



An Ireland that is fully inclusive of people with disabilities will be an Ireland where disabled people take their place alongside their peers, not only in education, and in the social arena, but also in the workforce, where they can contribute economically to the country and benefit from the services designed for citizens across their life span.

The right to work is established in the UNCRPD and this right needs to be established across all mainstream employment supports in Ireland. Our social welfare system has seen a huge transformation over the last few years, transforming from a welfare system to an activation and employment support system with controls and sanctions in place for noncompliance.

This new approach has actively barred disabled citizens out of the very services required to support them into work.

While we welcome the vision of the draft Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities¹ (CES), we still have significant concerns about the strategy's capacity to work alongside mainstream supports to ensure sustainable employment for people with disabilities. There are many disabled people who would benefit from accessing mainstream supports just the same as there are those who require specialist or tailored supports.

The strategy needs a funding support package to help bridge various barriers such as accessibility, transport, equality etc. It will otherwise stop their progress. It is understood that this will not be provided.

There is little attention paid to the transitions and hurdles placed in the way by systems which aim to serve jobseekers. Transitions such as from rehabilitation post injury to return to work have been documented as major pitfalls, and more needs to be done to address this issue.

Of course the major obstacle to employment for people with disabilities in Ireland is the cost of disability. The prospective loss of secondary benefits, especially the medical card, as

¹ The strategy is still in draft form and is yet to be released by the NDA, who were tasked with the job of developing it along with government departments.

well as unfavourable tax credits in many cases, are too great a risk for people with disabilities to take. We must ensure that work provides the long-term security a person with a disability requires to take up or return to education, training and employment.

For activation to be successful, people with disabilities need flexible supports, adaptations, coaching, and transition supports, as well as a guaranteed income. There can be no recovery without us, and employment is one of the biggest challenges to this.

Right now there is an election taking place in the Carlow/Kilkenny constituency. The Census tells us there are over 19,000 people with disabilities in these counties. We know 16% of people with disabilities in Carlow did not go to post primary school (18% in Kilkenny) and this compares to 5% of people with a disability in Carlow and 3% in Kilkenny. Only 27% of people of working age in Carlow are at work, and 33% in Kilkenny.

These two examples show how unfair and unequal life is for people with disabilities. These are 'big ticket' areas for society in general but seemingly not when it comes to the 13% of people with a disability. All too soon we will have the general election, and it is time for us to make our presence felt.

Finally, I would like to thank the contributors in this special edition. DFI and our fellow disability organisations are engaged in a wide range of innovative responses to the employment issue, and this newsletter represents only a small sample of what is being done and the services that are available.

- ***John Dolan, Chief Executive***

Definitions

Live register: the Live Register is not meant to measure unemployment. It includes part time workers (who work up to 3 days a week), seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseekers Benefit or Allowance. It also includes those signing on for 'PRSI credits' but receiving no payment.

Unemployed: is the term applied to those who were without work and available for work and had taken specific steps in the previous four weeks to find work. This is calculated on a quarterly basis via the Quarterly National Household Survey.

Longterm Unemployed: Long-term unemployment refers to the number of people with continuous periods of unemployment extending for a year or longer, expressed as a percentage of the total unemployed².

What does the employment landscape look like for people with disabilities?

By Joan O'Donnell, DFI

The current economic and jobs situation creates new challenges for everyone; yet while the economy thrived, people with disabilities were left on to live life on the margins and this situation cannot continue; the cost to people's lives and to the economy is too great³. The jobs situation in Ireland has improved over the last year, but there is little evidence to suggest that this is resulting in greater employment for people with disabilities seeking work. Long term unemployment remains a problem and the EU Commission has pointed out the structural unemployment is at risk of increasing. This is due to a mismatch between skills and jobs available. It means that those who have been left behind in the good times are at risk of being left behind once more as the economy improves. The most recent unemployment figures indicate that employment fell by 39,000 and the latest unemployment figure is 213,600⁴. There is concern however that the tight definition of

² International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

³ Eurofound (2012) Active Inclusion of Young People with Disabilities or Health Problems

⁴ Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 4 2014.

unemployment means that family carers and those with responsibilities for children are not included in the statistics as a person has to be actively seeking and available for work within 2 weeks. This is concerning because of the likelihood that activation measures will not be designed to include these people and this includes those on disability payments.

