

**Department of Enterprise Trade  
and Employment**

**Sectoral Plan**

**Under the**

**Disability Act 2005**

**July, 2006**

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## **Sectoral Plan under Disability Act, 2005**

### **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

#### **Foreword by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

I am very pleased to publish my Department's Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005. The formulation of this Plan has benefited from extensive consultations and discussions with a range of key stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions, including the significant and detailed submissions which they submitted to my Department.

This Government is fully committed to addressing the needs of those with disabilities and to furthering the policy of mainstreaming services to help them to play a full and active part in Irish society. The commitment of this Government is reflected in the legislation which has given rise to this plan, as well in the significant budgetary increases of recent years.

The public and voluntary agencies that administer programmes for people with disabilities have a critical role to play also. They are key to ensuring that the services they provide are professionally delivered and that they reach and support those for whom they are intended. It is important that their work is characterised by empathy, efficiency and dedication.

I am fully committed to removing obstacles that make it difficult for people with disabilities to participate in the labour market. To that end I am determined that my own Department and its agencies will continue to make a significant contribution to helping those with disabilities to get the training and other supports they need to achieve their potential.

This Sectoral Plan for my Department, and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy contained within it, will drive this process forward over the period ahead. I look forward to its implementation.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This Sectoral Plan for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment represents the detailed version of an Outline Sectoral Plan which was published by the Department in 2004 as part of the Government's National Disability Strategy. It contains proposals for providing fully accessible services by the DETE and the agencies under its remit over the next four years. In particular, it includes proposals for a Comprehensive Employment Strategy which is aimed at promoting systematic engagement with people with disabilities by the Department and its agencies.

## Key Highlights

The Plan contains the following key initiatives which are aimed at promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labour market, further developing the mainstreaming agenda within the Department and its agencies, helping people with disabilities to increase their economic and social independence, and promoting greater social inclusion:

1. Developing a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities by:
  - Enhancing the effectiveness of employment programmes and vocational training, including implementation of the new FAS Vocational Training Strategy
  - Further developing supports to the open market employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors
  - Increasing the participation rates of people with disabilities on CE over the period of the Plan and raising the CE participation limits for people

with disabilities, in order to provide additional training to assist progression to employment:

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

2. Further embedding the mainstreaming concept across the range of services provided by the Department and its agencies
3. Compliance with Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005 regarding the provision of accessible services to people with disabilities
4. Enhancing collaboration with key stakeholders, including the establishment of a Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy
5. Monitoring and Review - progress on the implementation of the labour market measures contained in this Sectoral Plan will be monitored by the Department in consultation with the Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy -The Plan will cover the period 2006-2010, and will be reviewed in 2009.
6. Collaborating with other key Government Departments and agencies to promote:
  - a. The removal of disincentives and benefits traps that may create barriers to employment
  - b. Enhanced structural capacity, flexibility and effectiveness of the education, training and employment systems for the purposes of facilitating gainful employment
  - c. Implementation of policies to increase awareness and support local recruitment and retention at work of people with disabilities

d. Exploration of the extension of the NEAP FÁS referral process to people with disabilities in the context of their special needs



# **Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005**

## **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment**

### **1. Introduction**

Under the Disability Act 2005, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment is one of six Government Ministers required to publish a Sectoral Plan that addresses disability matters specified in the Act.

The Outline Sectoral Plan for service delivery was published on 21 September 2004. This more detailed Plan contains the proposals for the provision of fully accessible services by DETE and the agencies under its remit over the next four years. In particular, it includes proposals for a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities which is aimed at promoting systematic engagement with them by DETE and its agencies, including FÁS. This will be done in cooperation with the range of other involved Government Departments and agencies to ensure the maximum possible participation of people with disabilities in the labour market and in society in general.

### **2. Consultation Process**

In the preparation of this Sectoral Plan DETE participated in a comprehensive regional consultative process. It was organised by the National Disability Authority in 2005. Conferences were attended by members of the general public, people with disabilities, carers, advocates, family friends and service providers.

In addition, submissions and proposals were sought from interested individuals or groupings. The Sectoral Plan process was advertised on the Department's website. All submissions received have been carefully considered.

As a consequence of these consultative arrangements, submissions have been received from the National Disability Authority, the Disability Legislation

Consultative Group, the Not For Profit Business Association, PwDI, the Irish Association of Supported Employment and the Social Partners. The Department has also engaged with the FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability. It includes representatives from organisations of and for disabled people, Government Departments, the Social Partners and Pobail.

### 3. Employment Context

Ireland has had unprecedented growth in employment over the last decade. However, people with disabilities have benefited from this growth to a limited extent.

The 2002 Census highlighted the fact that employment participation by those with a disability who do not express a difficulty about working remains significantly lower than for their non-disabled peers. Data from that Census showed there were about 130,000 people with disabilities of working age not in employment. These numbers are higher when people with long-standing illnesses are added to those with disabilities, as in the Quarterly National Household Survey figures. Up to 190,000 people of working age among this wider group were recorded in 2004 as out of work. Overall, about 60-65% of this group are aged under 55.

