

Income Protection A Guide to Claims for Employers

Irish Life Corporate Business



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Irish Life

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First Class Providers of
Income Protection

An income if an employee
cannot work as a result of
illness or injury.

contents

1	Introduction	Page 4
2	Monitoring long-term absences	Page 7
3	Submitting a claim	Page 9
4	Medical reports	Page 12
5	Claim assessment	Page 15
6	Paying Benefit	Page 17
7	The claim review	Page 20
8	Ceased claims	Page 22
9	Redundancy/termination of employment	Page 24
10	Health Claims Advisors	Page 26
11	Returning to work and rehabilitation programmes	Page 28



introduction

Irish Life's strength in Income Protection

Irish Life is the leading provider of Income Protection in Ireland.

We currently provide insurance to over 275,000 people covering a wide range of occupations.

Irish Life pays income benefits to 2,200 people to bridge the gap between social welfare entitlements and the income claimants require to maintain a reasonable standard of living when they are ill or injured.

The annual payout is over €49 million.

Income Protection is one of the corner stones of Irish Life's business. It provides benefits to people when they really need them. However, Irish Life's Income Protection benefit goes much further than simply ensuring the benefit cheque gets there on time.

After a serious illness or accident, many people are unable to adjust to their changed circumstances without the benefit of supportive advice and assistance. Irish Life believe therefore in the formation and maintenance of long-term relationships with the income protection claimant. The relationship spans from managing genuine claims efficiently to offering rehabilitation and retraining possibilities and also trained help and advice. All of these services are offered with the objective of restoring physical, mental, social and occupational capability as quickly and as fully as possible.

Irish Life want to build this business by working together with employers and brokers and this booklet is a step in that process.



Irish Life is dedicated to providing all its customers with excellent service - this booklet forms part of that commitment. It contains essential information concerning Irish Life's benefit application documentation, our assessment and review processes - in fact, all the necessary information you require in order that any application for benefit you may have to make in future on behalf of an ill or injured employee will be as straightforward as possible.

The purpose of your Irish Life Income Protection Scheme is to partially replace the income of employees during long-term absence from work due to illness or injury. This is a very valuable benefit for an employer to provide for employees.

Payment begins once a predetermined period ("the deferred period") has passed after the start of the absence from work. The deferred period is usually a continuous 13, 26 or 52 weeks, but this may differ according to the specific terms of your policy.

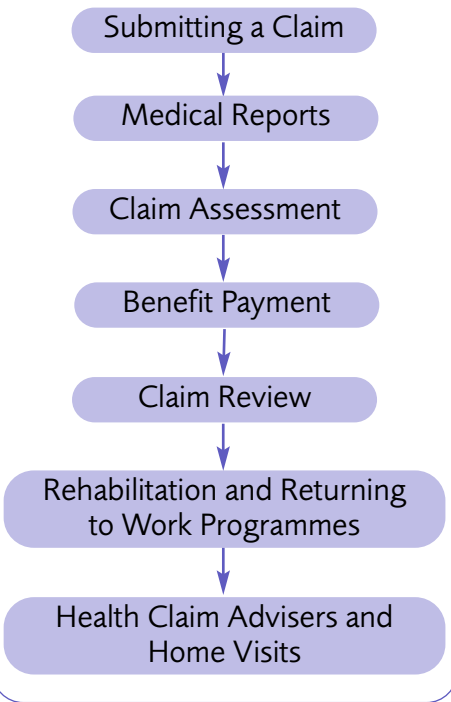


Please also check the specific terms of your policy.

Benefits payable under the scheme may increase annually by the lesser of an agreed percentage or the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the preceding twelve months.

The scheme may also provide a proportionate benefit for employees who are unable to return to work fully and either resume their normal occupation on a part-time basis, at reduced earnings, or undertake an alternative occupation at reduced earnings. This is a valuable support for employees who are keen to return to the workforce but who cannot resume their original job in a full capacity.

These are typical steps of a claim process:



Employees who qualify under the scheme will be paid under the terms of the policy until:

- they resume work
- they are fit enough to return to work
- their employment ceases
- the expiry date of payment
- retirement
- death

whichever is the earlier.

The benefit may also cease if an employee takes up an alternative occupation.

The following pages explain how you should go about submitting a claim and how such claims are processed. It is essential that you, as the employer, and Irish Life work together in managing any potential or existing claims.