Even at the height of the boom, when long-term unemployment was at an all-time low, the percentage of people with disabilities in employment was only half that for those without disabilities.⁵ We know that about 40,000 people with disabilities would like to work if the conditions were right⁶. Therefore, labour market activation needs to “include all those of working age who are able to work, not just the unemployed”.⁷

That being said, DFI strongly asserts that people with disabilities must not become the new underclass of workers; and they must be afforded an adequate working wage. The risk of getting caught in the category of the working poor in low paid, precarious work, is high for people with disabilities, whose educational backgrounds are often poorer than for those without a disability. If people with disabilities are truly to be given a chance to work in Ireland, then work must pay and medical cards, where required must be sustained on need rather than the current practice of removing them after three years in work. The fear of losing the medical card alone, is often enough to stop people moving into the workforce and working and contributing to their full potential.

⁵ <http://www.nda.ie/cntmgmtnew.nsf/employmenttraininghomepage?OpenPage>

⁶ Data from the National Disability Survey (2006) demonstrated that 37 per cent of people with disabilities who are not at work would be interested in a job, which corresponds to over 40,000 people who wish to be more active in the labour market.

⁷ (Watson and Maitre 2013).

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Intreo Service

Intreo is the new name for the service from the Department of Social Protection that deals with employment.



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection
Helping you build a better life



It was launched over 2013 and 2014, and local offices are now found all over the country. This has been a huge transformation as the Social Welfare offices have merged with FÁS Employment Services and renamed Intreo.

The main things Intreo do is provide information and supports (such as checking CVs, interview preparation and training courses) for people to get back to work. They also have information and can help Jobseekers with any questions they have about income supports such as jobseeker's payments, back to education payments etc.

However, Intreo has to date focused specifically on the Live Register and this has resulted in disabled people being locked out of supports that would help them to find or sustain employment. DFI has been very concerned with the level of service that people on disability allowance have been getting from Intreo. At a recent consultation meeting in DFI we heard stories of how people found it difficult to get the support they sought from Intreo in order to access work. Issues ranged from being told they were not eligible for the service, to assumptions being made about their disability that were upsetting and unhelpful.

DFI hopes that the expansion of services to disabled jobseekers recently brought in by the Department of Social Protection will result in a significant change in how people with disabilities are supported to find work. Ten Intreo offices around the country are now set to provide employment supports to disabled people seeking work. People with disabilities who present at one of the following offices will be offered an interview by a case officer who will agree suitable action plan with the individual and record the action plan for the person on the case management system: Cork City, Bantry, Waterford, Wexford, Limerick, Longford, Sligo, Finglas, Dun Laoghaire and Tallaght.

More information on Intreo is on the website; <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Intreo.aspx>

If you or someone you support has feedback on Intreo and the service that you get from any of these offices, DFI is keen to hear from you. Please contact Joan O'Donnell joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie with your story.

EmployAbility

The nationwide EmployAbility Service provides an employment support service for people with a health condition, injury, illness or disability and a recruitment advice service for the business community. EmployAbility services are currently under review by the Department of Social Protection to assess how effective they are at securing employment for those who access their service. The review will assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the service, including the level and sustainability of the jobs secured. It will also assess the level of demand for supported employment services in general and the extent to which current employment services meet that need.

Employability services are designed to:

- provide employment assistance and access to a pool of potential employees with varying levels of skills, abilities and training;
- provide ongoing support for both the employer and employee throughout employment;
- provide a professional job matching service to help ensure successful recruitment;
- provide advice and information on additional employment supports.

You can get more information on their website, www.employability.ie or you can email them at info@employability.ie

JobPath

Written by Brid O'Brien, INOU

JobPath is the name given to the proposed new employment service to support people who are long-term unemployed (excluding people



aged over 62), and those most likely to become long-term unemployed, to secure and sustain full-time (minimum 30 hours per week) paid employment.

As proposed, JobPath will only be open to people who are signing-on the Live Register and in receipt of a Jobseeker's payment, but there are unclear plans to extend this.

So, in the first instance, people who are already long-term unemployed and those people who become long-term unemployed will only be referred.

In October 2014, the Tánaiste announced the preferred tenderers for the provision of the programme: Turas Nua Ltd and Seetec Business Technology Centre Ltd.

Turas Nua Limited will operate in the southern half of the country including towns and cities such as Cork, Limerick, and Waterford.

Seetec will operate in the northern half of the country including towns and cities such as Dublin, Galway, Sligo and Dundalk. It is anticipated that referrals to these new providers will commence in the coming months.

The minimum level of service and support that the JobPath providers must provide include:

- The unemployed person being invited to a 'one-to-one' meeting with the JobPath Provider within 20 days of being referred by the Department.
- The provider working with the person for 12 months.
- A Personal Advisor working with the unemployed person to agree a 'Personal Progression Plan' – the Plan must identify the fields of work appropriate for the unemployed person; the unemployed person's job/employment goals and an agreed set of skills training and development goals and work experience interventions.
- The unemployed person meeting with their Personal Advisor for 'Review Meetings' at least every four weeks or so.
- The Provider providing 'in – employment support' for at least a 13 week period after the person has taken up work.

