



an roinn fiontar, trádála agus fostaíochta  
department of enterprise, trade and employment

# **SECTORAL PLAN UNDER THE DISABILITY ACT 2005**

## **REVIEW**

**(Parliamentary No. A10/0143)**

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## **Foreword**

### ***Foreword by Mary Coughlan, T.D, Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment***

I am very pleased to publish the Review of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005. The preparation of this review has been greatly assisted by consultations with a range of key stakeholders and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their valuable contributions and written submissions.

The Sectoral Plan, published in 2006, contains a number of key initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the workplace. This review will assist us in continuing to drive these policies forward, and to meeting the objective of ensuring that people with disabilities have the same right of access to employment as the rest of our citizens.

Significant progress has been made on advancing the goals of the Plan. Reviews have been carried out into the operation of the Wage Subsidy Scheme and the Supported Employment Programme, and appropriate reforms are being implemented to improve the operation of these employment incentives. In addition, the broadening of the High Supports Process will ensure that a range of customized and flexible supports will be available to people with disabilities seeking to enter the labour market.

A key objective of the Plan concerns the development of a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. Significant progress has been made between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and stakeholders on the advancement of such a strategy. A key focus of the Strategy will be on ensuring that systems, programmes and supports are integrated and complementary across the range of Government services, and on providing a continuum of supports that address the full spectrum of needs of people with disabilities who wish to avail of training and employment opportunities.

However, while there has been substantial progress over the past three years, the OECD, in their report 'Breaking the Barriers' published in 2008, noted that Ireland's rate of employment of people with disabilities was one of the lowest amongst OECD countries. We recognise, therefore, that there is a long way to go

before we can say that people with disabilities have an opportunity to participate on an equal footing in Ireland's social and economic life. We know that people with disabilities continue to be among those most at risk of poverty in Ireland. However, and notwithstanding the very difficult economic conditions which we now face, we remain fully committed to addressing this and to ensuring an inclusive approach to providing greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities, one that is fully rooted in the open labour market.

# **1. Executive Summary**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment under the Disability Act, 2005 which was published in 2006 contains a number of key initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the workplace including:

Developing a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities  
by:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of employment programmes and vocational training, including implementation of the FAS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People
- Further developing supports to the open market employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors
- Increasing the participation rates of people with disabilities on Community Employment (CE) over the period of the Plan and raising the CE participation limits for people with disabilities, in order to provide additional training to assist progression to employment
- Further embedding the mainstreaming concept across the range of services provided by the Department and its agencies
- Compliance with Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005 regarding the provision of accessible services to people with disabilities
- Compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act, 2005 regarding compliance employment in the public service.

## **1.2 Review Highlights**

The review indicates that substantial progress has been made on advancing the goals of the Sectoral Plan. Key areas of progress include:

## **Employment**

- 5,210 persons with disabilities placed in employment over the period 2006-2008 – the Sectoral Plan contains an employment target of 7,000 over the period 2006-2010
- Outline of a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities developed
- Operation of the pilot Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) has been reviewed, and the scheme placed on a permanent basis
- Retention of the medical card for three years for people with disabilities availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme
- FÁS Supported Employment programme reviewed and a number of actions implemented, including reducing the weekly working hours requirement from 18 to 8 hours. On-going stakeholder consultations are being managed under the Department's Consultative Forum on an Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and the Cross Sectoral Group.
- Maximum duration on Community Employment for people with disabilities extended
- Publication of Health and Safety Guidance relating to employment of people with disabilities

## **Training**

- FÁS Vocational Training Strategy actions implemented under key policy objectives

## **Activation**

- Advancement of the Disability Activation Project Pilot to engage with people with disabilities, led by the Department of Social and Family Affairs

## **Research**

- Completion of research on Acquired Disability and Employment.
- Funding by Science Foundation Ireland of €117.79m to undertake research across a number of disability related areas

***Parts 3 & 5 of the Disability Act, 2005***

- Compliance with Part 3 of Disability Act 2005 - disability access audits undertaken in respect of all of the Department's offices and significant progress made in improving access and egress in the Department's buildings for people with disabilities
- Compliance with Part 5 of Disability Act, 2005 – the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (at 4.7%) is included among those Government Departments which have achieved the highest employment rates for people with disabilities

The review acknowledges that, notwithstanding significant the progress to date in facilitating the employment and training of people with disabilities, these efforts need to be sustained and further enhanced to ensure that people with disabilities have an opportunity to participate on an equal footing in Ireland's social and economic life.

The review commits to ensuring an inclusive approach to providing greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities, one that is fully rooted in the open labour market, notwithstanding the current very difficult economic conditions and the considerable challenges these represent. The further advancement by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment of a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities in consultation with the Consultative Forum and the Cross Sectoral Group led by the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Health and Children and its implementation in the period ahead, will be critical to a success outcome from these efforts.

The review acknowledges the positive and insightful contributions the Department has received from its many stakeholders in the course of the review, and the ongoing constructive consultations between the Department and the Consultative Forum.

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1 The National Disability Strategy**

The National Disability Strategy was launched by Government in 2004 in order to underpin the participation of people with disabilities in Irish society. The strategy built on existing policy and legislation, including the policy of mainstreaming public services for people with disabilities.

The key elements of the Strategy are:

- The Disability Act, 2005
- The Citizens' Information Act, 2007
- Sectoral Plans published by six Government Departments
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004
- A multi-annual investment programme worth €900 million targeted at high-priority disability support services to run from 2005 until 2009

### **2.2 The Disability Act, 2005**

The Disability Act, 2005 is designed to advance and underpin the participation of people with disabilities in society by supporting the provision of disability - specific services and improving access to mainstream public services. The Act puts in place a strong framework, which seeks to make significant and long-term improvements to the lives of people with disabilities, and is a key element of the National Disability Strategy.

### **2.3 Review of Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment Sectoral Plan**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is one of six key Government Departments that published Sectoral Plans under the Disability Act, 2005. The Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment covers the period 2006 – 2010. The Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment covers the timeframe 2006-2010. The review of progress on the implementation of the actions contained in the Sectoral Plan as contained in this report meets a commitment in the Plan to carry out a review of

progress in 2009. Future actions in the remaining period of the Plan and beyond will be largely centered on the implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities, which is being advanced by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in partnership with the Consultative Forum and the Cross Sectoral Group.

## **3. Environmental Analysis**

### **3.1 Economic Context**

The Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment under the Disability Act, 2005 commenced during a year when the economy grew by 5.4%, and the annual growth in employment was the highest for five years. Economic growth continued during 2006 and 2007, with the total numbers of people in employment reaching over 2 million for the first time in our history.

However, 2008 saw a sharp annual decrease in employment of 86,900 - or 4.1%, - the largest annual decrease since the labour force survey commenced. By the fourth quarter of 2008 there were 170,600 persons unemployed, representing an increase of 69,600 in the year. This downward trend has continued in 2009, with QNHS figures for the second quarter of this year showing just 1,938,500 persons in employment, an annual decrease of 174,300 or 8.2%. Unemployment, meanwhile, had increased to 264,600, an increase of 137,900 or 108.8% in the year.

This rise in unemployment and the declining labour market conditions, which are unlikely to abate in the near future, will give rise significant additional challenges for people with disabilities who wish to gain, or remain in, employment. Even during a time of economic growth people with disabilities do not experience an increase in job opportunities similar to those without disabilities. In fact, for the two-year period immediately preceding the enactment of the Disability Act, the employment rate for people with a disability actually fell from 40% to 37% despite the positive economic conditions which prevailed.

### **3.2 Current Position**

#### ***Employment Statistics***

The immediate objective over the period of the Sectoral Plan (2006-2010) is to raise the employment rate of:

- Those who have no restriction on their ability to work; and
- Those who have some degree of restriction towards that of their peers who do not have disabilities. Specifically, a target to increase the number of those with a disability (and who do not have a difficulty holding a job) into employment by 7,000 and therefore

closer to the employment rate of their peers without a disability, is contained in the Department's Sectoral Plan.

While employment targets across the board are under review in this current period of employment losses, the measurement of targets for the employment of those across the spectrum of disabilities is further under consideration by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in cooperation with the CSO and with the advice of the NDA. Efforts are underway to establish a baseline for future measurements, shared definitions against which data will be recorded and a methodology for ongoing tracking of targets.

The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with a disability from 37% to 45% by 2016, as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. Again, this will present a significant challenge in a tightening job market, and it is important to focus on strategies and policies which will improve the opportunity for people with disabilities to avail of an eventual up turn in the economy.

## **FÁS**

As the National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS operates training and employment programmes; provides a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers, an advisory service for industry, and supports community-based enterprises. FÁS provides services on a regional and local basis divided into 8 regions – Dublin; Midlands; Mid-West; North-East; North-West; South-East; South-West; and West, with 66 offices and 20 training centres across the country. FÁS is, therefore, a key provider of services in helping to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities.

A review of progress to end 2008 shows that, from 2006 –2008, 5,210 persons with disabilities had been placed in jobs on completion of the various FÁS programmes:

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Wage Subsidy Scheme</b>	191	191	141	523
<b>Supported Employment Programme</b>	849	865	700	2,414
<b>FÁS Mainline</b>	296	334	380	1,010
<b>National Learning Network</b>	383	447	433	1,263
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,719</b>	<b>1,837</b>	<b>1,654</b>	<b>5,210</b>

In addition, as noted in the Sectoral Plan 2010-2012 of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the number of people availing of the Department's Disability Allowance Disregard scheme rose from approximately 6,500 when revised arrangements were introduced in June 2006 to some 9,600 at end August, 2009.