②

monitoring
long-term
absences

All your employees should be made aware that although Income Protection is a valuable benefit, it is not a pension. Your scheme is specifically designed to provide adequate financial protection, but not to be so beneficial to employees that they have no financial incentive to return to work once they are capable of doing so.

The claims experience for the scheme has a direct effect on the premium rate charged and poor claims experience is therefore bad for both the employer and Irish Life.

Monitor long-term absences

As a concerned employer you will rightly expect genuine claims to be paid. To help you plan efficiently for potential claims, we recommend you monitor any absences that are not of a short duration. If you keep in contact with employees who are incapacitated on a long-term basis you will be able to give them any assistance they need and ensure that a claim is made in good time.

Carry out the following safeguards:

To control your claims experience, it is advisable as an employer to:

- 1) Consult your Company Doctor for advice.
- 2) Arrange for your Company Doctor to obtain medical reports from the employee's General Practitioner and Specialist.
- 3) Consider referring the ill/injured employee to a specialist or paying for an intervention such as physiotherapy.
- 4) Arrange for your HR Department or Occupational Health Nurse to visit/meet with your employee.
- 5) Maintain contact with Irish Life and/or your Broker for assistance and advice.

3

submitting
a claim

Before you start to make a claim it is important you have the correct documentation. We require a number of documents to be submitted with the claim:

- Employment Information Form
- Job description
- Employee's Claim Form
- Medical Certificate
- Proof of age (unless age has already been admitted for scheme purposes)

- **Employment Information Form**

The Employment Information Form needs to be completed by the employer and provides essential details on the employment status, other claims and social welfare entitlements. It can also be used to provide a written job description if a formal document is not available. A detailed job description is essential in assessing whether or not the employee is fit to resume work. A functional or layperson's description will be of more benefit than a technical job specification.

- **Employee's Claim Form**

This form must be fully completed by the employee and provides the consent for Irish Life to obtain the necessary medical evidence or other information.

- **Medical Certificate**

The employee should take this form to their General Practitioner or Specialist for completion and it should then be returned with the Employee's Claim Form. The employee is responsible for the cost of completion of the Medical Certificate.

- **Proof of Age/Birth Certificate**

We also need the employee's original Birth Certificate or an alternative proof of age (Driver's Licence/Passport) to be submitted. A copy will be taken and we will return the original to you as soon as possible.

- If copies of any hospital/specialist reports are available, they should also be submitted as they may speed up the processing of the claim.

Do not send short GP Certificates

Throughout the life of the claim, please do not send us routine medical certificates issued by the employee's General Practitioner, as these are not used when assessing a claim. They are not sufficient to prove continued inability to work.

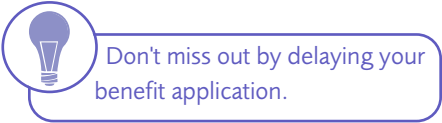
Submitting a claim in time during the deferred period

It is very important that your benefit application documentation is received well before the end of the deferred period (the initial period of absence during which no benefits are paid by us - e.g. the first 26 weeks).



It is very important that all documentation is completed correctly to avoid delays. Please ensure the Employment Information Form and Claim Form are signed and dated and that all the questions have been answered in full. Any omissions may cause unnecessary delay while documents are returned for completion.

Ideally we would like to receive claim forms at least 10 weeks before the end of a 26 week deferred period and at least 15 weeks before the end of a 52 week deferred period, to help us be in a position to notify you of a formal decision before benefit payments are due to commence.



Deferred Period	Submit your claim before the end of the deferred period
26 weeks	10 weeks
52 weeks	15 weeks

If you delay submitting the benefit application, you might miss the expiry date of the deferred period. The later the claim is submitted, the more difficult it is for us to collate medical evidence in retrospect. We would stress the importance of notifying us in good time. Where claim forms are submitted late i.e. after the expiry of the deferred period, Irish Life may only be in a position to pay a claim from the date of receipt of the forms. In some cases it may not be possible to consider a claim at all if there is a lengthy delay involved. Therefore, it is vitally important that claim forms are submitted on time.



medical reports

Obtaining medical evidence

If the Medical Certificate is completed by the General Practitioner and the employee is also under the specialist care of a Consultant, a request will be made to the Consultant to provide us with full detailed information from the employee's case notes. In most cases, a medical examination will also be required.

