615.90	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 10 CHILD	514.00	506.00	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 10 CHILD	644.10	630.80	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 10.5 CHILD	528.90	520.90	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 10.5 CHILD	659.00	645.70	13.30
PARTICIPANT WITHOUT ADULT DEPENDANT AND 11 CHILD	543.80	535.80	8.00	PARTICIPANT WITH ADULT DEPENDANT AND 11 CHILD	673.90	660.60	13.30
	1 x CDI	€ 29.80			1 x CDI	€ 29.80	
	1/2 CDI	€ 14.90			1/2 CDI	€ 14.90	
	<b>2010</b> PR	€ 216.00			<b>2011</b> PR	€ 208.00	
	IQA	€ 130.10			IQA	€ 124.80	

The payment a participant receives on Rural Social Scheme can be calculated in one of the following ways. This depends on what his/her qualifying social welfare payment was prior to joining Rural Social Scheme.

Participants qualifying through Farm Assist/Jobseekers Allowance/Jobseekers Benefit

*Personal rate he/she was receiving on their social welfare payment*

+

*Applicable IQA & IQC entitlements*

+

*Exchequer top up of €20.00 (based on rate at 1/1/2011).*

Participants qualifying as qualified adult dependants of a State Pension recipient

=

*Difference between the IQA amount received on the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant State Pension (contributory or non-contributory) & full personal rate on Rural Social Scheme.*

Participants qualifying through Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory), One-Parent Family Payment

=

*Applicant will continue to receive his /her social welfare payment*

+

*Exchequer top up which will be the difference between what they are entitled to from Dept of Social Protection and what they are entitled to on Rural Social Scheme*

*Please refer to Rural Social Scheme Rates Ready Reckoner on the next page. Please note these rates are for guidance purposes. The Rural Social Scheme participant's rate of pay is the rate verified by Pobal.*

In order to calculate the total weekly payment entitlement of a Participant, a full breakdown of their Social Welfare payment is required, this breakdown should also include specifics regarding Means Assessment and Fuel Allowance, should they be applicable.

- For Participants qualifying through Farm Assist, Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit, their total weekly payment will be broken down between Social Welfare Saving and Exchequer Top-Up. The Social Welfare Saving is the monetary value of their Social Welfare payment immediately before joining Rural Social Scheme. The Exchequer Top-Up is the difference between their social welfare saving and their total weekly payment entitlement under Rural Social Scheme, see table above for applicable rates.
- In the case of those qualifying through Qualified adult dependants of a State Pension (non-contributory), who themselves are under 66, and meet the eligibility criteria for farmers as outlined in section 2.1.1 or have an eligible fishing licence number, their payment will be Exchequer top-up only.
- For participants qualifying through Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/surviving Civil Partner's Pension (contributory and non contributory), One-Parent Family Payment, they will continue receive their payment from the Department of Social Protection. As a result, their payment will be an Exchequer Top-Up only. You will require full details and breakdown of the Social Welfare Saving in order to calculate what the amount will be.

**Note:**

Participants qualifying as Qualified adult dependants of a State Pension (non-contributory), who are under 66, will only receive a top-up payment and this payment will be calculated on the basis of the difference between the weekly monetary value of the IQA and the current Rural Social Scheme Personal Rate only i.e. the weekly personal rate payable on Rural Social Scheme. It should be noted that that such participants will, for the purpose of Rural Social Scheme, always be treated as a person without dependants, as any dependant increases will be paid to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) client (in this case the recipient of the State Pension (non contributory)). Therefore, the recipient of the State Pension (non contributory) will continue to receive their qualifying payment from the DSP, including the payment of the IQA. Therefore, all Implementing Bodies should ensure that participants commencing on the Rural Social Scheme under this eligibility category are made aware that their spouse, i.e. recipient of the State Pension (non contributory), will continue to claim and receive the IQA in their Social Welfare payment.

### **2.3 Increase for Qualified Adult (IQA)**

Any participant whose spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is either:

- not in insurable employment,
- insurably employed or
- self employed

**and** whose gross weekly means are €310.00 or less is entitled to receive an IQA of €124.80 per week (rate correct as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011).

#### **2.3.1 Rules surrounding IQA**

##### **2.3.1.1 Non - employment**

If a spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is not in insurable employment, an IQA of €124.80 p.w. is payable provided the conditions listed in section 2.3.3 do not apply.

### 2.3.1.2 Insurable Employment

**An Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup> application form must be completed and submitted to Pobal prior to an award of IQA.**

If a participant's spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is in insurable employment and their gross weekly earnings are €310.00 or less, they are entitled to receive an IQA of €124.80 per week. If a spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is in insurable employment and his/her earnings fluctuate from week to week, an average of the earnings over the previous 4 – 6 weeks should be used to determine if their earnings are below the threshold of €310.00 p.w. and if the IQA of €124.80 p.w. is payable. In these situations the Implementing Body should request 4 most recent payslips in respect of their spouse/civil partner /cohabitant or a completed Certificate of Earnings Form. In situations where a spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is participating on a Community Employment (CE) Scheme or any other eligible course Form (TC 1) should be completed.

However, if a spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's gross weekly earnings exceed the weekly threshold over a prolonged period of time, e.g. during seasonal periods, the IQA payment should cease to be paid to the participant during that period. As soon as the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's gross weekly income decreases to within the €310.00 threshold on a regular basis, the IQA can again be paid to the Rural Social Scheme participant, subject to the submission of relevant supporting documentation.

- \*\*\*\*\**Interpreting payslips*\*\*\*\*\*
- Ensure participant has completed and signed an Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup> application.
- Date Stamp the Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup>
- Ask for 4 most recent payslips covering all income for participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant. *These must be for*

- Add up the GROSS pay (figure before deductions) on all payslips and divide by number of weeks payslips to give the average weekly gross pay.
- Cross reference this by taking the gross pay to date on the latest payslips, divide by the insurable weeks to give you an average weekly gross pay from the start of the year to date.
- If both figures are below €310.00 then an IQA may be payable to the participant subject to verification from Pobal

Submit Rural Social Scheme Application or Form TC1 for CE Schemes to Pobal. Please submit all completed Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup>/TC1 applications to Pobal for verification, even if income appears to be more than the IQA threshold.

### 2.3.1.3 Self Employment

If the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant is self-employed, an average of his/her earnings should be used as a basis for determining their average weekly earnings and potential entitlement to the full IQA. In these situations their most recent notice of assessment from the Revenue Commissioners should be requested. If there has been a significant decrease in the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's income since the last Notice Assessment issued by The Revenue Commissioners,

then a recent letter from the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's accountant confirming current earnings will also need to accompany the assessment issued from The Revenue Commissioners. The participant should be asked to submit a copy of the Notice of Assessment for the current year as soon as it is available to support the information in the accountant's letter. Any participant applying for an IQA in these circumstances should be asked to sign an undertaking confirming the following-:

- That to the best of his/her knowledge there is an entitlement to an IQA based on proof of earnings provided.
- If it is established on receipt of the Notice of Assessment for the current year that the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's earnings exceeded €310.00 per week, then the participant will repay any IQA that has been awarded.

Therefore, Rural Social Scheme Implementing Bodies should remind these participants to advise them of any changes in circumstances to avoid potential overpayments.

Problematic cases will be dealt with on a case by case basis and Implementing Bodies should contact the Pobal Helpdesk for clarification.

### **2.3.2 How to apply for an IQA**

Participants may apply for an IQA by completing an Rural Social Scheme 4 Form and submitting the relevant documentation to their Implementing Bodies i.e. by forwarding one of the following:

- 4 most recent payslips in respect of your **spouse/civil partner /cohabitant**, if they are in employment, (or Certificate of Earnings Form as per Circular 3 of 2007), or
- Most recent notice of assessment from the Revenue Commissioners, in the case of self employment, and/or **a recent letter from the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's accountant confirming current earnings**
- Form (TC 1), if your **spouse/civil partner /cohabitant** is participating on a Community Employment (CE) Scheme or any other eligible course.
- Documentary evidence confirming date of birth for Participants **spouse/civil partner /cohabitant**. This can be provided in the form of a Birth Certificate, Passport or letter from Child Benefit Section. The original must be seen by the Supervisor, photocopied, stamped (IB stamp) and held on file.

Following a review of the application by the Implementing Body, eligible applications should be submitted to Pobal for review. Pobal will only award IQA payments to eligible participants subject to receipt of a completed Rural Social Scheme 4 form and the relevant documentation. Failure on a participant to supply the requested documentation within 4 weeks of the Rural Social Scheme4/TC1 being submitted will result in the payment not been awarded until all information has been supplied. In all cases, the onus is on the Rural Social Scheme participant to produce the necessary evidence such as pay slips etc to the Implementing Body to determine if an IQA is payable. If documentation such as payslips is not available when the Rural Social Scheme4/TC1 is being completed, the application should still be submitted to Pobal without delay.

### **2.3.3 When is an IQA Not Payable**

An IQA is **not** payable in respect of a spouse/partner under the following situations:

- If the participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant's gross weekly earnings exceed €310.00
- If the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's gross weekly earnings exceed €310.00 where s/he is on any form of unpaid leave from their employment, e.g. Parental Leave, Term Time, Career Break

- If the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is in receipt of any form of payment from the Department of Social Protection, regardless of its monetary value. However, it should be noted that the following Social Welfare and Health Board payments are payable with the Increase in respect of a Qualified Adult:
  1. Disablement Benefit
  2. Occupational Injuries Death Benefit in respect of an Orphan.
  3. Guardian's Payment (Contributory)
  4. Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)
  5. Child Benefit
  6. Domiciliary Care Allowance.
  7. Supplementary Welfare Allowance
  8. Family Income Supplement

Therefore, if a participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant is in receipt of any of the above payments or if their spouse has gross earnings of less than €310 per week they should make an application for the Increase in respect of their spouse through their local Implementing Body.

**NOTE- THE Rural Social Scheme4/TC1 APPLICATION  
WILL COVER BOTH A CLAIM FOR IQA & IQC IF  
APPLICABLE**

#### **2.3.4 Participant's spouse/civil partner /cohabitant makes a claim to Department of Social Protection for a social welfare payment**

In this instance, the participant should advise the Implementing Body that his/her spouse/civil partner /cohabitant has made a claim for a social welfare payment in their own right. If the Department of Social Protection have made a determination on this claim, then proof of this should be provided to the Implementing Body, and Pobal must be advised immediately so that any applicable IQA/IQC currently paid on the participant's pay can be deducted.