#### **People with disabilities aged 15-64 by employment status**

	Census 2002	QNHS 2002	QNHS 2004
Definition	Disabled (PES)	Long-term sick or disabled	Long-term sick or disabled
	'000s	'000s	'000s
Total aged 15-64	171	274	298
Of which :			
• At work	43	110	111
• Unemployed	12	8	9
• Economically Inactive	116	157	178
• Unemployed + Economically inactive	128	165	187

Not everyone with a disability and out of work will be in a position to take up a job. In the absence of a formal process of engagement with people with

disabilities, it is difficult to gauge how many of those currently not working are potentially available to work, given appropriate supports or accommodation of their disability.

People who have no restriction on their ability to work, together with those who have some degree of restriction, should be considered as being in a position to work, if appropriate accommodations and supports are available.

However, like others in the workforce, factors such as age, family circumstances and education will also impact on their participation rates.

A realistic medium term objective, therefore, is to raise the employment rate of that cohort who do not have a difficulty in holding a job towards the employment rate of their peers who do not have disabilities.

The immediate objective over the period of this plan is to aim to have at least half, or 7,000, of that cohort in employment. Progress in that regard will be reviewed after two years, or by end-2008 at the latest.

The overall aim of a comprehensive employment strategy must be to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from the growth in job opportunities in the economy. As a central tenet of the Government's National Disability Strategy is the mainstreaming of disability issues into the core policies and delivery systems of Government Departments, employment of disabled people has to be an inherent part of national employment policy.

Accordingly, the policy environment will continue to address the remaining barriers to employment and to accommodate people with disabilities in the workplace.

Examples of such barriers include loss of income supports and associated benefits. These create disincentives to people with disabilities seeking work; including early school leaving and those with poor levels of educational attainment.

Workplaces also have to be made accessible. Transport policies must facilitate people with disabilities in getting to their workplaces. Participation levels in education by young disabled persons also need to be improved, as education is a key building block for labour market participation.

Employers must better understand the important contribution people with disabilities can make to their business, and how valuable it can be to retain experienced and qualified employees who acquire a disability in the course of their working life. The challenge here is to make employers more fully aware of the strategies and supports available to employ and retain workers with disabilities. A lot remains to be done in this respect.

The NDA has highlighted that over 80% of people with a disability have acquired their disability in adult life. Accordingly, it is essential that a comprehensive employment strategy should not only relate to work participation for those currently outside the workforce. It must also address job retention following the onset of disability while working.

A comprehensive strategy must also address the spectrum of employment options. These include open employment, supported employment as well as employment in sheltered enterprises and cater for the diversity of talents and circumstances of those people for whom they provide support.

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

### **4.1 DETE Policy Context**

The Mission of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment for the period 2005–2007 as described in its Strategy Statement is:

- To work for Government and the people to grow quality employment and national competitiveness.

Under Pillar Two of the Department's Strategy - Quality Work and Learning - our goals are to pursue labour market policies which:

- Promote the development of human capital and lifelong learning

- Help to address the skills needs of the economy
- Facilitate increased participation in and access to employment, and
- Contribute to social inclusion.

Creating a more inclusive labour market is vital for Ireland's continuing economic and social development. It will help to underpin future economic growth and provide opportunities for unemployed and marginalised groups. These include people with disabilities who, despite the current low level of unemployment, have low labour market participation rates.

The key focus for this Sectoral Plan, therefore, is to facilitate and improve access to vocational training, employment programmes and open labour market employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Core to this objective is the belief that employment offers the best means for people with disabilities to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the country.

Such activation is a key element of the overall employment strategy which the Department will pursue in close collaboration with other Government Departments and agencies. The aim is to address the diversity of circumstances, needs and abilities of people with disabilities, and to work towards achieving the highest possible levels of employment for them.

#### **4.2 Mainstreaming**

The Government's decision to mainstream policy and service provision is of particular significance. It is key to ensuring equality of opportunity for people with disabilities within the system and effectively catering for their rights and entitlements.

Under mainstreaming, services will be provided to people with disabilities to the maximum possible extent across the range of DETE activities. This is consistent with the goals and objectives set out in the Department's Strategy Statement and Divisional Business Plans.

Our employment policy emphasis under this Strategy will be to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in mainstream employment and training programmes. However, where appropriate, training and employment supports will continue to be targeted specifically at people with disabilities.

The following pillars will underpin the comprehensive employment strategy:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of vocational training and employment programmes
- Further developing supports to the employment of people with disabilities

Furthermore, in the context of advancing the mainstreaming agenda, and as highlighted in the Disability Federation of Ireland report *Mainstreaming for Me*, the following elements will also underpin the approach:

- The removal of any remaining disincentives and benefits traps arising from the operation of the welfare system, to facilitate transition to sustainable and worthwhile employment
- Enhancement of the capacity, flexibility and effectiveness of the education, training and employment systems to ensure that people with disabilities are equipped to progress to gainful employment in the labour market
- The implementation of policies to increase awareness and so to support local recruitment and retention in work of people with disabilities
- Consideration of the expansion of the NEAP/FÁS referral process to people with disabilities.