The need for an examination by a Consultant of our choice

This will be carried out by an appropriate independent specialist medical examiner of Irish Life's choice, who has not previously treated the employee.

The need for such an examination should not be interpreted as cause for concern - it is simply another element in the process of obtaining independent detailed information to assess the employee's disability.

Arranging a Medical Examination

Certain aspects must be taken into account when arranging a medical examination:

- **The Specialist** - the appropriate Specialist has to be found.
- **The location** - we want to arrange the examination as near as possible to where the employee lives.

- **Obtaining appointments** - this can be difficult and may lead to an examination some distance from the employee's home. However, this should rarely delay the claim where claim forms have been submitted on time.

Minimising delays

Unfortunately, it is after the requests for medical information have been sent that delays most often occur. Accordingly, we allow three weeks from despatch of the requests before we start 'chasing' the information and we continue to do so at regular intervals until it is received.



Delays can be considerably reduced if the employee also telephones their GP or Consultant. Of course, this is entirely optional. The employee should always contact either yourself or the broker first to learn the current position of the claim.

On receipt, the information is immediately passed to our Claims Assessors. Usually, at this stage, there will be sufficient medical evidence for us to make a decision on the claim.

However, this is not always the case - the information can be very brief and in such cases further clarification may be requested from the General Practitioner or the Consultant. In some cases, we may request a copy of their full medical records if they are relevant to the application for benefit.

Payment for Specialist Reports, further GP Reports and the Examination Report

Irish Life will pay for these reports and will also pay reasonable travel expenses in respect of attendance for a medical examination. By this we mean bus or train fares or a contribution towards petrol expenses. We are unable to pay food or overnight accommodation expenses.

Confidentiality

All medical reports are obtained for the benefit of our Chief Medical Officer and are treated as strictly private and confidential.

5

claim

assessment

All factors are taken into account

When assessing the claim on behalf of your employee, the Assessor will look at all the medical evidence received and any Health Claims Advisor report, as well as considering the employee's occupation (the occupation they were following immediately prior to disability) and the policy terms and conditions. Our Chief Medical Officer will also often be consulted.

Functional disability

The Assessors will use the information gathered to determine the extent to which the employee is unable to perform the material and substantial duties of their occupation - in other words, the extent of functional disability. It is important to note that diagnosis of a condition does not in itself necessarily always denote functional disability.

The claim decision

At this stage a decision is made either to admit or decline the claim. The decision is immediately notified to you or your consultant/broker in writing.

If the claim is admitted, we have accepted liability and will pay the claim. Our letter of acceptance will contain details of the benefit payable.

Payment for a stated period

Sometimes it is clear from the information received that a full recovery and return to work can be anticipated within a short period. In these cases we will notify you that our liability is accepted for this limited period only, after which the benefit payments will cease.

- Should the employee return to work earlier than this, notify us of this date when known, so that the payment can be adjusted accordingly.
- Should the employee not return to work within this period, we would require notification to enable us to make further enquiries.

Declined claims

If the claim is declined, the letter will indicate the reasons behind the decision. Our Chief Medical Officer may also write to the employee's General Practitioner, if requested to do so, explaining, with further detail, the reasons behind the decision. There is an appeals process (see page 23) and any appeal must be submitted with supporting evidence within 3 months of the decision.

6

paying
benefit

The first benefit payment

Benefit is always paid monthly in arrears.

Sometimes, due to various factors, such as delays in receiving medical evidence, the decision to admit the claim may not be made until after the payment was due to commence.



Keep the employee on the payroll. It is important to note the claimant should always remain an employee throughout the claim process to be an insured member under your policy.

Subsequent payments

Subsequently, payment will be made on the monthly due date.

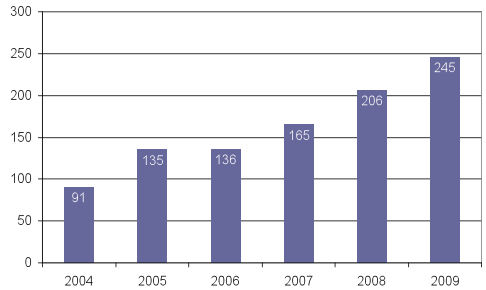
For how long will the benefit be paid?

Benefit will continue to be paid under the terms of the policy as long as the medical evidence and any other relevant evidence in our opinion continues to support the claim.

