County Offaly CIS in association with Irish Wheelchair Association

Cover Photograph: Supplied by Workway

Every effort has been made to include all relevant groups. However, we apologise to any group that is inadvertently omitted. All contact information was correct at time of printing, April 2005.
THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY FROM UNEMPLOYMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

– The Journey

County Offaly CIS in association with Irish Wheelchair Association

2005
Preface

County Offaly Citizens Information Service

Co Offaly Citizens Information Service (Offaly CIS) can provide you with information and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is supported and funded by Comhairle, the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy. Currently Offaly Citizens Information Service Ltd has three main offices, Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr. Four outreach centres also operate in Ferbane, Clonbullogue, Daingean and Rhode and a further outreach centre will open in Clara later this year. The service is free, confidential and independent and it is not necessary to make an appointment to see the fully trained information providers. Offaly CIS provides information, advice and low-level advocacy services which means you can:

- Get information on all your entitlements
- Get advice on the best options open to you
- Receive help filling out forms, following up enquiries or with an appeal if necessary.

This booklet represents over 12 months researching and working with people with disabilities accessing employment opportunities and the barriers, which exist in the workplace. In carrying out the research we endeavored to ensure a comprehensive cross-section of the community was represented and we are delighted that people with physical, sensory, learning and mental health disabilities participated. Our thanks goes out to those individuals for giving up of their time to contribute to this much needed analysis.

Co Offaly CIS enjoyed working closely with the Irish Wheelchair Association, The Health Service Executive (Midland Area), Aontacht Phobail Teoranta (APT), Workway, Disability Federation of Ireland, Centre for Independent Living, National Learning Network (previously known as the NTDI) and FAS in delivering this Document.

Comhairle publish a useful and practical guide on services and rights for people with disabilities called ‘Entitlements for People with Disabilities’ which complement this information booklet. It contains information on benefits, state pensions, payments for carers etc and is available at all CICs.

Jim Stone
Chairperson
Preface
Irish Wheelchair Association

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is a national organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with disability as equal, independent and participative members within the general community.

The role of IWA is:
- To advocate for change, locally and nationally, by representing the issues and concerns of adults and children with limited mobility.
- To research, develop and pilot new concepts of service delivery.
- To deliver services in partnership with statutory and non statutory agencies.

IWA has a broad range of services for people with physical disabilities, which include:

- Advocacy
- Assisted Living Services
- Resource and Outreach Centres
- Independent Living Apartments
- Motoring Advice Assessment and Tuition
- Transport
- Employment Training and Education
- Sport
- Respite and Holidays
- Peer Counselling
- Traditional Chinese Therapy
- Information
- Publications
- Spokeout
- Youth Services/SPIRIT

IWA, through a person centred planning approach has identified a number of people who aim to be in paid employment. This research, carried out in partnership with Offaly Citizens Information Services, confirms the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities across the broad spectrum of disability support groups. The loss of secondary benefits, additional training, disability awareness of colleagues in the workplace, when to disclose a disability, being caught in the loop of unpaid work placements, to name but a few, remain key issues for people with disabilities when accessing paid employment. Hopefully, this document will assist people with disabilities in addressing some of these issues.

Irish Wheelchair Association would like to thank County Offaly Citizens Information Services and Comhairle for inviting us to participate in this research.

Molly Buckley
Chairperson
Acknowledgements

The Steering Committee - for all their hard work and guidance in the production of this book. The committee comprises of:

- Carol Marnell Irish Wheelchair Association.
- Anne Quinn Co Offaly Citizens Information Service.
- Susan Ryan Co Offaly Citizens Information Service.
- Mairead Conroy Workway.
- David Whelan, Regional Disabilities Services, Health Service Executive.
- Maria Fox, Disability Federation Ireland.
- Sean O Brien, FAS Employment Services.
- Freda Kinnarney, Aontacht Phobail Teoranta (APT).

Thanks to Susan Ryan, Development Manager Co Offaly CIC, Anne Quinn, Acting Development Manager and Carol Marnell, Community Development Officer, Irish Wheelchair Association who conducted the research for this publication.

To the following agencies who participated so willingly during the research:

- Irish Wheelchair Association and The Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus.
- Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and the NLN.
- St Anne’s Services to People with Intellectual Disabilities, Sureway and Castleview Resources.
- KARE, APT, and the Centre for Independent Living.
- National Association for Deaf People.
- Mental Health Ireland.
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland.

To all the individuals who participated in the workshops through the above organisations. Thank you.

To the advocates who supported the participants taking part in the workshops.

To the National Association for Deaf People who provided sign language interpreters to the project.

To Offaly CIS Board of Management and Irish Wheelchair Association Management who supported this project.

To Comhairle who supported and funded this project under the Information Grants Programme.

To Co Offaly VEC, Adult Learning Centre, who generously literacy proofed the book.

To Regional Disabilities Services, Health Services Executive who generously gave us access to Bury Quay premises at no cost.

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Chapter One
Research Description

1.1 Introduction

In 2004, Co Offaly CIS and the Irish Wheelchair Association carried out research using a bottom up approach to information gathering and dissemination in relation to ‘the movement from unemployment to employment’ targeted at people with disabilities in the Offaly and surrounding regions. It was estimated that an information gap existed in this area. The goal of the research was to produce this report, which addresses training, and work issues and employment supports within Co Offaly and extended areas. The Book also includes a directory of services available. The information is published in various media including print, braille and audio formats. The main goal was to answer the question ‘How do I go about getting a job?’

The main objectives of the project were to:

- Consult directly with individuals and disability representative groups on what information gaps exist. Once information gaps have being identified, gather the relevant information into one handbook including a directory of support agencies with a description of their activities.
- Complement the Comhairle Publication "Entitlements for People with Disabilities". The Comhairle publication focuses on entitlements and this handbook will focus on the process and supports available in the movement from unemployment to employment, of people with disability.
- Empower the individual to move from unemployment to employment by increased awareness of supports available and providing complete information.

A number of issues were highlighted during the research with regard to an overall lack of information on what supports and services are available to people with disabilities when seeking employment. This publication has been developed in response to an identified need for greater access to information regarding disability and employment. It outlines what supports are available, who provides these supports and their relevant contact details.
1.2 Focus Group Profile

In carrying out the research 7 focus groups with the following agencies were carried out by Co Offaly CIS and IWA (Please see appendix 1 for focus group questions).

- Irish Wheelchair Association and The Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus.
- Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and the National Learning Network (NLN), previously NTDI.
- St Anne’s Services to People with Intellectual Disabilities, Sureway and Castleview Resources.
- KARE, APT, and the Centre for Independent Living.
- National Association for the Deaf.
- Mental Health Ireland.
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland.

An average of 6 people attended each focus group. Each group was furnished with a code of ethics before the research began (see appendix 3). Following the work with the focus groups, 200 questionnaires were forwarded to people with disabilities through the representative groups and 68 were returned. (Please see appendix 2 for sample of questionnaire) The groups were asked to target individuals with a disability who were seeking employment.

1.3 Questionnaire Sample Profile

i. Gender
Of the 68 respondents 45% were male and 55% were female.

ii. Age
17% of the respondents were aged between 16 and 24 years of age. 27% were aged between 25-34 followed by 22% between the ages of 35-44. 26% were between 45 and 64 with 6% over 65 years of age. 3% did not respond to the question.

iii. Residence
The sample was taken from all over the county of Offaly see Table 1.1, Geography of Sample.
52% of the respondents described themselves living in a town, with 11% saying they lived in a village and 38% saying they lived in a rural area. When those living outside a town or village were asked what distance from the nearest town or village they lived it was found that 24% lived less than 1km from the nearest town. 34% lived between 1km and 5km from a town, 20% lived between 5km and 10km from their nearest town and 20% lived over 10km from their nearest town.

**iv. Disability profile**

Table 1.2 shows the disability profile of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Sensory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Intellectual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Disability profile of respondents.
The Movement of People with Disabilities from Unemployment to Employment, The Journey

In this instance the respondents were asked to describe their disability. One can see from Table 1.2, the majority of respondents described their disability as physical, followed by individuals who have intellectual disabilities. 9% did not respond to this question.

The respondents were then asked when they acquired their disability. It was found that the majority, 48%, had acquired their disability from birth. This was followed by 14% who acquired their disability between the ages of 18 and 30 and 11% who acquired their disability between the ages of 31-45. Please see Table 1.3, When Disability was Acquired, for full breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Birth</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5-12</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3 When Disability was Acquired.

Chapter two examines the research results within 7 main themes that emerged from the research and attempts to highlight the main issues pertaining to people with disabilities and the supports that are available to help address these issues.
Chapter Two
Issues Facing People with Disabilities

The research showed 7 emerging themes highlighted by people with disabilities, which are as follows:

- Low Self Esteem and the Individuals’ Perception of Employers.
- Training and Education.
- Employment Opportunities.
- Financial Disincentives.
- Access and Transport.
- Assisted Technology.
- What Support People with Disabilities Identified for Themselves.

People with disabilities are not different from people without disabilities. They have the same hopes and desires, which are hugely diverse. When asked what type of paid employment people were interested in, the range varied from; shop assistant, factory worker, craft workers, office work, driving, gym instructor, quantity surveyor, writer, self employed, catering, mechanic, outdoor work and so on. The issue in question is ‘were any of these opportunities available to people with disabilities and what happened when they tried to access their desired job?’

(Please note all contact details for support agencies discussed in this section are listed in Chapter 3, Directory of Disability Support Groups).
2.1 Low Self Esteem and the Individuals’ Perception of Employers

‘Have you ever tried to get paid employment you would like?’

‘No, I needed training’

‘No, lack of awareness among employers’

‘I didn’t know how to disclose my disability’

‘Managers weren’t available to talk to me about the job’

‘Told that insurance was the problem’

Feedback from the Focus Groups together with the survey results indicated that people with disabilities suffered from low self-esteem and that they perceived that employers viewed them negatively. There was plenty of discussion around which jobs people wanted to access but when asked if they ever made an application for such jobs it was found that 36% of the group did not ever apply for such jobs. A further 20% did not answer the question. In the focus groups it was found that people felt they would not get the job even if they made an application so what was the point in making the application in the first place. They also perceived that employers would not be interested in employing them believing them to be not as productive as co-workers or in need of flexible working hours.

Of the 41% of respondents who made an application for paid employment, it was found that the respondents believed that employers lack of awareness of their abilities or employers’ perceived lack of education attainment resulted in them not getting the job.