If the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant has made a claim for a social welfare payment in their own right, but a determination on the claim has not yet been paid, the participant should notify the Implementing Body immediately of this. The participant is entitled to retain the IQA and any applicable IQC payment until the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant claim for social welfare has been determined. The participant will have to sign an undertaking to confirm that he/she is entitled to receive the IQA/IQC but that if the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is entitled to their own social welfare payment, that any overpaid IQA/IQC will be repaid by the participant

#### **2.4 Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC)**

**An Rural Social Scheme4/TC1 application form must be completed  
and submitted to Pobal prior to an award of IQC**

A participant may be entitled to an IQC of €29.80 for each qualified child where the participant has qualified for an IQA and their spouse/civil partner/cohabitant is not in receipt of an IQC for any other payment or where the spouse/partner's earnings do not exceed €310.00 gross per week. If they do not qualify for the IQA they may be entitled to a half rate IQC of €14.90, if the participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant has income between €310.01 and €400.00 gross or less per week.

If a participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant is in receipt of a social welfare payment in their own right, then half rate IQC should be awarded on Rural Social Scheme whilst the other half is awarded on the participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant's social welfare payment. However there may be some social welfare payments where the IQC entitlement is awarded to the participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant. These cases should be referred to Pobal who will advise further on the participant's IQC entitlement.

#### **2.4.1 Rules Surrounding IQC**

An IQC may also be payable in respect of a child between the ages of 18 and 22 who is attending full-time day course of education.

A qualified child must normally live with and be supported by the participant, must not be detained in a reformatory or an industrial school and must qualify under one of the following age conditions:

- Under 18
- If, on reaching the age of 18, the child is not in full-time education, payment of IQC must cease on the date they turn 18.
- If the child reaches 18 years of age in the academic year, the participant will continue to receive the IQC payment up until the last week of August, providing that they have just completed second level education or the Leaving Certificate Examination.
- Between the age of 18 and 22, IQC is payable while the child is attending a full-time day course of education, study, instruction or training at an institution of education. However, if the course includes paid work experience for a period in excess of 6 months, then an increase will **not** be paid in respect of the child (the exception to this is YOUTHREACH).
- If a child reaches age 22 during an academic year while attending a full-time day course of education, they continue to be regarded as a qualified child up to the end of that academic year, provided they continue in full-time education. If they reach the age of 22 after the end of the academic year, for example, during the summer holiday, then the IQC should be discontinued on the date they turn 22.

**Note:** Implementing Bodies must ensure that the child is attending a full-time day course. A "Certificate of participating in full-time education Form" is completed in respect of each child on reaching age 18 and at the commencement of each school year thereafter.

#### **Between the age of 18 and 22**

Each year the IQC payment will continue until the last week of September. Prior to this date, Implementing Bodies should carry out a review of all participants and obtain confirmation that the child/ren is/are in full-time education. Following this review the IQC payment should be discontinued where child/ren do not meet the conditions outlined above and any overpayment will need be repaid to Pobal. A review of all participants should be carried out periodically to ensure entitlement still exists and at anytime during the academic year, the child ceases full-time education the payment must be ceased. It is recommended that this review should take place at least every six months.

It is important that in September/October a valid Certificate of Participation in Full Time Education (CPFTE) is provided for the current academic year for dependent children aged between 18 and 22. If this is not provided, then any IQC payment in respect of that child will be removed from the participant's payment. If an IQC is removed, then a participant has four weeks to provide the CPFTE, so that the applicable IQC payment can reinstated.

If the information is not provided within 4 weeks, then participants will have to complete a new Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup> application form, and the IQC (if awarded) will be paid from the date of application.

### **2.4.2 Qualifying Conditions for IQC**

A participant must qualify under one of the following **income conditions**:

#### **In order to qualify for full rate IQC of €29.80:**

A participant must qualify for the Increase for Qualified Adult (IQA) and their husband's/wife's/civil partner/partner's earnings cannot exceed €310.00 gross per week.

#### **In order to qualify for half rate IQC of €14.90:**

- A participant may be entitled to a half rate IQC of €14.90, if their spouse/civil partner/cohabitant has income between €310.00 and €400.00 gross or less per week.
- If a participant's spouse/civil partner/cohabitant is in receipt of an IQC for any another payment (e.g. Social Welfare) half rate IQC will be paid on Rural Social Scheme and half rate IQC will be paid on the spouse/civil partner/cohabitant payment.

### **2.4.3 When is an IQC Not Payable**

An IQC payment is not payable in the following circumstances:

Where a spouse/civil partner/cohabitant gross weekly income is in excess of €400.

**Or**

Where a child is attending a course of training or instruction:

- Provided by FÁS and is getting an allowance,
  - Which arises from employment or forms part of an employment or work experience programme,
  - Which includes a period of paid work experience during an academic year, which is greater than the time spent receiving instruction or tuition at an institute of education,
- Or
- A period of work experience, which is part of a Teagasc approved course where the period spent on work experience during the academic year is greater than the time spent receiving instruction or tuition at an institute of education, or
  - Where the child is in receipt of a social welfare payment (except Disablement Pension) or Supplementary Welfare Allowance in their own right, or in receipt of Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowance (IDMA) from the Health Service Executive, or
  - Over age 18 and not in full-time education.

### **Participant's spouse/civil partner /cohabitant makes a claim to Department of Social Protection for a social welfare payment**

In this instance, the participant should advise the Implementing Body that his/her spouse/civil partner/cohabitant has made a claim for a social welfare payment in their own right. If the Department of Social Protection have made a determination on this claim, then proof of this should be provided to the Implementing Body, and Pobal must be advised immediately so that any applicable IQA/IQC currently being paid on the participant's pay can be deducted.

If the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant has made a claim for a social welfare payment in their own right, but a determination on the claim has not yet been paid, the participant should notify the Implementing Body immediately of this. The participant is entitled to retain the IQC and any applicable IQA payment until the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's claim for social welfare has been determined. The participant will have to sign an undertaking to confirm that he/she is entitled to receive the IQA/IQC but that if the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is entitled to their own social welfare payment, that any overpaid IQA/IQC will be repaid by the participant

#### 2.4.4 How to apply for an IQC

Participants may apply for an IQC by completing an Rural Social Scheme 4 Form and submitting the relevant documentation to their Implementing Bodies i.e. by forwarding one of the following:

- 4 most recent payslips in respect of their **spouse/civil partner/cohabitant**, if they are in employment, (or Certificate of Earnings Form as per Circular 3 of 2007), **or**
- Most recent notice of assessment from the Revenue Commissioners, in the case of self employment, If there has been a significant decrease in the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's income since the last Notice Assessment issued by The Revenue Commissioners, then a recent letter from the spouse/civil partner /cohabitant's accountant confirming current earnings will also need to accompany the assessment issued from The Revenue Commissioners. The participant should be asked to submit a copy of the Notice of Assessment for the current year as soon as it is available to support the information in the accountant's letter. Any participant applying for a IQC in these circumstances should be asked to sign an undertaking confirming the following:-
- Form (TC 1), if your **spouse/civil partner /cohabitant** is participating on a Community Employment (CE) Scheme or any other eligible course,  
**And**
- A Certificate of Participation in Full-Time Education Form– Rural Social Scheme 3 if the child is aged between 18 and 22 and in full time education.
- Documentary evidence confirming dates of birth for participant's children. This can be in the form of a Birth Certificate, Passport or letter from Child Benefit Section. The original must be seen by the Supervisor, photocopied, stamped (IB stamp) and held on file.

Following a review of the application by the Implementing Body, eligible applications should be submitted to Pobal for review. Pobal will only award IQC payments to eligible participants subject to receipt of a completed Rural Social Scheme 4 form and the relevant documentation. Failure by a participant to supply the requested documentation will result in the payment not being awarded until all information has been supplied. In all cases, the onus is on the Rural Social Scheme participant to produce the necessary evidence to the Implementing Body to determine if an IQC is payable.

Please refer to Circular Rural Social Scheme/5/2009 for further information regarding IQC entitlements.

**NOTE- THE Rural Social Scheme4/TC1 APPLICATION WILL COVER BOTH A CLAIM FOR IQC & IQA IF APPLICABLE**

## 2.5 Change in a Participant's Circumstances

Under the terms and conditions of both the Rural Social Scheme Participant Application Form and the Contract of Agreement between the Participant and the Implementing Body, all Participants are required to declare any change in their circumstances immediately, which may require a change in the calculation of their total weekly payment.

### Changes in circumstance which may affect the payment of an IQA:

- *Gross weekly income of spouse/civil partner /cohabitant of Rural Social Scheme participant increases to more than €310.00 per week—not entitled to IQA or full IQC*
- *Gross weekly income of spouse/civil partner /cohabitant of Rural Social Scheme participant increases to more than €400.00 per week—not entitled to IQA or IQC*
- *Gross weekly income of spouse/civil partner /cohabitant of Rural Social Scheme participant decreases to under €310.00 per week – may have an entitlement to IQA & IQC*
- *Gross weekly income of spouse/civil partner /cohabitant of Rural Social Scheme participant is between €310 and under €400-- Participant may be entitled to half rate IQC.*
- *Spouse/civil partner /cohabitant has applied for or has started to receive a Social Welfare Payment in his/her own right. (E.g. Carers Allowance/Benefit, Maternity Benefit/Allowance, Jobseekers Benefit/Allowance, Illness Benefit/Allowance—in these cases Supervisors should contact Helpdesk for advice once they have established the type of Social Welfare payment).*
- *Spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is no longer in receipt of a Social Welfare Payment in his/her own right.--participant may be entitled to an IQA and additional IQC.*

*This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other changes in a participant's circumstance which could affect their payment on Rural Social Scheme*

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### Changes in the payment of Increase for a Qualified Child(ren):

- *Increasing upon the birth of an additional child.*
- *Increasing from half rate to full rate where an Increase for Qualified Adult is payable.*
- *Decreasing from full rate to half rate if an Increase for Qualified Adult is no longer payable.*
- *The payment should be discontinued if a spouse/civil partner /cohabitant is in employment yielding a weekly wage in excess of €400.00 per week.*
- *The payment should be discontinued when a child dependant turns 18 years of age and is no longer in full-time education.*
- *Where a child dependant in full-time daytime education turns 22 years of age, the allowance should be discontinued on that day, or if this date falls during the college year, the allowance remains payable until the end of the current college year.*
- *Where a child between the age of 18 and 22 is attending a course which includes paid work experience for a period in excess of 6 months the IQC is not payable.*
- *Where a qualified child is no longer resident in the State, is detained in a reformatory or an industrial school or no longer lives with the participant, IQC is not payable.*
- *An Increase for a Qualified Child is not payable in respect of a child in receipt of a Social Welfare payment in their own right.*

Implementing Bodies should retain on file all backup documentation relating to change of circumstances such as payslips, etc; should further inspection be required. This is particularly relevant where the change in circumstance results in an increase in payment.