An ongoing challenge will be to ensure that employment supports transfer into open employment and are not predominantly in the form of specialised training or Community Employment.

### ***Retention***

For the majority of people with disabilities, the onset of disability occurs in adult life, with only a minority of people with disabilities having experienced their condition since childhood. In an economic downturn, those who have experienced the onset of disability while working may be particularly vulnerable to exit employment. OECD research suggests that such workers, in a worsening economy, are increasingly likely to retire early on grounds of ill health. The issue of job retention following the onset of disability while working will be an important component of the comprehensive employment strategy that is currently being advanced by the Department in consultation with stakeholders.

### ***Review of Supported Employment Programme***

The Supported Employment Programme was reviewed by FÁS in 2008 and a number of recommendations were made to enhance its operation and effectiveness. The recommendations are currently being implemented in consultation with stakeholders.

### ***OECD Recommendations***

Key barriers, identified by the OECD in 2008, to increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the Irish labour market are:

- The low level of educational attainment of this group of the population
- The lack of co-operation of the various employment policy institutions and the fragmentation of the benefit system.

As a result the OECD has have made a number of policy recommendations, under key headings, to decrease exclusion from the labour market related to poor health and disability. These key headings include:

- The introduction of systematic engagement with customers
- Boosting the quality of employment support for people with disability
- Modernising the benefit system and the disability assessment process
- Improving financial incentives for workers and raising the involvement of employers

Thus, it is evident from the period of the operation of the Sectoral Plan to date, that a sustained and more concerted effort will be required across the range of Government services, in cooperation with external stakeholders, to meet the challenge of increasing the employment rate of those people with disabilities who are able to work in the open labour market.

## **4. Consultation Process**

In the preparation of the review of the Sectoral Plan, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment sought submissions and proposals from interested groups and individuals. These included other Government Departments, the Social Partners and groups representing persons with disabilities. The review process was also advertised on the Department's website.

The review was carried out in consultation with the Consultative Forum on an Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities that was established by the Department in 2007. The Consultative Forum is chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, and includes representatives of people with disabilities, service providers, relevant Government Departments, social partners and agencies. The Forum provides a channel for key stakeholders to discuss broad strategic issues that directly or indirectly impact on vocational training and employment for people with disabilities. The Forum complements the work of the FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability, and provides a framework for linkage with similar fora established by other Government Departments. In addition, it interacts with the Senior Officials Group and the National Disability Stakeholders Monitoring Group in reporting and monitoring progress in the implementation of the Department's Sectoral Plan.

As a consequence of these consultative arrangements, submissions have been received from: the National Disability Authority, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Association of Supported Employment, the Disability Federation of Ireland, the Equality Authority, the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Enable Ireland, the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability, the HSE, REHAB Group, the Not for Profit Business Association, Amnesty International and the Department of Health & Children.

All submissions received have been carefully considered. A summary of the key issues and recommendations made in these submissions is contained in Appendix 1.

## **5. Progress on Enhancing the Effectiveness of Vocational Training and Employment Programmes**

### ***5.1 Vocational Training***

#### ***Benchmarking***

Since 2006, FÁS has been benchmarking take up on training programmes by people with disabilities. Data is collected on Registration, Throughput and Placement for the following Groups:

1. Lone Parents
2. People with Disabilities
3. Members of the Travelling Community
4. Refugees

The benchmark targets have been agreed and monitored for each year since 2006. Relevant data is made available to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy, the FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability and FÁS Regional Directors in order to maximise participation.

#### ***FÁS Strategy on Vocational Training for Disabled People***

As highlighted in the Sectoral Plan, vocational training is an important route to help people with disabilities to realise their full occupational potential. The inclusion of the FÁS Strategy on Vocational Training for Disabled People in the Sectoral Plan was an endorsement of this policy objective, and formed a key goal of the Sectoral Plan. The Strategy contains thirty recommendations for action with a time frame for implementation and responsibility assigned to the relevant FÁS line division. These actions are being pursued under the following policy objectives:

- Mainstreaming
- Training Programmes and Delivery
- Training Supports
- Facilities and Redress
- Costs

A FÁS Steering Group was set up in 2007 to explore means of both activating more people with a disability to use FÁS services and to improve their participation in the labour market. The group also has responsibility for monitoring progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the vocational training strategy. Notable areas of progress achieved by FÁS in implementing the recommendations contained in the Strategy include the following:

Specialist Training Programmes have been evaluated in order to increase their relevance to the open labour market and ensure inclusion of skills identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

A Protocol for dealing with learners who have mental health issues has been developed by FÁS and distributed to Employment Services, Training Services, Community Services and Services to Business. Specialist Training Services with expertise in this area represent a resource for advancing this issue

A process is now in place to provide work experience on all Specialist Training Programmes.

- A training plan and training programme specification has been developed for the Workway Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, in order to improve the job seeking skills of people with disabilities. The materials were tested in 2008 on a County Clare project for people with disabilities and initial FETAC Certification was achieved. The materials are now available for inclusion in Specialist Training Programmes or mainline training for Community Services, and Training Services as appropriate.
- FÁS information material has been reviewed to ensure it is updated and accessible.
- A new Client Services System has been rolled out which has the capability to identify barriers for people with disabilities.
- A draft redress procedure for people with disabilities is in place to deal with formal complaints.

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<sup>1</sup> Workway was established by the Social Partners to identify and address practical barriers to people with disabilities specifically in the area of employment. The Workway Guidelines were published in 2004 and contain comprehensive information on the employment of people with disabilities that are either joining the workforce or are coming back into employment having acquired a disability.

### ***Sub Committee on Social Inclusion***

The FÁS Board Sub Committee on Social Inclusion was established in 2006 and has met on fourteen occasions. There are 7 FÁS Board Members and two FÁS Staff representatives on this group. The Sub Committee ratified the FÁS Equality for its Customers Policy and the associated guidelines. The Committee also agreed the mainstreaming of Equality Proofing following its pilot in Employment Services, and also supported the establishment of a National Equality Group within FÁS to mentor and review the implementation of the FÁS Equality for its Customers' Policy.

*In regard to the specific action areas outlined in the FÁS Vocational Training Plan for Disabled People the following has been progressed:*

## ***5.2 Recommendations under Mainstreaming***

Mainstreaming is defined under the strategy as the 'systematic integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market; by actively creating conditions whereby people with disabilities can compete and operate in the open labour market on an equitable basis with their non- disabled peers' Mainstreaming is a key area for action under the Strategy and a number of specific actions have been progressed.

### ***Develop a revised and comprehensive framework to increase FÁS staff capacity in working with people with disabilities***

Individual staff training needs regarding disability are now examined on an annual basis through the Performance Development System.

### ***Increase referrals of people with disabilities to mainline options***

Monitoring reports on people with disabilities referred to FÁS training programmes have been established, to ascertain referral patterns and to develop strategies to promote referrals to mainline options. Data is gathered quarterly and is assessed on an annual basis against agreed targets. The target for 2009 is a 2% increase on the 2008 results. For 2008 – the most recent annual data available -

- the number of people registering a self declared disability was below target (1,096 registrations compared to a target of 1,350),

- the number of people, who had been in receipt of a disability income, completing training and employment programmes exceeded the target set (8,729 compared to a target of 7,533)
- the national placement data for people with a disability was slightly below target (5,366 compared to a target of 5,425).

Alongside these such FÁS training programmes, services provided by specialist training providers in helping to progress people with disabilities into training, employment or further education have continued to make an important contribution in promoting increased social inclusion for people with disabilities.

***Set targets for people with disabilities' participation in all areas of training activity, and review annually.***

Participation rates are now being measured against quantifiable targets, aimed at increasing numbers in each calendar year. The targets for 2008 were established as a 2% increase on 2006 participation rates for people with disabilities. To date, targets for throughput have been exceeded, whilst actuals for self declared registrations and placement are marginally less than targets. While these are clear indications of achievement, they are limited by the fact that participation for persons with disabilities in FÁS programmes remains optional in the absence of a conditional national activation policy.

***High Supports Process***

In January 2003, FÁS introduced a new High Support Process (HSP) for jobseekers who are suffering personal barriers to employment. Key components of the HSP are:

- Participants availing of the HSP are assigned to FÁS Employment Services Officers and / or LES Mediators under a caseload management system.
- The process is available to long-term participants on the Job Initiative Programme as well as jobseekers referred to FÁS under the National Employment Action Plan who are identified as 'Non-Progression Ready'.
- FÁS Employment Services Officers and LES Mediators provide support as appropriate. Such support is arranged in consultation with external agencies such as the Departments of Social and Family Affairs, Health and Children, and Education and Science.

- A total allowance of €2,200 (maximum) per person is available when sourcing the relevant intervention.

The SSP was broadened in 2007 in order to provide a range of customised and flexible supports, including training to assist jobseekers - including people with disabilities - to enter the labour market. It is now part of the FÁS menu of programmes that is available for people with disabilities. In addition, protocols and systematic assessment tools are being developed to aid effective decision making in terms of supports required to people with disabilities who wish to enter the labour market.

In 2008, a High Supports Programme, for people with disabilities was launched by FÁS in the Dublin and FÁS west regions. The Report is currently being considered by their Social Inclusion Directorate Monitoring Group.