Inter – Departmental approaches to apply in implementing this strategy are reflected in the protocols at Appendices 1 and 2.

## **5. Enhancing the Effectiveness of Vocational Training and Employment Programmes for People with Disabilities**

A key pillar of this strategy is enhancing the effectiveness of vocational training and employment programmes for people with disabilities.

### **Vocational Training**

#### **5.1 FÁS Strategy**

Vocational training is one of the primary routes to help people to realise their full occupational potential. It is, therefore, important that people with disabilities have access to the widest possible vocational training provision.

A commitment in the Mid Term Review of Sustaining Progress - Pay and the Workplace (June 2004) provided that FÁS would publish a strategy on vocational training for people with disabilities.

Additionally, the Disability Act 2005, the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 required FÁS to review how it delivers its services to disabled people - and to remove barriers that would prevent them from accessing its services.

In the above context a Strategy for Vocational Training has been developed by FÁS under the following headings:

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

The Strategy (detailed in [Appendix 3](#)) acknowledges that all have a right to fully participate in FÁS programmes and courses. It notes that equality of both access and outcome is possible by removing barriers to social inclusion. In addition to allowing for positive action measures, it also notes that mainstreaming policy must recognise the diversity of disabled people, and the need for an individualised approach to meet their vocational training needs.

The Strategy requires that the three guiding principles of *equality, maximising participation, and enabling independence and choice*, adopted by the Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities, will inform all FÁS' policies in pursuing a mainstream agenda for disabled people. The FÁS Strategy is considered below in the context of these three principles.

## **5.2 Equality**

Equality of choice requires equal access to training courses for disabled people on the same basis as their non-disabled peers. This includes the need for programme adaptation, the provision of supports or the provision of new variants or formats of programmes. Mainstreaming also makes FÁS responsible for training provision that is delivered in an integrated setting to disabled people alongside their non-disabled peers.

As with other FÁS programmes, training for disabled people should prepare participants for open labour market employment. The FÁS Training Strategy notes that much training for disabled people is not mainstreamed. Under its Strategy, FÁS will closely monitor referral patterns, participation rates and successful completion of training courses by disabled people on a six-monthly basis. This is with a view to assessing the need to develop better strategies so as to increase referrals to mainline options and to ensure that training better meets the needs of disabled learners. Such monitoring by FÁS will commence in 2007 and access to its outcomes will be publicly available.

All staff involved in training disabled people will receive training in best practice. This will ensure that they are equipped to professionally and sensitively deliver such training. Peer mentoring or support will also be available to ensure that Employment, Training and Community Services staff are sensitised to the range of issues that can arise for those with disabilities.

## **5.3 Maximising Participation**

The FÁS Vocational Training Strategy acknowledges that a range of initiatives are required to increase the numbers of disabled people utilising FÁS' training services. FÁS will work with other stakeholders through the Community Development Programmes and the Family Resource Centres, the public



media, business and Government Departments to improve take-up on training programmes by people with disabilities.

The FÁS Strategy will, through regional benchmarking, set targets for disabled persons participation in all of its training programmes. FÁS recognises the need to promote participation of the maximum number of people with disabilities in training and employment programmes generally.

Bridging programmes between the various levels of training provision will enhance training progression for disabled people, as well as improving opportunities to access the full range of training options available under the FÁS umbrella. These options could include specific skills training, community training centres, traineeships, apprenticeships and training provided by specialist training providers.

The potential for adapting the FÁS Connections training programme, originally developed for the long-term unemployed, will also be examined with a view to facilitating increased choice and participation.

#### **5.4 Choice and Flexible Provision**

Access to mainstream services helps promote the independence of disabled persons by giving them greater choice and control over how their needs are met. Employment, Training and Community Services staff in FÁS will continue to play an important role in helping disabled job seekers identify their needs.

Additionally, FÁS eCollege options offer a wide range of courses and flexibility. They can be accessed anywhere there is a computer with an internet link and one tutor can assist a larger number of learners. Blended eCollege training courses have the added advantage of offering both in-classroom training and self-paced training in the learner's own time and environment and with the support of a tutor. This option can be particularly suited to disabled people who do not avail of FÁS mainline or Specialist Training Provider courses.

Under the FÁS Strategy for Vocational Training an annual budget will be allocated to pilot innovative and flexible means of mainline training and to pilot the designing and delivering of new approaches for such training.

### **5.5 Specialist Training Provision**

FÁS will continue to contract with Specialist Training Providers (STPs) to deliver vocational training to people with disabilities in an adapted and supported way. Such provision is mainly targeted at those who require more intensive supports than are available through FÁS.

To develop a seamless model of training delivery, pilot bridging programmes will be developed between STPs and FÁS training programmes. This will enhance progression between training programmes for disabled people and provide opportunities for them to access the full range of training options available.

To encourage progression and transfer between STPs training programmes and those of FÁS, it is intended that both will coordinate their efforts to ensure optimum choice, incremental progression and the provision of appropriate supports.