In situations, where a participant has a reduction in their total weekly payment, it should be recorded on the weekly payment form. You will also be required to send Pobal a note explaining the change of circumstance and supporting documentation along with the weekly payment form.

**Note:** Implementing Bodies must notify Pobal immediately of any changes of circumstances.

Where there is a change in a participant's total weekly payment, due to a change in circumstance, such changes are attributed to their Social Welfare Saving; the only exception to this is where the participant qualified through a CE Transfer, as their total weekly payment comes from Exchequer Top-up.

## **2.6 Payment of Arrears**

### **2.6.1 Fuel Allowance:**

- (a) Arrears allowable for approved applications providing it is in the Fuel allowance season. Arrears can be paid back to the start of the current fuel allowance season providing that a participant has an entitlement.

### **2.6.2 IQA applications and Full/Half Rate IQC linked to Spouse**

Applications must be on The IQA/IQC Rural Social Scheme<sup>4</sup> Application Form to ensure the validity of the application.

- (a) If the application is valid and is approved by Pobal, Pobal can award the IQA/IQC entitlement for that week and future weeks – any arrears that may be due to the participant are subject to the conditions at (c) below.
- (b) the arrears are allowable back to the date of application (i.e. the date that the supervisor has signed the Form). This date of application cannot be any longer than four weeks – a period of four weeks is given to facilitate the compiling of necessary documents.

### **2.6.3 Stand alone IQC Applications:**

(a) Applications must be on The IQA/IQC Application Form to ensure the validity of the application.

(b) If the application is valid and is approved by Pobal, Pobal can award the IQC entitlement for that week and future weeks – any arrears that may be due to the participant are subject to the conditions at (c) and (d) below.

(c) The arrears are allowable back to the date of application (i.e. the date that the supervisor has signed the Form). This date of application cannot be any longer than four weeks – a period of four weeks is to facilitate the compiling of necessary documents.

(d) The only exception to the above is:

(i) Newborn child – arrears are allowable back from date of application to date of birth to a max. of 26 weeks. Additional arrears will have to be requested by group directly to Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Section.

### **2.6.4 Withdrawal of claims for arrears**

Implementing Bodies have 4 weeks from date that Pobal requests information on standard cases to submit the information required unless otherwise indicated.

After this time Pobal will contact the Implementing Body that unless the information is received within 10 working days, then the claim for arrears will be considered by Pobal as withdrawn. If the participant/Implementing Body wish to pursue arrears after the claim is withdrawn, then a new application will have to be made and arrears will only be paid from the date of the current application subject to entitlement being established.

### **2.7 Overpayments**

If a participant receives Rural Social Scheme pay to which he/she is not entitled, then an overpayment will be assessed against him/her for that amount overpaid.

Pobal will calculate the amount of overpayment and issue a notification to the Implementing Body outlining the reason the overpayment occurred and a calculation of the total overpaid.

The Implementing Body should then discuss the overpayment with the participant. If the participant agrees that the overpayment is valid, then repayment can be made as follows:-

- Weekly payroll deduction- subject to agreement by Pobal.
- One off lump sum repayment to Pobal

If the participant disagrees with the assessment, then he /she may request that a review of the assessment made by Pobal is carried out by The Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Unit.

## **2.8 TAX & PRSI/Universal Social Charge**

### **2.8.1 PAYE – Pay as You Earn**

All wage payments to participants are assessable for Income Tax (PAYE) purposes. However, the actual amount payable by an individual will depend on his/her tax credit and standard rate cut off point.

It is important to ensure that participants' tax is dealt with properly from the start and to ensure this happens participants will need to do two things:

- The participant must give the Implementing Body their PPS No. (formerly known as your RSI No.). This number is their unique personal identification number for public services in Ireland. The Implementing Body will then let the Tax Office know that the participant has started work on the Rural Social Scheme and that they are the employer.
- The participant must apply for a Certificate of Tax Credits. He/she will need to complete an application form to do this. It is called Form 12A Application for a Certificate of Tax Credits and Standard Rate Cut-Off Point.

### **2.8.2 Emergency Tax**

If a participant does not provide either a:

- Certificate of Tax Credits from the Tax Office or,
- P45 (parts 2 and 3), in respect of their previous employment,

tax will be deducted on an emergency basis when paying the participant wages.

This means that the participant is given a temporary tax credit for the first month of employment but tax deductions are increased progressively from the second month onwards. The effect of emergency basis is that after 4 weeks no tax credits are given, and tax is paid at the higher rate from week 9, regardless of the level of pay. It makes sense therefore to avoid the emergency basis by following the simple steps outlined earlier when a participant commences on the scheme. Details of emergency tax rates are in the Revenue leaflet PAYE Notice to Employers.

### **2.8.3 Income Tax Bands**

Income tax bands will determine the rate of tax that a participant pay's on their income or salary. In the tax year 2011 for example, a single person will pay 20% tax on income up to €32,800 and 41% on any balance.

The table below outlines the standard rate cut off points for income.

<b>Personal Circumstances</b>	<b>2010 €</b>	<b>2011 €</b>
Single/Widowed without dependent children	36,400 @ 20% Balance @ 41%	32,800 @ 20% Balance @ 41%
Single/Widowed qualifying for One Parent Family Tax Credit	40,400 @ 20% Balance @ 41%	36,800 @ 20% Balance @ 41%
Married Couple one spouse with Income	45,400 @ 20% Balance @ 41%	41,800 @ 20% Balance @ 41%
Married Couple both spouses with Income	45,400 @ 20% with increase of 27,400 max. Balance @ 41%	41,800 @ 20% with increase of 23,800 max. Balance @ 41%

### **2.8.4 Tax credits**

The table above outlines the level of income which is taxed @ 20 or 41%. The amount of tax is further reduced by an individual's tax credit. The table below outlines the tax credits which may be available to an employee-:

<b>Tax Credit</b>	<b>2010 €</b>	<b>2011 €</b>
Single Person	1,830	1,650
Married Person	3,660	3,300
PAYE Credit	1,830	1,650
Widowed Person (without dependent children)	2,430	2,190
One Parent Family Credit	1,830	1,650
Incapacitated Child Credit Max	3,660	3,300

Blind Tax Credit	1,830	1,650
Single Person	1,830	1,650
Married - One Spouse Blind	3,660	3,300
Married - Both Spouses Blind		
Widowed Parent	-	3,600
Bereaved in 2010	4,000	3,150
2009	3,500	2,700
2008	3,000	2,250
2007	2,500	1,800
2006	2,000	-
2005		
Age Tax Credit	325	245
Single/Widowed	650	490
Married		
Dependent Relative	80	70
Home Carer	900	810

More detailed information regarding tax credits and reliefs is available from your local Tax Office

### 2.8.5 PRSI – Pay Related Social Insurance

- Participants on the Rural Social Scheme who have gross earnings of €38 or more per week pay a Class 'A' PRSI contribution on the scheme.
- 
- Participants earning up to €352 gross per week do not pay any social insurance, however they will receive a credit for that week.
- 
- Participants earning between €352 and €500 gross per week, the payment will be nil on the first €127 and pay 4 % on the amount above €127.00.
- Participants on the Rural Social Scheme whose gross earnings are less than €38 per week, pay PRSI at Class J. Participants who pay PRSI contribution at Class J are covered for Occupational Injuries Benefits only.

**Note:** Implementing Bodies should advise applicants who are qualifying through Disability Allowance, Widow(ers)/Surviving Civil Partner Pension (contributory and non contributory) and One-Parent Family Payment, that the Rural Social Scheme payment will take preference over their social welfare payment. As the Rural Social Scheme top-up payment will (in most situations) be less than the minimum payment of €38 per week required to qualify for a class 'A' PRSI contribution, applicants will only qualify for a class 'J' contribution rather than a class 'A' contribution while participating on the Rural Social Scheme. As the entitlements under each of these respective insurance contributions vary quite significantly, applicants should contact the Department of Social Protection to ascertain what their entitlements will be, before joining the Rural Social Scheme. However applicants from these categories who receive more than €38 per week top-up from Rural Social Scheme will qualify for a class 'A' PRSI contribution.

### 2.8.6 UNIVERSAL SOCIAL CHARGE (USC)

The Universal Social Charge (USC), which came into effect on 1 January 2011, is a tax payable on gross income, including notional pay, after any relief for certain capital allowances, but before pension contributions.

The rates and thresholds of the Universal Social Charge are as follows:

\* **Individual aged under 70 years**

<b>USC Thresholds</b>	
<b>Rate</b>	
Income up to €10,036	2%
Income from €10,036.01 to €16,016	4%
Income above €16,016	7%

Participants pay on Rural Social Scheme is exempt from the Universal Social Charge. However any other income he/she may earn outside Rural Social Scheme may be subject to the universal social charge.

## **2.9 Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA)**

Should any Participant wish to open a PRSA, or have deductions made towards a current PRSA, all relevant information should be forwarded to Pobal, who will facilitate such a function. Pobal will issue a cheque to the Organisation with which the relevant participant has their PRSA, on a monthly basis. Deductions which are made payable to an approved pension provider are subject to tax relief @ 20%. From 1 January 2011, employee contributions to occupational pension schemes and other pension arrangements will no longer be exempt from employee PRSI. Such contributions will also be subject to the Universal Social Charge which came into effect on 1 January 2011.

## **2.10 Union Membership**

Participants are free to join a Union at their discretion. Details of membership should be forwarded to Pobal in order to facilitate the deduction of union subscriptions

## **2.11 Retirement from the Rural Social Scheme**

Rural Social Scheme participants may work on the Rural Social Scheme until the day before their 66th birthday. The State Pension (both Contributory and Non-Contributory) is payable with effect from the day on which a person reaches 66 years. Prior to a participant retiring, Pobal will notify the Implementing Body of the participant's retirement date. Participants should be advised to apply to The Department of Social Protection well in advance of their retirement to allow their claim for a pension to be processed.