A recurring theme throughout the workshops was the dilemma of disclosure of a disability. There are many dimensions to the disclosure issue, including whether or not to disclose a disability, when to disclose, to whom and how much and what information to provide.

People with disabilities need support in three areas:

- Self Esteem
- Getting the message of ability to employers
- Disclosure of Disability
2.1.1 Self Esteem

Although the research does not determine a clear link between self-esteem and education standards it may be reasonable to assume that these two issues are in fact linked. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) feels strongly that opportunities for people with intellectual and physical or sensory disabilities must be provided by both the VEC literacy service as well as the disability representative groups through disability days and training services (NALA submission to the NDA on Standards in Disability Services).

To access literacy training contact the local Adult Learning Centre. Also contact your local disability representation group and check if they run self-development programmes. Contact details are listed in Chapter 3.

2.1.2 Getting the Message of Ability to Employers

A person's self esteem is often affected by how other people react to them in a social or work environment. Many people are unsure of how to respond to someone with a disability and are self conscious about the language they use. They are concerned about using the wrong words and inadvertently causing offence, or being unable to cope with a situation because of lack of knowledge about the appropriate etiquette when working with people with disabilities. One of the ways to improve the esteem of a person with disability is to challenge the attitudes of people who interact with them especially in the workplace. The following supports are in place to support employers in the hiring of people with disabilities.

i. Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme

A grant is available to all organisations in the private sector towards providing disability awareness training to their staff. The Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme is intended to assist in the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace and to eliminate mistaken perceptions about people with disabilities and their capacity to be productive and effective colleagues and employees.

Disability awareness training is of benefit to everyone, as we are often unsure of appropriate etiquette when dealing with people with disabilities, be they our work colleagues, clients, employees or customers. Disability awareness training grants are available to private sector employers from FÁS, which has a list of accredited trainers. Funding is available at a level of 90% of cost in the first year of training and thereafter, 80% of eligible programme costs are granted.

Contact FÁS Services to Business for Further Support.
ii. The Employee Retention Grant Scheme

This scheme aims to assist employers to retain employees who acquire an illness or impairment that affects their ability to carry out their job. The scheme aims to maintain the employability of individuals by providing funding to retrain, so that a person can take up another position within the company and identify accommodation such as work equipment adaptation and/or training to enable the individual to remain in their current position.

The scheme is open to every company in Ireland in the private sector. Any existing employee (working at any level in the organisation) who acquires an illness, condition or disability that affects his or her job is covered under this scheme.

Public sector employers in Ireland are not eligible to apply for these grants. Public sector employers in Ireland are obliged to promote positive attitudes towards disability and ensure they put in place all arrangements to ensure the full integration of staff with disabilities in employment.

Funding under this scheme is made available in two stages:

Stage 1: Assists employers by allowing them to "buy-in" expert skills from outside the company to develop a written individual "Retention Strategy" for any employee who acquires a disability. The Retention Strategy could set out steps needed to accommodate and, if necessary train the employee to remain in his or her role. Alternatively, the Retention Strategy could outline where the employee could be re-deployed in the company and the accommodation/re-training needed to do this.

Stage 2: Provides financial assistance (grant aid) to the employer towards the implementation of the written Retention Strategy. This will include grant aid towards re-training, job coaching and/or hiring an external co-ordinator to oversee the way the individual Retention Strategy is implemented.

The following activities are not eligible for funding under the Employee Retention Grant Scheme:

- Attendance at workshops and seminars
- Capital expenditure associated with training
- Company-wide disability management assessments or the development of disability/absent management policies.

Contact FÁS Services to Business for Further Support.
iii. Workplace Literacy Project Midlands Region.
The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), with the support of FAS is engaging in the development of a basic education support model for those who are already in the workplace. The objective is to raise awareness of literacy needs and to recruit employers to address the literacy and numeracy needs of employees.

iv. Employment Support Scheme (ESS).
The ESS offers financial assistance to employers of people with disabilities on a full-time basis (20 hours or more) whose work productivity levels are between 50% and 80% of average performance. The shortfall in productivity is determined by the employer in consultation with the employee and agreed with a FÁS employment service officer. The employer is paid a subsidy of between 20% and 50% of the employee’s wages to cover the shortfall.

Contact FÁS Employment Services for Further Support.

v. Employer’s PRSI Exemption Scheme.
This scheme benefits employers who recruit a person with a disability who is participating for the first time in the Back to Work Allowance scheme. Employers are exempted from their portion of the PRSI contribution for a maximum period of two years in respect of each first-time participant in the Back to Work Allowance scheme, provided the person continues in their employment. There is no need for employers to apply separately for this exemption, as it is processed automatically with the employee’s application for the allowance.

Contact Citizens Information Centre, or local Social Welfare office with regards to the Back to Work Allowance Scheme.

Social Policy Issues

Should Government be more proactive in targeting companies to participate in the Disability Awareness Training Support Programme?

Should employers automatically qualify for the PRSI exemption if they recruit a person with a diagnosed disability irrespective of whether that person is on a back to work scheme?

2.1.3. Disclosure of Disability

A number of options are available to those who choose to disclose as illustrated below in Table 2.1 (following page), Disclosure of Disability.
Employers may learn that an applicant or an employee has a disability through a variety of means. A post offer medical examination may reveal the use of medications. A series of ‘gaps’ in the work history on a job application form may generate pointed questioning by the interviewer regardless of the source of the information, whether through purposeful disclosure by the applicant/employee or through any other means, the employer is required by the Employment Equality Act not to discriminate against qualified individuals.

### When to disclose

- At the time of application
- On the resume
- In the cover letter
- When the employer calls with an invitation to interview
- In between the offer of an interview and the actual interview
- In the initial stage of the interview
- At the conclusion of the interview
- When the job offer is received
- When starting work
- When an accommodation is needed.
- If, or, when a crisis occurs.

### Whom to tell

- The immediate supervisor
- A higher-level manager
- Shop steward
- Co-worker
- Friends in other areas of the company
- Personnel representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When to disclose</th>
<th>Whom to tell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the time of application</td>
<td>The immediate supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the resume</td>
<td>A higher-level manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the cover letter</td>
<td>Shop steward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the employer calls with an invitation to interview</td>
<td>Co-worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In between the offer of an interview and the actual interview</td>
<td>Friends in other areas of the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the initial stage of the interview</td>
<td>Personnel representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the conclusion of the interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the job offer is received</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When starting work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When an accommodation is needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If, or, when a crisis occurs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 disclosure of Disability

An employer cannot ask an applicant if he/she has a disability or ask about the nature or severity of the disability. An employer can ask an applicant if he/she can perform the duties of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. An employer can also ask the applicant to describe or to demonstrate how, with or without reasonable accommodation, they will perform the duties of the job.
2.2 Training and Education

‘What was your experience in accessing employment?’

‘I’m not able to match the job requirements’

‘Hard to get the exemption (from social welfare) to train’

‘I have to wait a long time to get services’

‘I’m caught in a work experience loop’

Above are some of the comments from the focus group, when asked ‘what was their experience in accessing employment?’ It was found that 56% of the sample had job related training. The majority of this training is based around computers. 3% of the training was on the job, and 11% of the sample said they received training from the NTDI, with 8% stating they received manual training. However, upon further examination, the range of employment sought is wide ranging as seen in table 2.2, Jobs People Would Like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorry Driver</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottery/Craft Shop</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian/Clerical</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job working from wheel chair</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with elderly/children</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub work</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100%
However, the table also shows that over a quarter of people questioned did not know what type of job they would be interested in. Upon further discussion during the focus groups it was found that the training available did not match the job they wanted or they felt that they were constantly receiving work experience but it never resulted in a position of employment. People were also aware that receiving training from disability specialist agencies sent a message to employers that they had a disability.

The respondents were asked to describe their level of education. It was found as illustrated in Table 2.3, Level of Education, that 44% of the sample described their education attainment at only second level junior with only 28% making it to leaving certificate. Only 8% of the sample had acquired a third level education with 9% not making it into second level education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Junior</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level Senior</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third level Diploma</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third level Degree</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3, Level of Education

Interestingly, on closer examination it was found that 74% of individuals who were disabled from birth reached an education level of second level junior. The remainder of the sample was evenly spread over age and education achievement.

People with disabilities need support in three areas:
- **Accessing Education up to Second Level Senior and Third Level**
- **Matching skills with Job and receiving good career advice.**
- **On the Job Training**
2.2.1. Accessing Education up to Second Level Senior and Third Level

There are a number of agencies that help people access education whether second level or third level. Within the context of second level, many agencies, outside the secondary schools system, support adult learners and are available to help people complete second level education. Furthermore, each third level institute has access officers available who have special regard to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. If an individual contacts the college or discloses through the CAO application procedure of their disability the university or IT can then put in place supports to accommodate that student. There are also alternative qualifications that 3rd level institutes recognise, such as foundation certificate courses; FETAC qualifications etc, which better meet the needs of the people who are outside the leaving, certificate arena. Organisations that can help access education include:

- Colleges and Institutes of Technology
- AHEAD (Check directory for details)
- Adult Guidance Service under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science.
- Vocational Education Committees
- Adult Learning Centres/Adult Education Centres/V.T.O.S.
- FÁS
- National Training and Development Institute.
- Secondary Schools
- Libraries

The following are financial supports available to students (source AHEAD.ie).

**i. Special Fund for Students with Disabilities**
This fund is administered by the Department of Education and Science and is not a maintenance grant. It is a grant for assistive or adaptive technology that a student with a disability may need while they are in college.

**ii. Disability Allowance and Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)**
Disability Allowance can be retained while at second and third level education. However students with disabilities can now avail of the Back to Education Allowance. This payment is the same amount as the Disability Allowance but there are added benefits. These include a once a year payment of Euro 240 at the start of the academic year to help with the cost of books or course equipment. Another advantage of the scheme is that students can work while on the scheme without it affecting their payment. To avail of the Back to Education Allowance students must be registered on a
full time course. Also to qualify for BTEA you must have been in receipt of Disability Allowance for the previous six months. It is then a case of transferring from one payment to another.

**iii. VEC Maintenance Grant**

A maintenance grant is available to all students who qualify under a means test when pursuing full time 3rd level education (contact your local VEC Office). You can also qualify for the maintenance grant even if you are in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance.