An independent review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the public funds provided to such specialist training organisations is currently underway. It will be available shortly. The findings will inform policy and future approaches or adaptations that may be necessary.

### **5.6 Local, regional focus**

FÁS will increase the focus of both training and employment programmes on progression to local labour market employment.

Regional Networks will be established in all FÁS regions to provide a mechanism to ensure fuller utilisation of existing FÁS courses and supports within the regions by disabled people. These Regional Networks will allow representative organisations to discuss issues of interest or concern relating to vocational training and employment services provided. Cross-cutting

issues at local level that extend more widely will be managed through the County Development Boards and Social Inclusion Committees.

### **5.7 FÁS Employment Programmes: Community Employment**

The main purpose of the Community Employment (CE) programme operated by FÁS is to provide work experience and training for disadvantaged persons.

CE assists people to re-enter the active workforce. It does so by breaking their experience of unemployment through a renewed work routine and by assisting them to enhance both their technical and personal skills.

This includes those with a disability. CE can provide them with an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a fixed term basis.

Under CE, a system for planning, organising and recording learning from work experience and formal training is currently being piloted. Its national roll-out will commence from this Autumn. It will enhance the quality of CE work experience and training to the benefit of participants, including people with disabilities.

At end 2005, 4,635 participants or nearly 22% of total participants on CE had joined from having a benefit linked to disability. Participation rates for such people with disabilities will be progressively increased over the period of this plan.

In addition, in order to provide additional training to assist progression to employment:

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

In addition, further consideration will be given to how the employment programme model might be adapted to enhance progression to training and open employment for those with disabilities.

The ring-fencing and prioritisation of CE places for health related services, including those for persons with disabilities, was introduced in order to maintain the delivery of a wide range of essential services. Health-related service provision levels are being maintained at a constant level.

## ***6. Further developing the supports to the open labour market employment of people with disabilities***

### **6.1 Gateway – Greater complementarity**

The FÁS Gateway or National Employment service (comprising the FÁS Employment Service and the Local Employment Service) will place special focus on the needs of people with disabilities in supporting their participation in the labour market.

Gateway will be promoted as an occupational guidance service for people with disabilities seeking information on local job vacancies, career guidance, training options including FÁS' training courses and Specialist Training services, apprenticeships, and traineeships. It will also provide an information and advisory service for all employers, both public and private sector, who wish to recruit, or retain, people with disabilities.

FÁS Employment Services have achieved a quality standard for service delivery. Its Employment/Social Inclusion Services hold the Q–mark. This standard will be maintained with a view to ensuring consistent quality service. The potential for setting similar standards for the Local Employment Service is also being pursued.

The FÁS Gateway service explores the full range of vocational training options for disabled people. It determines whether applicants meet the requirements of the course profile for mainline training (as against Specialist Training) and, if so, the necessary supports required. This allows Specialist Training Providers to concentrate their resources on those that will most benefit from their services.

The potential of the Local Employment Service (LES) as a resource for contacting and mediating with employers on behalf of job seekers with disabilities is being examined.

The LES Network assists those most distant from the labour market to obtain employment through the provision of intensive support and locally responsive services. These services include intensive guidance, education/training, employment supports and mediation. FÁS will continue to contract with PLANET (the Network of Area Partnership Companies) for services that include clear targeting of client groups, including people with disabilities, having regard to local and regional needs. Attainment of these targets will be monitored by FÁS on a regular basis.

FÁS Gateway will also utilise the High Supports Process to encourage and support people with disabilities participating in the labour market. This process involves a multi-agency/case conferencing approach to addressing clients' needs.

### **6.2 Extending activation process to People with Disabilities**

The Employment Action Referral Process has been very effective in encouraging and supporting the unemployed to participate in the labour market.

An independent evaluation of the NEAP process has recommended extending it to other disadvantaged groups where there is scope to do so. The potential for extending it to people with disabilities in line with their special needs, and the Government's commitment to mainstreaming, will be actively considered.

This will include exploring issues of welfare entitlements and benefits and examining and addressing the disincentives for people in receipt of income maintenance, secondary payments and other secondary benefits. This consideration will be informed by learning from the recent 'Midlands Pilot', as well as learning from the CSO's sampling of people with disabilities who expressed an interest in obtaining employment, and the information gathered of the types of employment and support they require.

The 'Midlands Pilot' was initiated in January 2005 with the aim of providing a multi-agency integrated employment support service to disabled people. Some 422 such people were identified as meeting the target criteria within the

region. Participation in the pilot was voluntary. It focused on those accessing and qualifying for Disability Allowance, between 16 to 25 years of age, who were recorded as having the capability to advance vocationally.

The pilot provided an integrated point of contact between FÁS, DSFA and HSE to enable a multi-agency examination of training and employment potential and/or services needs, an examination of the nature and extent of existing supports and an analysis of outcomes. However, the pilot has received a low level of engagement, with just 30% of those invited to attend the initial interview doing so. Among the minority who attended for interview, it was evident that many had at some stage interacted with various service providers including the National Rehabilitation Board, the HSE, FÁS and the National Learning Network.