### **2.11.1 Participants on the Rural Social Scheme on the basis of their own Social Welfare Entitlement**

Once a participant becomes eligible to receive a State pension, this will eliminate a participant's eligibility for any of the underlying Social Welfare payments required to qualify for the Rural Social Scheme. Receipt of a State pension also eliminates a participant's entitlement to claim an increase for Qualified Adult Allowance in respect of the person claiming the pension payment.

An exception to this situation occurs when a Rural Social Scheme participant qualifies for a State Pension (transition) formerly known as a Retirement Pension. In these circumstances, the participant must retire on the day before their 65th Birthday. This is the case as payment of this

pension is effective from the day a person reaches 65 years and is conditional on the recipient being retired from insurable employment.

However, an Rural Social Scheme participant who does qualify for a State Pension (transition) may elect to forego their entitlement to this payment in favour of remaining on the Rural Social Scheme until they reach 66 years. In such cases, they are permitted to remain on the Rural Social Scheme, but on the strict understanding that they inform their local Social Welfare Office in writing that they do not intend to take up their entitlement to their Retirement Pension payment. Written confirmation of this should be obtained from The Department of Social Protection by the Rural Social Scheme participant and submitted to the Implementing Body.

### **2.11.2 Participants on the Rural Social Scheme on the basis of a "Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant Swap" (formerly known as "spousal swap")**

In circumstances where the participant is on the Rural Social Scheme on the basis of a Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant Swap i.e. the participant qualified for the Rural Social Scheme on the basis of their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant's underlying Social Welfare payment, the participant must retire from the Scheme when their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant commences claiming payment to an entitled Pension, payable by The Department of Social Protection. This is because the participant's Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant is the Social Welfare customer. Therefore, entitlement to the underlying qualifying Social Welfare payment ceases with effect from the date on which the Social Welfare customer commences claiming a pension from the Department of Social Protection.

In the event that the participant's Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant has an entitlement to a State Pension (transition) and they elect to claim this payment, the participant **must** leave the Scheme with effect from the day before their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant reaches 65 years. If the participant's Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant has an entitlement to a State Pension (transition), but elects to forego that entitlement in favour of their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant remaining on the Rural Social Scheme, written confirmation from The Department of Social Protection stating that the State Pension (transition) will not be claimed, must be submitted by the participant to the Implementing Body.

### **2.11.3 State Pension (Contributory or Non-Contributory)**

The Rural Social Scheme participant must leave the Scheme on the date before their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant reaches 66 years. This is because entitlement to the underlying Social Welfare payment, which qualified the participant for the Rural Social Scheme, ceases on the day on which their Spouse//Civil Partner /Partner reaches 66 years.

In the event that the participant could qualify as an adult dependant of a recipient of the State Pension (non-contributory) they would still be required to leave the Rural Social Scheme in order for a re-assessment of entitlements to be undertaken by The Department of Social Protection.

### **Rural Social Scheme Participants with an entitlement to payment of an Increase for Qualified Adult Allowance**

In the event that the participant's dependant Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant has an entitlement to a State Pension (Transition) and elects to claim this payment, the participant is no longer entitled to claim an IQA as part of their Rural Social Scheme total weekly payment. The participant's payment must, therefore be re-calculated with effect from the date on which their dependant Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant reaches 65 years.

If the participant's Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant has an entitlement to a State Pension (Transition), but elects to forego that entitlement in favour of their Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant remaining on the Rural Social Scheme, written confirmation from the Department of Social Protection stating that the Retirement Pension will not be claimed must be submitted by the participant to the Implementing Body.

In the event that the participant's dependant Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant has an entitlement to a State Pension, either Contributory or Non-Contributory, the participant is no longer entitled to claim an IQA as part of their Rural Social Scheme total weekly payment. The participant's payment must, therefore, be re-calculated with effect from the date on which their dependant Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant swap reaches 66 years.

All Implementing Bodies should advise all relevant participants to apply to the Department of Social Protection for their pension at least three months before their 66th birthday. Any participant who may qualify for the State Pension (Transition) (formerly known as Retirement Pension) should be advised to apply to the Department of Social Protection at least three months before their 65th Birthday.

All decisions regarding qualification for any of the aforementioned pensions are entirely a matter for the Department of Social Protection.

## **2.12 Annual Leave**

The statutory minimum Annual Leave is 20 days per annum. All participants are entitled to annual leave totalling 8% of their total hours worked over a 12 month period:

$19.5 \text{ hrs} \times 52 \text{ wks} = 1,014 \text{ hrs}$ . 8% of 1,014 hrs = 81 hours Annual Leave per annum

**OR**

$81 \text{ hours} \div \text{standard } 8 \text{ hr day} = \text{Annual Leave entitlement of } 10.5 \text{ days per annum}$ .

Pro-rata annual leave entitlements apply to periods worked of less than 12 months duration within the leave year.

Depending on the work patterns of Rural Social Scheme participants, it may be more convenient to calculate Annual Leave entitlement by hours rather than days. Each Implementing Body should keep a record of the actual number of hours of Annual Leave taken by each participant on their own files.

Implementing Bodies should ensure that all participants take their full leave entitlement during the relevant 12-month period. Annual leave must be taken during the relevant leave year and cannot be carried over to the next leave year. If termination of a participants contract occurs and if the paid holidays already taken by the participant exceeds the paid holiday entitlement on the date of termination, the excess should be deducted from any termination pay where applicable or otherwise repaid by the participant.

Participants should not be paid for untaken leave unless they resign from the Scheme, and untaken Annual Leave is payable to them.

**Please note:** An Implementing Body may at its discretion offer enhanced or additional terms, however, any additional costs arising must be borne by the Implementing Body.

## **2.13 Sick Leave**

Under the Rural Social Scheme the following procedures must be applied in relation to Sick Leave:

### **2.13.1 Certified Sick Leave**

Participants are entitled to 7 days or 56 hours paid certified sick leave in a consecutive 12-month period. This payment should only be made on the production of medical certificates for the relevant period of absence. Thereafter, any certified sick absences will be unpaid. All participants should be advised to apply to the Department of Social Protection for Illness Benefit to cover their absence. The relevant Claim Form is available from their Doctor, and this form must also be signed by their Doctor.

Participants should be advised that the Department of Social Protection do not pay Illness Benefit for the first 3 days of their absence.

While in receipt of Illness Benefit, participants will receive credited PRSI contributions, from the Department of Social Protection, for the relevant period, thus maintaining their PRSI contributions record for their period on Rural Social Scheme.

**Note:** Participants should be advised that if they receive Illness/Injury Benefit while on paid sick leave, they should forward this payment to their Implementing Body. *Implementing Bodies must then reimburse Pobal with the full amount of any entitlement to Illness Benefit received from the Department of Social Protection*

**Important note for participants:** When a participant returns to work after been out on sick leave, they should inform the Department of Social Protection on this matter, as payment for illness benefit must cease once a participant returns to work. In a situation whereby a participant returns to work on the Rural Social Scheme and continues claim illness/injury benefit, the participant must return their illness/injury benefit payment to the Department of Social Protection and inform them that they have returned to work on the Rural Social Scheme.

Implementing Bodies should also retain a copy of the final medical certificate which confirms that a participant who has been out on sick leave is now fit to resume work.

### **2.13.2 Uncertified Sick Leave**

Participants are entitled to 2 days or 16 hours paid uncertified sick leave in any consecutive 12-month period. Any deduction in a participant's payment, to reflect unpaid absence must be made from both the **Social Welfare Saving** and the **Exchequer top-up**, on the weekly payment form. Implementing Bodies are required to record all sick leave for each participant/supervisor.

Please note any participant who has taken an Unauthorised Absence, is not entitled to payment for that period. Therefore, a deduction should be made from their weekly payment, from both Social Welfare Saving and Exchequer Top-up, to reflect the period of the absence. These absences should also be recorded on the employee record.

**Please note:** An Implementing Body may at its discretion offer enhanced or additional terms, however, any additional costs arising must be borne by the Implementing Body.

### **2.14 Maternity and Adoptive Leave**

Employers are not obliged to pay Maternity/Adoptive Benefit when an employee is on Maternity/Adoptive leave. Participants are therefore advised to apply for either the Maternity/Adoptive Benefit while on this leave. As entitlement to Maternity/Adoptive Benefit is a matter for the Department of Social Protection and is based on having sufficient PRSI contributions, the onus is on the individual to apply in sufficient time.

#### **2.14.1 Maternity Leave**

- The Statutory Maternity Leave entitlement is 26 weeks, plus the option of an additional 16 weeks unpaid leave. Participants must commence their Maternity Leave no later than 2 weeks before their expected date of confinement.
- The Maternity Benefit form (MB10) must be completed and forwarded to the Maternity Benefit Section, the Department of Social Protection, St. Oliver Plunkett Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal at least 6 weeks before the expected date of confinement. Please note that failure to apply for this payment within 6 months of the birth of the child may result in loss of benefit.
- If a Participant has a stillbirth or miscarriage anytime after the 24th week of pregnancy, they are entitled to full maternity leave.

Fathers are only entitled to maternity leave if the mother dies within 24 weeks of the birth. In these circumstances, the father may be entitled to a period of leave, the extent of which depends on the actual date of the mother's death. Where a father qualifies for leave under these circumstances, he also has an optional right to the additional maternity leave.

### **2.14.2 Adoptive Leave**

- Adoptive Leave is available to an adopting mother or single man who adopts a child.
- The leave entitlement is 24 weeks from the date on which the child is placed with their family plus an option of an additional 16 weeks unpaid adoptive leave after the adoptive leave ends.
- The Adoptive Benefit form (AB1) must be completed and forwarded to the Adoptive Benefit Section, the Department of Social Protection St. Oliver Plunkett Rd, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal at least 5 weeks before the leave is due to begin. In certain cases, an application can be made after the child is placed with their family. Please note that failure to apply for this payment within 6 months of the date the child is placed with you may result in loss of benefit.

