

***'Infoline' operated by the Workplace Relations Commission's  
Information and Customer Services Unit (ICS), Ireland***

<b>Title of the policy or measure (in English)</b>	<i>'Infoline'</i> – operated by the Information and Customer Services Unit (ICS) at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)
• Country	Ireland
• Sectors	All
• What groups are targeted by the measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employers (directly targeted)</li> <li>- Workers (directly targeted)</li> <li>- Legal Practitioners (directly targeted)</li> <li>- Employer representatives (directly targeted)</li> <li>- Employee representatives (directly targeted)</li> </ul>
• Purpose of measure	Changing attitudes: awareness raising
• Short sentence summarising the measure	The WRC's Information and Customer Services Unit (ICS) operates a dedicated anonymous phone number or Infoline (Lo-call*: 1890 80 80 90) during working hours (930 – 1700 hrs) Monday to Friday which provides impartial information to callers on employment rights, employment equality, equal status and related legislation. <sup>i</sup>
<b>Background</b>	
• Background context driving the implementation of the measure	The purpose of the WRC is “to be a world leader in delivering a workplace relations service to provide for variable means of redress, effective enforcement within a reasonable period, and to reduce the cost to employees and business when processing issues through industrial relations and employment rights machinery in a user-friendly, independent, effective, impartial and cost-effective manner.” Within this context one of the services offered, among others, includes information provision on employment rights and entitlements in the form of the Information and Customer Services (ICS) Unit which provides an Infoline for these purposes. <sup>ii</sup>
• When was the measure implemented? (including start date and end date/ongoing)	The WRC <i>'Infoline'</i> has been in operation since the commencement of the WRC on the 1 October 2015 and is ongoing. <sup>iii</sup>
• Names(s) of authorities/bodies/organisations involved	Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)
• Scope of the measure (a pilot project, nationwide, regional wide)	National
• Type of (policy) measure	Tool
• Key objectives of the measure	<p><b>General objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- . The aim is to provide both employers and employees with the information they require to ensure that their workplace operates to the best standards in terms of compliance with employment rights and industrial relations legislation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific objectives:</b></p>

- To provide information on an individual basis to employers and employees and members of the public on employment rights and entitlements and industrial relations issues;
- To provide clear, accurate, relevant information delivered in a friendly and professional manner<sup>iv</sup>;
- To provide information on redress for members of the public who have been discriminated against by service providers;
- To provide information on employment permits and making an application for an employment permit.

#### Specific measure

- Description of how the measure operates in practice

Information on rights and entitlements under employment legislation is provided by the WRC Information and Customer Service Unit, free of charge.<sup>v</sup>

The Information and Customer Services Unit has set up a dedicated anonymous telephone call-in service, *Infoline*.

- Infoline is manned by experienced WRC employees (Information Officers). It operates Monday to Friday from 930 hours to 1700 hours, and has a built-in automated feature for calls received after-hours.
- The service is based in Carlow but has Information Officers located in all the regional offices including, Dublin, Sligo, Shannon and Cork. Call management technology delivers an integrated service across multiple geographic centres.
- The Carlow contact centre is manned by a staff of 6 WRC employees (Information Officers) from a wider body of 24 staff who work two days on phones and are involved in other activities for the remainder of the week e.g. processing and answering e-mail enquiries.
- The Information Officers provide information related to labour law, mediation, adjudication, work permits (how to apply for one and the status of permit requests), published decisions of the WRC and Labour Court decisions, redundancy and also on how to use the online complaint forms provided on the WRC's website.
- Most enquiries are related to employment rights, employment permits, terms of employment, payment of wages, conciliation, redundancy and unfair dismissal etc.
- When an interested party dials the dedicated phone number s/he is greeted with a welcome message and is informed of the possible cost of the call.
- The call flow issues priority status to calls that have been on hold the longest and provides recorded information to the caller about the service that will be provided by the WRC.
- Before getting through to one of the WRC's Information Officers, callers can listen to a list of pre-recorded answers that might provide the required information.
- For each call the WRC Information Officers use a network access database to record specific information related to the call such as the status of the person calling (employee, employer), the region (or county) the enquiry relates to, the sector of the activity and the type of enquiry.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What resources and other relevant organisational aspects are involved?</li> </ul>	<p>Original set up costs (software plus hardware) cost EUR 20 000 with residual annual technology licencing costs per deployed phone agent of approximately EUR 620 by 24 information officers (actively on the call-taking roster and using the agent<sup>vi</sup>)<sup>vii</sup></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the source(s) of funding?</li> </ul>	<p>The Workplace Relations Commission is funded from the Central Exchequer and direct government expenditure</p>
<p><b>Evaluation and outcome</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the measure achieved its objectives?</li> </ul>	<p>Based on a user survey of services provided by the WRC including its call centre which was undertaken in 2017, the Infoline has proven to be successful. The callers who consented to be surveyed were asked about the efficiency of the call centre. The results showed overall satisfaction with the service was very high at 91 %, while 92 % of callers surveyed said that they were likely to use the service in the future as they had found it useful and they would recommend the service. The survey covered issues of ease of finding the contact details, waiting times, usefulness of pre-recorded information and then standard and usefulness of the information delivered by the Information Officers. The survey asked whether action had been taken on foot of contact to the “Infoline” and 90 % had already taken action or were planning to take action or decided not to act.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment method (including indicators used to measure its impact), and the outputs and outcomes achieved</li> </ul>	<p>The WRC are committed to regular surveys of its customers with the first survey having taken place in 2017. From 2019 the WRC will have a communications strategy in place which will seek to bolster the work of the Infoline through the use of an improved public website and the creation of social media accounts to enhance WRC engagement with the public. Engagement on these platforms will also be evaluated regularly by the Business Solutions and Communications units.</p> <p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>The Infoline dealt with some 52 001 calls during 2017 with 71 % of the calls made by employees and 20 % of the calls received coming from employers.<sup>viii</sup> The total number of calls answered since its inception in 2015 to 2017 was 128 735.<sup>ix</sup></p> <p>At just under 20 000 calls, by far the highest call type related to employment permits queries. Such calls, given the urgency and personal impact of the issue, are by their nature complex and time-consuming. Other topics that generated a high number of calls related to working hours (14 %), terms of employment (9 %), payment of wages and redundancies (7 % each). In addition, the Service dealt with almost 6 000 calls in relation to making a complaint to the WRC.</p> <p><b>Outcomes<sup>x</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Infoline has improved the general availability of information on the main issues affecting the workplace through the provision of statistics gathered as part of the call-taking function and entered into a bespoke database developed for that purpose.</li> <li>• The database development included the provision to record key information on queries. This enhances the WRC’s ability to anticipate likely questions and standardise their response to similar questions raised by callers.</li> <li>• 90 % of callers surveyed had already taken action or were planning to take action or decided not to act. Actions taken, includes for example, discussing the issue in question with the employer, mediation and</li> </ul>