Some of the supports that the unemployed person can expect include assistance with:

- Looking for work
- Developing a CV

- Developing job interview skills
- Accessing places on agreed training and education courses
- Accessing computers, the internet and other facilities to aid the person in their search for employment
- Developing key skills to sustain employment and in-employment support when the person obtains work

As with the Department's own Intreo Service, there is a requirement that the unemployed person engages with the JobPath provider. Failure to engage with the provider may result in the Department reducing the person's Jobseekers payment. If the unemployed person does not attend job interviews, take-up job offers or education/training opportunities his/her payment may similarly be affected.

One of the key performance indicators against which the success of JobPath will be measured is the extent of the unemployed Clients' satisfaction with the new service. The INOU will be closely monitoring the implementation of JobPath and we are eager to hear from people about their experiences of JobPath, when it is up and running.

The Department of Social Protection website has some short information about JobPath here <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/JobPath.aspx>

EU Youth Guarantee Scheme

Written By Pierce Richardson, DFI

The Irish Government expects to provide a Youth Guarantee to around 30,000 young people who are at a very high risk of long-term unemployment, yet it does not include young people on a disability payment. DFI is concerned that young people with disabilities are not being considered eligible for inclusion in the Guarantee.

The Youth Guarantee is a commitment at EU level given to all young people who are unemployed for 4 months that they will receive good quality offer of education, training and/or work



experience. This is a measure designed to tackle youth unemployment across Europe, where there are grave concerns of the “scarring” effect that long term unemployment may have on the lives of young people unable to find work and commence active participation as adults in society. Concern for the scarring effect of unemployment is not being extended to those who are in receipt of Disability Allowance however. James Doorley, Deputy Director of the National Youth Council commented that *“The Irish Government have defined those eligible (to date) as only those on the live register. That excludes 13,161 young people under 25 on disability allowance and we would support the view put forward by [your colleague] Joan O’Donnell that the policy needs to be changed and all young people should benefit from the youth guarantee including young people with disabilities”*.

To date the Youth Guarantee has been piloted in Ballymun in Dublin with plans to be rolled out nationally shortly. DFI is very concerned however that no attempt is being made to ensure that young people with disabilities will be accommodated on the scheme. Those who commenced on the pilot and moved to a disability payment subsequently left the programme and their actual capacity or interest in working is not captured in the final report.

Lorraine Cook, a young woman who is seeking work says *“The idea of activation schemes is great in theory but when groups of people in society are excluded from accessing these programmes it undermines the reasoning why these programmes function in the first place. I am an adaptable visually impaired woman actively seeking to have the same equal rights as everyone else. People who continue to be discriminated against want to be able to contribute to society rather than relying on the taxes of working people to pay for the goods and services that we all want to pay for. When exclusion is experienced not only does it send out a negative signal about a country but it can also cause health problems that can be avoided. I know that there are some people who due to personal reasons cannot work but the choice should be available to all of us who want to participate on an activation scheme or apply for a job no matter what.”*

This systematic exclusion of young people with disabilities from accessing opportunities on par with their peers, where this might be the most appropriate path for them to take must end. DFI asks for an extension of eligibility to all young people with appropriate supports put in place where required.

DFI ASSOCIATE AND AFFILIATE ORGANISATIONS

WALK PEER Programme

Written by Des Henry, Careers and Employment Coordinator, WALK

In the course of supporting Service Users with intellectual disability, autism and complex needs to live self-determined independent lives, WALK found the “gap” in terms of supporting people into employment and education and training to be particularly stark. When WALK found that mainstream services were not available to support this cohort because they were deemed to be “Not Job Ready,” they sought to develop a model that would meet their particular needs.



WALK PEER Programme emerged through the EU funded Walkways project, aimed at supporting young people to fulfil their own aspirations for employment and having a career. PEER stands for “*Providing Equal Employment Routes*” and is focused on supporting young people at an early stage to gain access to the same employment opportunities as their mainstream peers. It delivers individualised supports at key transition points in the person’s life.

A key and innovative intervention used by the programme is the engagement of other young people who are trained as volunteer “PEER Mentors” to provide support. These volunteers provide a more natural form of support for participants in work or education and training environments. Through PEER the Walkways team succeeded in supporting young people with intellectual disability, who were in education, to take their first steps into paid employment.

WALK could see the broader potential for the PEER model and was chosen as one of the Disability Activation Programme (DACT) projects in 2013. The aim of the DACT project was

to pilot the WALK PEER Programme model in County Louth, engaging young people aged 15 – 25 who were on a disability payment from Department of Social Protection, to “bridge gaps” in accessing *mainstream* employment, education and training. The programme was set up in January 2013 and commenced meeting participants three months later.