### **6.3 Promoting Awareness and Providing Information**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in conjunction with FÁS, will continue to promote awareness regarding the employment of disabled people through a number of programmes, projects and schemes.

In particular it will promote the development of mechanisms and supports - financial or otherwise that will increase employers and co-workers ability to work with disabled employees within the private sector. It will do this in conjunction with the Equality Authority, NDA, the Social Partners and other relevant agencies. This will include reviewing the effectiveness of the Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme. It will also include:

- Developing and enhancing mechanisms which explore and challenge attitudes about disability, for example, Three 60 and the Ability in the Workplace campaign.
- Building on the suite of materials developed through *Workway* – an initiative funded by the Government to promote awareness among employers and workers alike of the positive business and societal contributions that employing people with disabilities can have. The practical outcomes of *Workway* provide a good basis for implementing

and further developing employment supports and guidance strategies that this initiative gave rise to. These include:

- the *Joint Employment Guidelines*, which contain practical information on the employment of people with disabilities that are either joining the workforce, or coming back into employment having acquired a disability. They are a useful resource for managers to inform themselves about best practice in dealing with disability in the workplace and will be promoted widely by FÁS in association with employers and trade union interests.
- *A Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities*, a tool to be used by both people with disabilities who are currently looking for employment, and by the service providers who are supporting people with disabilities looking for a job. The *Guide* will be adopted as the standard job search module by FÁS and rolled out to FÁS mainline training centres, FÁS Employment Services Officers, the LES and Job Clubs. The guide will be a mandatory module within STPs and will be disseminated to guidance counsellors in schools.
- the pre-employment template to determine job readiness will be used by FÁS to develop a checklist or interview aid. It will be piloted within the National Employment Service to determine eligibility for Supported Employment.
- contributing to the cost and maintenance of the Workway website as a useful source of information for employers, co-workers and people with disabilities.

FÁS will continue to actively promote awareness regarding its supports for the employment of disabled people on a systematic basis through such channels as its web site, selected mail shots, presentations to relevant groups, publications, magazine articles, newsletters, brochures and employer packs.



#### **6.4 Wage Subsidy Scheme**

The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) was launched by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in July, 2005 and is being implemented by FÁS.

The WSS aims to increase the numbers of persons with a disability in employment by creating a level playing field for them in seeking out or remaining in employment. The WSS provides financial incentives to employers outside the public sector to employ people with a disability who work more than 20 hours per week. The scheme operates by offering subsidies to employers under three separate strands and they can benefit under one, or all, simultaneously.

**Strand I:** Wage subsidy based on the employee's agreed productivity level (maximum yearly subsidy of €9,500)

**Strand II:** Grant assistance to cover additional supervisory, management and other work-based costs where a company employs more than two disabled people (sliding scale of 10% - 50% of wage subsidy)

**Strand III:** Grant assistance to employ an Employment Assistance Officer where an employer employs thirty or more disabled workers (grant of €30,000 p.a.).

Eligible employees can also benefit from the Department of Social and Family Affairs Back to Work Allowance Scheme. It permits the retention of a percentage of their social welfare payment, and the medical card, for three years.

Despite the generous provisions above outlined, the take-up on this scheme to date has been most disappointing. The WSS will now be promoted more extensively by FÁS to encourage employers and potential employees to avail of the available incentives and to maximise take-up.

The WSS will be closely monitored in order to assess performance and effectiveness, including the need for any necessary adaptations to maximise participation levels. The Consultative Forum to be established under this Plan will be consulted on this. In particular the implications for take-up under the WSS as a result of the introduction of new tapered withdrawal of the Disability Allowance and Blind Pension in rehabilitative employment or self-employment will be examined.

### **6.5 Supported Employment**

The FÁS Supported Employment Programme is an open labour market initiative that provides people with disabilities with appropriate supports to help them to access the open labour market.

The Programme funds the placement and support of people with different types of impairment and varying degrees of disability. It is implemented by sponsor organisations on behalf of FÁS. They employ Job Coaches who provide a range of supports tailored to the individual needs of the jobseeker with a disability and include:

- Helping the job seeker to identify his/her skills and interests;
- Assisting the job seeker to find a suitable job;
- Analysing the tasks involved in the job and using this to plan the supports to be provided;
- Providing on-the-job training and support when the person commences employment;
- Providing on-going support to employee and employer for an agreed time period.

Twenty five incorporated consortia for Supported Employment organisations have been established. They currently annually provide supported employment services to over 2,000 people with disabilities each year. A national FÁS/ Directors forum has been set up to support the ongoing development of the programme and a related PR/Marketing campaign is currently being developed.

Mental Health Awareness training for Job Coaches is also underway.

The budget for the programme for 2006 was increased by 24% to €8.2million. The supported employment programme will be developed and enhanced.