2.2.2. Matching skills with Job and providing good career advice

The Supported Employment programme prepares people with disabilities for existing jobs, matching them with those jobs, and assisting them to integrate into the workforce by providing on-going supports in the workplace, as required. In addition to providing the supports that an individual may need to do a particular job, support is also given in relation to work related skills that some people may need to integrate into a working environment for the first time.

The supports provided by the programme involve four key strands that are carried out by a Employment Officer. These strands involve: (i) An assessment process with the potential employee to identify the type of employment that is most suitable to him or her; (ii) Job sourcing and development, involving contact with local employers, and job analysis; (iii) Matching the job seeker with a suitable employer; (iv) Providing the employee with necessary support and coaching at the place of work. The amount of support provided in most cases, decrease over time as the employee learns the skills required for the job and integrates into the workplace.

The Employment Officer assists the employer with the integration of the employee into the workforce, through information, advice and any practical measures necessary. The assignment of a co-worker by the company to act as a mentor can optimise the integration of the employee with a disability. Individuals must be referred onto the programme and demonstrate that they have the capacity to work 18 hours a week in order to participate in a Supported Employment programme. An exception may be available as individuals are examined on a case by case basis.

*Contact Midland Employment Support Agency and FÁS Employment Services for further information.*
2.2.3 On the Job Training (Source Workway.ie)

However when the supported employment scheme ceases it is important that the person with the disability continues to move with changes and developments in the company. It is important that people with disabilities participate fully in training on an ongoing basis. On-the-job training is often provided in a team situation so that co-workers might be called upon to provide assistance to a colleague with a disability. This provision can be made available following consultation and collaboration between all concerned. Performance of employees can be measured by:

- Setting a target or discussing the level of achievement to be expected.
- Deciding how performance will be measured.
- Does a worker with a disability have the same opportunities to train/retrain and develop their skills as other workers?
- Reward success!

2.2.4 FAS Training Opportunities

People with disabilities can avail of appropriate FÁS Training Programmes in any area of the county. In fact they will be treated as a priority case. A person in receipt of Invalidity Pension or Disability Benefit for at least 6 months can keep their allowance if they get an exemption from Social Welfare, and also receive a FÁS Training Allowance. A person in receipt of a Disability Allowance or Blind Pension receives an additional €31.80 per week. (One must apply directly to Social Welfare for an exception. It is not automatic).

FÁS will endeavor to provide any specialist equipment/adaption required before a person starts training provided that the training centre management are advised beforehand.

If a client requires a training programme not run by FÁS it is possible that FÁS can contribute to the cost of the programme from its Customised Training Fund. Most FÁS Training Centres offer a variety of Evening Training Courses and these tend to be more varied than day time courses. A fee is charged for these courses but unemployed persons with a disability may have this fee paid through the Customised Fund.

Contact APT or FÁS Employment Services unit to find out more about supported employment agencies.

Social Policy Issues

Why are people with disabilities dropping out of education so early?

How can Companies need to be more involved in providing on the job training for employees with disabilities?
2.3 Employment Opportunities

“What has been your experience in accessing employment and if you were unsuccessful, what do you think stopped you from getting the job?’

‘Positive experience, other staff were excellent in support’

‘Would not be able to work full time’

‘I need flexible working hours’

‘What does the term rehabilitative mean?’

Not everyone’s experience in the workplace was negative and the research found evidence that once the supports were in place and other staff members were supportive, the employee with a disability fitted into the organisation. However this was the exception as opposed to the rule. The survey found that 45% of the sample surveyed felt that they experience barriers in accessing paid employment as seen in table 2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4, Have you experienced barriers in accessing paid employment?

Table 2.5, lists the barriers that people with disabilities experienced when accessing employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Disability itself</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Losing Benefits</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive Dismissal</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job itself, not flexible or PT</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Buildings</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare restrictions</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never seem to have enough training or experience</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching job and disability</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5, Barriers Experienced by People with Disabilities
It was found that individuals experience a wide range of barriers for example; transport, their actual disability, flexibility of the job itself, difficulties with the Social Welfare Exemption Systems. During the focus groups people had difficulty not only with the application process for the Social Welfare Exemption to train and work but also had issues with the length of time it took to process and with terminology associated with the exemption. For example, it was apparent at one workshop that people did not know what was considered rehabilitative. The respondents felt that this term was subjective and open to interpretation.

It was also found that people experienced barriers early on in the application process as seen in Table 2.6. With 17% having difficulties at the application stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commencement of Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing in the Work Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6, At What Stage of Your Paid Employment did you Experience these Barriers

It may be reasonable to link difficulties with application with issues of disclosure discussed earlier. More research will need to be carried out in this area.

**People with disabilities need support in three areas:**

- *Removing Barriers to accessing paid employment especially with regard to the exemption from social welfare.*

- *More support at the application stage of accessing employment.*

- *Matching the Job to the person.*

### 2.3.1 Employment Supports

Employment Supports are available for people with disabilities in the following areas:

#### i. Job Interview Interpreter Grant

If a person attending an interview is deaf or hard of hearing or has a speech impairment, they may benefit from having the services of an interpreter at the interview. FÁS provides a grant that allows anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing or has a significant
speech impairment to have a professional interpreter provide services for him or her at a job interview.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate in a variety of ways, depending on a number of factors. Examples of these factors include: the amount of residual hearing, the type of hearing impairment, language skills, the age when the impairment began, speech abilities, speech-reading skills, personality, ability, family environment, and educational background.

In an interview setting, the use of an interpreter can help a person express their thoughts clearly and concisely. Interpreters who are used during job interviews are not permitted to participate in the conversation and view all information exchanged as confidential. Nothing is added or deleted from any interaction between you and the interview board that takes place.

**ii. Personal Reader Grants**

If a person has a visual impairment or is blind and needs some extra assistance with reading at work, they may be eligible to apply for a Personal Reader Grant. The grant aid is at a rate of €7.00 euro per hour for a maximum of 16 weeks (640 hours per annum). The number of hours that Personal Reading services are needed per week will depend on the type of work involved and should be agreed between you and your Reader in advance.

The person requiring assistance does not have to be a registered blind person or someone with a specified level of visual acuity to apply for a Personal Reader Grant. If you are experiencing difficulty with reading at work for reasons of visual impairment, then you are entitled to apply for this grant. In addition, there is no means test associated with a Personal Reader Grant and you do not need to have a certain level of income to apply.

*Contact your local FÁS Employment Support Service Office.*

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**Social Policy Issues**

*Should the Social Welfare Exemption Scheme for people with disabilities to work or train be simplified, with decision delivered faster and an appeal procedure for the citizen built into the system?*

*There appears to be inconsistency in the application of the exemption rule across payments and schemes. Should this procedure be streamlined?*
2.4 Financial Disincentives

‘What has been your experience in accessing employment’?

‘I was prepared to lose my benefits if the pay was good’

‘Bureaucracy, form filling regarding medical cards, exemptions from social welfare’

‘Fear of losing my medical card and I was stressed because of this’

During the focus groups people with disabilities expressed a fear of losing secondary benefits if they took up paid employment. It was further expressed that the possibility of losing the disability allowance payment also reduced the opportunity for some to return to work.

Reconciling the need to provide support for those who are unemployed as well as providing supports in such a manner as to encourage employment, particularly part time or flexible forms of work is one of the most serious challenges with respect to the needs of people with disabilities.

The National Disability Authority report on Disability and the Cost of Living (2004) concluded that people with disabilities have additional spending costs compared to people without disabilities. These costs lie mainly within in the areas of equipment, mobility and communication, living costs, medical expenses and care and assistance. It found that at low levels of disability, the costs is unlikely to exceed €40 a week however at high levels of disability the added cost of disability is unlikely to be less than €40-50 a week (NDA, 2004 p21). As the financial burden is greater for a person with disability as opposed to a person without a disability, therefore the risk of losing benefits for a person with a disability is greater than that of a person without a disability.

### Three Key Areas where benefit trap occurs:

- **Difficulties arising from the operation of the income maintenance payments e.g. means tests, operations of income disregards etc.**

- **Fear of losing general secondary benefits e.g. fuel allowance etc**

- **Fear of losing secondary benefits specific to people with disabilities, e.g. mobility allowance, blind welfare allowance, aids and appliances under the medical card, free travel pass etc.**
2.4.1 Financial Supports Available

i. Back to Work Allowance Scheme

The Back to Work Allowance Scheme encourages people getting Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension, and Unemployability Supplement to take up employment. People getting Carer’s Allowance, who have ceased caring responsibilities, are also eligible. It provides people with a financial cushion to help them to return to work. You may also qualify, no matter what age you are, if you are getting one of the following payments for 15 months (or 12 months if you are aged 50 or over):

- Blind Pension
- Disability Allowance
- Carer’s Allowance (if you are no longer a carer)
- Invalidity Pension
- Unemployability Supplement

You may also qualify if you have been receiving Disability Benefit for at least 3 years. The company offering the work must ensure that:

- The position does not displace another employee,
- Working hours are a minimum of 19.5 hours work per week, and
- The position will last for at least 12 months or longer.

As an employee, you get your social welfare payment for 3 years as follows:

- 75% of your weekly social welfare payment for the first year
- 50% for the second year
- 25% for the third year

You can also keep any secondary benefits for 3 years as long as your household income is within the Social Welfare Ceiling. (please check with CIC for the up to date figures).

2.4.2 Rehabilitative/Part Time Work

People in receipt of Invalidity Pension or Disability Benefit for at least 6 months can keep their allowance and also work up to 20 hours per week; there is no limit on earnings but the extra earnings may be taxed. People in receipt of Disability Allowance or Blind Pension can earn up to €120 per week on top of their allowance.

You will need to get an exemption to do this; simply apply in writing to the office from which you get your allowance.
2.4.3 Employment Opportunities Through FÁS

People with disabilities will be advised of vacancies appropriate to their needs. People can also log on to www.fas.ie and view vacancies at a national level on the jobsireland.ie website.

Community Employment (CE) Programme may well be an attractive option for customers of FÁS with a disability; these schemes offer employment for 19.5 hours per week. People in receipt of Invalidity Pension of Disability Benefit for at least 6 months will keep these allowances, if they get an exemption from Social Welfare, and also receive the allowance from the CE scheme. People in receipt of Disability allowance or Blind Pension will earn €120 extra per week.

Contact FÁS or check with the "Ability in the Workplace" section on the www.fas.ie

Social Policy Issues

Should the Disability Allowance Scheme be re-examined in order to create an incentive for people with disabilities to enter the work force?

The cost of disability should be dealt with separately to income maintenance (NDA 2004).

