

# Employment Incentives

DEPT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

As we enter a period of economic decline it may seem optimistic, even obstinate, to be writing about employment incentives. However, there are still some opportunities out there, particularly for those who wish to supplement their incomes while retaining their benefits.

At the very height of the Celtic Tiger, only 32 percent of people with disabilities were in employment in Ireland. According to the National Economic and Social Council's (NES) 'Well-Being Matters: A Social Report for Ireland', there are 90,500 people in receipt of Disability Allowance (DA) while 53,900 receive Invalidity Pension (IP).

If you are getting a disability payment such as DA or IP, you may be allowed to do work that is considered 'rehabilitative or therapeutic' and retain your benefits, provided you first get written approval from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA).

Such 'therapeutic' work may include participation on a FÁS training course or Community Employment (CE) scheme. There are two types of Community Employment (Part-time Integration Option and Part-time Job Option), each with its own regulations and eligibility requirements. People over the age of 18 who are in receipt of DA or IP qualify to participate in both schemes.

Essentially, if you are in receipt of IP, you get the standard FÁS Training Allowance and you continue to get your pension. If you are in receipt of DA, your allowance is suspended and you are paid a FÁS Training Allowance at the same rate as your DA. In addition, you are also paid a weekly training bonus and you retain any extra benefits to which you are entitled. The FÁS objective is that, in all cases, participants who are in receipt of secondary benefits from the DSFA or the Department of Health and Children will continue to receive their benefits while participating in FÁS training or FÁS Community Employment schemes.

FÁS also provides a wide range of supports for people with disabilities in employment and employers of people with disabilities. The FÁS Wage Subsidy Scheme gives financial assistance to employers to encourage them to employ people with disabilities with productivity levels of below 80 percent of standard performance.

FÁS pay a standard fee for a three-hour period for an interpreter to accompany a person with a speech or hearing impairment to a job interview. The FÁS Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant (WEAG) provides limited funding for a person with a disability who is starting, or already in employment, in order to make the workplace, including equipment, easier to use.

The Employee Retention Grant Scheme was set up to assist employers to retain at work people who develop a disability through sickness or injury while in employment. Employees who acquire an illness or disability can be offered retraining to continue working at their existing duties using modified techniques or have the option of undertaking alternative duties.

To get full details on any FÁS Grants or Community Employment, you should contact your local FÁS Office or see their website [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie)

If you are thinking of setting up as self-employed in a business that has been approved by a job facilitator or Partnership Company and you are in receipt of DA or IP, you can qualify for the Back to Work Enterprise Scheme.

Under this scheme, you can keep 100 percent of your benefits during your first year in business and 75 percent during the second year. The Back to Work Allowance Scheme was suspended in 2009. People with disabilities who are in receipt of DA or IP, who take up employment having been unemployed for over a year, are entitled to a special tax allowance.

The job you are taking up must be for a minimum of 30 hours a week and be capable of lasting at least 12 months. Apply to your local tax office. Information Leaflet (IT 58) is available online at [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

Value Added Tax (VAT) may also be claimed back for certain aids and appliances used by a person with a disability to assist them at work.

If you are a person who is employed at a low rate of payment, you should be aware that you may be entitled to claim Family Income Supplement (FIS). To qualify for FIS, your weekly family income must be below a certain level. You must be working at least 19 hours per week and your job must be expected to last at least three months. You cannot get FIS if you are taking part in any FÁS scheme. For further information you should contact your local Citizens Information Centre or request an application form

(FIS 1) from Social Welfare Services at LoCall 1890 92 7770 or see [www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/fis1](http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/fis1)

Finally, under the Disability Act 2005, all public bodies are obliged to ensure that at least three percent of their workforce is comprised of people with disabilities. The National Disability Authority (NDA) has a statutory monitoring role to ensure compliance with the three per cent quota. In their latest report, the NDA state that while for the first time, in 2007, all 15 Government Departments reached or exceeded their obligation, forty-five per cent of Government organisations have still not reached their target. These organisations may present opportunities for people with disabilities seeking employment. A full list of these public bodies is contained in Appendix A of the NDA 2008 Report: Compliance with Part 5 of the Disability Act ([www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)).

## CASE STUDY

I NOW FEEL BETTER EQUIPPED TO PURSUE A CAREER IN SPORTS ADMINISTRATION,  
SAYS DAVID WALSH

David Walsh has just completed an IWA rehabilitative training programme and sees full-time employment as very much part of his future. He says: "My ambition is to work full-time. As part of the IWA rehabilitative training programme, we looked at a range of employment incentives that are available to people with a disability. I had no idea what was out there. On first viewing it can look complicated. So, I suggest you get support in trying to identify the supports that best suit your own particular situation." Having completed his training programme, David feels he now has the capacity to attend a job interview, confident that he can advise a potential employer about the supports that are available to both him and the employer. David, who is currently undertaking work experience with IWA, wants to take up employment in sports administration. "I had some experience working in a summer camp for adults last year, organising various events and activities. I thought I would hate it, but I really loved it. Unfortunately I think employers aren't aware of the incentives that are available. It is usually left to the person with a disability to tell them, and in the majority of cases to actually make the application for funding themselves." David is keen to stress the importance of Personal Assistance at work. "I have 50 hours of Personal Assistance per week. If I didn't have a PA, I would be unable to fulfill my ambition of working full-time."