Other FÁS supports to open labour market employment include:

- Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant - grant assistance for employers who have to adapt their workplace or equipment for an employee with a disability
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant – available to people with a hearing or speech impairment attending job interviews
- Personal Reader Grant - available to people who are blind or visually impaired and who may need assistance with job related reading

#### **6.6 Promoting Job Retention**

According to NDA research, over 80% of working age disability is acquired. Workplace related accidents leading to a disability or illness can, therefore, represent a challenge to job retention.

The revised Workplace Safety Code – developed through the Workplace Safety Initiative and launched by the Minister for Labour Affairs in June 2006 – reinforces approaches of responsibility and voluntary commitment to ensure that individual places of work are safe and secure for all. The emphasis here is on the prevention of accidents and on continually reinforcing the message that respect for safety procedures and compliance with best safety practices is indispensable. Where accidents unfortunately occur, the Workplace Safety Code addresses the provision of direct medical care for injured workers and, significantly, also addresses the need for follow-up and supports to assist the injured or disabled worker back to his/her job at the earliest feasible opportunity.

In this context the Health and Safety Authority will be asked to prepare guidelines by end 2007 on promoting safe workplaces and safe work practices in inclusive workplaces that employ people with disabilities. In addition the *Workplace and Wellbeing Strategy*, which is being developed by the Authority, will include guidelines for employers to facilitate those who have had workplace accidents, including acquired disability and illness, to return to work.

Financial assistance will continue to be available to employers under the FÁS *Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS)*. This grant assists employers to keep at work employees who become disabled through illness or injury. Through it employees can be re-trained so that they can undertake alternative duties, or continue to work at their existing duties using modified techniques.

The operation of the ERGS will be reviewed by FÁS, in conjunction with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and other stakeholders, with a view to identifying the reasons for its relatively low take up. The review will assess the potential for enhancing the attractiveness of the scheme to employers, and for developing a strategy to increase its take-up of this grant.

#### **6.7. Promoting recruitment in the Public Sector - DETE**

Part 5 of the Disability Act, 2005 provides a statutory basis for positive action measures for the employment of people with disabilities in the public service. It places an obligation on each public body to take such measures. It provides that each Minister may specify targets for the employment of people with disabilities in the public bodies under his/her aegis, while the Minister for Finance may specify targets for the civil service. In the meantime the Government's existing target of 3% will apply.

Part 5 also requires the Department to establish a Monitoring Committee to monitor compliance by the public bodies under its aegis with the 3% target and to draw up procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements under the Act. The Department of Finance continues to be responsible for

monitoring compliance in the civil service, while the NDA has an overall monitoring role and may direct bodies to take measures to ensure compliance.

The relevant bodies under the aegis of the DETE are fully aware of the requirements under Part 5 the Disability Act concerning the statutory 3% target and the new reporting obligations and a number of them have formulated codes of practice on the employment of people with disabilities.

DETE will establish a monitoring committee to oversee compliance with Part 5. The Committee shall be chaired at senior management level and comprise representatives in accordance with Section 48(4) of the Act. The Committee will have the following terms of reference:

- To review progress by DETE and the public bodies in relation to the 3% target;
- To review the employment practices and supporting measures in place in DETE and its bodies, having regard to the existing Codes of Practice in place in the bodies and to the new Code of Practice for the civil service, when published;
- To promote the adoption of Codes of Practice across the relevant public bodies under the Department's remit in consultation with the NDA, having regard to the existing codes in place;
- Devise an action plan which incorporates targets and measures to support incremental progress in achieving and exceeding the 3% target;
- To prepare and implement appropriate reporting mechanisms to fulfill the requirements of Part 5.

## **6.8 Developments in the Civil Service**

The Government has accepted the main recommendations contained in a report by external consultants entitled 'Employment and Career Progression of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service' as part of the Modernisation programme for the Civil Service. A number of actions are being taken by the Department of Finance to implement the Government decision:

- Work is progressing on the development of a new Code of Practice for the employment and career progression of people with disabilities in the Civil Service - the Code will place special emphasis on implementation by all Government Departments and Offices of appropriate measures. The code will also highlight the need to monitor progress and to change measures in place where necessary
- Guidelines are being developed by the Department of Finance to ensure a more effective approach to monitoring staff with a disability
- A full time disability officer was appointed in October 2005 in the Equality Unit of the Department of Finance, to act as an advisor to the Department in the development of policy in this area and to develop a body of expertise for the assistance of Departments/Offices and individuals

### **New recruitment arrangements**

A programme of recruitment at EO and AO level for people with a disability, with the aim of giving an initial boost to the number of people with a disability working at these levels and above within the service, is being developed by the Department of Finance in consultation with the Public Appointments Service. It is proposed to hold the first such competition at EO level, in autumn 2006.

The new recruitment approach will continue to support the Government's policy to create job opportunities for people with a disability and will aim to attract as many suitable applicants as possible.

Recruitment into the Civil Service, regardless of disability status, will continue to be based on the normal selection criteria and educational standards, and new recruits will be expected to perform to the standard required for the job. In relation specifically to people with a disability, the focus will be on the provision of the necessary supports that will enable such staff to perform their assigned job.