### **2.14.3 Procedures regarding Maternity/Adoptive Leave**

- Participants must give their employer (Implementing Body) at least 4 weeks' written notice of their intention to take Maternity/Adoptive leave.
- If a Participant intends to take the additional 16 weeks' Maternity/Adoptive leave, they must provide their employer with at least 4 weeks' written notice. Both of these notices can be given at the same time.
- For Maternity leave, the Participant must also provide their employer with a medical certificate confirming the pregnancy.
- For Adoptive leave, the Participant must also provide their employer with a certificate of placement confirming the expected date of placement of the child.
- Participants must give the Implementing Body at least 4 weeks' written notice of their intention to return to work.
- Participants who decide not to return to work after Maternity/Adoptive leave are required to give notice in the usual manner to their employer.
- The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004 provides for postponement of Maternity leave in strict circumstances, that is if the baby is hospitalised. Participants must notify their employer as soon as possible if they wish to postpone their maternity leave (please note that the employer can refuse this application).
- ***The Implementing Body must forward the details of all information supplied by the Participant/Supervisor immediately to the Pobal Payroll Officer by email/fax.***

### **2.14.4 PRSI Contributions**

Participants will be automatically awarded PRSI credits while in receipt of Maternity/Adoptive Benefit. If unpaid additional Maternity/Adoptive leave is availed of, the Participant must get the

Implementing Body to complete an application for either Maternity leave 'credits' form (MATL CREDITS) or Adoptive leave credits form (AL CREDITS).

#### **2.14.5 Annual Leave and Public Holiday Entitlement**

It should be noted that time spent on Maternity/Adoptive leave (including additional Maternity/Adoptive leave) is treated as though the participant/supervisor has been in employment. Therefore, this time can be used to accumulate annual leave and public holiday entitlement.

#### **2.14.6 Notification to Pobal**

It is important that Pobal receives at least 3 weeks' prior notice from the Implementing Body (by e-mail) of a Participant's intention to take Maternity/Adoptive Leave. Pobal must also receive at least 3 weeks prior notice (by e-mail) from the Implementing Bodies of a Participant's intention to return to work following Maternity/Adoptive leave. (Please refer to Pobal Circular F Rural Social Scheme 2008 for more information).

#### **2.15 Force Majeure Leave**

This is paid leave, which is available to allow participants deal with emergencies resulting from a family member's injury or illness. This leave is limited to 3 days over a 12 consecutive month period or 5 days over 36 consecutive month period. In order to claim this leave, the participant must provide a note explaining their absence and which family member was affected. Implementing Bodies will be required to maintain a record of these absences. In situations where a participant has worked less than 12 months, pro rata rates of leave etc. will apply.

#### **2.16 Public Holidays**

Participants who are rostered to work on a Public Holiday are entitled to a paid day off on that day.

Participants who are not rostered to work on a Public Holiday are entitled to paid time-in-lieu in the equivalent of 20% of their weekly hours. 20% of the standard 19.5-hour week is 4 hours. It is recommended, where possible, that this time is taken on the week on which the Public Holiday falls, if this is not possible the time-in-lieu can be added to a participant's Annual Leave.

There are 9 Public Holidays each year:

- Christmas Day
- St. Stephen's Day
- New Year's Day
- St. Patrick's Day
- Easter Monday
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in May
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in June,
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in August
- The last Monday in October

#### **2.17 Bereavement Leave/Paternity Leave**

There is no statutory leave entitlement to Bereavement Leave or Paternity Leave; therefore Implementing Bodies should treat such instances in accordance with their own company procedures.

## **2.18 Payments After Death**

On the death of an Rural Social Scheme participant, the surviving Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant Swap.

has a continued entitlement to payment for a further 6 weeks. The same applies on the death of a Qualified Adult or a Child Dependant.

*The following guidelines should be followed in the case of death:*

In the case of the death of an Rural Social Scheme participant who is not single, the surviving Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant **may** be entitled to 6 weeks' payment of the deceased person's allowance, this would include any increases for IQA and IQC. The Spouse/civil partner (*but not a cohabitant*) should apply to the Department of Social Protection for a widow(er)'s/surviving civil partner's pension which, if awarded, would be payable from week 7.

Where the Rural Social Scheme participant was receiving an IQA for a person who is now deceased, he/she will continue to receive the full payment for 6 weeks following the death of the Spouse/civil partner/Cohabitant. Written notification should be completed at the earliest convenience and forwarded to Pobal. From the 7<sup>th</sup> week, the survivor will receive his/her payment at the single rate of payment. Alternatively, the Spouse/civil partner/ (*but not a cohabitant*) may be eligible for a Widow(er)'s/Surviving Civil Partner pension at a higher rate.

- Where a IQC was being paid and the child is now deceased, the parent/guardian of the deceased child will continue to receive it for a period of 6 weeks following the child's death. A Written notification should be completed at the earliest convenience and forwarded to Pobal.
- In the case of the death of an Rural Social Scheme participant who is single, the continued payment is not due after death.

Note: If an Rural Social Scheme participant or any of his/her dependants die, the next-of-kin should notify the Pobal as soon as possible. This will prevent the possibility of excess payments being made.

In the case of payment after death entitlements, please request that the recipient of the payment advises the bank details to which the payment is being credited. In some cases a bank account will be closed or suspended on the death of an account holder, thus preventing the payment after death being transferred to the account.

## **2.19 Secondary Benefits**

### **2.19.1 Fuel Allowance**

Fuel Allowance is paid to qualifying participants for a period of 32 weeks from the end of September to the end of April. The fuel allowance rate for 2011 is €20 per week. The starting and end dates of the payment are decided by the Department of Social Protection. Any additional fuel allowance entitlement such as the one off payment in December 2010 will also be paid to any qualifying participant

All Implementing Bodies are required to meet with the following arrangements to ensure that the allowance is only paid to those Rural Social Scheme participants who qualify:

- It will be necessary to have formal confirmation of entitlement to this Allowance from the Department of Social Protection in respect of participants where this information is not currently available, e.g. for participants who commenced on Rural Social Scheme since the end of the most recent Fuel Scheme.

- If there is/are question(s) regarding a participant's entitlement to this allowance, formal clarification should be sought from the relevant Social Welfare Local Office.

Participants who have transferred from Jobseeker's Benefit are not eligible to Fuel Allowance. Participants on Disability Allowance, Widow(ers) Pension (Contributory and non-contributory) and recipients of One-Parent Family Payments should apply to the Department of Social Protection for their Fuel Allowance.

**Note:** Only one fuel allowance entitlement is permitted per household.

### **2.19.2 Medical Cards and Other Secondary Benefits**

While the Rural Social Scheme is recognised as a qualifying payment type for the purpose of assessing entitlement to other secondary benefits, such as medical card, back-to-school clothing and footwear allowance, entitlement to any such benefits to participants of the Rural Social Scheme is entirely a matter for the relevant paying authorities i.e. the Department of Social Protection, and the Health Service Executive.

Therefore a participant will still be required to meet the terms and conditions attached to the secondary benefits, as set out by the relevant paying authority, in order to qualify for any such payments.

### **2.20 Higher Education Maintenance Grant Scheme**

The Department of Education and Science has included the Rural Social Scheme as an eligible payment for the Special Rates of Maintenance Grant with effect from 2006. Please note that the Increase for a Qualified Child paid to a participant is disregarded for the purposes of calculating the Special rate of Maintenance Grant (Top-up Grant). Therefore if a participant is applying for the top up grant for his/her child, then a breakdown of their payment on Rural Social Scheme for the relevant year should be requested from Pobal and submitted to the local education authority. Please see Circular Rural Social Scheme/12/2010 & Rural Social Scheme/11/2007 for further details.

# Rural Social Scheme Operational Procedures Manual

## Section 3 – Management of the Rural Social Scheme by Implementing Bodies

**POBAL Rural Social Scheme  
Help Desk**

**01-511 7241**

**for assistance with all your Rural Social Scheme  
queries**



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Department of Social Protection  
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### **Section 3 –Management of the Rural Social Scheme**

While responsibility for the operation of the Rural Social Scheme rests with the Department of Protection, it is delivered at a local level by the local Development companies who act as Implementing Bodies. As the Implementing Body will be responsible for selecting both the scheme and its participants, they will be recognised as the employer in all cases. Pobal carries out, on behalf of the Department of Social Protection, a payroll function in respect of the scheme and operates a help desk facility which Implementing Bodies can contact for assistance with Rural Social Scheme queries.

#### **3.1 Obligations on the Implementing Bodies in relation to Impartiality**

Each Implementing Body will be required to operate the Rural Social Scheme in a consistent, impartial, fair, equitable and transparent manner. All individuals who wish to apply to participate in the Rural Social Scheme, or individuals or organisations who wish to propose projects must be afforded an equal opportunity to do so by their Implementing Body, subject to reasonable time limits and deadlines. Each Implementing Body will be required to nominate one senior official who shall ensure compliance with these terms.

#### **3.2 Processing Applications**

Prospective participants on the Rural Social Scheme should be asked on the application form, (a template of the application is sent out to all local development companies operating Rural Social Scheme) to provide details of their social welfare status, including a breakdown of the payment if it includes allowances for adult and/or child dependants. It has been agreed that this information will be certified by the Department of Social Protection. Applicants must also provide their PPS number.

In all cases, applicants should be requested to provide proof that they are actively farming as outlined in Section 2.1.2 and in the case of fisherpersons a copy of their relevant licence or permit as outlined in Section 2.1.3.

They should also be asked to provide an indication as to which of the work categories they would prefer to work on, along with their preferred work location, as these details could assist the Implementing Body to select proposed projects.

Applicants will be required to sign a waiver (waiver is on the application form) allowing the Implementing Body to verify their eligibility details with the relevant authorities in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.

#### **3.3 Selection of Participants**

Any information provided on application forms regarding work preferences and geographic proximity to places of work should be taken into account when considering applications and, if necessary, confirmation should be sought on the preferences of the applicant.

The selection procedures should include an informal interview/discussion between the applicant and representative/s of the Implementing Body. This selection procedure must be undertaken in an independent and impartial manner in a way that is clear and transparent. The Implementing Body must closely monitor this provision and if a conflict of interest arises or if an applicant is deemed ineligible; all information must be clearly documented. Participants should be selected in terms of their general suitability for the work involved and their experience of similar work. Adequate notes of each informal interview/discussion should be prepared for the purpose of supporting decisions made. Such notes should record details in relation to any conflict of interest, which may occur between any applicant and any representative of the Implementing Body involved in the selection procedure.