To date 119 young people have been offered supports by the programme and 100 “PEER Mentors” have been trained. Participants have a wide variety of challenges including Intellectual Disability, Autism, Physical/Sensory Disability, Mental Health, Acquired Brain Injury and Specific Learning Disabilities. While WALK PEER Participants come from a wide variety of settings, over one third were classified as ‘NEET’ (Not in Employment Education or Training) – in other words they were not engaged in or supported by any other services, mainstream or otherwise. Also significant is the fact that over 30% of participants were in special schools. Both of these facts highlight significant “gaps” in support available to young people who are most in need to access mainstream employment, further education and training opportunities.

The programme has surpassed its target 50% progression, while 70% of participants have taken the opportunity to experience employment in a real work environment. The PEER model has proven itself to be particularly strong in enabling young people with disabilities to break down barriers and progress to mainstream further education opportunities. A significant number of participants are currently completing QQI Level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications in colleges of further education.

WALK is currently in the process of developing a series of manuals related to PEER, which will enable the model to be used in a variety of settings.

For further information on PEER contact **Des Henry**, Careers and Employment Coordinator at 01 429 0094 or des@walk.ie.

Keeping Ireland Fit for Work

Written by Grainne O’Leary – Head of Development Services, Arthritis Ireland



Every year in Ireland, 7 million working days are lost due to absence and ill health because of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), an umbrella term covering over 200 conditions, including arthritis, back pain and tendonitis. This costs the State a staggering €275 million in annual Illness Benefit payments. At present there is no consistent policy on intervention in the treatment of MSDs even though it has long been accepted in the medical arena that it’s required to ensure an earlier return to work.

That is why Arthritis Ireland is leading the development of the Fit for Work programme in Ireland. In 2011, a partnership of interested stakeholders representing GP’s, consultants, occupational health professionals, employers, employees and patient groups was established and is advocating for a number of key recommendations to be adopted. Known as the Fit for Work Coalition, the group believes that a strategy focused on the health and well-being of the workforce will ultimately reduce workplace absenteeism and improve the lives of people living with MSDs.

Chief to achieving this is the establishment of a cross departmental group involving the Department of Health and the Department of Social Protection to work with the Fit for Work Coalition. The coalition believes that early intervention is key; an employee, employer and health specialists working together to find the best solution is proven to improve patient outcomes and labour market participation, as well as making savings to the healthcare and welfare system.

In order for more Irish employees and employers to benefit from early intervention, a nationally agreed programme with buy-in from the Department of Health and Department of Social Protection needs to be created as soon as possible.

The Fit for Work Coalition also believes that good prevention measures in the workplace will help reduce the risk to staff health, while the promotion of employee health should be embedded in the culture of all organisations.

Arthritis Ireland has created two **information guides** - one for employees and one for employers – on managing arthritis or musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace. These can be ordered through Arthritis Ireland’s National Helpline on 1890 252 846 or downloaded online at www.fitforwork.ie.

NCBI Employment Services

Written by Denis Daly, Employment Advisor, National Council for the Blind



Remaining in employment is a major concern for people dealing with sight loss. Both employers and the individual themselves may be unsure of what measures can be put in place to accommodate someone who is blind or vision impaired. NCBI’s Employment Service receives referrals from service users, training institutions, government services and employers. They provide a multidisciplinary service such as assistive technology assessments, mobility training or other potential supports that assists in keeping a job.

With the onset of some eye conditions during employment, retention advice, awareness and reintegration can be offered both to the employee and to the employer. In this, the ES assists both the employee and employer in enabling an individual with sight loss to maintain their employment.

If You Are Experiencing Sight Loss in Work

First of all, it's important to know you're not alone. The initial stages of vision loss at all levels can be extremely difficult, especially if you enjoy your work and don't want to give it up, are concerned that your job may be in jeopardy. Keep in mind that it is often much easier to try and adapt your current work situation while employed, rather than trying to re-

enter the workforce. Don't make any fast decisions and don't assume that vision loss means job loss.

Workplace Adaptations

Remember that the individuals you work with daily and your employer may have limited experience with, or knowledge about, vision loss and low vision. In preparation for discussions with your employer try to be clear about where and when you're experiencing problems. Assess the "essential functions" of your job in a step-by-step way, and consider how each problem or barrier may be resolved.

Initially, it's not likely you'll have the answers to all of your questions—so be sure to seek help and contact the NCBI's Employment Service and encourage your employers/HR to also seek assistance from the NCBI in understanding some of the steps that may need to be undertaken such as an assistive technology assessment and mobility assessment.

Your employer may be willing (or even legally required) to provide funding for any adaptive equipment you require to do your job. The Reasonable Accommodation Scheme (RAS) has also a range of grants that are available to an employer in the private sector.