## **6.9 Departmental Initiatives**

In the context of the practice of promoting recruitment in the Public Sector as outlined above, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will consider how best to promote the exchange of learning and good practice in relation to such issues as recruitment, innovative practices, accommodation, organisational learning and job retention measures.

### **Number of Staff with Disabilities**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment exceeds the 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities and continues to monitor its compliance in this regard. In addition, the Department participates in initiatives aimed at providing temporary placements in the Department to people with disabilities. In this regard, the Department is participating in the *Willing Able Mentoring (WAM)* Project during summer 2006.

### **Career Progression of Staff with Disabilities**

As reflected in the *Department's Statement of Strategy 2005- 2007*, the Department is committed to facilitating the career progression of staff with disabilities and to the raising of disability awareness issues at all levels throughout the organisation. In line with *Pillar Four of this Statement entitled "Business Delivery, Modernisation and Customer Focus"* the Department is committed to developing policies to improve participation in promotion competitions by people with disabilities.

In addition, the Department's Human Resources Strategy 2005 – 2007 contains a specific action point to "*develop policies to facilitate the career progression of people with disabilities.*"

To ensure the continued development of the careers of staff with disabilities, the Department has introduced a number of initiatives:

- It has implemented the *Performance Management Development System (PMDS)* which creates opportunities for all staff to develop their competencies and enables managers to identify if any specific development opportunities are required for persons with a disability.
- the Department's grade development programmes contain a module to raise awareness of what actions can be taken to assist staff with disabilities to enhance their career development.
- The Department employs a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) whose role is:
  - to act as the point of contact for staff with disabilities, their managers and the H.R. Section;
  - to support/assist staff with disabilities and their line managers through the provision of information;
  - to assist in the implementation of best H.R. practice having regard to disabilities and current legislation;
  - to facilitate increased awareness of disability throughout the Department;
  - to participate in the DLO Network and so share knowledge and best practice in relation to the employment of people with disabilities;
  - to encourage self-disclosure by staff with disabilities.

### **Raising of Disability Awareness**

To meet the commitment in the Department's Human Resource Strategy 2005–2007 to raise awareness of equality issues, the Department has



established a dedicated equality intranet homepage and is making Disability Awareness Guidelines and other relevant literature available to all staff as a means of providing practical advice on how to deal with people with disabilities.

The Department also engaged the Aisling Foundation to deliver a series of disability awareness presentations to all staff during March – May 2006.

### **Disability Awareness Training**

The Department will also ensure that key staff are provided with appropriate training in order to assist people with disabilities in accessing services.

## **7. Further Actions under Mainstreaming**

The following additional actions under mainstreaming will be taken in the context of maximising the delivery of services by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to promote the interests of people with disabilities:

### **Consumer Affairs**

The National Consumer Agency will become a forceful, statutory advocate for consumer rights and will be empowered and resourced to promote the consumers' case with regulated industries and individual regulators. The Agency will work to address the needs of vulnerable consumers, including those with disabilities and, where appropriate, will work in partnership with and support initiatives taken by organisations in this area.

### **CEBs**

County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) have a range of supports, both financial and capability building, that are available to all, including disabled persons, subject to meeting the relevant conditions and criteria to qualify for support. In addition, there are particular actions that CEBs take to target groups of people with a known low level of entrepreneurial activity in order to develop and enhance their entrepreneurial skills. These include a limited derogation from the standard criteria for financial support in the case of the unemployed and women returning to the workforce as well as specific targeted capability building supports such as the Women in Business support networks. CEBs

will be encouraged to explore the potential for the extension of such initiatives to the promotion of entrepreneurship amongst those with disabilities.

### **Research and Development**

The Department will discuss with the NDA the potential for maximising R&D support under calls for proposals by the Department's agencies (e.g. Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, IDA) on an open, competitive basis, to promote excellence in science and technology. Such proposals as may be submitted in partnership with the proposed Centre for Universal Design would relate to research and development of products, or design solutions which advance universal design of the built and external environments or associated products, or of computer hardware or software which is accessible to people with disabilities.

### **Divisional Business Plans**

Disability will be incorporated in future Business Planning guidelines of the DETE in the context of further developing and expanding the business planning process. Disability will also be taken into account in the Department's review of the Business Planning process to be undertaken later in 2006.

The Department will review with relevant stakeholders in its Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy (see para.11.2) the potential to promote the interests of people with disabilities across the range of its policies and services and those of its agencies.

### **One Step Up**

Skills development among people with disabilities will be important for progressing in employment and there is a need for additional training support for workers with disabilities, many with below average levels of education, if they are to progress in their careers.

Skills development among people working with disabled workers will be addressed through the 'One Step Up' initiative. It promotes life long learning through easy access to a range of learning initiatives such as tutor led training and e-learning.

Research, in consultation with employers and trade unions, will be undertaken by FÁS to determine supports required to assist people with disabilities to continue to up-skill within the workforce. An action plan involving FÁS, the Social Partners and other relevant agencies will be developed to address the findings and recommendations that emerge from this research.