At the end of the selection procedure successful applicants should be placed on a waiting list. Each Implementing Body must maintain a waiting list of applicants who have expressed an interest in joining the Rural Social Scheme, which can then be utilised to fill vacancies as they arise, following existing participants opting to leave the scheme. If the existing quota in place at the time of the annual renewal of contracts on 1<sup>st</sup> April (new annual renewal date for the contracts effective from 2009) is fully availed of, Implementing Body may implement the 'first in, first out' process i.e. those participants who are the longest on the scheme and who have served in excess of one year may have to give up their place to a person on the waiting list. Implementing Bodies who wish to implement the 'first in, first out' process must ensure that this process is undertaken in an independent and impartial manner in a way that is clear and transparent. Adequate notes should be prepared for the purpose of supporting decisions made under this process.

Failure of an Implementing Body to ensure that persons participating on the Scheme were eligible to do so at the time of selection may result in the funding for that person being withdrawn and may also result in the Implementing Body being asked by the Department to ensure that any amounts paid to those persons during their participation on the Scheme is recovered.

**Note:** Participants under Rural Social Scheme are employees of their respective Implementing Body.

### **3.4 Successful applicants joining Rural Social Scheme**

All successful applicants will be required to sign a document outlining the tenure of their inclusion on the Rural Social Scheme along with the terms and conditions of the scheme, which will include that all participants will be subject to a minimum 12 week probationary period. They should also provide their Certificate of Tax Free Allowance & Standard Rate Cut-off Points Certificate issued by Revenue. It is also recommended that participants are advised to complete a Pay Mandate, allowing their wages to be paid into the bank, before commencing on the scheme.

Each Implementing Body should provide their local social welfare office with details of those commencing on the Rural Social Scheme, so as to avoid any duplicate payment to participants.

*Participation on the Rural Social Scheme is not intended to be on a permanent basis.* The operation of the Rural Social Scheme is reviewed annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> April (new annual renewal date for the contracts effective from 2009). If a participant's application is successful, they should be offered a place on the Rural Social Scheme for an initial period up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Following a participants initial contract, they will need to complete a renewal form, where Implementing Bodies must reassess the participants eligibility to take part in the Scheme and must ensure insofar as is possible that only those who still meet the qualifying conditions are considered for participation for a further term or for inclusion on any waiting list that may be in operation.

Failure of Implementing Bodies to ensure that participants still qualify to take part on the Scheme at the time their contracts are renewed may result in the funding for those persons being withdrawn and may also result in the Implementing Body being asked to ensure that any amounts paid to those persons during their participation on the Scheme are recovered.

Renewal of contracts should also depend on suitable work being available etc.

**Please note:** Participants who complete a 12 month term on the scheme may re-apply to participate for a further term, however, participants who are the longest on the scheme and who have served in excess of one year may have to give up their place to a person on the waiting list. Implementing Bodies who wish to implement the ‘first in, first out’ process must ensure that this process is undertaken in an independent and impartial manner in a way that is clear and transparent. Adequate notes should be prepared for the purpose of supporting decisions made under this process.

### **3.5 Selection of Projects**

As with the selection of participants the selection of projects should be undertaken in a fair, equitable and impartial way in a manner that is clear and transparent. The Implementing Bodies should advertise the criteria for the scheme using the categories of work outlined below annually prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> April (new annual renewal date for the scheme, effective from 2009). The deadline for responses to be submitted must be reasonable and ensure all prospective project promoters are giving adequate time to prepare a proposal.

Any proposals received after the set deadline should be held in reserve for consideration in the event that there are insufficient suitable projects identified from those submitted on time. All project applications must be accompanied by a detailed plan indicating the timetable for completion of the various tasks being put forward under the application.

The Implementing Body should examine the projects put forward and assess them in terms of how they fit in with the work programme, aims and objectives of the Rural Social Scheme, and any contributions by Community Groups towards projects to be undertaken. Each Implementing Body should also bear in mind any contributions that the community groups are willing to provide i.e. necessary materials as well as the geographical spread of projects being put forward and the aims and duration of each proposed project.

Insofar as possible, approved projects should be spread on a reasonably broad basis across the geographic area covered by each implementing body. All projects must be for at least one year, with identifiable and measurable deliverables. Preference should be given to new projects rather than to renewing existing projects. Project proposals should clearly outline the work that needs to be undertaken and outline the contribution to be made by the project applicants by way of materials etc.

It should be noted, in particular, that the Department of Education & Science provides funding in the form of grants to all Primary and Post-Primary schools for the carrying out of caretaking, secretarial, maintenance and minor works. Therefore, projects involving those duties are not eligible under the Rural Social Scheme.

The selection process must be undertaken by representatives of the Implementing Body, one of whom must be an employee of the Implementing Body and the remaining representatives can be Board members appointed by the relevant Implementing Body. As with other decisions to be taken, no member of the selection committee may participate in the assessment or decision process in respect of any project proposed by an organisation of which they are a member or have a material interest or by an individual to whom they are related, or associated with in any way which would give rise to, or be seen to give rise to, any conflict of interest on the part of the committee member.

All project promoters/community groups must reapply to have their project re-selected on an annual basis. Where an Implementing Body intends to allow a project to remain within the Scheme for a third successive year the Implementing Body must consult with and obtain prior approval from the Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Section.

Projects carried out under the Scheme shall commence between the dates referred to in the proposal and shall operate for a period of up to 52 weeks, or up to the 31st of March or any other such period as the Department shall direct at any time, at the end of which period all funding shall cease and the Department shall have no further obligation whatever in the matter.

Implementing Bodies shall not select community based or other work projects for inclusion under the Scheme, which are already in receipt of aid from public funds for the same purpose or where there is funding available from other sources.

**Note:** While the Rural Social Scheme will operate independently of the FÁS Community Employment Scheme (CE), it will complement it in areas where both schemes are in operation.

### **What work will be undertaken:**

- The work to be undertaken by participants on the scheme will fall into the following broad categories:
- Projects relating to maintenance and enhancement of waymarked ways, agreed walks, bog roads etc.;
- Energy conservation work for elderly and less well off;
- Village and countryside enhancement projects;
- Social care and care of the elderly, community after-school support groups and community pre-schooling support groups;
- Environmental maintenance work – maintenance and caretaking of community and sporting facilities;
- Projects relating to not for profit cultural and heritage centres;
- Community Administration/Clerical duties;
- Any other appropriate community-based projects that may be identified during the course of the scheme.

**NOTE:** Where a proposed project falls under the measure “any other appropriate community-based projects that may be identified during the course of the scheme”, Implementing Bodies must consult and seek approval from the Department in advance, before agreeing to the project proposal. Failure of an Implementing Body to secure Department approval for such projects may result in funding for the unapproved project being withdrawn.

### **3.6 Successful Projects**

When the successful projects have been selected by each Implementing Body, a one-year contract which outlines the terms and conditions of the Rural Social Scheme should be signed by the Implementing Body and the Project Promoter.

**Please note that the Department will not issue approval in respect of Rural Social Scheme projects which involve participants carrying out any duties/works where any or all of the costs are met from another public funding source.**

### **3.7 Rural Social Scheme Project Promoters**

Community Groups must reapply to have their project re-selected on an annual basis. All projects must be for at least one year, with identifiable and measurable deliverables.

### **3.8 Rollover of Rural Social Scheme in Subsequent Years**

All Implementing Bodies should publicise the Rural Social Scheme, both in terms of the recruitment of participants, and submissions from local organisations promoting projects and work plans under the Scheme, annually. This should be done in sufficient time as to agree contracts with all appropriate parties before the annual renewal date of the 1st April annually (new annual renewal date for the scheme, effective from 2009). Community Groups must reapply to have their project re-selected on an annual basis. Where the Implementing Body intends to allow a project to remain within the Scheme for a third successive year the Implementing Body must consult with and get the agreement of the Department.

**Please note**, that current participants, along with those organisations with projects currently in place on the Rural Social Scheme, are also required to re-apply for the Scheme annually. New applications for projects under Rural Social Scheme should be given preference, along with trying to ensure that there is a good geographical spread of projects throughout a region across each of the categories of work.

### **3.9 Supervisory Arrangements**

The ratio of supervisors to participants is to be no more than 1:20. However, an Implementing Body may allow one single instance where the ratio is up to 1:25.

There are a number of different supervisory scenarios currently in place:

- Where projects are approved involving a number of small groups of workers in an area – a supervisor could be appointed by the Implementing Body to supervise a number of projects provided supervisor to participant ratio is no more than 1:20.
- Where there is an application for small number of workers (4/5) in a remote area and islands – a Chargehand to be appointed to undertake supervisory work and report to Implementing Body, subject to agreement by the Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Section.

Implementing Bodies wishing to employ an additional supervisor should only consider doing so, when they have the majority of participants required to fill a new scheme in place. An application for sanction should then be made to *The Rural Social Scheme Section, Department of Social Protection, Government Buildings, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo*, requesting Departmental approval to employ an additional supervisor.

### **3.10 Health & Safety**

Implementing Bodies are responsible for ensuring that all relevant Health & Safety requirements are adhered to and must respond to requests to ensure proper standards are in place and ensure Health & Safety Training is provided for all participants. The cost of this training is incorporated into the Materials Grant.

All Rural Social Scheme participants are required to sign an undertaking to indicate that the requirements under Rural Social Scheme have been brought to their attention and that they fully accept their role and responsibility with respect to Health and Safety.

It is imperative that all Implementing Bodies comply with the Health and Safety Legislation and ensure that all activities carried out on the Rural Social Scheme are covered under the Rural Social Scheme insurance policy.

**Note:** For Health and Safety reasons Rural Social Scheme participants are not permitted to use Hydrated Lime (Calcium Hydroxide) for the marking of pitches. See Circular Rural Social Scheme/6/2008

### **3.11 Grievance Procedures**

If a Participant or Supervisor has a grievance, they have a right to a hearing by their immediate superior or other management, as circumstances warrant. If unhappy with the outcome of the hearing they must be entitled to appeal to a more senior manager and may be accompanied either by an elected staff representative or other representative of their choice at the appeal hearing.

In the event of the matter not being resolved internally the matter shall be referred through normal industrial relations procedures. The procedures referred to above do not restrict any right in law to apply to a Rights Commissioner, the Labour Relations Commission, the Labour Court, the Employment Appeals Tribunal or Equality Officer as appropriate.

# Rural Social Scheme Operational Procedures Manual

## Section 4 - Supervisors

**Pobal Rural Social Scheme  
Help Desk**

**01-5117241**

**For assistance with all your Rural Social  
Scheme queries**



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## **Section 4 – Supervisors**

Rural Social Scheme Supervisors are employees of their respective Implementing Body. While the job specification and contract of employment for the Rural Social Scheme Supervisors is a matter for each Implementing Body, the Guidelines set out below should be common to all Supervisors.