The NCBI's Employment Service can assist both you and your employer in these steps and together looking creatively at solutions to enable you to continue in your working life.

NCBI has a range of information sheets on www.ncbi.ie to assist individuals with sight loss and also advice and information for employers www.ncbi.ie/information-for/employers

Dyslexia and the Workplace

Written by Harriet Doig, Information Officer, Dyslexia Association

The modern workplace can be a challenging environment for a person with dyslexia but, with the right supports in place and understanding and



awareness on the part of the employer, dyslexia need not be a barrier to an employee flourishing and contributing fully to the successes of their company.

The main areas in which employees with dyslexia might encounter difficulties would be the production of appropriately professional written work – reports, letters, emails and so on – and organisation and time management. Fortunately, most of the adjustments that can be made to support employees in these areas are simple and low-cost. For example, a person with dyslexia might ask a colleague to proof-read a report for them, or they might find it easier to prioritise their workload if instructions are presented to them in a clear list format.

Day-to-day adjustments like these are usually just a case of managers and colleagues becoming more aware of the effects of dyslexia, and fostering an environment where dyslexic employees feel confident in asking for support. IT can also make a massive difference – again, how an individual with dyslexia makes use of IT supports in their job will vary massively depending on their role and their own preferences, but in general the use of spellchecking tools and software, the use of calendars and reminders to organise tasks, using screen-reading tools to make it easier to access written information and voice recognition to help with producing written work would be the most commonly used workplace technologies.

There are numerous options available in all of the categories outlined above, from in-built features of MS Office through to specialist software designed for people with dyslexia. A company need not necessarily spend any additional money on providing assistive technology, but where a more expensive option is required, the employer may be able to access a Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant via their local Intreo Centre.

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland runs an information service, which both employers and employees can use to seek advice on employment issues. DAI can also run dyslexia awareness training for companies on request, and free seminars on dyslexia and the workplace are held from time to time.

Finally, it is worth noting that people with dyslexia often have characteristics that make them excellent employees, such as determination to succeed and creative thinking. It is probably no coincidence that there are so many entrepreneurs and business leaders with dyslexia!

DAI can be contacted by phone on 01 877 6001 or by email to info@dyslexia.ie. Follow DAI on Facebook or check <http://www.dyslexia.ie/events-news/upcoming-dai-events/> for details of upcoming seminars and training sessions.

The European Context in an Irish Setting

Written by Joan O'Donnell, DFI

The EU Commission Recommendation 2008 on the Active Inclusion encourages Member States to take action to actively include people excluded from the labour market.

To this end, the Commission recommends that the Member States draw up and implement an integrated comprehensive strategy and the Recommendation sets out three strands based on which active inclusion policies are to be implemented.

The Three strands are as follows:

- Adequate income support together with help to get a job. This could be by linking out-of-work and in-work benefits, and by helping people to access the benefits they are entitled to.
- Inclusive labour markets – making it easier for people to join the work force, tackling in-work poverty, avoiding poverty traps and disincentives to work.
- Access to quality services helping people participate actively in society, including getting back to work.

The inclusion agenda in Ireland has so far focused on activation and needs to rebalance its focus towards more social goals. This is in line with the recognition at a European level that excessive emphasis on monetary targets has long term unintended consequences that are devastating for people's lives. We cannot rely exclusively on the Comprehensive Employment Strategy to deliver real jobs for people with disabilities.

Mainstream services must also be made available and this raises the issue of equality of access in line with equality legislation (Equal Status Act 2000). Additionally, the principles of the UNCRPD specifically Article 27, which grants people a right to work, must be upheld.

All Departments supporting people with disabilities to be part of society must work together to ensure that these rights are upheld and that the National Disability Strategy is implemented.

For further information email Joan at joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie

BARRIERS TO WORK

Barriers to work with a Spinal Injury

Written with information provided by Fiona Bolger, CEO, Spinal Injuries Ireland

There are 1,600 people and families in Ireland who live with the consequences of a spinal cord injury (SCI)



daily. The most common cause of injuries are road traffic accidents (30%), medical (28%) and domestic (12%) and industrial accidents (12%) followed by sports (7%).

A report from October 2014 revealed a high level of exclusion in the employment market for people with a spinal injury. Over 76% are unemployed, compared to a 35% unemployment rate before injury. A further statistic shows that 40% of people with a SCI are living at or below the poverty line.