	<p>discussion with trade union officials, or referring a complaint to the adjudication service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is difficult to quantify trade disputes or complaints averted by the provision of information via the Infoline. However the 2017 survey does identify 90 % of those callers surveyed had taken some form of action or made a decision not to act.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are lessons learnt and the key conditions for success?</li> </ul>	<p>Lessons learnt and success factors include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing a culture of friendly engagement and professionalism to be accessible to a wide audience.</li> <li>- Delivering information by well-trained Information Officers who are not legal professionals.</li> <li>- Information Officers benefit from being supported by a tailored or bespoke customer relationship management system or database that provides prompted approved answers and allows WRC agreed positions to be shared.</li> <li>- Continued development of the Information Officers is important with on-going briefing and training to ensure the information provided is correct and up-to-date.</li> <li>- A quality assurance regime is vital and can be delivered in a stepped fashion from the Information Officer through, pre-approved responses, peer contact and escalation to managers and where necessary to a 'legal proceedings' committee framework which allows referral of complex legal issues for an agreed WRC position.</li> <li>- Sufficient staff resources are needed to maintain a call drop rate of below 5 %.</li> <li>- A key performance indicator is that 90 % of callers receive the relevant information at first contact.</li> <li>- Technology needs to be in place to support a regionally dispersed contact centre that enables calls to be answered regardless of the location of the Information Officer.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of transferability (e.g. other countries/groups/sectors)</li> </ul>	<p>The service is highly transferable. Technology supports are critical particularly if the service is required to be delivered from multiple locations throughout a region. A customer management service or database with key approved information and responses ensures a consistent delivery of that information. A commitment to upskilling the information providers and developing a training program which delivers the necessary informed and skilled workforce is crucial.</p>
<p><b>Additional information</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts</li> </ul>	<p>Padraig Dooley, Chief Labour Inspector and Director of the Workplace Relations Commission  Email address: <a href="mailto:Padraig.dooley@workplacerelements.ie">Padraig.dooley@workplacerelements.ie</a>  Telephone: +353 599178961</p> <p>Maria Ross, Manager of Information &amp; Customer Services and WRC Head of Communications  Email address: <a href="mailto:maria.ross@workplacerelements.ie">maria.ross@workplacerelements.ie</a>  Telephone: +353 599178943</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful sources and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workplace Relations website (<a href="http://www.workplacerelements.ie">www.workplacerelements.ie</a>)</li> <li>- Statement of Strategy 2016-2018 Workplace Relations: Assisting the Recovery in a Changing and Challenging Environment. Available at <a href="https://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Publications_Forms/WRC-Statement-of-Strategy-2016-2018.pdf">https://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Publications_Forms/WRC-Statement-of-Strategy-2016-2018.pdf</a></li> </ul>

	<p>- Information and Customer Services Unit website:  <a href="http://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Workplace_Relations_Services/Info_Cust_Serv/">http://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Workplace_Relations_Services/Info_Cust_Serv/</a></p> <p>- Workplace Relations Act 2015:  <a href="http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/16/enacted/en/html">http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/16/enacted/en/html</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metadata and key words for online search</li> </ul>	<p>Ireland; Information and Customer Services (ICS); Infoline; telephone call-in service; Workplace Relations Commission; employment rights; employment equality; equal status; anonymous; information officers</p>

<sup>i</sup> Source: [https://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Good\\_Workplace\\_Relations](https://www.workplacerelements.ie/en/Good_Workplace_Relations)

<sup>ii</sup> Other services include advisory, conciliation, mediation, and adjudication services and also inspection and enforcement services to encourage compliance and to impose penalties where compliance does not occur.

<sup>iii</sup> Previously, the Infoline was operated by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation under the umbrella of the National Employment Rights Authority.

<sup>iv</sup> EU Platform Undeclared Work, Report on the Joint Activity between Romania and Ireland, March 2018.

<sup>v</sup> The information for this field is largely excerpted from the WRC Annual Report 2017, op cit.

<sup>vi</sup> Agent relates to the software application which allows the information officer to take calls via the call management system.

<sup>vii</sup> EU Platform Undeclared Work, 2018, op cit.

<sup>viii</sup> Information on outputs is extracted from the WRC annual report 2017 op cit.

<sup>ix</sup> For more information see Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation at <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/News-And-Events/Department-News/2018/May/14052018a.html>

<sup>x</sup> Information on outcomes was received directly from the WRC.