### ***Facilitate progression between Rehabilitation and Vocational Training***

Following discussions between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the Department of Health and Children, FÁS and the Health Services Executive, terms of reference for a Working Group on bridging initiatives from rehabilitative training to vocational training were agreed by the Department of Health and Children's National Co-ordination Committee. A proposal for bridging tests has been developed by a FÁS /HSE working group and has been approved by the Cross Sectoral Group on a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>.

The objective of joint FÁS/HSE bridging initiatives will be to maximise the prospect of people with disabilities progressing from rehabilitative training programmes to successfully accessing, undertaking and completing vocational training programmes by:

- Ensuring that the potential of people with disabilities for vocational training has been properly assessed
- Assisting individuals to determine the vocational training programme most suited to their interests and aptitudes

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<sup>2</sup> This newly established group, chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment & the Department of Health and Children provides a mechanism for a cross-sectoral approach between Departments and agencies with responsibility for the delivery of the mainstreaming agenda in respect of the employment of people with disabilities.

- Identifying issues which are likely to pose additional needs/challenges for a person with a disability in accessing, undertaking and successfully completing their chosen vocational training programme
- Ensuring that workable solutions to addressing the barriers to successful transition are put in place prior to commencement of training
- Providing each individual with an individualised transition programme.

Concurrently, FÁS is currently preparing a tendering specification for the tests. An additional bridging pilot from rehabilitative to vocational training is also being tested by FÁS in Charleville, County Cork.

Additionally, the National Learning Network report that of those completing rehabilitative training with the organisation 277 persons progressed to employment and 728 progressed to vocational training or third level education in the period covered by this review.

### ***Increase promotion of FÁS Services to People with Disabilities***

A 'disclosure' brochure has been developed and made available, in all Employment Services Offices outlining the advantages of disclosure when registering with FÁS. A poster and brochure, outlining the supports available for employers of a person with disabilities, has also been developed and distributed. National media articles and advertisements have been prepared where appropriate. A new organisation 'tag-line' has been developed and implemented by FÁS - the FÁS web-site clearly states that **"All FÁS Services are open to People with Disabilities"**.

## ***5.3 Recommendations under Training Programmes and Delivery***

### ***Develop protocol for entry to Specialist Training Providers***

Proposals have been developed by FÁS Community Services to ensure that Specialist Training Providers who are contracted by FÁS should recognise that the FÁS Gateway (Employment Services and the Local Employment Service) is the appropriate independent occupational guidance service for people with disabilities

seeking training. All referrals to these courses must be made by FÁS Employment services or the LES.

***Improving identification of supports for people with disabilities progressing to training***

The Disability Manual and Guidelines for supporting people with disabilities in training were updated by FÁS in 2007.

***Pilot and Develop Innovative and Flexible Programmes with Appropriate Supports***

Flexible means of training design and delivery in FÁS mainline provision to advance the mainstreaming policy will be implemented by FÁS as soon as possible. Resulting from the response by FÁS in 2009 to increase training for the unemployed, a number of new initiatives have been developed including the introduction of night courses by FÁS for participants, including people with disabilities, in 2008 free of charge; the introduction of short course programmes will allow people to build their 'Major Award' over a number of short courses.

***Ensure that Training Options available to People with disabilities are kept up to date***

All training course information for people with disabilities is available on the FÁS website.

***Increase Specialist Training Providers Labour Market Relevancy***

The FÁS Action Plan for Specialist Training Providers states that these courses should be evaluated with regard to the employment market and should include the skills identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. This recommendation was implemented by FÁS in 2006.

***Improve Job Seeking Skills***

A training plan and training programme specification has been developed for the Workway Guidelines<sup>3</sup>, in order to improve the job seeking skills of people with disabilities. The materials were tested, in 2007, on the County Clare project for

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<sup>3</sup> Workway was established by the Social Partners to identify and address practical barriers to people with disabilities specifically in the area of employment. The Workway Guidelines were published in 2004 and contain comprehensive information on the employment of people with disabilities that are either joining the workforce or are coming back into employment having acquired a disability.

people with disabilities and initial FETAC certification was achieved. The materials are now available for inclusion in Specialist Training Programmes or mainline training for Community Services and Training Services as appropriate.

***Provide Work Experience on all Specialist Training Providers Training Programmes***

The provision of a minimum of four weeks work experience is now mandatory for all Specialist Training Providers training programmes, and the work experience is required to be directly relevant to the content of the training course. A work experience module has been introduced on the FÁS Supported Employment Programme. Work experience is also being provided in a number of instances by specialist training providers.

***Equality Awareness on all FÁS Training Courses***

A new Client Services System has been rolled out in FÁS Employment Services, which has the capability to identify barriers for people with disabilities. The FÁS Equality Policy for Customers was published and disseminated in 2006. Equality proofing is being implemented in FÁS Training Services and Community Services Divisions, and will be progressed within Services to Business Division as soon as possible.

***5.4 Recommendations under Training Supports***

***Update FÁS Disability Handbook and Guidelines on Supporting People with Disabilities in Training availing of FÁS Training Services and improve dissemination and use***

The FÁS Disability Handbook and Guidelines were updated in 2007. Material is updated regularly. The Disability Manual is on the FÁS intranet and is available to all staff for reference.

***Define and Mainstream the Scope and Structure of a Disability Support Service***

A Disability Support Service has been piloted by the Disability Policy and Development Unit in 4 FÁS Training Centres namely Finglas, Loughlinstown, Shannon and Limerick. It was independently evaluated, and in 2008 the FÁS Executive Board approved the establishment of an Access and Learning Support Service with 17 members to be contracted to deliver this service over a two year period before evaluating it. Discussions are currently taking place between FÁS

and Trade Unions regarding the roll out, or a variant of this service by the Director of Training Services.

The Appointment of an Access Officer remains under close review having regard to the obligation contained under Section 26(2) in the Disability Act, 2005.

Since the enactment of the Disability Act in 2005, the staff of the Disability Policy and Development Unit have dealt with any such queries.

## **5.5 Recommendations under Facilities and Redress**

### ***Schedule Access Audits of Premises to assess FÁS requirements to ensure requirements with Disability Act, 2005***

A pilot independent access audit of Employment Services Offices in the Midlands has been completed to apply for the National Disability Authority's Accessibility Award. The experience learned and the costs incurred will inform future actions in this area. Environmental access audits on all Employment Services offices are planned on the enactment of the Revised Part M of the Building Regulations, which is anticipated in by mid 2010.

### ***Ensure Publications and training Materials are available in alternative formats as required in Section 28 of the Disability Act, 2005***

Arrangements have been made for publications and training materials to be put into accessible formats on request. FÁS will seek further expressions of interest from experts in Publications Accessibility Auditing, on publication of the Citizens' Information Board<sup>4</sup> guidelines in accessible formats.

### ***Implement Redress Procedure for People with Disabilities***

An independent Inquiry Officer has been appointed by FÁS to investigate any complaint by a trainee under the Access provisions (Sections 25 to 29) of the Disability Act, 2005. A draft grievance procedure is in place and forms part of current consultations process with Instructors.

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<sup>4</sup> The Citizens' Information Board's key functions are to support the provision of independent information, advice and advocacy services and to assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in accessing their entitlement to social services.

[http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/social/downloads/Accessible\\_Information\\_For\\_AI.pdf](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/social/downloads/Accessible_Information_For_AI.pdf)

## **5.6 Recommendations under Costs**

### ***Enact recommendations contained in the review of Vocational Training and Rehabilitative Training Services***

In 2006, a review was undertaken of the effectiveness and efficiency of FÁS Vocational Training Services and Rehabilitative Training Services for People with Disability. This report was completed in January 2007. In total, nineteen recommendations were made under four key headings:

1. Current and Future Funding
2. Selection and Assessment of applicants
3. Transparency and Accountability
4. Other recommendations

An Action Plan has been drafted and an implementation plan will be scheduled for approval by the FÁS Executive Board as soon as possible. It is envisaged that the process will be completed by November 2009 for roll out of the Action Plan in January, 2010.

## **5.7 Employment Programmes**

### ***Community Employment (CE)***

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) was rolled out in 2006 – 2007 to approximately 1,200 CE projects nationally, consisting of 23,000 participants and supervisors. ILP is a system which facilitates the recording and approval of ILP activities (work experience, training, briefings and meetings). To date the system has been very well received by the various sets of users and is operating very successfully. The ILP System will be superseded by the Community Services Management (CSM) system. The CSM is a larger system which will not alone support ILP but also all other Community Services processes across all programme areas.

Participation rates on CE have been increased in line with the commitment in the Sectoral Plan to progressively increasing participation rates under CE over the period of the plan.

- For people with disabilities under 55 years of age, the participation limit was raised by one year from 3 to 4 years
- For people with disabilities over 55 years of age, the participation limit has been raised by one year from 6 to 7 years.

Currently there are 5,833 people with disabilities on CE out of a total of 23, 934 (24.37%), compared to a total of 4, 635 (c. 22 %) at the commencement of the Plan in 2006.

## **6. Progress on Further Developing Supports to Open Labour Market Employment**

### **6.1 Gateway**

Employment Services are the Gateway for all FÁS services. Since October 2007, all disabled customers approaching Employment Services are required to be case loaded<sup>5</sup>, whether seeking employment, FÁS training, schemes or supports. This is to not only provide information for tracking purposes but also to provide intensive job seeking support to those who require it. The Gateway service provides occupational guidance for its registered customers as an integral part of its service. Further configuration of the FÁS Gateway will be considered by the Cross Sectoral Group with a view to developing the Gateway towards contributing to directing people with disabilities to the full continuum of training and employment supports.