Return to Work - Success Rates

We have been hugely successful in assisting increasing numbers of employees to return to work over the years. This is the best possible outcome for employees, employers and the insurer and has led to significant premium reductions for those employers with good claims experience.

Return to Work Trends 2004 to 2009



Return to work trends 2004-2009

Source: Irish Life Corporate Business

Tax/PRSI/Income Levy

The benefit may consist of two parts:

- the employee's benefit
- the Premium Protection.

The employee's benefit should be paid to the claimant through your normal payroll system. It is treated as salary for income tax purposes and therefore, comes under the PAYE system.

PRSI should be deducted from the employee's benefit, subject to the normal PRSI thresholds and exemption limits. The claimant's PRSI class may change and it is important that you are notified by the claimant if this happens. Also, if the claimant is exempt from paying PRSI, you should be informed of this. You should contact The Department of Social Protection if you have any queries regarding the operation of PRSI. You should also keep in regular contact with your employee to ensure that the appropriate PRSI contributions (if any) are being made by you on their behalf.

The Income Levy will also be deducted from the employee's benefit, subject to the normal thresholds and exemption limits. If the

claimant is exempt from paying the Income Levy you should be informed of this. You should also be informed by your employee if there is any change in their exemption status at any stage in the future. You should contact the Revenue Commissioners if you have any queries regarding the application of the Income Levy.

The Premium Protection element should be retained by you as the employer and used to contribute to the continuing cost of the claimant's pension and life assurance benefits.

If you hold a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme with Irish Life, the Premium Protection Benefit will not be paid to you. Instead, it will be transferred internally on a monthly basis directly to the pension fund.

Maximum Benefit

The benefit payable, including amounts from other sources, cannot exceed a proportion of the employee's salary, typically 2/3 of the salary. The amounts from other sources could include any other salary or income, Social Welfare payments, other similar insurance benefits (including disability mortgage protection insurance) and any annualised lump sum awards or settlements made in respect of the disablement.

Accepted Residences

We are generally unable to assess claims or offer claims management services outside of Ireland or the UK. Employees will therefore only be entitled to benefit if they are

ordinarily resident within Ireland or the United Kingdom. The benefit will not be payable for more than 6 calendar months in total while employees are outside these countries.

Relapse after returning to work - linked claim

Sometimes people return to work, but their original condition subsequently worsens to such an extent they are no longer able to continue working. If an employee returns to work for less than six months before this happens we will consider 'linking' the claim.

This means another deferred period will not apply and payment of benefit will resume immediately, at the same level as when benefit ceased, providing the objective medical evidence supports the claim.

Another deferred period will not apply only if the reason for the second absence is directly related to the original disability.

Partial Benefit

If, immediately following a period of disablement when the employee was receiving full benefit, the employee is unable to carry out their normal occupation but, with our approval, returns to their own or any occupation at a reduced rate of earnings, the benefit may continue to be paid but at a reduced rate. A benefit formula is used to ensure that the employee is better off financially as a result or any such partial return to work.



the claim review

The claim review procedure

Claims are always reviewed on a regular basis. Where a recovery is indicated, we will review the claim as warranted by the medical information.

A Certificate of Continued Disablement may be requested. This is made of two parts.

- One for completion by the claimant and
- the second part to be completed by the attending doctor/specialist.

The completed form should then be returned to us. Irish Life cannot be responsible for the doctor's fee for this Certificate.

We may also obtain up-to-date information from the Specialist on the current extent of the employee's functional disability. Like the GP's report, this will normally be provided based on the employee's case notes. Occasionally however, the Specialist may wish to re-examine the employee before submitting a report. An independent medical examination by a selected Specialist may also be requested or we may arrange for our Health Claims Advisor to meet the claimant to discuss the various aspects of the claim.

While the vast majority of claims are absolutely genuine, some are not. We have a duty to ensure that we only pay claims that satisfy the policy terms and conditions. For these reasons, we use the services of Private Investigators on occasion as one of our tools to help us determine whether claims are valid. The Private Investigation companies used are large professional companies which must be accredited or be members of an

appropriate trade body. They are bound by a confidentiality agreement and by the terms of the Data Protection Acts. This means that information given to them by us as part of their instructions, and gathered by them on our behalf, will not be disclosed to any other party. On completion of an investigation, the Private Investigation Company must deliver all the data collected in relation to the investigation to us and delete all information from their own records. Private Investigators must also comply with and operate within a Code of Practice prepared by us.