Spinal Injuries Ireland provide information and supports on employment, education and training. On-site supports are available for people while they are in the National Rehabilitation Hospital such as the inter-disciplinary Vocational Rehabilitation team who support people to explore their employment options. The Community Liaison Officer visits

Further employment information is available on their website, <http://www.spinalinjuries.ie/support-services/onsite-resource-centre/employment-support/>. You can also contact Spinal Injuries Ireland by phone on 01 23 553 17.

people in their homes examine further options such as training courses or education, including information about possible short-term Spinal Injuries Ireland funded courses.

Many Deaf jobseekers Still Face Barriers

Written using information provided Tracey Treanor, Advocacy Development Officer, Irish Deaf Society

There are about 8,444 deaf people in Ireland. In terms of employment, 62% of all Deaf people in the labour force are unemployed, when compared with 42% of the mainstream population.*

*Figures from Census 2011.

Irish Deaf Society



The majority of Deaf jobseekers believe that telling potential employers about their Deafness reduces their chances of getting a job. Most Deaf people would not have been offered communication supports during the recruitment process, which would compound any disadvantage that they might have in competing for a job. Without communication supports, Deaf people are not given the opportunity to show their skills and potential. The recruitment process is the first barrier that Deaf people experience in obtaining employment, but it is often the most excluding barrier.

A lack of awareness of Deaf people and communication is cited by Deaf jobseekers as the root cause of these difficulties. Employers who have never met a Deaf person before may have prejudiced or unfounded ideas of what Deaf people can or cannot do. Employment Services can also suffer from this lack of awareness: Negative attitudes about the ability of Deaf people can limit the support and advice that Deaf people receive compared with their hearing counterparts.

The barriers that Deaf people face in acquiring employment are prevalent, needless, and excessive. Cultural shifts in attitudes and awareness are what is required to allow Deaf

people the equal and just opportunity to compete for jobs and to permit the fulfilment of their personalities.

Barriers

Being Deaf affects an individual's ability to communicate effectively within the hearing world every day. Communication is a two way process but for deaf people who may not speak good English or cannot read English well, explaining what they want to say is difficult.

In many instances hearing people will not take the time or make the effort to communicate with deaf people effectively. This is possibly because they feel embarrassed, or have no understanding of deafness.

The main barrier faced is often communication, especially miscommunication between deaf and hearing parties. An all too common example of this arises with employment, as deaf people miss out on guidance or receive unsuitable advice from a Job Coach. This is often because Deaf individuals cannot fully explain themselves without communication support. The result of this lack of communication can have very negative effects on deaf people's physical and mental health.

Deaf people's experience of accessing services provided by the third sector

When Deaf people try to access a service provided by a local or national public service, they often struggle. Some don't know that they have a right to ask for an interpreter. Generally, Deaf people only have access to sign language and community support if they go to the Deaf Community. They don't have that access elsewhere. This is a major source of social exclusion for Deaf people.

You can contact the Irish Deaf Society by text: +353 (86) 380 7033, Email: info@irishdeafsociety.ie, Skypø: irishdeafsocietyv or Telephone: +353 (01) 860 1878

Partial Capacity Benefit

by Philippa Brennan, DFI

The Partial Capacity Benefit is a social welfare scheme which allows Jobseekers to return to work or self-employment (if they have reduced capacity to work) and continue to receive a payment from the Department of Social Protection. They may be required to attend a medical assessment.

To qualify for Partial Capacity Benefit they need to be currently getting either Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension. Disability Allowance and Blind Pension are not qualifying payments for Partial Capacity Benefit.

There is no restriction on earnings or number of hours they can work, and they can work in a self-employed capacity. They are still entitled to certain secondary benefits such as free travel.

Self-Employment while disabled

by Philippa Brennan, DFI

People with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed than people without disabilities. According to the 2011 Census, 19.2% of people with disabilities in Ireland who are 'at work' are self-employed, while the figure for people without disabilities is just 16.8%.

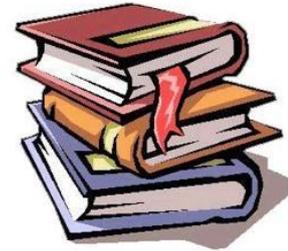
If approved, people in receipt of Disability Allowance may earn up to €120 a week from self-employment without their social welfare payments being affected, but they may lose the medical card.

They may be eligible to apply for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, which allows for people considering starting their own business on social welfare benefits to retain a percentage of their benefit whilst taking up self-employment for a period of four years.

Training and Education

By Joan O'Donnell, DFI

Upskilling and reskilling are important for many people seeking work and especially important to those who may have left school early. So how does a person with a disability gain access to activation and training supports? And are those supports designed to meet people where they are at?



Over the last year, the 33 Vocational Education Committees and 17 FÁS Training Centres across the country came together to form 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). They are to provide education and training to people who are referred through Intreo services. However, Intreo services have been designed to support those on the Live Register not anyone on disability related payments.