### **6.2 Local Employment Service Network**

The Local Employment Service (LES) network assists those most distant from the labour market to obtain employment through the provision of intensive support and locally responsive services. During 2007 a Social Inclusion FÁS/LES Working group was established to

- Look at the challenges of activation of specific groups in terms of scoping current and best practice, identifying gaps and providing solutions to address gaps
- make recommendations on how to promote complementary provision between FÁS and the LES Network
- Make recommendations on how to address the challenges of collecting and collating data on different target groups
- Agree initiatives that may be undertaken to enhance accessibility to LESN Services for people with disabilities that do not require extensive resources

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<sup>5</sup> Caseloaded clients have the benefit of dealing with a named ESO/LES Mediator in all their dealings with FÁS; they are considered priority for FÁS training courses; with access to additional supports under the High Support Process and under FÁS's Technical Employment Support Grants.

- Commence discussions on introducing equality proofing in LESN Services.

To date, an aftercare service for clients with high support needs during the first few weeks of employment has been developed by LES and is currently under consideration for testing in the Dublin region. A report on developing complementarity is currently under consideration by the main FÁS/LES/Planet Co-ordination Group.

An additional FÁS/LES working group was established during 2008 relating to the National Employment Services to address operational issues and promote closer and more efficient relationships. The need for developing links between this service and that provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs' Job Facilitators will also be considered.

### **6.3 Extending Activation Process**

The 'Midlands Pilot' was initiated in January 2005 with the aim of providing a multi-agency integrated employment support service to people with disabilities. The pilot was evaluated in 2007. Specific lessons were learned regarding the weaknesses in the information held in respect of the targeted group, and the absence of an effective system to share information between participating organisations. The pilot also raised questions regarding the low level of service usage among persons who did attend, and the lack of positive outcomes for persons who had accessed services prior to this initiative. It particularly brought to light the gaps in the rehabilitative, training and employment continuum for disabled people. The lessons learned from its implementation represent a valuable input to developing policy and practice in respect of designing and delivering high-quality services in the area of training and employment supports to people with disabilities.

A new Disability Activation Project, located in Mullingar, which is being led by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, has commenced and is progressing. A local implementation group comprising the Department of Social and Family, the Department of Education & Science, the Department of Health & Children, FÁS, the HSE, the National Disability Authority and the VECs, is responsible for overseeing the operation of the project.

A total of 624 people from the Mullingar, Athlone and Longford areas in receipt of Illness/disability related payments, have been directly invited to engage with the

project - 235 people have been interviewed on a one-to-one basis with a view to preparing individualised progression path plans. Of those interviewed, 111 people have been offered further training or education options.

The Project has already facilitated 7 programmes: 3 training programmes and 1 workshop based programme in the Mullingar area, 2 training programmes in Longford and 1 training programme in conjunction with the VEC in Athlone.

An "Enabled for Life" Programme commenced in Mullingar in November 2008 and ended in late January 2009 - 13 participants completed the programme and a detailed report was prepared. A third modified 'Enabled for Life' Programme commenced in Mullingar in March 2009. The participants on this programme have lower levels of education attainments and will receive more one to one inputs. A second foundation pilot programme will commence in Longford in the near future. Some 150 recipients of Disability Welfare Payments, resident in the Athlone area, were recently invited to engage with the project. 15 are currently participating on an 'Enabled for Life' programme in Athlone. A second programme is scheduled to commence in early 2010.

#### **6.4 Promoting Awareness & Providing Information**

FÁS continued to instigate a range of awareness raising initiatives aimed at promoting the employment of people with disabilities, including funding of the following:

##### **Workway website**

Funded initially by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and then by FÁS, Workway was the first project in Europe to take a partnership approach to tackling the high unemployment rates among people with disabilities. Between 2002 and 2005, private sector employers, trade union representatives, disability service providers, government agencies and people with disabilities, came together to form four regional Workway networks in Cork, Kerry, Donegal and Galway. These networks addressed the complex and challenging barriers that people with disabilities face in accessing and staying in employment. Guided by a national steering committee, the regional networks developed a wide range of practical materials for people with disabilities, employers and trade union representatives which are available to view or download from this site. Since the completion of the work of the project the Workway website is being maintained by IBEC and ICTU, with support for FÁS in 2008/2009.

### ***ICTU 'Disability Champions' project***

The 'Disability Champions' project aims to recruit and train disability champions throughout the trade union movement in Ireland. It is concerned with designing best practise approaches to social inclusion in the workplace, and there is an emphasis within the project on the recruitment of people with disabilities into the trade union and also the retention of current employees. The aim of the training is to build an active network of knowledge and expertise in relation to disability and employment. The 'Disability Champions' project is recognised by FETAC and is awarded at level five. FÁS are continuing to fund this initiative in 2009.

### ***Post Equal continuation of the Willing Able Mentoring Project***

The aim of the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) project sponsored by AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability) is to increase the number of graduates entering the workplace and securing employment appropriate to their level of educational qualification through the development of innovative workplace solutions, e.g. structured mentoring supports. One of its target groups is unemployed graduates with disabilities, with limited or no previous work experience, looking for mainstream employment. The WAM Project placed 47 graduates with disabilities in the two year period 2006/2007. Of these, 28 were placed in jobs throughout the Civil Service.

The WAM Project has a two-year funding contract with FÁS for Graduate placement and Capacity Building. The contract will be completed in 2010.

Funding is also being provided by FÁS in 2009 for AHEAD's 'GET READY 4 WORK' initiative – a collaboration with career services in higher education to prepare graduates with disabilities for the workplace.

### ***O2 Ability Awards***

The Ability Awards, which were established by the Aisling Foundation in 2005 (since re-named as Kanchi) now as the first business awards scheme of its kind, recognise best practice in Irish business in the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities. The awards were also held in 2006 and 2007, under the title 'O2 Ability Awards', with financial assistance from the O2 organisation. Government funding has been provided for these Awards as follows:

	<b>FÁS</b>	<b>Dept Justice Equality &amp; Law Reform</b>	<b>Dept Enterprise Trade &amp; Employment</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>€60,000</b>	<b>€263,000</b>	-
<b>2006</b>	<b>€100,000</b>	<b>€350,000</b>	-
<b>2007</b>	<b>€163,000</b>	-	<b>€350,000</b>

Funding amounting to €154,000 is being provided by FÁS for the 2009 /2010 Awards.

### **6.5 National Advisory Committee on Disability**

The second term of office of the FÁS National Advisory Committee<sup>6</sup> (NACD) ended in September 2008. During that term the Committee made a series of recommendations on FÁS Programmes, research and strategies. The Committee was re-established in January 2009 with changes to its Terms of Reference to reflect a greater focus on key priorities, including critiquing new programmes, services, and /or innovations specifically for people with disabilities, proposed by FÁS; proposing new ideas to FÁS to encourage employment, retention and advancement of people with disabilities in the open labour market; and facilitating the design of FÁS' response to any new initiatives from Government.

Eight Regional Networks have been established to identify local initiatives that would assist promotion and participation rates of people with disabilities. The NACD and Regional Networks continue to meet to address their specific agendas. Stakeholders have emphasised the importance of these networks working proactively with disability organisations, for example, by holding regular open days for people with disabilities. It is intended that this option will be discussed with the FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability.

### **6.6 Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)**

Following a review in 2008 of the pilot phase of the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS), the scheme was placed on a permanent basis subject to a number of changes being made that are aimed at improving take-up by both employers and people with disabilities.

These changes, which were rolled out under the revised WSS from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 include:

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<sup>6</sup> The National Advisory Committee on Disability (NACD) represents organisations of and for people with disabilities, relevant Government Departments, FÁS, and the social partners.

- removing the two separate productivity levels for the Scheme – there is now only one productivity level of 80% or less going forward, with a current hourly rate of €5.30 coupled with an annual review that takes a more general approach;
- introducing a training element to the WSS - any WSS employer may apply for the FÁS Competency Development Programme, through the *Services to Business One Step Up for the Employed* Initiative, to introduce a training element to the job for the employee. There is no restriction or qualification time for the application. The only requirement is that the disabled person must be an employee of the Company registered for the WSS;
- allowing WSS employees and employers to avail of support under the Supported Employment Programme. Since February 2009, once an individual has reached Phase Three of the Supported Employment Programme, they are eligible for the Wage Subsidy Scheme;
- promoting the WSS to increase the awareness of the Scheme - the need for achieving greater employer awareness of the WSS and the range of FÁS supports and schemes for people with disabilities through information campaigns and other means of promotion has been highlighted by stakeholders in their submissions on the review of the Sectoral Plan, and will be kept under review in the context of current budgetary constraints;
- allowing temporary retention of the medical card for WSS employees. Following consultations between the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Health and Children the Department of Health it has been agreed that employees under the pilot WSS, who continue to be employed under the scheme, may retain their medical card until 30th November 2011. New recruits to the scheme, who already hold a medical card and have been unemployed for at least twelve months, may retain it for a period of three years from the date they commenced employment under the WSS;

- streamlining the administration of the WSS - this is being implemented on an on-going basis, e.g., reducing the number of application forms an employer may have to complete, completion of sick pay guidelines for WSS employers. The current eligibility criteria relating to the operation of the WSS have been modified to allow an exception to the Minimum Wage and 'going rate' rules in the case of apprenticeships. As a Positive Action pilot for people with disabilities, two places per region (a total of 20) are being obtained by FÁS with effect from August 2009 for both new and redundant apprentices with a disability.