Should people with a disability be entitled to the medical card automatically similar to people over 70’s?
As highlighted earlier in Table 2.4, people with disabilities identified access to buildings and transport to be major barriers to accessing employment.

‘Inaccessible Offices even in buildings built two years ago’

‘Told that the workplace was inaccessible’

‘No Transport, couldn’t get to my destination’

In particular, people had difficulties accessing modern buildings that should be compliant under equality and planning legislation. However, it was expected that older buildings would still pose a difficulty. Individuals pointed out that access did not end at simply entering or leaving a building but also included difficulties with accessing rooms because of steps, narrow doors, toilets are too small, no parking facilities or car parking spaces are too narrow or on slopes, uneven paths etc.

Transportation difficulties were categorised within the context of public and private services. The Equal Status Act 2000 outlaws discrimination in the provision of goods and delivery of services. The NDA policy paper, Towards Best Practice in the provision of Transport Services for People with Disabilities (2003) reviews the National Development Plan 2000-2006 which includes an upgrading of public transport services to ensure accessibility. Furthermore the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 was established to implement accessibility to small public service vehicles.

However, access to public transport is not available to all people with disabilities and as illustrated in chapter one, Profile of Sample over 40% of the sample live 5km or more from a town centre where access to public transport is available. To this end, better supports regarding purchase of private transport is required.

Three Key Areas where support is needed in relation to Access and Transport:

- Access into and within buildings
- Access onto public transport
- More support in accessing private transport options

The Employment Equality Act provides that employers should make reasonable provisions for people with disabilities. Supports available to people with disabilities are as follows:
2.5.1 Buildings Supports

The following supports are available in relation to accessing buildings.

i. Grants for adapting or equipping the workplace for staff with disabilities
Grant assistance is available for employers, employees and self-employed people with disabilities who need to adapt the workplace or purchase specialised equipment. An employer can apply for the grant if the person with a disability is already employed or is about to be employed. Alternatively, a person with a disability can apply for the grant directly if they are already in employment or about to commence employment.

Public sector employers in Ireland (i.e., Government Departments, State agencies, Health Service Executive, Local Authorities, etc.) are obliged to facilitate the needs of their staff with disabilities. This means making assistive technology, adaptive equipment and facilities, aids and appliances available. Public sector employers and their employees with a disability are therefore not entitled to claim this FÁS grant. (Public sector employers are required to make these services available from their own resources).

Examples of some adaptations for which grants may be given include some of the following:

- Voice synthesisers for computers or amplifiers for telephones
- Alarm systems with flashing lights
- Minor building modifications (including construction or addition of ramps or modifications to toilet facilities)
- Braille converters
- Stair lifts

There is a wide range of equipment and adaptations that are covered by this grant. One should be aware, however, that an individual or employer is not entitled to make an application for grant assistance each year. This grant can also be used to upgrade adapted equipment that was funded previously.

Contact your local FÁS Employment Services office.

ii. Tips on Making the Workplace Accessible (Source Workway.ie)
The workplace can often be made accessible with minimum effort and expense. Everyday activities can sometimes be difficult for people with disabilities. However, by making adjustments, a barrier-free environment can be created that will allow everyone to take advantage of facilities. Listed below are questions relating to adjustments, which can be made for easy access to, and within, the workplace:
Outside/Entering the Building:
Are disabled parking spaces available near the building entrance and are they clearly marked?
Is the set down area and pedestrian routes clear of obstructions?
Is there level or ramped access at the entrance to avoid steps?
Is pathways and ramped access slip resistant?
Are there clear directional signs to the entrance of the building?
Is the doorway wide enough for a wheelchair user?
If premises are accessible by use of intercom, are there visual or other indicators in place for people who are hearing impaired or deaf?
Is the location of doorbell or intercom at an accessible height for a wheelchair user?
Is there audio or warning sounds, which indicate opening or closing movement of doors, etc?

The Reception Area:
Height of counters and desks may obstruct communication or cause difficulty for a wheelchair user, as would height level of public telephones, light switches, control buttons, coat rails, etc...
Counters/reception partitioned with glass may obstruct communication with a person with a hearing or speech impairment?
Is the receptionist and other staff members aware of how best to facilitate people with disabilities?
Is the entrance and reception area roomy enough to allow wheelchair users to pass through without affecting other waiting visitors?

Meeting Others & Taking Breaks:
Is the entrance, reception area, corridors, canteen and all other areas generously sized and free from obstructions to allow everybody move around comfortably?
Is there a good level of lighting in meeting rooms, corridors, reception area, etc..?
Are canteen facilities at a height to avoid accidents or spillage?
Offer and give assistance, if accepted.
Are provisions made for special dietary needs?

Changing Levels / Getting upstairs:
Is there a lift and is it sited in an area for easy access?
Stairs sited in an area for easy access and that are not too steep.
Warnings at the top and bottom of stairs and signposts legible and well lit?
Warning at stairwells or other locations hazardous for the visually impaired.
Handrail on both sides of all staircases.
Toilets:
Is there sufficient room in toilets to allow a wheelchair user move around comfortably and free from obstruction?
Are toilets accessible by lift or ramp if located on another level or floor?
Are hand dryers, switches, mirrors, etc., at an accessible height for all users?

Work Space:
Chairs should be at the proper height with back support.
Getting a wheelchair under a desk or table may prove to be difficult and therefore involves height consideration for desks and tables.
Roomy workspace, printing bay and storage rooms.
Storage of files, stationary, etc. at an accessible low level, as with pigeon holes for post.
On the telephone, e.g. volume control, manipulating buttons, using a microphone, etc.
Assistive Technology when using the computer, e.g. Screen Reader software, voice activation, headphones and/or speakers, screen magnification.
An employee with Motor impairment may have difficulty with computer keyboard, pens, etc. as handgrip may be weak.

Communications:
Blind means non-visual usage, with printed material causing difficulty. Therefore it is better in electronic format.
Deaf means sign language or paper-based communication. Audio is difficult, electronic is better.
Learning difficulties means explaining the message. You may need to simplify or use visual graphics.

Meetings:
Room for all attendants to move about without difficulty and with no obstructions.
Documentation and reference materials also available in electronic form.
Background noise should be at a minimum. Preferably use a looped area.

2.5.2 Public Transport Support

The following support is available in relation to private transport.

i. Free Travel Pass
Free travel is available on Iarnrod and Bus Eireann road and rail services, the Aran Islands ferry service and certain private services that have opted into the scheme. A person may also travel free of charge on public transport between Ireland and Northern Ireland. You may be entitled to free travel if:
You are receiving a Disability Allowance, a Blind Person's Pension, a Carer's Allowance or an Invalidity Pension from the Department of Social and Family Affairs. If you were receiving an Invalidity Pension and changed over to a Retirement Pension or a Widow's/Widower's Pension, you retain the entitlement.

You are in residential care and would be receiving Disability Allowance if you were not in such care.

You have been receiving Unemployability Supplement for at least a year.

You are blind and over 18.

You are blind and aged between 16 and 18 and attending a special workshop or training school.

You have been receiving Invalidity Pension or Benefit from another EU member state or from a country with which Ireland has a bilateral social security agreement for at least a year.

People in receipt of disability allowance doing a full time course (Monday to Friday), which is considered rehabilitative, would receive an unrestricted pass for the duration of that course. People on invalidity pension have to make an application to the invalidity section for an exemption under rule 4 in order to received an unrestricted pass, again to complete a course or light work.

Contact your local CIC for more information.

2.5.3 Private Transport Supports

The following supports are available in relation to private transport.

ii. Mobility Allowance

The Mobility Allowance is available to individuals who are aged between 17 and 66 who have a disability and are unable to walk or use public transport and who would benefit from a change in surroundings; (for example, by financing the occasional taxi journey). If an allowance is administered by the Health Service Executive and is awarded, it will be continued beyond the age of 66 but you may not apply for the allowance if you are 66 years of age or over. It is a means tested monthly payment payable by Health Service Executive in Ireland. The difficulty with this payment is that it is means tested separately from the Disability Allowance. If a person does access employment, even if it is within the Disability Allowance thresholds, one is at risk of losing the Mobility Allowance. A second issue is that the allowance stops once a person is 66, however their transportation need does not cease and thirdly the definition of disability in terms of the allowance needs to be redefined. Members of the blind community told us that mobility is a huge issue for them. They cannot purchase a car or drive for themselves, however they are not allowed to access the Mobility Allowance because they are able to walk.

Contact the Local Health Centre or CIC for more information.
iii. The Motorised Transport Grant

This is a means tested Health Service Executive payment for people with disabilities in Ireland who need to buy a car or have a car or other vehicle adapted in order to enable them to drive and, as a result, earn a living. A person must be over 17 years and under 66 years and have a disability that impedes the use of public transport. They also must hold a driving licence and be physically and mentally capable of driving. Lastly the applicant must require the car or other vehicle in order for the individual to obtain/retain employment or because the individual lives in a very isolated location. Where your application is made on the basis of obtaining or retaining employment or self-employment, the Health Service Executive must be satisfied that you are capable of holding down a job.

The grant may also be considered in exceptional circumstances for people with severe disabilities who are over 17 years and under 66 years, who live in remote locations and who are impeded from using public transport. It may be possible for you to get a grant if you are unemployed and could take up work if you had a car. Self-employed people may be able to get a grant.

Contact the Community Care Manager, Health Service Executive.

iv. Tax Relief for Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers

The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme provides a range of tax relief linked to the purchase and use of vehicles by disabled drivers and disabled passengers in Ireland. Under the terms of the scheme, one can claim remission or repayment of vehicle registration tax (VRT), repayment of value-added tax (VAT) on the purchase of a vehicle and repayment of VAT on the cost of adapting a vehicle. Contact your local CIC for up to date ceilings.

Relief is limited to a vehicle that has been specially constructed or adapted for use by a disabled person and that has an engine size of less than 2,000cc in the case of the driver and 4,000cc in the case of the passenger.

If a person qualifies for tax relief under the scheme, they can also claim repayment of excise duty on fuel used in your vehicle for the transport of a disabled person, up to a maximum of 600 gallons per year. In addition, your vehicle may be exempt from the payment of annual road tax on application to a Motor Tax Office.

Contact your local tax office or your CIC office for more information.
Social Policy Issues

Timely Implementation of the National Development Plan in relation to mobility and access to public transport.

Stronger enforcement of Equality Employment Legalisation and Equality Legislation that compels employers to make their premises accommodating to people with disabilities thus ensuring that all services are accessible.