While 10 Intreo offices around the country now offer supports to disabled people, it must be remembered that education and training is only being offered if it is required to gain access to a job. It is not yet clear how those who seek activation and training supports to improve their wellbeing and social inclusion will be supported to do so via Intreo. It is important that literacy and numeracy are given as much attention as highly skilled training opportunities and that disabled people seeking work have access to both.

There are concerns that literacy issues are not getting enough attention in the current training landscape. People with weak literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to be unemployed and many of these people have disabilities. Therefore, it should follow that this issue is an important consideration in labour market policy and more particularly activation policy. However, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is of the view that this is not happening and is concerned that unemployed adults with literacy and numeracy needs, and those with low educational attainment, are not being adequately prioritised for labour market activation. This is despite the fact that with training those who started with poor

literacy skills were 29% more likely to exit the live register compared with 11% of the full unemployed population⁸.

At the other end of the labour market activation continuum is Momentum. This is described as an education and training opportunity linked to identified job vacancies and employers in fields with skills shortages. It provides workplace supports including relevant industry certification. It is available only to those on the Live Register however and people on disability payments who require reskilling in order to enter or return to the labour market, who may be considered job ready, cannot apply.

NCBI DigiPlace4all Community Event

Thursday May 28th

10.30am - 1pm (Registration, Tea/coffee: 10.00)

Goldsmiths Room 3, Radisson Blu Hotel, Golden Lane, Dublin

DigiPlace4all <http://ie.digiplace4all.eu> is an online peer support community helping people with disabilities build the digital skills needed to transition from VET training to mainstream education & employment.

This morning event will demonstrate the peer support and sharing facilities on the DigiPlace4all community website. It will bring community members together to share their perspectives of using DigiPlace4all, engage with new community members and introduce our Digital Champions.

For an employment perspective, the DigiPlace4all community supports people with disabilities set up one-to-one support with their peers who have first hand experience using the same or similar technology as them to access the workplace.

⁸ Kelly, E., McGuinness S., O'Connell, P. (2010) Literacy, Numeracy, Activation amongst the Unemployed, ESRI.

Employers will also benefit from linking in with other employers who have ensured their work environments are digitally accessible for employees with disabilities.

Please register your interest in attending by emailing Esther Murphy esther.murphy@ncbi.ie or Mark Magennis mark.magennis@ncbi.ie

Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/digiplace4all>

DFI MEMBER ORGANISATIONS | NEWSLETTER DIRECTORY

For information, please contact the member organisations directly.

ACTS (Accessible Community Transport Southside)

Newsletter available at www.actsltd.ie

Acquired Brain Injury Ireland

Newsletter available at www.abiireland.ie/publications.html

Arthritis Ireland

Subscribe to e-zine at www.arthritisireland.ie

Aware

Subscribe to e-newsletter at www.aware.ie

Bodywhys

Subscribe to newsletter at www.bodywhys.ie,

Bray Lakers

Visit www.braylakers.ie/Newsletter/190 for newsletters

Care Alliance Ireland

Visit http://www.carealliance.ie/publications_newsletters

Carers Association

Subscribe at www.carersireland.com/newsletters.php,

Carmichael Centre

Sign up for news at <http://www.carmichaelcentre.ie/news>

Disabled Drivers Association

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://www.ddai.ie>

Down Syndrome Ireland

Twice-yearly magazine available to members of the organisation

Dyslexia Association of Ireland

Visit <http://www.dyslexia.ie/about/download-section/>

Enable Ireland

E-newsletter at <http://www.enableireland.ie/newsletter>

Epilepsy Ireland

Visit <http://www.epilepsy.ie/index.cfm/spKey/news.html>

Féach

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://feach.ie/index.php/newsletter>

Fighting Blindness

Visit <http://www.fightingblindness.ie/news/email-newsletter/>

GROW

Subscribe at http://grow.ie/blog/publication_titles/newsletters/

Irish Guide Dogs Association

Visit <http://www.guidedogs.ie/iopen24/newsletters.php>

HAIL (Housing Association for Integrated Living)

Download newsletters at <http://www.hail.ie/publications.htm>

Headway

Monthly e-newsletter at <http://www.headway.ie/stayintouch>

Heart Children Ireland

Subscribe at <http://www.heartchildren.ie/sign-our-newsletter>

Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland

Visit <http://www.huntingtons.ie/content/hope-newsletter-0>

Irish Haemophilia Society

Subscribe at <http://www.haemophilia.ie/newsletter.php>

Irish Kidney Association

Visit <http://www.ika.ie/services/support-magazine-archive>

Irish Motor Neuron Disease Association

Subscribe to newsletter at www.imnda.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association