Arrangements have been put in place by the Department of Social and Family Affairs in the event that an employee for whom a wage subsidy is payable can no longer continue in employment. Where an employee:

was previously in receipt of a Disability Allowance or Invalidity Pension, and has been in employment for less than 12 months - their income support payment will automatically be restored without the need to re-apply;

has availed of the Back to Work allowance (BTWA) before 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2009 - their income support payment will be restored automatically without the need to re-apply anytime during the three year period.

### ***Back to Work allowance and WSS***

Subsequent to the April 2009 Supplementary Budget and the necessity to refocus resources in the current difficult economic conditions, the employee strand of the BTWA has been discontinued in the case of new entrants from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009. In this regard it is intended that the overall position relating to exploring future pathways to the WSS, e.g. through the Department of Social and Family Affairs' Disability Allowance Disregard, will be reviewed by the Cross-Sectoral Group on an Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. In addition, it is anticipated expected that the current comprehensive review of the Disability Allowance scheme, which is being carried out by the Department of Social and Family Affairs will inform future policy in this area.

## **6.7 Supported Employment**

The Supported Employment Programme (SEP) is an active labour market initiative to assist jobseekers with a disability to find employment in the open labour market.

Supported Employment has 4 main phases:

- **A Needs Assessment.** When someone is referred to Supported Employment, an employment specialist called a Job Coach will carry out a needs analysis to identify the person's job aspirations, undertake assessment of capacity and skills, identify and address barriers to employment.
- **Job Sourcing and Development.** The Job Coach will identify possible jobs, prepare a client for specific jobs and/or job interviews, carry out job analysis, provide advice for both the employer and the client and arrange work experience placements.
- **In employment with Job Coach support.** Providing the employee with necessary support and coaching in the workplace. The Job Coach will support both the employer and employee.
- **Aftercare and Follow-up.** Providing an aftercare/on call service for clients to aid integration, career development and independence. The amount of support provided should decrease over time as the employee learns the skills required for the job and adapts to the workplace.

A review of the SEP was completed in 2008 by consultants commissioned by FÁS. Following the review FÁS has developed an Action Plan in consultation with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment that is aimed at increasing overall participation and placement rates under the programme. The plan includes the following elements:

- Placement rates will be increased
- Reduction of the previous 18 hours per week work requirement to 8 hours
- Development of methods of assessment of client entry to SEP
- Development of an exit strategy for SEP participants
- Development of a new national identity under a new brand name entitled *EmployAbility*

A number of actions have been implemented, including introducing key performance indicators, a tracking system, performance monitoring systems, and reducing the weekly working hours requirement from 18 to 8 hours. Agreement has been reached with stakeholders on a re-branding of the programme under the name 'EmployAbility – Providing Supported Employment in your Area'. Discussions with stakeholders' representatives are on-going in regard to a number of other important actions, i.e., agreeing a definition relating to all eligibility criteria for entry to the service, and agreeing an exit strategy for participants after 18 months on the SEP. Overarching stakeholder consultations are being managed under the Department's Consultative Forum on an Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

It is hoped that agreement of the various stakeholders can be achieved as soon as possible with a view to undertaking a national launch of a re-branded and more efficient supported employment service for people with disabilities

On going consideration is also being given by the Cross-Departmental/Agency Group (see para 4.2, footnote 1) to ensuring that the SEP forms part of a more structured approach for delivering employment and training services to people with disabilities, as part of the further development of a comprehensive employment strategy.

## **6.8 Income Supports/Benefits - Financial Barriers**

### ***Ensuring that income supports and associated benefits do not create financial barriers to people with disabilities participating in the labour force or availing of training or educational opportunities***

The Sectoral Plan 2010-2012 of the Department of Social and Family Affairs notes that Ireland was one of 11 countries which participated in a review undertaken by the OECD to examine the interactions between employment and welfare systems. A report was published by the OECD in November 2008 which specifically addressed the position in Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland. The report covered a number of areas including:

The report noted that Ireland was at an early stage of structural reform although it noted that Ireland has recognised many of the challenges it faces and that various reforms were under discussion or planned (e.g. in relation to the employment strategy and activation initiatives). The report contained a number

of recommendations in relation to enhancing the systematic engagement with customers, boosting the quality of employment support for people with disabilities; modernising the benefit system and the disability assessment process; and improving financial incentives for workers and raising the involvement of employers. These recommendations will inform the development of policy in these key areas in the years to come. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue to work closely with the Department of Social and Family Affairs in contributing to policy development in this important area.

### **6.9 Promoting Job Retention**

In order to simplify the various employment schemes for both employers and employees regarding disability, FÁS launched in 2009 the “Reasonable Accommodation Fund” for the Employment of People with Disabilities which includes grants for:

- Workplace Equipment/Adaptation
- Job Interview Interpreters
- Personal Readers
- Employee Retention.

The budgets and actual expenditures for the programmes that make up the Reasonable Accommodation Fund for the last three years are as follows:

#### **Reasonable Accommodation**

	<b>Budget (€)</b>	<b>Actual (€)</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>535,000</b>	<b>217,000</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>417,000</b>	<b>191,000</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>580,000</b>	<b>167,000</b>

In April 2009, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) published user-friendly guidelines for employers on health, safety and disability requirements when employing a person with a disability. The guidelines are designed to assist employers at making workplaces healthy and safe for employees with disabilities and, using real-life examples of people with disabilities in the workplace to

demonstrate how, with very little fuss, an inclusive health and safety process can be implemented that benefits both employee and employer. In terms of accommodating employees with a disability, a number of solutions are highlighted including the use of height adjustable desks; hands-free telephone sets and offering flexible start and finish times. The publication recognises that employees with disabilities are not a homogenous group; rather they are individuals with different abilities and requirements.

Key research findings which explore the incidence of disability acquired by people during their working life, leading to long term absence from work, and perceived barriers to retention in employment following such a disability, were completed in 2008 consultants appointed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The findings contained in this report represent a valuable reference for both informing future government policy and employers' practice in this area.

## ***6.10 Further Actions under Mainstreaming***

Developments in regard to further actions under the mainstreaming of services to promote the interests of people with disabilities were as follows:

### ***County Enterprise Boards***

County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) have a range of supports, both financial and capability building, that are available to all, including people with disabilities, subject to meeting the relevant conditions and criteria to qualify for support. In addition, there are particular actions that CEBs take to target groups of people with a known low level of entrepreneurial activity in order to develop and enhance their entrepreneurial skills. While the CEBs do not have a programme dedicated to this matter, CEBs continue to be cognizant of any opportunities to promote entrepreneurship amongst those with disabilities.

### ***Research and Development***

*Science Foundation Ireland* (SFI) has provided a significant amount of funding, to undertake research across a number of disability related areas (see table below). At present, based on the SFI Census 2008 of its funded researchers, 52 lead Principal Investigators with 539 research team members in total, are currently working on disability related research projects. In addition, SFI is also highly

committed to the funding of projects that are aimed at developing those technologies that will improve the lives of people with disabilities. Significant funding has been invested into the area of blindness while, through the development of sensor technology, SFI aims to develop technologies that can support older people living independently. SFI has also invested in the areas of tissue engineering and vaccine development with the aim of effectively reducing the number of people with disabilities within Ireland. The major disability related areas funded by SFI to date are detailed in the table below.

<b>Area</b>	<b>€m</b>
<b>The Ageing Brain</b>	<b>47.3</b>
<b>Diabetes</b>	<b>5.11</b>
<b>Blindness</b>	<b>19.77</b>
<b>Speech &amp; Hearing</b>	<b>2.46</b>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>4.84</b>
<b>Tissue Engineering</b>	<b>2.71</b>
<b>Vaccine Development</b>	<b>8.83</b>
<b>Technology Development</b>	<b>24.51</b>
<b>Total SFI Funding to date</b>	<b>117.79m</b>

### **Consumer Affairs**

The National Consumer Agency (NCA) is committed to working to address the needs of vulnerable consumers, including those with disabilities. It is the Agency's intention that the particular concerns and needs of consumers with disabilities will form an important part of discussions on appropriate Codes of Practice. A fundamental part of the process of establishing best standard Codes of Practice will be the introduction of robust systems for addressing, and resolving consumer complaints. The Agency is currently suffering from very severe staffing constraints and is unable to pursue this objective at the present time. However, the agency is seeking to have its staffing issues resolved, following which it intends to pursue this objective.

### **Divisional Business Plans**

Business Plans for all of the Department's business units must have regard to the National Disability Authority's *Code of Practice on the Accessibility of Goods & Services*, as well as the Department's Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan, in order to ensure that best practice is adopted in the provision of services to people with disabilities. This is outlined as a key requirement in the Department's Business Planning Guidelines.

## **One Step Up**

The One Step Up for the employed is, since February 2009 available to people with a disability employed under the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS), subject to annual budget constraints.

Any WSS employer may apply for the FÁS Competency Development Programme (CDP) through the Services To Business “One Step Up for the Employed” initiative to introduce a training element to the job for the employee. There is no restriction or qualification time for the application - the only requirement is that the person with disabilities must be an employee of the company registered for the WSS. There is no specific measure under the One Step Up Competency Development Programme initiative for people with disabilities – all programmes are intended to be accessible for people with disabilities.