Review of Part M of the building regulations to determine if they are adequate for both public and private buildings.

Stronger enforcement of disability proofing of buildings at the planning and construction stage of development under Part M of building regulations.

Means tested payments should be linked so that there is only a single means test, for example, if one is in receipt of DA and one fulfils the physical conditions necessary to receive the Mobility Allowance, one should automatically qualify.

Disability payments, such as the equipment and building adaptation grants should be index linked.

Rural Transportation Schemes should be expanded and supported.
2.6 Assistive Technology

‘What barriers did you experience?’

‘The lack of assistive technology in the work place’ ‘Technology is needed but may not be available, video phone, email, fax, minicom, portable amplifier, mobile phone for texting’

‘Every workplace should have a loop system’

‘The grant for assistive technology is hard to get’

‘Length of time it takes to get repairs or specialized adaptations’

‘There is no financial support when it comes to repairing or maintaining equipment’

A major finding from the focus groups is that people with disabilities felt that assistive technology would greatly help them in the workforce. The respondents felt that employers could improve facilities to reasonably accommodate them in the workplace. Furthermore the respondents believe that the application for the grant towards the cost of assistive technology is too cumbersome. The respondents highlighted issues surrounding the length of time an application took to process and lack of continued support in maintaining such specialized equipment.

Assistive Technology aims to offer the widest range of supports so that the user can make best use of all the features and advantages that technology has to offer. Assistive Technology is any item, whether purchased off the shelf, or customised, which enhances an individual’s independence. Assistive technology works best when a good match is reached between the user and the technology.

Three Key Areas where support is needed in relation to Assistive Technology

- Matching the technology to the individual’s disability requirements and job.
- Accessing funding to purchase the technology.
- Ensuring that employers use Assistive Technology.

2.6.1 Matching Technology to the Disability and Job

Acknowledging that an individual has a need is the first step in the service delivery process. How a person’s needs are identified and addressed will vary according to the
nature and extent of the service available. For example, a third level student is likely to have his/her needs assessed by an Assistive Technology advisor with/without additional technical support from a technician. Additional supports may be available through other members of a Disability Support Service in college, but usually assessment of need is undertaken by one, or at most, two professionals in consultation with the user.

Alternatively, an individual who is availing of specialist disability services may be able to access a team of people who share a range of AT knowledge and skills, including therapists, teachers, care assistants, special needs assistants, engineers and technicians, and/or other personnel.

Enable Ireland provides individual assessment, trialling of devices and systems, product information, recommendations and advice, and training in high tech assistive technology.

2.6.2. Funding

Assistive Technology funding varies widely across the country. Unlike other countries disabled people in Ireland do not have any legal right to access funding and supports for aids and appliances. Therefore what provisions are made available are open to adjustment in relation to other funding demands which are made upon the Health Services. There are three primary sources of funding:

i. Department of Health and Children
Funding for Assistive Technology has been provided by local Health Service Executive under their Aids and Appliances scheme. Medical and surgical aids and appliances (e.g: wheelchairs, certain communication aids, etc) are usually free of charge to Medical Card holders provided they are recommended by a health professional, eg: occupational therapist, speech and language therapist.

People who have one of the conditions designated under the Long Term Illness Scheme may get medical and surgical appliances for that condition free of charge. Non-Medical Card holders may get such aids and appliances free if they are part of hospital treatment. If not, they may get some assistance from the Health Service Executive which may contribute to the cost or may lend them if they are required for short term use.

ii. Department of Education and Science

Primary Level
Primary school provision of funding supports for the use of assistive technology is generally dealt with under the ‘Computer Applications for individual pupils with Special
Needs at Primary Level’ and the ‘Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in National Schools’ schemes. This application must be supported by the school principal, the school inspector and the chairperson of the Board of Management of the school. Further information can be attained from: Department of Education and Science, Marlborough St, Dublin 1 Ph: 01-8896400.

Secondary Level
Funding of Assistive Technology and related resources for secondary level students is dealt with primarily under the Circular M11/95: "Grants towards the purchase of equipment for pupils with a disability". The purpose of the scheme is to provide the pupils in question with equipment of direct educational benefit to them. Examples of such equipment would include computers, tape-recorders, word processors, drafting machines, induction loops, braille equipment and software.

The equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of the school and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities. Where the school has no further requirement for the equipment, the Department may allocate it to another school in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.

The rate of grant in respect of any pupil will be the cost of the equipment, subject in general to a maximum grant of €3,800. In certain circumstances, where the nature of the equipment warrants it, a higher grant may be considered.

Further information can be obtained from: Aileen Finucane, Dept. of Education and Science, Ground Floor, Block 2, Marlborough St. Dublin 1. Ph: 01-8896400.

Third Level
Most third level institutions have Disability Liaison Officers. The Disability Liaison Officer may provide a number of services including arranging any special access requirements and provisions for sitting examinations.

The National University of Ireland may award a special grant of up to €500 to a student with a disability attending a course at a NUI college.

Department of Education Special Fund for Students with Disabilities
This fund is specifically designed to financially assist third level students who have special needs. It is administered centrally by the Higher Education Grants Section, Department of Education and Science, Tullamore.
Students should make applications to this fund through their respective third level institution in September/October of each year.

For application forms students should, in the first instance, contact the appropriate person in the third level institution e.g. Disability Officer, Access Officer, Student Services or the Registrar’s office.

Further information contact Department of Education and Science, Cronamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, Ph: 090–6483600 or 01-8896400.

Contact AHEAD who has published "Accessing Third Level Education in Ireland – A Handbook for Students with Disabilities".

**iii. FÁS**

The Workplace Equipment/Adaptation grant is available. Referred to in Section 2.5.

*Note: Personal Assistant Services designed to support people with significant physical disabilities, which may be of relevance to users and potential users of assistive technology, are administered by the Irish Wheelchair Association and the Centre for Independent Living.*

**iv. VAT refunds on aids and appliances used by people with disabilities**

If a person with a disability lives in Ireland and needs to use certain aids and appliances, one can avail of a refund of Value-Added Tax (VAT). Aids and appliances for which a VAT refund may be claimed are aids and appliances that help a disabled person to overcome his or her disability in the exercise of a vocation or the performance of daily activities.

The aid or appliance must be owned by and for the exclusive use of the person with the disability. If the VAT refund is being sought by a person other than the user of the aid or appliance, the Revenue Commissioners may demand evidence that the aid is solely owned by and for the sole use of the person with the disability.

*Examples of eligible aids and appliances include:*

- Walk-in baths designed for people with disabilities
- Commode chairs
- Lifting seats and specified chairs designed for people with disabilities
- Tele-text
- Braille books
- Hoists and lifts designed for incapacitated people, including stair lifts.
It may be necessary to produce medical evidence of a person's disability. One can obtain VAT refunds on aids and appliances bought by another person for the exclusive use of and ownership by a disabled person. However, the purchaser of the goods must not supply these goods in the course of a business run by the purchaser.

*Contact your Local CIC for more information.*

(Source ‘Assistive Technology for Living’ Enable Ireland and Cheshire Ireland, CD Version 2004. for sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2).

### 2.6.3. Supporting Employers to Implement an Accessible Environment

The National Council for the Blind Ireland – Technology and Adjustments which Improve Access to Employment (Source Workway.ie) have identified measures both simple and more complex, that under the reasonable accommodation section of the Employment Equality Act, employers could implement that can make a workplace more accessible. Firstly an employer should ask an employee what he/she needs – he/she is usually the expert on how to manage the disability. Examples of how to take reasonable accommodation are illustrated below.

- A dot of silicon on a switch to enable an operator align controls on a machine
- A thick felt tip marker to make file folders readable
- Control over the lighting levels by adding desk lamps, dimmer-switches or adjustable blinds
- Strategic signs throughout a building should be in Braille and raised letters
- Computer software packages such as a voice synthesiser to read out information on the screen and a magnification system to enlarge the size of text or graphics on screen
- Specially adapted scanners to transfer printed material onto the computer
- Electronic Braille displays to enable a person read the screen via a device attached to the computer
- Extra electrical sockets and a slightly larger workstation to hold additional equipment
- Instead of sending handwritten notes between supervisors and employees or among colleagues, voice or e-mail messages can usually be sent, or if neither of these is available, and inexpensive tape recorder can be used
For a job that requires measuring, weighing, or calculations, many different kinds of measuring and calculating devices are available that "talk". These include scales, tape measures, thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, watches, calculators, money identifiers, and cash registers.

For a job that requires travel, a person who is blind may travel with a long cane, a guide dog, or by using electronic travel aids.

Social Policy Issues

People with disabilities should have a legal right to access funding and supports for aids and appliances.

The process of accessing funding should be simplified.

Funding to upkeep the equipment should be available.
2.7 What support people with disabilities identified for themselves

‘What would help you get this job in the future.’

‘Confidence building, not being afraid to try something new’

‘Advocacy, someone to speak for me’

‘More information’

‘Disability should be respected, disability awareness should be taught in the schools’

During the workshops people were asked what supports they thought would help them in the future. People with disabilities have a high awareness of the additional supports that they need to progress into the workplace. The following are the additional supports that were identified by the focus groups.

- New ways of accessing education.
- More training and work experience. The movement of training to rural towns and villages.
- More financial support.
- Education of employers on abilities not disabilities.
- Disability awareness through schools for everyone. People with a disability should be respected.
- Legislations around paid leave entitlement that occurs because of a person’s disability.
- Monitoring of employers to ensure compliance to equality legislation.
- Better transportation support.
- More family support.
- Programmes designed to help build confidence for example a ‘Fresh Start Programme’.
- More support in employment.
- More information supports.
- More flexibility with regards to the exemption to work.
- Better grant systems for the purchase and upkeep of assisted technology.
- Companies should have minimum assistive technologies available within the company such as a loop system and JAWS. Possibly offer tax incentives to companies to install such systems.
2.8 Conclusion

The research attempted to identify supports that people with disabilities can access to gain employment. An important aspect of the research is that it is examining resource needs from the person with the disability’s perspective. The paper also tried to identify social policy issues that need to be addressed by government in order to improve the quality of life of the individual by improving the opportunity for that person to access employment. All themes identified are interconnected and should not be considered in isolation. Further research is needed to interlink the cause and effect of the themes identified. For example, the author made assumptions in examining the results such as linking the lack of education with self-esteem levels however this should be further examined.