Visit www.iwa.ie/information/publications/spokeout-magazine

Livability

Subscribe to e-mail updates at <http://www.livability.org.uk/>

Migraine Association of Ireland

Subscribe to monthly e-zine at <http://www.migraine.ie>

Move 4 Parkinsons

Visit <http://www.move4parkinsons.com/join-move4parkinsons/>

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland

Subscribe to e-newsletters at www.ms-society.ie

Muscular Dystrophy Ireland

Subscribe at <http://www.mdi.ie/newsletter-by-email.html>

National Council for the Blind of Ireland

Magazine at <http://www.ncbi.ie/news/ncbi-news-magazine>

Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland

Subscribe to newsletter at www.nfaireland.ie

Offaly Centre for Independent Living

Email sarah@ocil.ie to subscribe to monthly newsletter

Neurological Alliance of Ireland

Sign up to newsletter at <http://www.nai.ie/>

Parkinsons Association of Ireland

Visit http://www.parkinsons.ie/mediacentre_publications

Post Polio Support Group

Newsletters at http://www.ppsg.ie/publications_survivor.html

Rehab Group

Visit <http://www.rehab.ie/about/rehabnews.aspx>

Roscommon Disability Support Group

Email mganly@rosdisabilities.ie to request copies of newsletters

Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland

'Ability' magazine at <http://www.sbhi.ie/ability-magazine.html>

Special Olympics Ireland

Subscribe at <http://www.specialolympics.ie/home.aspx>

Spinal Injuries Ireland

'Spinal News' at http://www.spinalinjuries.ie/?page_id=164

Walkinstown Association

Visit http://www.walk.ie/info_newsletter

Yoobyoo (formerly Children In Hospital Ireland)

Subscribe to newsletter at <http://yoobyoo.ie/>

DFI SUPPORT OFFICERS | CONTACT DETAILS

National Office

Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8

Tel: 01 454 7978

Fax: 01 494 7981

E: info@disability-federation.ie

Dublin Mid-Leinster

Anthony Carrick (Dublin Office)

Dun Laoghaire, Dublin South East, Wicklow

Mobile: 086 820 6736

E: anthonycarrick@disability-federation.ie

Louise McCann (Dublin Office)

Dublin South City, Dublin South West, Dublin

West, Kildare, West Wicklow (Dublin Office)

Mobile: 086 918 9750

E: louisemccann@disability-federation.ie

Jacqueline Grogan (Dublin Office)

Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath

Tel: 01 708 0108

Mobile: 086 388 2600

E: jacquelinegrogan@disability-federation.ie

Joan O'Connor (Dublin Office)

Support Officer: Policy and Research

Tel: 01 425 0121

E: joanoconnor@disability-federation.ie

Dermot O'Donnell (Dublin Office)

Support Officer: Support for Organisations

Tel: 01 425 0125

E: dermotodonnell@disability-federation.ie

Dublin North-East

Joan O'Donnell (Dublin Office)

Meath, Louth, Cavan, Monaghan

Mobile: 086 383 4587

E: joanodonnell@disability-federation.ie

Martin Naughton

Dublin North Central, Dublin North, Dublin

West

Mobile: 086 820 7196

E: martinnaughton@disability-federation.ie

West

Michael Corbett

Galway, Mayo, Roscommon

C/O DFI, 8 Acres Grove, Newport, County

Mayo

Tel: 098 419 19

Mobile: 086 380 4750

E: michaelcorbett@disability-federation.ie

North-West

Jennifer Van Aswegen

Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal

Unit 2C, Castle House, Castle Street, Sligo

Mobile: 086 381 1261

E: jennifervanaswegen@disability-federation.ie

Toni Gleeson

Limerick, North Tipperary, East Limerick, Clare

DFI, The Forge, Croke Street, Thurles, County

Tipperary

Mobile: 086 600 4526

E: tonigleeson@disability-federation.ie

South

P.J. Cleere

Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford,

Wexford

DFI, Tinryland, Carlow

Tel: 059 9179431

Mobile: 086 381 1064

E: pjcleere@disability-federation.ie

Alison Ryan

Cork, Kerry

101 North Main Street, Cork.

Tel: 021 427 1752

Mobile: 086 381 6323

E: a.ryan@disability-federation.ie



The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society. It comprises organisations that represent and support people with disabilities and disabling conditions.

The vision of DFI is that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and that they are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

There are over 120 organisations as affiliates or associates of DFI. DFI also works with a growing number of organisations and groups around the country that have a significant disability interest, mainly from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Networking
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development / Implementation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI works on the basis that disability is a societal issue and so works with Government, and across the social and economic strands and interests of society.

Disability Federation of Ireland, Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8

Tel: 01-4547978 **Fax:** 01-4547981

Email: info@disability-federation.ie **Web:** www.disability-federation.ie



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