### **6.11 Provision of Resources**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment invested an estimated total of €214.617 million on disability services within the Department and its Agencies for the period 2006 –2008. Of this total expenditure the following estimated expenditure related to FÁS programmes, schemes, and vocational training services for people with disabilities:

	€m
• Wage Subsidy Scheme	23.732
• Supported Employment Programme -	24.510
• Specialist Training Providers (vocational training services) -	156.571
• Disability Support/Awareness	2.393
<b>Total</b>	<b>207.206</b>

Additional areas funded included access to buildings, refurbishing of public areas, website accessibility and disability awareness training. A full list of resources for which funding was supplied is attached at Appendix 2.

In addition to the €214.617 m spend on disability services by the Department and its Agencies, Science Foundation Ireland provided funding amounting to €117.79m on research and development of technologies to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

## **7. Compliance with Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005**

Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 places specific obligations on public bodies regarding the provision of accessible services to people with disabilities.

### ***Disability Audits***

During 2005, a series of Disability Access Audits was undertaken in respect of all of this Department's offices as follows. The audits were based on the Building Regulations and on "best practice", and included:

- The external environment (approach routes, car parks, etc.)
- The entrance (access ramps, reception areas)
- Moving around inside a building and using facilities (corridors, lifts, WCs, lighting, surfaces etc.)
- Building management (means of escape, good housekeeping)

The recommendations in these reports have been implemented as far as possible and significant progress has been made in improving access and egress in our buildings for people with disabilities, including improvements to corridors, lifts and WCs, as well as good housekeeping. Improvements have also been made in providing ramps for wheelchair access, automatic doors in the Department's three main buildings in Dublin, as well as the installation of induction loop systems for people with hearing impairment in reception areas.

### **Ensuring services and information are accessible for people with disabilities**

The Department has appointed disability access officers for each of the Department's buildings in order to provide assistance to people with disabilities seeking access to the Department's services.

The Department seeks to ensure that all goods and services which it purchases are accessible to people with disabilities. Disability awareness applies across a large range of goods and services ranging from the individual items which are purchased to the most expensive of items such as acquiring office accommodation. Disability access/ egress, and toilets for people with disabilities are a vital part of any plans for new office accommodation.

The Department's website now complies with Priority 2 (AA) of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0. The Department will continue to review the status of the website to ensure that it continues to conform to the highest standards of user accessibility.

The Department seeks to ensure that, as far as practicable, the information it provides which is directly relevant to persons with intellectual disabilities is in simple and easy to understand language. The Department also ensures the appropriateness of the manner in which people with disabilities are represented in public literature, captioning on corporate videos, audio loops, and e-information.

## **8. Compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005**

Under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005:

- Each public body is required to ensure, unless there is good reason to the contrary for not doing so, that not less than 3% of its workforce are people with disabilities.
- Each public body shall, in so far as practicable, take all reasonable measures to promote and support the employment by it of people with disabilities.

Data compiled by the National Disability Authority in 2007 showed that the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment reported one of the highest employment rates of people with disabilities – 4.7%. All but two Government Departments met or exceeded the target, with the Department of Foreign Affairs reporting a 2.1% employment rate of people with disabilities<sup>7</sup> and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food reporting a 2.6% employment rate of people with disabilities. The Government Departments reporting the highest employment rates of people with disabilities were the Departments of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources (6%), Defence (civilian employees) (6%), An Taoiseach (5.1%), Social and Family Affairs (4.8%), Enterprise, Trade & Employment (4.7%), and Health and Children (4.6%).

### ***Bodies under the Aegis of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment***

A Monitoring Committee for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment was established in 2007 comprising 5 members who meet at least 3 times a year to consider the returns from public bodies, and compile the report on compliance for submission to the National Disability Authority and the Tanaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Reports in respect of Public Bodies under the remit of this Department, which are mainly staffed by Civil Servants of the Department, are submitted to the

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that this data was based on a staff census in which only 31.3% of staff chose to take part. This was the lowest staff census participation rate among those Government Departments that used the staff census exclusively as their method of data collection.

Department of Finance Monitoring Committee. The following Offices of the Department are included in the Department's figures:

- Companies Registration Office
- Employment Appeals Tribunal
- Labour Court
- Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement
- Office of the Registrar of Friendly Societies
- Patents Office

The Labour Relations Commission and the National Consumer Agency are Public Bodies staffed by Civil Servants and are reported on to the Department of Finance Monitoring Committee.

The following bodies report to the Department's Monitoring Committee:

- Competition Authority
- County Enterprise Boards
- Crafts Council of Ireland
- Enterprise Ireland
- FÁS
- Forfás
- Health & Safety Authority
- IDA Ireland
- Inter-trade Ireland
- Irish Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority
- National Standards Authority of Ireland
- Personal Injuries Assessment Board
- Science Foundation Ireland
- Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd

## **9. Complaints and Redress Structures**

Under the Department's current complaints procedure, complaints are acknowledged within two working days of receipt, and a full written reply sent within 17 working days of receipt. Any expected delays are notified to the complainant. Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to a complaint, the complaint may be reviewed by a Divisional Complaints Officer. These procedures comply with the Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints.

## **10. Implementation - Enhancing Collaboration with Key Stakeholders**

Ensuring meaningful cross-departmental action is one of the most challenging aspects of implementing the National Disability Strategy and of delivering effectively on employment. It is, however, a critical aspect of delivering successfully on the commitment to the employment of people with disabilities.

In accordance with a key priority identified in the Sectoral Plan, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment established, in 2007, a Consultative Forum on an Employment Strategy. The following organisations are represented on the forum:

- Rehab
- Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI);
- National Federation of Voluntary Bodies
- Not for Profit Business Association
- People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI)
- Mental Health Ireland;
- Inclusion Ireland (formerly NAMHI);
- Forum of People with Disabilities;
- IASE
- CNEASTA
- Irish Advocacy Network
- AHEAD
- IBEC
- ISME
- ICTU
- SFA
- Kanchi (formerly Aisling Foundation)
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Department of Health & Children
- Department of Education & Science
- FÁS
- Office of Disability and Mental Health
- NDA
- HSE

The Forum provides a channel for key stakeholders to discuss broad strategic issues that directly or indirectly impact on vocational training and employment for people with disabilities. Since its establishment in 2007 the Department has actively engaged in discussions with the Consultative Forum on a range of policy issues relating to the labour market participation of people with disabilities. In particular, the Forum has provided a valuable framework and reference point for views and expertise for the Department in the development of an outline for a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities.

### ***10.1 Cross Sectoral Group***

The need for further co-operation between the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Social and Family Affairs, and Health and Children with a view to developing innovative supports and programmes for people with disabilities to move from health and personal social services supports to employment, or access to both when necessary, has been highlighted by stakeholders in their submissions on the review of the Sectoral Plan.

Complementing the deliberations of the Consultative Forum, a Cross-Sectoral Group has been established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment and the Department of Health & Children to:

- Provide a mechanism for a cross-sectoral approach between Departments and agencies with responsibility for the delivery of the mainstreaming agenda in respect of the employment of people with disabilities;
- Progress a targeted Action Plan based on the commitments in the Sectoral Plans, including the formulation of a comprehensive employment strategy.

The Cross-Sectoral Group is co-chaired at Principal Officer level by the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Health and Children, and also has representatives from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, FÁS and the Health Service Executive. Consideration will be given to the inclusion of other relevant Departments or agencies as the need arises.

The terms of reference of the group are:

- To develop a strategic framework to facilitate and promote access to employment for persons with a disability based on the commitments in the Sectoral Plans
- To formulate a comprehensive employment strategy as part of the strategic framework
- To develop an appropriate continuum of training and employment support services, and improving and developing the employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- To inform future action on employment issues
- To monitor the implementation of the strategic framework on employment

## **11. Monitoring and Review**

Monitoring reports on progress by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in the implementation of the commitments contained in its Sectoral Plan are discussed with the Department's Consultative Forum and with the National Disability Stakeholders' Strategy Monitoring Group (NDSSMG), in conjunction with the Senior Officials Group on disabilities.

The Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform prepares two half yearly progress reports for the NDSSMG, providing updates on all individual departmental and cross-sectoral actions. Through the NDSSMG, all Departments meet twice yearly with stakeholders who have an opportunity to question progress and obtain updates from the Departments.

Following recent discussions between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, the National Disability Authority and the Central Statistics Office it is anticipated that information from the CSO's Quarterly National Household Statistics (QNHS) can be processed such as to enable changes in the employment of people with disabilities to be tracked over the period of the Sectoral Plan 2006-2010.

## **12. Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities**

The need for developing a comprehensive employment strategy to help create a more inclusive labour market in the context of Ireland's continuing economic and social development was identified in the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

In accordance with this key commitment in the Sectoral Plan, the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment has developed an outline for a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities following discussions with the Department's Consultative Forum. The aim of the strategy is to address the diversity of circumstances, needs and abilities of people with disabilities, and to work towards achieving the highest possible levels of employment for them. The outline for the Comprehensive Employment Strategy has been presented to the Consultative Forum and has received a positive response. Work on further advancement of this strategy is continuing in consultation with the Cross Sectoral Group.