Chapter three, Directory of Disability Support Groups follows. This chapter outlines support groups available to people with disabilities.
Chapter Three
Directory of Disability Support Groups

This section includes a description and contact details of disability support groups within Offaly and its environs that are available to support people with disabilities. A number of the agencies listed provide specialised support surrounding employment issues. The groups are listed alphabetically and not in order of importance.

AHEAD
AHEAD, the association for Higher Education Access and Disability is an Independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in third level education for students with disabilities in Ireland. AHEAD undertakes research in areas relating to disability and third level education and acts in a consultative capacity to the Higher Education Authority, education institutes and other bodies in the education sector.

Newman House
86 Saint Stephen’s Green
Dublin 2.
Tel: 01 4752386
Fax: 01 4752387
Email: ahead@iol.ie
Web: www.ahead.ie

Aontacht Phobail Teoranta
Aontacht Phobail Teoranta (APT), which translates into Community with an Agreed Purpose, exists to support and facilitate the economic and social integration of people with disabilities in order to improve the quality of life of the person and their family. APT provides a range of services for people with disabilities in the Health Service Executive (Midland Area), which include Rehabilitative Training, Employer Based Training and Supported Employment.

Aontacht Phobail Teoranta
Kilcruttin Centre
Tullamore, Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 41204
Fax: 0506 52267
Email: info@apt-irl.ie

AWARE
(Helping to defeat depression)
Aware holds support meetings weekly, two separate venues – one for sufferers of depression and one for relatives. The aim of the group is to help people cope with the illness and to provide factual information concerning depression (i.e leaflets, books, tapes and magazines). Aware also aim to foster and increased public awareness of the nature, extent and consequences of depression. They also promote research into the causes and effective treatments of the illness.

Offaly Contacts
Mary Mooney
Tel: 0506 55744
Richard Egan
Tel: 087 6967367

Head Office
72 Lower Leeson Street
Dublin 2.
Tel: 01 661 7211
Fax: 01 661 7217
Email: info@aware.ie
Web: www.aware.ie

National Helpline 1890 303302

Brainwave Midlands
Brainwave, The Irish Epilepsy Association, is the national voluntary organisation for people with epilepsy in Ireland. Brainwave services include information, advice, counselling, training and advocacy. The organisation is also actively involved in research, lobbying and campaign work. Particular areas of interest are the improvement and development of specialist services such as satellite clinics, epilepsy specialist centres and epilepsy specialist nurses for people with epilepsy.
Margaret Bassett  
Community Resource Officer  
Brainwave Midlands  
C/O Offaly Historical Society  
Bury Quay  
Tullamore  
Co Offaly  
Tel: 0506 28631  
Fax: 0506 28667  
Mobile: 086 4022518  
Email: midlandbrainwave@eircom.net

Head Office  
249 Crumlin Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Tel: 01 4557500  
Fax: 01 4557013  
Email: info@epilepsy.ie  
Web: www.epilepsy.ie

Bri  
Bri is a support group for people who have acquired a brain injury. An acquired brain injury is defined as damage to the brain that has occurred sometime after birth. It is not the same as intellectual disability. It results from trauma caused by falls, road traffic accidents, assaults, strokes, tumours etc.

Mick Clavin  
Charleville View  
Tullamore  
Co Offaly  
Tel: 0506 41236

Centre for Independent Living, County Offaly  
Co. Offaly Centre for Independent Living is part of a world wide independent living movement of people with disabilities. The centre for independent living promotes self-empowerment, self-determination, control and responsibility with the ultimate goal of independent living with the opportunity of having a house or an apartment, working, paying taxes and contributing to the community and supporting and raising a family, i.e. participating fully in all aspects of society.

Offaly Centre for Independent Living  
Kilcruttin Business Park  
Tullamore  
Co Offaly  
Tel: 0506 22832/24144  
Fax: 0506 22832  
Email: ocl@eircom.net

Cheshire Ireland  
Cheshire Ireland provides supported accommodation, respite and community services to adults with physical disabilities.

Currently, the service operates 18 centres/services around Ireland. New accommodation and respite services are in the course of development in a number of locations. The Cheshire ethos is one of supporting people in their individual choices as to how they live their lives. In keeping with this ethos, the mission is to become a service provider which listens to people with disabilities and responds to their wishes and needs in ways that respect individuality and maximise opportunities for choice.

Cheshire Ireland  
Central Office  
BIM House  
Crofton Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: 01 280 4879  
Fax: 01 280 4954  
Email: info@cheshire.ie  
Web: www.cheshire.ie

Co Offaly VEC Adult Guidance Service  
This service aims to provide a quality adult education guidance service to participants in VTOS, literacy and other adult and community educational programmes.

Adult Guidance Service  
Woodchester House  
O Connor Square  
Tullamore, Co Offaly  
Tel: 0506 27104  
Email: dhackett@offalyvec.ie

County Offaly  
Citizens Information Services  
Co. Offaly Citizens Information Services provides information and advice on individual’s rights and entitlements and low-level advocacy services. Within Offaly there are three Citizens Information Centres based in Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr.

Tullamore Citizens Information Centre  
Bridge Centre  
Tullamore  
Co. Offaly  
Tel: 0506 52204/27142  
Fax: 0506 26742  
Email: Tullamore.cic@comhairle.ie  
Web: www.comhairle.ie  
Citizens Website: www.oasis.gov.ie

Birr Citizen’s Information Centre  
Wilmor Road  
Birr  
Co. Offaly  
Tel/Fax: 0509 21017
Comhairle

Comhairle is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services. It supports the provision of information to the public through the nationwide network of Citizens Information Centres, the Citizens Information Phone Service and through the OASIS and Citizens Information Databases. The agency has a statutory commitment to assist and support people, particularly those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in accessing their entitlements to social and civil services.

DUBLIN WEST & MIDLANDS REGION

Counties Dublin West, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath
Hainault House, The Square, Tallaght, Dublin 24
Tel: 01 462 0444
Fax: 01 462 0494
Email: comhairle.tallaght@comhairle.ie

Comhairle Head Office
7th Floor, Hume House
 Ballsbridge
Dublin 4, Ireland
Tel: 01 605 90 00
Fax: 01 605 90 99
Email: info@comhairle.ie
Web: www.comhairle.ie

Department of Social & Family Affairs

The Department of Social and Family Affairs have a wide range of services targeted at people who are ill or disabled. These include Blind Person's Pension, Disability Allowance, Disability Benefit, Disablement Benefit, Injury Benefit, Invalidity Pension, Medical Care, Medical Review and Assessment and Prescribed Occupational Disease. A Job Facilitator assists and advises those returning to the workplace.

Jobs Facilitator
Government Buildings
Clonminch
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 25510
Web: www.welfare.ie

Disability Federation of Ireland

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is the national support organisation and advocate for voluntary organisations/non-statutory agencies in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions. The role of DFI is to provide a range of supports and services to voluntary organisations, which will enable them to deliver the best possible range of services to people with disabilities.

Maria Fox
Regional Support Officer,
Offaly Exhibition & Research Centre
Bury Quay
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 28632
Fax: 0506 28607
Mobile: 086 3882600
Email: mariafox@disability-federation.ie
Web: www.disability-federation.ie

Disability Legal Resource Board

The Disability Legal Resource Board objective is to increase awareness amongst people with disabilities about their rights and provide a mechanism of access, information and support for those who wish to pursue their rights through legal means.

Athlone
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 090 6483600

Dublin
Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 8896400

Tullamore
Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 24300

Email: info@education.ie
Web: www.education.ie

Department of Education & Science

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide high-quality education which will (a) enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society; and (b) contribute to Ireland’s social, cultural and economic development. Within the DES remit is the provision of education for children, young adults and older adults with special needs.

Athlone
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 090 6483600
Disability Legal Resource
Carmichael Centre
Coleraine House
Coleraine Street
Dublin 7
Helpline: 01 8728764
Email: disabilitylegalresource@eircom.net

Dyslexia Association of Ireland
The Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) aims to promote awareness of Specific Learning Disability (SLD/Dyslexia) and to serve the needs of people with this difficulty. Services offered include: psycho-educational assessment of children and adults, group and individual specialised tuition, teachers’ courses, summer schools, speakers for schools and parents groups.

DAI
Suffolk Chambers
1 Suffolk Street
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: 01 6790275/6
Fax: 01 6790273
Email: info@dyslexia.ie
Web: www.dyslexia.ie

Enable Ireland
Enable Ireland is a leading national provider of services for people with physical disabilities and their families. Enable Ireland offers a range of services covering personal development, independent living, employment, and social and leisure activities.

Enable Ireland North Tipperary
2 Cudville Road
Nenagh
Co. Tipperary
Tel: 067-34375
Fax: 067-43292
Enable Ireland National Services
Sandymount Avenue,
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 261 5900
Fax: 01 261 2983
e-mail: info@enableireland.ie
www.enableireland.ie

Equality Authority
The Equality Authority is an independent body set up under the Employment Equality Act 1998. The Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000 outlaw discrimination in employment, vocational training, advertising, collective agreements, the provision of goods and services and other opportunities to which the public generally have access on nine distinct grounds. Gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief; and membership of the Traveller Community.

Equality Authority
Clonmel St
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: 01 4173333
Fax: 01 4173366
Email: info@equality.ie
Lo-Call Number: 1890 245545
Text Phone: 01 4173385

Equality Tribunal
The Equality Tribunal is an impartial forum to hear or mediate complaints of alleged discrimination under equality legislation. It is independent and quasi-judicial and its decisions and mediated settlements are legally binding.

Equality Tribunal
3 Clonmel Street
Harcourt Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 477 41 00
Fax: 01 477 41 41
E-mail: info@equalitytribunal.ie
Web: www.equalitytribunal.ie

FÁS Employment Services/
FÁS Services To Business
FÁS have a responsibility for providing labour market services to people with disabilities. People can meet with an Employment Services Officer for a Career Guidance Interview and will also be informed of all options, including FÁS Training and Employment programmes. FÁS offers employment related supports such as the Employment Support Scheme (ESS); Job Interview Interpreter Grant; Personal Reader Grant; Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant (WEAG); Employee Retention Grant Scheme; Supported Employment Programme and the Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme.

Sean O’Brien
Senior Employment Services Officer
FÁS Employment Services
Church Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 21921
Fax: 0506 21964
Web: www.fas.ie

Danny Weston
FÁS Services to Business
Church Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
GROW
GROW is a uniquely structured worldwide community mental health movement. Its programme of personal growth and group method have all being developed by people suffering from depression, anxiety, panic attacks etc. It is anonymous, non denominational and open to all.