Payment for claim review information

We pay the General Practitioner's and the Specialist's fees for any information requested directly by us. However, we do not pay for any incidental expenses the employee may incur in connection with the claim review apart from reasonable travel expenses in respect of any examination arranged by us as mentioned previously.

When might benefits cease?

If the medical evidence and any other relevant evidence received at the review in our opinion supports the claim, then benefit will continue to be paid. However, if the evidence does not confirm the employee continues to be functionally disabled under the terms of the policy, then we will be obliged to cease payment and we will advise you accordingly.



ceased claims

If the decision to cease the benefit is made, you or your broker/consultant will be notified in writing, in advance, to allow time for an appeal if necessary. As with the initial claim assessment, the letter will indicate the reasons behind our decision to cease benefit.



Make sure we are notified if the position changes. It is worth remembering that we can only make a decision on the medical evidence on file. If, after the decision to cease the claim, the employee has to have unexpected further treatment, we cannot act unless we are aware of the current situation.

Appeals

Appeals are dealt with by separate Claims Assessors within Irish Life to enable a fresh review of the claim.

Further up-to-date specialist medical evidence would be required in order to support an appeal. The information needs to be provided by the claimant. The decision may then be upheld, the benefit payment could be reinstated or, as happens in the majority of appeals, a further independent specialist medical examination may be required.

If an appeal is successful, benefits will be reinstated from the month they were ceased, provided that medical evidence supports this.

Please note that not all appeals are successful and the reasons for the rejection

of an appeal will be given in writing. The Financial Services Ombudsman may subsequently have a role in resolving any disputes once our internal dispute resolution procedures have been exhausted.



At any time during the review of a claim, the current position can be checked by telephoning Irish Life on 01 704 1802.

Return to work

To ensure accurate benefits are paid, it is very important we are notified immediately when an employee returns to work.

Death

Regrettably, some employees die whilst in receipt of benefit. If this happens it is very important we are notified as soon as possible. Any overpayment of benefit in respect of a period after the date of death will have to be refunded to Irish Life.

9

redundancy/
termination of
employment

Let us know if redundancy is being considered.

If you wish to terminate a claimant's employment after the end of the deferred period, you should notify us in writing before the decision has been finalised or any action taken.



This is important because, in accordance with the policy terms and conditions, once an employee's employment is terminated he or she is no longer a member of the Income Protection Scheme and no benefit is payable.

In special circumstances we may be able to waive this condition and continue to pay the benefit directly to the claimant. This would be solely at Irish Life's discretion and has implications which would have to be considered individually.

10

health claims advisors

Trained assistance and advice in a time of need

Our Income Protection goes much further than simply ensuring the benefit cheque gets there on time.

As part of our claims management philosophy, we try to get to know each of our clients as an individual and to tailor our services to their requirements, where appropriate.

In our experience, when a client has suffered a serious illness or accident that prevents them from working, there are questions which people sometimes find difficult to get answered. The aim of our home visit service is to help with some of these aspects and also to provide supportive advice and assistance.

Visits to clients whose claims have not yet been admitted will generally be arranged by appointment.

Subsequent visits, in respect of claims which are in payment, can be either by appointment or unannounced.

Health Claims Advisors can provide advice about:

- The claims assessment processes
- Possible rehabilitation supports available from Irish Life
- The role of outside agencies and the supports they can provide
- Planning the transition back into the workforce
- Financial safety nets which offer help in attempting a return to work

11

returning to
work and
rehabilitation
programmes

Rehabilitation

Irish Life provide access to a number of rehabilitation services including:

- Mental Health Rehabilitation Programme
- Cancer Rehabilitation Service
- Springback Programme
- Career Change Programmes



These approved programmes are fully funded by Irish Life and have been hugely successful in helping claimants to return to work.

Although the employee might not be able to resume their original occupation on a full-time basis, they may recover sufficiently to be able to work part-time, or to take an alternative job at a reduced salary. Irish Life should be notified in advance and a proportionate benefit may be payable so they do not suffer financially as they take this first step towards rehabilitation. It is very important when a benefit is being paid on this basis that we are notified of any salary increases so benefit can be adjusted before incorrect payments occur.