A key focus of the Strategy is on ensuring that systems, programmes and supports are integrated and complementary across the range of Government services. This is with a view to providing a continuum of supports that address the full spectrum of needs of people with disabilities who wish to avail of training and employment opportunities. This will involve:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of vocational training and employment programmes
- Raising employers' awareness on employment and retention in employment
- Integrating systems, programmes and supports to employment, training and education

Key pillars contained in the Strategy include:

- Preparation for Employment – Training by Specialist Training Providers, e.g., developing a joint bridging programme from (HSE) rehabilitative to (FÁS) vocational training and other mainstream options

- Job Matching and Job Supports, e.g., agreeing a role of FÁS as a Gateway for assessing the needs of people with disabilities
- Raising Employer Awareness and Job Retention, e.g., engaging with IBEC and other employer representative bodies to ensure employers are aware of FÁS supports; developing and implementing an effective system of intervention for people who become long-term absent from work
- Integrating systems, programmes and supports, e.g., developing and articulating a continuum of training and employment and related supports for people with disabilities across the broad spectrum of Government services

Responsible bodies and timeframes have been assigned to the various actions. The draft Strategy will be further discussed with the Department's Consultative Forum Group once it has been finally agreed by the responsible bodies concerned. A working draft of the outline for a Comprehensive Employment Strategy is attached at Appendix 3.

## **13. Next Steps**

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy that is being advanced by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in partnership with the Consultative Forum and the Cross Sectoral Group will provide for an integrated strategy of engagement by the relevant Government Departments and their agencies, and other stakeholders, to promote the labour market integration of people with disabilities. The strategy aims to deliver a process of engagement that addresses the range of capacities and needs of people with disabilities, to ensure that those who are able to are given every opportunity to engage in meaningful work, notwithstanding the challenges presented by the current difficult economic environment.

Implementation of an agreed Action Plan for improvements to the operation of the FÁS Supported Employment Programme in co-operation with stakeholders' interest groups will be a key measure for the delivery of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities.

In the period remaining under the Sectoral Plan, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is committed to ensuring that the implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy is commenced with the cooperation of all stakeholders, including the Departments of Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs and the relevant agencies. The focus, in accordance with the actions and timeframes contained in the strategy, will be on sustaining efforts to increase the overall employment rate of people with disabilities. The Department is committed to ensuring that the strategy will be finalised and actions agreed for implementation soon as possible to ensure that people with disabilities may be able to obtain the maximum benefit from the eventual economic recovery and a consequent upturn in the Irish labour market.

## Appendix 1

### Summary of submissions from Stakeholders

STAKEHOLDER	RECOMMENDATION
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	<p>Recommendations of research in wage subsidy scheme, job retention strategy and supported employment are implemented</p> <p>Supports available from HSE and FÁS should complement one another.</p> <p>Address lack of legislation and regulation covering the provision of sheltered work and unwaged supported employment.</p>
Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE)	<p>Change criteria of the Wage Subsidy Scheme to ensure it can be used to its maximum potential for creating further integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities</p> <p>Include IASE in the consultation process for the development of employment services for people with disabilities throughout Ireland.</p> <p>Develop links between the Social Welfare system and FÁS with a view to offering positive support and guidance in relation to employment for people receiving social welfare disability payments.</p>
National Disability Authority	<p>The comprehensive employment strategy should implement the recommendation of Vision for Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence based approaches to training and employment for people with mental health problems should be adopted and such programmes should be put in place by the agencies responsible for this area</li> <li>• Strengthen links between FÁS and the Local Employment Service</li> <li>• Clarify the proposal to use the Gateway as a one-stop-shop into services</li> <li>• Use links between the Department of Enterprise, Trade &amp; Employment, its agencies, and employers to advance support for the demand side of the labour market for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Examine reasons for low take up of Job Retention Scheme and reshape in order to deliver on its objectives</li> <li>• Explore capacity to accommodate other groups who are distant from the labour market alongside people with disabilities in specialist training programmes</li> <li>• Record and independently evaluate learning from the pilot disability activation programme in Westmeath</li> <li>• Inclusion, in revised Sectoral Plan of a more detailed treatment of the main strategic areas,</li> </ul>

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
	together with appropriate targets and timeframes.
Enable Ireland	Consider innovative ways of raising awareness of disability in employment, using a range of tools including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of Workplace assessments</li> <li>• Employer Seminars</li> <li>• Employer guides</li> <li>• Increased provision of Advice/Information online</li> </ul>
Association for Higher Education Access & Disability	Ensure more structured discussion between stakeholders around specific issues with measurable action plans produced from meetings.
HSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand or prioritise Community Employment places for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Increase the availability of employment based training options and set specific targets in this area</li> <li>• Consider developing, on a pilot basis, an <i>On Job Assessment Scheme</i> in order to provide a situational type of work based assessment for people with disabilities</li> <li>• IDA should request the recruitment of people with disabilities and their participation in developmental and training opportunities, at the developmental and start up phase of investment projects</li> <li>• Provide more flexible and individual responses at FÁS Employment Service Gateways.</li> <li>• Provide transition planning from school to training, to employment and between different programmes.</li> <li>• Pilot 3 bridging programmes from rehabilitative training to vocational training. Review and evaluate outcomes and develop ongoing bridging programmes.</li> <li>• Strengthen joined up working between agencies.</li> <li>• Develop local area response teams comprised of personnel from FÁS, HDE and S/SFA, to develop streamlined and joined up planning.</li> <li>• Transfer expertise of Specialist Training Providers to FÁS mainstream centres.</li> <li>• Implement FÁS Vocational Strategy recommendation re provision of a Disability Support Service and prioritise appointment of Access Officers.</li> <li>• Develop modular based training programmes</li> <li>• Include specific target increased in the participation rates of people with disabilities in FÁS training courses in Sectoral Plan</li> <li>• Develop outcome based funding model of vocational training</li> <li>• Examine limitation of Supported Employment Services to some geographic areas</li> <li>• Conduct full audit of FÁS buildings and premises</li> </ul>

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
<p>REHAB Group &amp; the Not for Profit Business Association</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a local model of collaborative working.</li> <li>• Address lack of progress on the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities</li> <li>• Strategy should ensure that a wider range of options in terms of employment are considered and supported</li> <li>• Ensure that the concept of ‘mainstreaming’ adopted and the mainstreaming strategies developed under the Sectoral Plan support people with disabilities to achieve employment in the open labour market</li> <li>• Recognise the National Learning Network as a mainstream training provider</li> <li>• Consider extra supports required by many people with disabilities to enable them to enter and retain employment, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Specific supports for people experiencing mental health difficulties</li> <li>– Flexibility in hours of work</li> <li>– Access to secondary benefits</li> <li>– Job retention supports</li> <li>– Supports to enable people with disabilities to develop high quality careers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure that the Wage Subsidy Scheme is an attractive option for employees and employers</li> <li>• Develop meaningful engagement with employers to meet their needs and communicate the benefits of employing people with disabilities</li> <li>• Co-ordinate action between Department of Enterprise, Trade &amp; Employment and the Department of Health &amp; Children with regard to the Adult Day Services Review</li> <li>• Consider some form of monitoring of Plan by external agencies</li> <li>• Ensure all training courses provide students with disabilities with the skills and qualifications they require to compete in the labour market</li> <li>• Rollout, countrywide, the National Learning Network’s Rehabilitative Training programmes</li> <li>• Restate the overarching aims of the Sectoral Plan to reinvigorate progress in the employment of people with disabilities</li> <li>• Detail rates of progression and regression in all areas under the plan since 2006</li> <li>• Introduce targets for improving the position of people with disabilities, which are based on a careful consideration of available statistical and economic data</li> <li>• Ensure forward planning by the Department which takes into account the demographics of people with disabilities and which assesses and plans for their future needs.</li> </ul>

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collected data which will give a clear picture of the experiences of people with disabilities in the labour market</li> <li>• Ensure more formal recognition of the role of the consultative forum in the monitoring structure of the Sectoral Plan under the National Disability Strategy is required</li> <li>• Identify areas where cross-departmental cooperation could be beneficial</li> <li>• Ensure that social welfare payments incentivise people to enter employment</li> <li>• Publicise availability of funding to support the employment of people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Amnesty International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfil recommendations relevant to D/ETE set out in 'A Vision for Change'</li> <li>• Implement the recommendations of the National Economic and Social Forum report 'Mental Health &amp; Social Inclusion</li> <li>• Train frontline staff to provide good quality service to people with mental health difficulties</li> <li>• Report specifically in relation to people with mental health difficulties</li> <li>• Provide co-ordinated service, in conjunction with other departments/agencies for people with mental health difficulties.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Summary of Expenditure under Sectoral Plan<sup>8</sup>