Midlands Contact
Harriet Horan
O’Connor Square
Tullamore, Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 51124

Headquarters
11 Liberty Street, Cork
Tel: 021 4277520

Headway Ireland
Headway Ireland is the National Association for Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). It develops, provides and promotes services to enhance the potential of people with an acquired brain injury. It also works to heighten public and political awareness of acquired brain injury and the impact it has on individuals, families and carers. Headway Ireland have a range of community based rehabilitation services for people affected with brain injury, including rehabilitative training, day activity, therapy and family support, information, outreach and employment services.

Head Office
Headway Ireland
101 Parnell Street
Dublin 1, Ireland
Tel: 01 872 9222
Fax: 01 872 9590
Email: info@headwayireland.ie
Web: www.headwayireland.ie
National Telephone Helpline, 1890 200 278

Irish Advocacy Network
The Irish Advocacy Network exists to promote and facilitate peer advocacy on an island-wide basis. This is achieved through the provision of information and support for Mental Health service users and or survivors. The Irish Advocacy Network aims to support people in speaking up for themselves and in achieving empowerment by taking control of their own lives. Services provided include Accredited Peer Advocacy Training, Staff Awareness Training, Family Support/Awareness Training, and Setting up of Peer Support Groups, Finance Training for Groups, Health and Safety Training, Volunteer Training, Information Support.

Irish Advocacy Network
National Office
Old Rooskey House, Monaghan
Tel: 047 38918
Fax: 047 38682
Email: admin@irishadvocacynetwork.com
Web: www.irishadvocacynetwork.com

Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
The Association’s primary and long-term aim is to complement, support and provide for the various stages of development in the lives of its members with disabilities, their families and friends.

Head Office
Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
Old Nangor Road
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Tel: 01 4572329
Fax: 01 4572328
Email: Info@iasbah.ie
Web: www.iasbah.ie

Irish Sign Link
Irish Sign Link offers a professional interpreting service.

Irish Sign Link
25 Clyde Road
Ballbridge, Dublin 4
Tel/Minicom: 01 6080437
Fax: 01 6685029
Email: signlink@indigo.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association
The Irish Wheelchair Association is a national organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with disabilities as equal, independent and participative members within the general community. Services include Peer Counselling, Resource Outreach Centres, Education and Training, Independent Living Apartments, Motoring Advice, Parking Permits, Personal Assistance Services, Respite and Holiday Breaks, Sport, Information, Chinese Therapy and Youth Services/Spirit.

Midlands Contact
Carol Marnell
Irish Wheelchair Association
114 Ardenvale
Tullamore, Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 29823
Fax 0506 29846
Email: Tullamore@iwa.ie

Headquarters
Aras Chuchulainn
Blackheath Drive
Clontarf, Dublin 3
Tel: 01 8186400
Fax: 01 8333873
Email: info@iwa.ie
Web: www.iwa.ie
KARE

KARE is a voluntary organisation providing a comprehensive range of services for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in County Kildare, East Offaly, West Wicklow and North Carlow. The Employment Assist Bureau is a section of the KARE services. The services offered by the bureau include job development, and job coaching. It offers a professional placement of support service through the model of supported employment.

KARE Central Services
Lower Eyre St
Newbridge
Co. Kildare
Tel: 01 45 431544
Fax: 01 45 432707
Email: kare@iol.ie
Web: www.kildare.ie/Voluntary/KARE/KARE.html

Labour Relations Commission

The LRC mission is to promote the development and improvement of Irish industrial relations policies, procedures and practices through the provision of appropriate, timely and effective services to employers, trade unions and employees. In discharging its general responsibility for promoting good industrial relations in Ireland, the Commission provides a range of industrial relations advisory and mediation services to meet the particular demands of employers, employees and their representatives.

Labour Relations Commission
Tom Johnson House
Haddington Road
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 6136700
Fax: 01 6136701
Email: info@irc.ie
Lowcall: (outside the 01 area) 1890 220227

Midland Employment Support Agency Ltd (MESA)

Supported employment is a programme, which enables people with disabilities to be employed in paid jobs in the open labour market. People with a wide range of disabilities have become successfully employed using the supported employment model. The job placement process is designed to ensure that appropriate support is provided by experienced Employment Officers to job seekers, employers and co-workers.

Tony Reilly
Programme Coordinator
Midland Employment Support Agency
The Bridge Centre
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 23901
Mobile: 086 8335271
Fax: 0506 23897
Email: mesa.apt@iol.ie

MS Ireland

The principal aims of the Society are to; empower PwMS to control their lives and influence their environment, allow PwMS to live with dignity while participating in the community, provide support for the families and carers of PwMS, co-operate with the medical, scientific, social and caring professions, promote scientific research into the causes of MS, encourage the better management of MS and its symptoms, exchange and disseminate information on MS and develop an efficient, effective and caring organisation to serve the needs of PwMS.

Midlands Region
Mary Leonard
Regional Community Worker
MS Ireland Midlands Office
Newtown Terrace
Athlone
Co. Westmeath
Tel: 090 6476353
Fax: 090 6476353
Email: midlands@ms-society.ie

MS Resource Centre
Dartmouth House
Grand Parade
Dublin 6
Tel: 01 269 4599
Fax: 01 269 3746
Email: info@ms-society.ie
Web: www.ms-society.ie

Mental Health Ireland

Mental Health Ireland (previously known as the Mental Health Association of Ireland) is a national voluntary organisation, which aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights.

Midlands Contact (Laois/Longford/Offaly/Westmeath)
Finola Colgan
Unit 5
12 Henry Street
Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Mobile: 086 8353387

Mental Health Ireland
Mensana House
6 Adelaide Street
Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin
Tel: 01 284 1166
Fax: 01 284 1736
Email: information@mentalhealthireland.ie
Health Service Executive
Midlands Area
The Board is responsible for meeting the mental health needs of the Board’s population. This is achieved through a variety of mechanisms ranging from the promotion of mental health at community level by Health Board, Community and Voluntary Agencies; assessment, identification and treatment of mental health problems at primary care level (general practitioner and community based health services). Specialist involvement of the adult psychiatric service at secondary (community and hospital level) for those with mental illness requiring more intensive support and referral onto national specialist services. To secure and maximize health and social gain for people with mental illness, their carers and families, the Board will; promote positive mental health; treat mental illness promptly and appropriately; provide care and support for those suffering from long term mental illness.

Liam O’Callaghan
General Manager
Community Care
Health Centre
Arden Rd
Tullamore
Tel: 0506 27635

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland
Muscular Dystrophy Ireland’s Family Support Service has been operational since 1990. MDI employs five Family Support Workers whose role is to visit members in their own homes and to identify, evaluate and advise on the problems that arise with neuromuscular conditions. The Family Support Worker also provides information on the various neuromuscular conditions and on welfare issues which are not always readily available to families.

MDI OFFICE, TULLAMORE (MIDLANDS)
(covering areas: Laois, Longford, Offaly & Westmeath)
Ms. Sinead Kenny
Family Support Worker
MDI, Disability Offices
Offaly Exhibition & Research Centre
Bury Quay
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 28638
Email: caroline@mdi.ie
Email: willie@mdi.ie

National Adult Literacy Agency
The NALA is a membership organisation with voluntary status, concerned with national coordination; training and policy development in adult literacy work in Ireland.

Peter Kieran
Regional Development Worker
Adult Education Centre
Austin Friar Street
Mulligar
Co Westmeath
Tel: 044 40374
Fax: 044 45834
Email: pkiernan@nala.ie

National Association for Deaf People
The National Association for Deaf People (NAD) campaigns for full equality in all aspects of life for deaf and hearing-impaired people. The NAD also provides a wide range of services directly including minor hearing aid repairs, supply of deaftech equipment and family support services.

Midlands Contact
Joan O’Toole
Laurelle Plaza
Market Square
Tullamore.
Tel: 0506 51606
Fax: 0506 26011
Email: nad@tullamore.nadp.ie

National Council for the Blind
NCBI community based staff provide information support and advice on a wide range of services and individually tailored options to people with visual impairments towards meeting their needs. Through mobility training people can learn to move around again safely by being shown how to use their residual vision to its maximum or through the use of a long cane. NCBI staff can help restore a person’s confidence in their application of common-sense solutions in coping with household chores and tasks of daily living.
Midlands Contact
Annette Dowling
Regional Manager
NCBI Westmeath
Day Care Centre
Abbey Road
Athlone
Co. Westmeath
Tel: 090 6473575

Dorothy Mc Loughlin
Community Resource Worker
NCBI Offaly
Clochan House
Midland Sensory Resource Centre
General Hospital
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 46258

Headquarters
Whitworth Road
Drumcrondra
Dublin 9
Tel: 01 8307033
Fax: 01 8307787
Low Call Number: 1850 334353
Email: info@ncbi.ie
Web: www.ncbi.ie

National Disability Authority
The National Disability Authority (NDA) is an independent statutory agency established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform by the National Disability Authority Act 1999. NDA strives to ensure that the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities are protected.

National Disability Authority
25 Clyde Road,
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 6080400
Fax: 01 6609935
Email: webmaster@nda.ie
Web: www.nda.ie

National Learning Network
(Previously the National Training and Development Institute)
The NLN objective is to assist people at a disadvantage in the labour market to learn the skills they need to build lasting careers in jobs that reflect their interests and abilities. This is achieved through a brand of training, education, employment access and enterprise development that is respected and often replicated across Europe.

NLN Tullamore,
Tanyard, Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 41272
Fax: 0506 21636
Email: tullamore@ntdi.ie
Web: www.rehab.ie

Offaly Parents and Friends of the Mentally Handicapped Association
The services of Offaly Parents and Friends of the Mentally Handicapped Association cater for children and adults with moderate, severe and profound disabilities which include psychological and counselling service’s, children’s training centres, special school and special classes, children’s respite service, adult resource centres day service, Adult respite service, residential service and supported employment.

PJ Wyer
No 2 Convent View
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 41032

People with Disabilities in Ireland
People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI) is the only national cross disability organisation funded by the Government. PwDI objective is to support all people with disabilities to take part in and influence the decision making process that impacts on their lives and opportunities. The priority areas for Lobbying, Communication, Training, Education and Employment, Research and Promotions and Membership.