Mental Health Rehabilitation Programme

This Programme is suitable for anyone who has experienced mental health difficulties that have resulted in a period of absence from work and who is experiencing difficulties in returning to paid employment.

It is based around 4 major themes that are addressed in a variety of ways. Work under

each theme involves a combination of individual consultations with both the Rehabilitation Co-ordinator and relevant professionals.

It also includes home exercises that are designed to encourage exploration and increase awareness.

Elements of the Programme:

1 Exploring mental health

This initial phase is designed to help the participant consider the meaning of the terms mental health and mental ill health and the impact that their own difficulties have had on their life.

2 Optimising functioning

This strand aims to maximise function both physically and socially and to raise awareness of how attitudes and behaviour can impact on the ability to return to work.

3 Regaining and retaining mental health

The aim of the work carried out under this section is to build psychological resilience to prevent or tackle mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety and to equip participants with the skills to tackle their own emotional difficulties.

4 Returning to work

Work carried out under this theme aims to facilitate a return to work and to explore the impact of the participant's own mental health difficulties on work.

Cancer Rehabilitation Service

Our Cancer Rehabilitation Programme was designed in association with the Beacon Clinic. It is natural for people who have completed cancer treatment to be worried about a recurrence and what the future might hold for them. Returning to the workplace can evoke other concerns including a fear of not being able to cope, a fear of isolation and a fear of not being accommodated if the person has specific requirements to enable them to complete their job. The programme is designed to assist people who have suffered from cancer during this transition phase back into the workplace.

Elements of the Programme:

1 Suitability assessment

This initial phase will involve a consultation with the Occupational Health Physician who will thoroughly evaluate the participant's health and assess their suitability to participate in the programme. This phase also includes the gathering of information from their medical doctors in order to build up a full medical history.

2 Rehabilitation treatments

During this intensive 6 week programme, participants will have regular meetings with their Case Manager who will consult with all the parties providing rehabilitation on the programme. During the programme, they will receive treatment from an Occupational Health Physician, a

Psychotherapist and a Lifestyle Consultant. Where required, referrals will also be made to other medical specialists, and this may include physiotherapy.



The programme is designed to be flexible and can be organised around medical appointments, or a phased return to work which may have already started.

Completion of the programme offers assistance in returning to work, and getting closer to the life participants had before they had cancer. The programme is directed by an Oncologist and delivered by a very experienced multidisciplinary team. The aim is that this programme will be the final milestone for people in their recovery from cancer.

The Springback Programme

The Springback Programme was developed in association with the Blackrock Clinic. It is designed to help people suffering from back pain to return to work at the earliest possible opportunity. The programme is available nationwide.

The aim of the programme is to:

- Enable people to become more active and to encourage them to self-manage their current symptoms and any potential relapses.
- Provide participants with an independent exercise programme that can be pursued indefinitely.

Essentially, the focus of the entire programme is to achieve pre-set goals including improved functional capacity and the ability to return to work.

Elements of the Programme:

1 Initial Assessment

Following an assessment by Irish Life, participants are referred to the Blackrock Clinic Physiotherapy Department where objective measures are taken. These provide the baseline.

2 Rehabilitation

Participants are either treated at the Blackrock Clinic or referred to a local chartered physiotherapist for rehabilitation. The Springback Programme generally consists of 10 one-hour rehabilitation sessions followed by a reassessment at the Blackrock Clinic.

3 Final Assessment

Following completion of rehabilitation, a final assessment at the Blackrock Clinic is organised. The assessment involves repeating all physical measures and all self-assessment questionnaires. At this time, the personal goals and the return to work status are reviewed.



Since its development, the Springback Programme has been very successful. Significantly, it has achieved its primary objective of assisting many people to return to work.

Career Change Programmes

Some employees who have suffered serious illness will not have the ability to return to their normal occupation. However, they may be capable of taking up alternative employment or careers. We therefore fund and provide access to a Career Change Consultant. This ensures individually tailored assessment and follow-on sessions with the Consultant. The main items covered by the programme are:

- Assessing personal strengths, abilities and experience.
- Examining career options.
- Retraining options.
- CV and personal profile preparation.
- Researching and targeting companies.
- Job searching.
- Interview preparation.
- Job placement.
- Starting a new business or being self-employed.

Irish Life has been very successful in assisting employees in finding new jobs, changing careers or starting new businesses.

Contact us

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