<b>Vote Group Enterprise Trade and Employment</b>				
<b>Expenditure on Disability Services 2006 - 2008</b>				
<i>Vote 34</i>	<i>Service</i>	<b>Expenditure to end December 2006</b>	<b>Expenditure to end December 2007</b>	<b>Expenditure to end December 2008</b>
<i>Name Vote/Subhead</i>	<i>Disability Act, 2005</i>	<i>€000</i>	<i>€000</i>	<i>€000</i>
	<b>Accessibility</b>			
<b>ETE</b>	Intranet Accessibility Development Work	10	100	20
<b>ETE</b>	Risk Register Application	0	0	0
<b>ETE</b>	Work Permits Accessibility		0	0
<b>ETE</b>	Patents Office Website Accessibility	0	8	0
<b>ETE</b>	Disability Access	495	150	10
<b>ODCE</b>	Access to buildings	0	0	0
<b>Forfas</b>	Access upgrade	2	0	13
<b>Forfas</b>	Health and Safety	1	1	1
<b>Forfas</b>	Toilets	35	0	0
<b>INTERTRADE</b>	Improve physical access to IntertradeIreland's Information resource Centre. "High Contrast" internal painting scheme	0	2	0
<b>IDA</b>	Building Access contribution to Forfas	1	0	0
<b>EI</b>	Designated car parking spaces	0	0	5
<b>EI</b>	Refurbishments to existing facilities and provision of additional accessibility features	34	0	0
<b>EI</b>	Provision of additional accessibility features for Eastpoint and Shannon Westpark	0	0	41
<b>NSAI</b>	Refurbishment of existing facilities (Reception, Public Meeting Rooms, Public Access Points, Toilets)	0	0	0
<b>NSAI</b>	Access audit and analysis	0	0	5
<b>FAS</b>	Accessibility of premises and services (Estimated Figures)	2,500	2,500	1,000
<b>LRC</b>	Access to building	0	0	0
<b>NCA</b>	Refurbishment of existing facilities and provision of additional accessibility features	0	10	0
<b>HSA</b>	Access to building	0	4	5
<b>SFADCO</b>	Upgrade Works	145	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>3,223</b>	<b>2,775</b>	<b>1,100</b>

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	<b>Sectoral Plans</b>			
<b>FAS</b>	Wage Subsidy Scheme	6,694	7,610	9,428
<b>FAS</b>	Supported Employment Programme	7,682	8,254	8,574
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>14,376</b>	<b>15,864</b>	<b>18,002</b>
	<b>Services.</b>			
<b>DETE</b>	Disability Liaison Officer		6	6
<b>DETE</b>	Disability Awareness presentations, sign interpretation	26	14	4
<b>DETE</b>	Audio/Visual Software	2	0	0
<b>DETE</b>	Advertising and Publicity	0	1	1
<b>ODCE</b>	Compliance with WAI guidelines to level AAA (top level) for accessibility of websites for persons with disabilities	1	2	1
<b>ODCE</b>	Dissemination of Information – Accessible formats for publications	0	0	0
<b>Forfas</b>	Publications/Web	23	18	7
<b>Forfas</b>	IT Equipment	1	1	0
<b>INTERTRADE</b>	Information dissemination – meet requests for accessible formats for publications and events	0	8	0
<b>INTERTRADE</b>	Diversity awareness training - €2,000. Enquiry Officer - €2,000	0	4	3
<b>IDA</b>	Awareness	2	1	1
<b>IDA</b>	Website Development	10	12	11
<b>EI</b>	Access to Enterprise Ireland's corporate website	18	22	18
<b>CEBs</b>	Provision of services to clients with disability e.g. access, hiring of a signer for clients with hearing impairment	9	20	27
<b>NSAI</b>	Disability Awareness Training	0	0	0
<b>NSAI</b>	Provision of Specialist Services	0	0	0
<b>NSAI</b>	Access to information	0	0	0
<b>FÁS</b>	Specialist Training Providers (vocational training for people with disabilities)	49,371	52,009	55,191
<b>FÁS</b>	Disability Support/Awareness	1,077	460	856
<b>LRC</b>	Diversity Training	5	0	0
<b>HSA</b>	Training	0	3	4
<b>HSA</b>	Website Development	0	5	4
<b>SFADCO</b>	Training	1	0	0
<b>SFADCO</b>	Miscellaneous	0	2	9
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>50,546</b>	<b>52,588</b>	<b>56,143</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>68,145</b>	<b>71,227</b>	<b>75,245</b>

<sup>8</sup> This list does not include the €117.79m spent on disability related areas funded by SFI

## Appendix 3

# Draft Outline for a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

*Note: The draft Strategy will be further discussed with the Department’s Consultative Forum Group once it has been finally agreed by the responsible bodies concerned in the Cross-Sectoral Group.*

KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<b>1. Interdepartmental Cooperation</b>		
<b>Employment Targets</b>		
– measure aggregate increases in numbers of PWD employed	DETE/NDA	2010
– measure numbers of PWD on vocational training courses & employment support interventions	FÁS/NDA/HSE	Ongoing
– increase employment rate of PWD from 37% to 47% as measured by QNHS	DETE/NDA	2016
– increase overall participation rate of PWD in education, training & employment to 50% by 2016	DETE/NDA	2016
<b>Interdepartmental Group</b>		
Re-initiate cross-department, cross-agency group across DOHC, DETE, D/SFA, FÁS, HSE (and other agencies and departments as relevant) in order to:	DoHC/DETE/DSFA/FÁS/HSE	2009
– establish agreed definitions of those with PwD falling under the remit of this Comprehensive Employment Strategy	DoHC/DETE/DSFA/FÁS/HSE	On-going

KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– set out the full continuum of training and labour market employment supports for PWD in relation to all types of disability and all levels of impairment</li> <li>– agree configuration of FÁS as employment Gateway</li> <li>– develop bridging schemes from RT to VT</li> <li>– propose intervention &amp; activation measures for those on disability payments</li> <li>– Establish/Agree cross departmental responsibility for Social Employment</li> <li>– examine outputs from recent pilots on activation of PWD (in particular the Disability Activation Project) &amp; bring forward mainstreaming recommendations from these pilots</li> <li>– set out clear timeframes for the achievement of all of the above.</li> </ul> <p>development of systems to share information across agencies (data protection issues will need to be addressed) and for profiling to assist the targeting of activation and supports - when Part 2 of the Disability Act is rolled out for adults, this would give an important framework</p>		
<p><b>Job Matching and Job Supports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– examine, develop &amp; agree a concept of FÁS as a Gateway for PWD seeking employment/support towards employment</li> </ul>	NDA/DoHC/DETE/FÁS/HSE	2009

KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– agree role of FÁS as a Gateway in terms of assessing the needs of PWD. DoHC assessment inputs transferred via protocol to FÁS will be applicable in some cases. HSE not sure what this means— clarification required</li> </ul>	NDA/DoHC/DETE/FÁS/HSE	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– implement enhanced caseload management system in FÁS (with links to/from HSE, D/SFA)</li> </ul>	FÁS	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– develop greater complementarity between two strands of the NES – FÁS and LES</li> </ul>	FÁS	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– examine outputs of the Disability Activation Project pilot run by DSFA to promote systematic &amp; cross-sectoral engagement with PWD &amp; consider wider implementation</li> </ul>	DSFA/FÁS/HSE	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– [implement revised FÁS Supported Employment Programme in consultation with Consultative Forum]</li> </ul>	DETE/FAS	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– put Wage Subsidy Scheme on a permanent footing</li> </ul>	DETE/FÁS	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– make provision for return to former DA status if WSS support fails</li> </ul>	DSFA/FAS	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– pursue Programme for Government commitment of retention of medical card indefinitely for those on WSS</li> </ul>	DETE/DoHC/DSFA/FÁS/HSE	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– introduce a training element to the WSS</li> </ul>	FÁS/DSFA	2010

KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<b>2. Raising Employers' Awareness and Job Retention</b>		
<p><b>Retention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– develop &amp; implement effective system of intervention for people who are long-term absent from work</li> <li>– Job Coach assistance with Supported Employment Programme to be extended to WSS employers to retain PWD in employment</li> <li>– DSFA to examine those on DA &amp; use medical assessors to form opinion on activation readiness and where applicants ready, incentivise, support work options</li> <li>– full roll-out of DSFA's Social and Economic Participation Programme</li> </ul>	<p>DSFA</p> <p>FÁS</p> <p>DSFA</p> <p>DSFA</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2010</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>
<p><b>Employer Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– engage with IBEC &amp; other employer representative bodies to ensure employers aware of supports available to employ &amp; retain in employment PWD</li> <li>– engage with IBEC &amp; through DETE industrial development agencies to ensure dissemination of Health and Safety Guidance related to PWD</li> <li>– facilitate Minister-led roll-out of nationwide awareness campaign for employers around creating employment opportunities for PWD</li> </ul>	<p>NDA/DETE/FÁS</p> <p>NDA/DETE</p> <p>DETE/DoHC/FÁS</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2010</p> <p>2009</p>

KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– provide job retention guidance to employers</li> <li>– promote safe work places and practices in inclusive workplaces</li> <li>– maximise local employment opportunities through FÁS</li> <li>– HSE and FÁS funded service and training providers to continue to build local links with employers</li> <li>– Need to have protocols developed to support this process as employers may have a vast range of services approaching</li> <li>– Provide telephone number employers can call if they have queries re employing someone with disability or in relation to someone on their staff who acquires a disability</li> <li>– FÁS (or FÁS-subcontracted) helpline for employers on disability employment issues</li> </ul>	<p>NDA</p> <p>HSA</p> <p>FÁS</p> <p>HSE/ FÁS funded providers</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>FÁS</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>2010</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>TBC</p>
<b>3. Integration of Systems, Programmes and Supports</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ensure that removal of income supports &amp; associated benefits do not create financial barriers to employment, training or educational opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>DETE/DoHC/DSFA</p>	<p>2010</p>



KEY PILLARS	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– promote and develop “one stop shop” for VT access through FÁS for all PWD applicants</li> </ul>	FÁS	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– examine the profile of PWD participating in CE Scheme, assess if there is scope to implement a similar scheme dedicated to PWD</li> </ul>	DETE/FÁS	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– roll-out of FÁS Access &amp; Learning Support Service Officers to mainline Training Centres</li> </ul>	FÁS	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– review outputs of West Dublin pilot of FÁS High Support Programme for PWD Individual Learner Plan</li> </ul>	FÁS	2010