Travel expenses payable to Rural Social Scheme Supervisors should be in line with the rates payable by the relevant Implementing Body's Company procedures, and should not exceed public sector rates. Details of current rates are available from [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).

The Department pay a grant towards employment in respect of all supervisors, this is payable on a weekly basis by Pobal on the Department's behalf.

The rate payable under this grant in respect of Supervisors contracted to work 39 hours per week is €31,005.51 per annum (i.e. €594.20 per week) and are effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008

All Supervisors are contracted to work 39 hours per week. If Supervisors are working reduced hours as a result of unpaid leave (e.g. Parental Leave/Carer's Leave), the rate of pay should be calculated by using the 39-hour weekly rate on a pro-rata basis.

The Supervisors' pay scale is not linked to any other grade or post (directly or indirectly) in the public service. The Supervisors' pay scale is subject to all general round increases and will be payable at the same time as they would be received by public service workers.

Implementing Bodies have discretion to make an additional payment, however any additional costs must be borne by the Implementing Body.

Implementing Bodies should ensure that each scheme under Rural Social Scheme has Supervisory cover of 39 hours per week.

The ratio of supervisors to participants is to be no more than 1:20. However, an Implementing Body may allow one single instance where the ratio is up to 1:25.

Implementing Bodies wishing to employ an additional Supervisor should only consider doing so, when they have the majority of participants required to fill a new scheme in place. An application for sanction should then be made to the Rural Social Scheme Division of the Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Unit, requesting Departmental approval to employ an additional Supervisor.

In the application, Implementing Bodies should specify (i) the number of participants currently in place to fill the new scheme and (ii) the timeframe within which the remaining number of participants required to fill the scheme are likely to be in place.

Only after receiving approval from the Department, should Implementing Bodies advertise the new post. Under no circumstances must an offer of employment be made to any individual until Departmental approval has been received.

Note: All new Supervisors currently being recruited must work 39 hours

#### **4.1 Annual Leave**

The Supervisors are entitled to 20 days Annual Leave per annum.

**Please note:** An Implementing Body may at its discretion offer enhanced or additional terms, however, any additional costs arising must be borne by the Implementing Body.

#### **4.2 Sick Leave - Supervisors**

Supervisors are entitled to 15 days paid certified sick leave in any 12-month period. This payment should only be made on the production of medical certificates for the relevant period of absence. Thereafter, any certified sick absences will be unpaid.

Supervisors who take more than 3 consecutive day's sick leave must submit a claim form for Illness Benefit / Injury Benefit which can be obtained from their doctor. This form must be signed by the doctor as well as the supervisor and forwarded to the Department of Social Protection or the address on the back of the form.

The section instructing the Department of Social Protection to make the Illness Benefit payment, payable direct to the Implementing Body i.e. the employer must be completed on the form..

*Implementing Bodies must then reimburse Pobal with the full amount of any entitlement to Illness Benefit received from the Department of Social Protection*

Supervisors should be advised that the Department of Social Protection do not pay Illness Benefit for the first 3 days of their absence.

The Sick Pay Scheme will not cover absences relating to the following:

- Traffic accident(s);
- Substance abuse;
- Dangerous sports (i.e. Martial Arts, mountaineering, skiing, parachuting flying as a hobby), or
- Injuries sustained while working for another employer.

Paid sick leave is not statutory and the sick leave/pay entitlements outlined above are the maximum that the Department of Social Protection is prepared to offer.

**Please note:** An Implementing Body may at its discretion offer enhanced or additional terms, however, any additional costs arising must be borne by the Implementing Body.

#### **4.3 Maternity and Adoptive Leave – Supervisors – (See Section 2.12 for details, as same guidelines apply to Supervisors)**

Implementing Bodies will be required to employ a Supervisor on a temporary contract to cover the Supervisor's period of leave.

Implementing Bodies should seek sanction from the Rural Social Scheme Division of the Department of Social Protection, requesting Departmental approval to employ a temporary supervisor

Only after receiving approval from the Department, Implementing Bodies should advertise the temporary post. Under no circumstances must an offer of employment be made to any individual until Departmental approval has been received.

#### **4.4 Supervisory Allowance**

In a situation where an Implementing Body does not wish to recruit a Supervisor, there is provision for the Implementing Body to sub-contract the Supervisory duties to an appropriate local organisation/company.

In such circumstances, a payment of two-thirds of the Supervisor’s current grant is payable. This payment is made 6 monthly in advance by Pobal to the Implementing Body.

The Implementing Body is responsible for ensuring that the subcontracted organisation provides 39 hours per week supervisory cover. They must also ensure that all funding provided to the organisation is spent appropriately.

An additional grant in respect of Employer’s PRSI is not payable where the Supervisory allowance applies. A Contract of Agreement should be signed by the Implementing Body and the subcontracted Organisation. While the terms of this agreement are a matter for the two respective parties, reference should be included regarding the hours per week of cover required. Any new applications for a Supervisory Allowance must have prior approval from the Rural Social Scheme Division of the Department of Social Protection.

#### **4.5 TAX /PRSI/Universal Social Charge**

##### **4.5.1 PAYE – (See Section 2.6.1 for details, as same guidelines apply to Supervisors)**

##### **4.5.2 PRSI**

Supervisors on the Rural Social Scheme are liable to pay a PRSI contribution which entitles them to an ‘A’ contribution on the scheme. On earning amounts above €500 per week, the payment will be 2% on the first €127.00, then 6% on the balance. Although this contribution is reckonable for the purpose of qualifying for all social welfare benefits and pensions, entitlement can only be assessed by the Department of Social & Family Affairs.

##### **4.5.3 UNIVERSAL SOCIAL CHARGE (USC)**

The Universal Social Charge (USC), which comes into effect on 1 January 2011, is a tax payable on gross income, including notional pay, after any relief for certain capital allowances, but before pension contributions.

The rates and thresholds of the Universal Social Charge are as follows:

**\* Individual aged under 70 years**

<b>USC Thresholds</b>	
<b>Rate</b>	
Income up to €10,036	2%
Income from €10,036.01 to €16,016	4%
Income above €16,016	7%

#### **4.6 Chargehand Allowance**

Payment of a chargehand allowance of €50.00 per week may be made to an appropriate Rural Social Scheme Participant, where circumstances warrant the payment of this allowance.

Implementing Bodies should seek sanction from the Rural Social Scheme Division of the Department of Social Protection before deciding to pay a chargehand allowance to a Rural Social Scheme participant. In the application seeking approval to pay an additional chargehand allowance, the Implementing Body must clearly outline the rationale for the justification of payment of the allowance. The application must clearly set out the duties involved and the reasoning behind the payment.

The Implementing Body must not make any offer to pay a chargehand allowance to a Rural Social Scheme participant until Departmental approval has been received. Chargehand allowances will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Division. In situations where a chargehand allowance has been awarded to a participant and the duties of the participant have changed i.e. from the original application, Implementing Bodies should notify the Rural Social Scheme Division of the Department of Social Protection immediately.

#### **4.7 Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA)**

Should any supervisor wish to open a PRSA, or have deductions made towards a current PRSA, all relevant information should be forwarded to Pobal, who will facilitate such a function. Pobal will issue a cheque to the Organisation with which the relevant participant has their PRSA, on a monthly basis. Deductions which are made payable to an approved pension provider are subject to tax relief @ 20%. From 1 January 2011, employee contributions to occupational pension schemes and other pension. Arrangements will no longer be exempt from employee PRSI. Such contributions will also be subject to the Universal Social Charge which came into effect on 1 January 2011.

#### **4.8 Union Membership**

Supervisors are free to join a Union at their discretion. Details of membership should be forwarded to Pobal in order to facilitate the deduction of union subscriptions

#### **4.9 Duties of Rural Social Scheme Supervisor**

##### **Administration**

- To facilitate the recruitment of Rural Social Scheme participants, and to manage and process participants' documentation including applications, assessments, start-up forms, weekly wages ,leavers forms and the annual renewal process.
- To ensure that all participant entitlements as confirmed by the Department of Social Protection are processed correctly for all social welfare entitlements including fuel allowance, medical cards, budget increases etc;
- To ensure that participants are in receipt of the correct Social welfare Payments, that Pobal are notified immediately of any errors and to ensure that any forms or correspondence signed by The Department of Social Protection are not amended under any circumstances;
- To ensure that all information that may have a bearing on participant payment rates is processed accurately and without delay in order to ensure that neither overpayment or underpayment situations occur;
- To implement and manage an effective time keeping record system for participants on projects;

- To produce regular progress reports to the Manager including community work reports, advertisements and personnel reports;
- To make recommendations on materials, and to monitor and record the use of materials purchased for use on their scheme(s);
- To maintain a personnel record for each participant, ensuring confidentiality in relation to such records
  
- To operate within the materials budget allocated and
- To ensure that the scheme operates within the terms of the Company's insurance policy.

### **Community**

- To work closely with the Company's staff and community development officers;
- To support community groups with the implementation of their local work plans;
- To schedule, supervise, support and manage participants in partnership with local community groups;
- To develop and maintain a good working relationship with each community liaison officer, and to maintain community project records including calls and correspondence.

### **Participants**

- To organise with the Manager, the matching of participants to work programmes based on their skills, knowledge and geographical location;
- To liaise with Pobal on behalf of the participants with regard to weekly payments or changes in circumstances;
- To communicate effectively with all participants on the schemes;
- To deal with disciplinary and grievance matters in relation to participants in line with Company policies.

### **Health and Safety**

- To ensure, in association with the Manager, that all work carried out under the Rural Social Scheme is done in compliance with all relevant workplace legislation and in line with current best practice, in relation to, *inter alia*, health and safety and measures against harassment and discrimination;
- Ensure that all work areas provide a safe and healthy environment for participants, both in terms of facilities and work practices;
- To organise with the Manager relevant health and safety training for participants;
- To ensure adequate protective clothing/equipment is purchased and issued to participants.

### **Other**

- To liaise with local agencies including County Council, Health Board, Social Welfare local offices, FÁS, Local Employment service as necessary;
- To attend Supervisor team meetings;
- To ensure that each scheme complies with all the regulations of the Department of Social Protection Rural Social Scheme Unit;
- To represent and promote the Rural Social Scheme in day-to-day work, outside meetings, highlighting the positive benefits of participation for individuals and communities; and
- Any other duties deemed appropriate to the Rural Social Scheme at local level.