Midlands Contact:
Regional Office
Offaly PwDI
Kilcrutten Centre
Cormack Street
Tullamore
Co Offaly
Tel: 0506 24144
Fax: 0506 22832

Head Office
People with Disabilities in Ireland
Richmond Square
Morning Star Avenue
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 87 21 74 4
Fax: 01 87 21 77 1

Regional Disability Services, Health Services Executive (Midland Area)
The Regional Disability Services department of the Health Services Executive facilitates the provision of a quality, responsive and localised service with the ultimate aim of enabling each individual with a disability to achieve their potential and maximum independence. Services are funded by the Executive and are delivered in partnership with 23 non-statutory service providers to individuals with an
intellectual, physical or sensory disability and persons with autism. The services provided include day, residential, respite, health related supports, rehabilitative training and independent living training.

Disability Co Coordinator
Regional Disability Services
Health Services Executive
Arden Road
Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 46272
Fax: 0506 46273
Web: www.mhb.ie

Rehab Care
Rehab Care operates a wide variety of responsive health and social care programmes and offers choice, quality and personalised services including flexibility within the programmes, which are all designed to meet the individual wishes and requirements of each client.

Midland Region
Gerard Kirwan
Tullamore Sheltered Workshop
Kilcrutten Business Park
Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 24613
E-mail: tullamore@rehabcare.ie

Tullamore Autism Respite Service
Mary Conroy Thoms
Charleville Cottage
Charleville Road
Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 29991
E-mail: charlevillercottage@rehabcare.ie

Head Office
Communications Department,
Rehab Group, Beach Road
Sandymount
Dublin 4
Tel: 01 2057200
Fax: 01 2057202
Email: dara.duffy@rehab.ie

Schizophrenia Ireland
Schizophrenia Ireland is the national organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and addressing the needs of all those affected by schizophrenia and related illnesses, through the promotion and provision of high-quality services and working to ensure the continual enhancement of the quality of life of the people it serves.

Contact Midland Region
Mary Kennedy
Regional Development Officer
SI Midlands
55 Dublin Street, Longford
Tel: 043 42366
Fax: 043 42367
EMAIL: mkenndey@sirl.ie

Head Office
Schizophrenia Ireland
38 Blessington Street
Dublin 7
Tel: 01 8601620
Fax: 01 8601602
Email: info@sirl.ie
Web: www.sirl.ie
HELPLINE 1890 621 631 lo-call
OPEN 9am - 4pm MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Sisters of Charity of Jesus & Mary
This organisation is the main non-statutory service provider to people with Intellectual Disabilities in Co. Offaly. The service provides residential, respite, sheltered work and day services.

SCJM
Triest House
Portarlington
Co. Laois
Tel: 045 525327
Fax: 045 525251
Email: brendan.broderick@scjm.ie

Spinal Injuries Ireland
SII provides support with both the emotional and practical issues facing the individual with the spinal injury, as well as providing support for their families. SII mission is to achieve the ultimate goal of true social inclusion for people with disabilities through providing education, understanding and consensus.

Spinal Injuries Ireland
National Rehabilitation Hospital
Rochestown Ave
Dún Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
Tel: 01 2355317
Fax: 01 2350955
Email: colm@siairl.org

St. Anne’s Service
This organisation provides residential, respite and day service to people with Intellectual Disabilities in the Birr area of Co. Offaly.

St. Anne Service
Sean Ross Abbey
Roscrea
Co. Tipperary
Tel: 0505 22046
Fax: 0505 22525
Email: david.mkieran@eircom.net
Vocational Education Committee (VEC): Adult Learning Centre

Co. Offaly V.E.C. Adult Learning Centre, Hibernian House, O’Connor Square, Tullamore provides flexible learning opportunities for adults wishing to improve their reading, writing, spelling and numeracy skills. Tuition is available in one to one and small group situations and through computers. This is free and confidential service.

Adult Learning Centre
Hibernian House
O’Connor Square
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: 0506 52280/27191
Fax: 0506 27191
Email: headoffice@offalyvec.ie
Web: www.offalyvec.ie

Workway

Workway is an IBEC/ICTU partnership initiative set up to raise awareness around the employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the private sector and seeking to enhance the current level of effectiveness of equal opportunity employment policies and practices in the business community.

Contact West / North-West Regions
Project Co-ordinator
Mairead Conroy
Workway
21, Shantalla Place
Galway.
Tel: 091 587470
Mobile: 086 3816334
Email: Maireadworkway@eircom.net
Web: www.workway.ie
Appendix 1

Workshops with People with Disabilities

1. Describe the type of paid employment you would like.

2. Have you ever tried to get this job?

3. What has been your experience in accessing this employment?

4. If you were unsuccessful, what do you feel stopped you getting this job?

5. What would help you get this job in the future?

6. Have you tried to get other paid work?

7. What happened?
Appendix 2
Survey Questionnaire

Q1 Please tick
Male ☐ Female ☐

Q2 Choose age group as appropriate:
16-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65 Plus ☐

Q3 Please indicate where you live?
(i) Town ☐
(ii) Village ☐
(iii) Rural Area ☐ Nearest Town or Village: .................................................................
Distance from there: ..................................................................................

Q4 Please describe your disability.
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................

Q5 When did you develop disability?
(1) From Birth ☐ (2) Under 4 ☐ (3) 5-12 ☐
(4) 13-17 ☐ (5) 18-30 ☐ (6) 31-45 ☐
(7) 46-60 ☐ (8) 61-70 ☐ (9) Over 70 ☐

Q6 Please tick your current level of education.
Primary Education ☐ Second Level - Junior Certificate ☐
Second Level Leaving Certificate ☐ Third level - Diploma ☐
Third level - Degree ☐
Other Please specify: .....................................................................................
Q7 Have you undertaken any job related training?
Yes ☐          No ☐

Q8 Please describe the type of training and certification (if relevant).
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................

Q9 Are you currently working in paid employment?
Yes ☐          No ☐
If no skip to question 12.

Q10 Describe your current employment
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................

Q11 Is your employment:
Full-time ☐          Part-time ☐
Other - please specify........................................................................................................................................

Q12 Describe the type of paid job you would like?
.................................................................................................................................................................

Q13 Have you ever tried to get this job?
Yes ☐          No ☐
.................................................................................................................................................................

Q14 If yes, what happened?
.................................................................................................................................................................

Q15 If no, what has stopped you in attempting to secure this job?
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
Q16 Have you experienced barriers in accessing paid employment?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q17 If yes, please outline what these barriers are.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Q18 At what stage in your search for paid employment did you experience these barriers?
Please tick as appropriate

Application ☐ Interview ☐

Commencement of Work ☐ Ongoing within the workplace ☐

Q19 Please tick which of the following support agencies you have used (if any) to assist you in seeking employment. Please rate each service you have used from 1 for very poor to 5 for very good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Agencies</th>
<th>Please Tick if you have used this support</th>
<th>Please Rate the effectiveness of this support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Very Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Information Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comhairle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobs Club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Employment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Employment Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTDI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other please list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q20 Please outline any specific supports you require that are not available to you when accessing employment.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Appendix 3
Code of Ethics

Why are you consulting – what is the purpose?
The mission of the project is to provide assistance to people with disabilities in seeking employment. The main objectives are:

- Consult directly with the representative groups of people with disabilities and individuals on what information gaps exist.
- Produce a handbook including a directory of support agencies with a description of their activities, to address these information gaps.
- This handbook will complement the Comhairle Publication “entitlements for people with disabilities” and will focus on the process and supports available in the movement from unemployment to employment.
- Empower the individual to move from unemployment to employment by increased awareness of supports available through providing complete information.
- Involvement of people with disabilities who have successfully moved into employment in the dissemination of the handbook directly to the target group.
- Measure and evaluate the success of the project.

What is driving the process behind the consultation?
To identify the information gaps which exist for people with disabilities when moving from unemployment to employment and to produce a handbook to address such gaps.

What is the consultation about?
- Improving the information available to the target group.
- Producing a new handbook to address the information gap identified.
- Involving groups which represent people with disabilities.
- Demonstrating a commitment to social inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Creating a partnership approach to address the needs of people with disabilities.

What are the anticipated outcomes?
- Produce a handbook to assist people with disabilities move into employment including a directory of support agencies with a description of their activities.
- To improve the information and support available to people with disabilities.

Who are the key stakeholders?
- County Offaly Citizens Information Service.
- Irish Wheelchair Association (Midland Region).
- Working group comprising of representatives from FAS, Health Service Executive (Midland Area), APT, Workway, NLN, DFI and The Centre for Independent Living.
- Representative groups of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities.
- Comhairle.
**What participants expect to get out of it?**
- Full and equal participation by all groups.
- A partnership approach based on trust.
- Consult directly with people with disabilities.
- An document that will support people access employment.

**What is expected from all sides?**

**From researchers**
- Every effort will be made to ensure the consultative process will be fully accessible by all groups including visually impaired, people with hearing difficulties, wheelchair users.
- The timing and venues of consultations will be arranged to as to suit people with disabilities e.g. schedule meetings for centres which people attend and times they attend. This will also help to address any transport difficulties people may have.
- Some people may never have been involved in consultation before so this will need to be taken into account.

**From people with disabilities**
- They have the right to have an advocate present at all times if they so wish.
- They have the right not to participate in the research.

**Time Commitments expected from Participants with Disabilities**
- Participants will be expected to provide between 1 to 2 hours of time in a focus group situation.
- 30 minutes if filling in a questionnaire. Additional time will be allotted if the individual requires more time.

**When, Where and at what times will the meeting be held?**
The meeting will be held in location convenient to the person with a disability for example through contact with specialised services for people with disabilities such as:

- IWA.
- Centre of Independent living.
- National Learning Network (Previously Known as the NTDI).
- National Association for Deaf People.
- National Council for the Blind.
- The research meeting will be held during the day either in the late morning or afternoon during a weekday.
- Workshops timing have yet to be agreed.
- Dates to be agreed.
- The process and discussions are confidential in the sense that individuals and individual cases will not be quoted.
- The outcomes of the process will be finalised by the working group and feedback to the target groups through a series of workshops.

**Supports**
To ensure equal participation of people with disabilities there will be consultation with representative groups and individuals to identify what requirements are necessary.

**Access issues include:**
- Language interpretation.
- Loop system.
- Easy to read documentation.
- Pre meeting contact if necessary.
- Mobility access such as ramps, lifts, restroom facilities and sufficient room to manoeuvre.
- **Breaks will be built in to the consultation sessions/focus groups sessions if required.**
- Individuals being consulted may be accompanied by an advocate/personal assistant or a carer if they so wish.