#### 4.10 Retirement from the Rural Social Scheme

Rural Social Scheme Supervisors may work on the Rural Social Scheme until the day before their 66th birthday. The State Pension (both Contributory and Non-Contributory) may be payable with effect from the day on which a person reaches 66 years.

Supervisors must not be paid on the weekly payment form on or after their 66<sup>th</sup> birthday

#### 4.11 Universal Social Charge

##### **UNIVERSAL SOCIAL CHARGE (USC)**

The Universal Social Charge (USC), which comes into effect on 1 January 2011, is a tax payable on gross income, including notional pay, after any relief for certain capital allowances, but before pension contributions.

The rates and thresholds of the Universal Social Charge are as follows:

##### **\* Individual aged under 70 years**

<b>USC Thresholds</b>	
<b>Rate</b>	
Income up to €10,036	2%
Income from €10,036.01 to €16,016	4%
Income above €16,016	7%

However supervisors “entitled to a full medical card are specifically excluded from the universal social charge. The exemption exists for people who hold a full medical card. It does not exist for people who hold a GP only medical card. The individual does not need to hold the full medical card for the full year to qualify for the exemption. For example, the card may be issued to the individual in December but the individual is still entitled to the exemption for the full year in question.”

Therefore any supervisor who holds a full medical card, should forward Pobal proof that they are a medical card holder so that Pobal can make arrangements to exclude them from the universal social charge.

*Glossary of circulars Information notices issued by The Rural Social Scheme Unit – Department of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs & Department of Social Protection*

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Circular Reference	Subject
Circular RSS/1/2005	Supervisors Pay
Circular RSS/2/2005	
Circular RSS/3/2005	Increased Grant towards employment of supervisors
Circular RSS/4/2005	Levels of overpayments to participants
Circular RSS/5/2005	Participants eligible for fuel allowance
Circular RSS/6/2005	Deadline for RSS Forms and Weekly payment forms
Circular RSS/7/2005	Participant application form
Circular RSS/8/2005	New participant application form
Circular RSS/9/2005	Pay rate for full time supervisors
Circular RSS/10/2005	Revised pay rate full time supervisors
Circular RSS/11/2005	Implementation of fuel allowance 2005
Circular RSS/12/2005	Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance
Circular RSS/13/2005	
Circular RSS/14/2005	Retirement from the RSS- (revised June 2006)
Circular RSS/15/2005	Retention of medical cards
Circular RSS/16/2005	Contracts under RSS
Circular RSS/17/2005	Re-allocation of RSS places
Circular RSS/18/2005	Christmas payroll 2005
Circular RSS/19/2005	Revised pay for supervisors 2005
Circular RSS/1/2006	Implementation of increased rates to participants
Circular RSS/2/2006	Rural Transport
Circular RSS/3/2006	IQA & CDI revision
Circular RSS/4/2006	Pobal payroll staff & contacts
Circular RSS/5/2006	Child/Sibling Transfer
Circular RSS/6/2006	Health & Safety Requirements
Circular RSS/7/2006	Change of staff @ RSS Unit in Dept
Circular RSS/8/2006	Project details/Administration template
Circular RSS/9/2006	Abolishment of tapered IQA
Circular RSS/10/2006	UB/JB following RSS
Circular RSS/11/2006	Widow(er)s/Surviving Civil Partner eligibility to participate on RSS
Circular Reference	Subject
Circular RSS/12/2006	One parent Family payment recipient eligibility to participate on RSS

*Glossary of circulars Information notices issued by The Rural Social Scheme Unit – Department of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs & Department of Social Protection*

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Circular RSS/13/2006	Qualified adult dependant of a recipient of State Pension – eligibility to participate on RSS.
Circular RSS/14/2006	Removal of CE eligibility
Circular RSS/15/2006	Increased grant to supervisors
Circular RSS/16/2006	Removal of earnings threshold
Circular RSS/17/2006	Warmer homes
Circular RSS/18/2006	Fisherperson - Eligibility
Circular RSS/19/2006	Employing new supervisors
Circular RSS/20/2006	Application Form 2006
Circular RSS/21/2006	New contact details RSS
Circular RSS/22/2006	Number of RSS participants
Circular RSS/23/2006	Contract templates under review
Circular RSS/24/2006	Participant Contracts
Circular RSS/25/2006	Back to Work & Back to Education Allowance
Circular RSS/26/2006	Contract for RSS Supervisors
Circular RSS/27/2006	Procedure for final places & quota
Circular RSS/28/2006	Quotas- Notification to IBs
Circular RSS/29/2006	Free Fuel allowance 2006
Circular RSS/30/2006	Fisherperson- eligibility to participate on RSS
Circular RSS/31/2006	Extra places on RSS- press release
Circular RSS/32/2006	Vacant places- RSS
Circular RSS/33/2006	Eligibility on RSS from UB/JB
Circular RSS/34/2006	Temporary contracts RSS participants
Circular RSS/35/2006	Recommendations RSS Seminar- Thurles 2006
Circular RSS/36/2006	Capital Funding 2006
Circular RSS/37/2006	Guidelines Capital Funding 2006
Circular RSS/38/2006	Allocation of 100 extra places on RSS
Circular RSS/39/2006	Allocation of remaining RSS places
Circular RSS/40/2006	Participants on Disability Allowance & J class PRSI contribution
Circular RSS/41/2006	Insurance & Health and Safety
Circular RSS/1/2007	Annual Leave ~participants
Circular RSS/2/2007	Increased grant supervisors wages
Circular Reference	Subject
Circular RSS/3/2007	Increase in upper limits IQA/CDI
Circular RSS/4/2007	Capital Funding 2007
Circular RSS/5/2007	Administration Funding
Circular RSS/6/2007	Revised pay supervisors
Circular RSS/7/2007	Capital Materials 2007
Circular RSS/8/2007	Annual Reports & Audited Accounts
Circular RSS/9/2007	Garda Clearance
Circular RSS/10/2007	Renewal of Contracts
Circular RSS/11/2007	Higher Education Grants

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Circular RSS/12/2007	Waiting Lists
Circular RSS/13/2007	Application Form 2007
Circular RSS/14/2007	Contract template supervisors 2007
Circular RSS/16/2007	Temporary participant Contract template 2007
Circular RSS/17/2007	Eligibility self-employed fisherpersons
Circular RSS/18/2007	Fuel Allowance 2007
Circular RSS/19/2007	Filling of RSS vacancies
Circular RSS/20/2007	Annual leave entitlements
Circular RSS/21/2007	RSS projects
Circular RSS/22/2007	Capital Materials
Circular RSS/1/2008	Revised pay for Supervisors
Circular RSS/2/2008	IQA/CDI applications
Circular RSS/3/2008	Category of “other” work
Circular RSS/4/2008	Renewal process for year 5
Circular RSS/5/2008	Renewal Form 2008
Circular RSS/6/2008	Hydrated lime- use of
Circular RSS/7/2008	Documentation to confirm 2actively farming”
Circular RSS/8/2008	<u>Back to School Clothing &amp; Footwear Allowance</u>
Circular RSS/9/2008	Land area requirement for eligibility RSS
Circular RSS/10/2008	Fixed term participants contract template 2008
Circular RSS/11/2008	RSS contract year eligibility
Circular RSS/12/2008	Capital expenditure 2008
Circular RSS/13/2008	Signage
Circular RSS/14/2008	Supervisor contract templates
Circular RSS/15/2008	Free Fuel Allowance 2008
Circular RSS/16/2008	6 week payment after death on RSS
Circular RSS/17/2008	Participant application form
Circular RSS/18/2008	Administration & animation templates
Circular Reference	Subject
Circular RSS/19/2008	Annual Report & audited accounts
Circular RSS/20/2008	Annual leave
Circular RSS/21/2008	Increased grant towards supervisors pay
Circular RSS/22/2008	IQA payments if husband/wife/civil partner/partner in receipt of a social welfare payment
Circular RSS/23/2008	Cohesion- ~Transfer of RSS
Circular RSS/1/2009	Capital/Materials/Administration funding 2009
Circular RSS/2/2009	Data protection guidelines
Circular RSS/3/2009	Capital Materials returns request
Circular RSS/4/2009	Renewals process Year 6 RSS
Circular RSS/5/2009	Child Dependant Increase (CDI)
Circular RSS/6/2009	Participant contract template

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Circular RSS/7/2009	Supervisor contract templates
Circular RSS/8/2009	Christmas bonus
Circular RSS/9/2009	Carers leave
Circular RSS/10/2009	IQA payments when spouse reaches 66
Circular RSS/11/2009	Category of “other” work
Circular RSS/12/2009	Expenditure Administration & Animation funding
Circular RSS/13/2009	Work in graveyards
Circular RSS/14/2009	Work in graveyards – further information
Circular RSS/15/2009	National Monuments
Circular RSS/16/2009	Participant application form 2009-10
Circular RSS/17/2009	Filling of vacancies
Circular RSS/18/2009	Annual reports & audited accounts
Circular RSS/19/2009	Materials Funding 2009
Circular RSS/1/2010	Materials funding 2010
Circular RSS/2/2010	Participants sick leave entitlements
Circular RSS/3/2010	Template administration returns 2009
Circular RSS/4/2010	Eligibility & Performance Management
Circular RSS/5/2010	Supervisor Contract templates
Circular RSS/6/2010	Participant contract template
Circular RSS/7/2010	Renewal process year 7 RSS
Circular RSS/8/2010	Persons nominated for responsibility of points 1&4 on Dept Agreement.
Circular RSS/9/2010	Garda vetting administration
Circular RSS/10/2010	Annual report & audited accounts
<b>Circular Reference</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Circular RSS/11/2010	Filling of RSS vacancies/Application & contract templates
Circular RSS/12/2010	Higher Education - Special Rate of Maintenance Grants Scheme (TOP-UP GRANT)

*Glossary of circulars Information notices issued by The Rural Social Scheme Unit – Department of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs & Department of Social Protection*

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Information Notices issued by Department - Rural Social Scheme Unit

Date issued	Subject
16/10/2009	Garda vetting training
7/1/2010	Work during severe weather conditions
14/1/2010	Embargo on filling RSS vacancies
12/8/2010	Transfer of responsibility for RSS to Department of Social Protection
28/10/2010	Change of Address National Monuments Service
22/12/2010	Leave taken during severe weather conditions
14/1/2011	Filling of RSS vacancies
26/1/2011	Re-location of RSS Unit in Dept