## **8. Provision of Resources and Extent of Provision (Section 5)**

Total planned expenditure by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and its agencies in 2006 to meet the accessibility costs associated with Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005, and the cost of implementing the range of services identified in this Plan to promote the greater social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities, amounts to almost €75million. This represents an increase of over €8million over 2005.

The greater portion of total planned expenditure relates to FÁS' vocational training and employment services. It amounts to €67million in 2006, compared to €59million in 2005 and up from €17million in 2000.

The DETE Corporate Services Division has a budget of €0.5million for 2006 to meet the needs of staff and customers with disabilities. This amount includes the costs of specialist equipment, disability awareness training, accessible information, and physical adaptation works on the Department's buildings. However, the Department will also meet the needs of people with disabilities, and of staff, outside this allocation as needs arise.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is committed to ensuring that the necessary funding is maintained and enhanced to implement the actions contained in this Plan. It will prioritise the provision of these resources in the context of the Estimates process for the Public Service.

This sectoral strategy will as appropriate be reflected in and supported by the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

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

### **9.1 Introduction**

Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 places specific obligations on public bodies regarding the provision of accessible services to people with disabilities. To guide them in their compliance with specific sections (namely sections 26 to 28) the NDA has prepared a Code of Practice on the Accessibility of Services, which is prescribed in S.I. 163 of 2006 as an approved Code by the Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform. As an approved code of practice, compliance with this Code shall be deemed to be compliance with the relevant provisions of the Act.

The provisions of the Act regarding accessibility include:

- Section 25: public bodies to ensure that the public areas of public buildings are made accessible in compliance with appropriate standards and Regulations by 2015.
- Section 26: public bodies to ensure that their services are accessible for people with disabilities where practicable and appropriate.
- Section 27: public bodies to ensure that the goods or services that they purchase are accessible.
- Section 28: public bodies to make their information available in accessible formats. For example, communications from a public body to a person with a hearing or visual impairment must, as far as practicable, be provided in an accessible format following a request. Information provided electronically must, as far as practicable, be compatible with adaptive technology. Published information, relevant to persons with intellectual disabilities, must be made available in easy to read formats.

### **9.2 Access to Public Buildings (Section 25)**

The Department's Customer Service Action Plan 2005 – 2007 provides that it will continue to refurbish and improve facilities in all of its premises as needs

are identified and with a continued emphasis on ensuring that its premises are increasingly accessible for people with disabilities.

Reports of disability audits carried out in all of the Department's buildings in September, 2005 contained a significant number of recommendations. The Department is implementing these recommendations to ensure that all of its buildings are accessible by 2007. It is planned to prioritize these recommendations, with disabled access as one of the main priorities. The Department will promote physical access, as far as practicable, to all public spaces and buildings occupied by it or by the agencies under its remit by 2007.

### **9.3 Accessibility to services provided by Department (Section 26)**

Section 26 gives effect to the policy of mainstreaming public service provision for people with disabilities. The Department is now undertaking a survey to ensure that its mainstream services are accessible to people with disabilities insofar as this is practicable and appropriate.

#### Section 26 (1)(a) - Integrated Access to Services

The Department will ensure, where practicable and appropriate, that the services it provides to the general public are accessible to people with disabilities. The Department is undertaking a survey to ascertain the nature and level of services provided by it to people with disabilities. The findings of the survey will be used to identify any gaps in service delivery to people with disabilities. Where such gaps are identified, appropriate action plans will be prepared to address them. The survey is being carried out in conjunction with the ongoing progression of the recommendations of the access audits in order to achieve integrated access.

#### Section 26 (1)(b) - Providing Assistance

The Department will where practicable provide assistance to enable a person with a disability to access a mainstream service.

The Department will draw on the results of the survey on the level and nature of services currently provided to people with disabilities by the Department to ascertain the types of assistance that may be required in the future.

The Department will develop procedures for the provision of assistance to persons with disabilities and will identify appropriate sources of such assistance. In order to assist such people in accessing services, the Department will also ensure that key staff receive disability awareness training.

#### Section 26 (1)(c) - Expert Advice

The Department will, where appropriate, ensure the availability of appropriate expertise and skills to advise it in relation to making its services accessible. In establishing the types of expertise which may be required, and whether such expertise is available in-house or needs to be sourced externally, the Department will assess the results of the survey of the level and nature of services currently provided as well as services that may be required in the future.

#### Section 26 (2) - Access Officers

The Department will appoint an appropriate number of Access Officers to ensure that such officers are readily available throughout the Department to people with disabilities seeking access to the Department's services. The Department will also ensure that officers are adequately trained and fully appraised of their duties and responsibilities and have the necessary resources and support so that they are equipped to undertake their functions.

The Department will promote the appointment and availability of Access Officers so that the general public and staff are aware of how to contact them.

#### **9.4 Accessibility of services provided to Department - Section 27**

The Department will ensure, unless it would not be practicable or justifiable on cost grounds, or would result in an unreasonable delay, that goods and services provided to it are accessible to people with disabilities.

To this end, the Department will endeavour to comply with the provisions of Council Directive 2004/18 by laying down, where applicable, technical or design specifications that take into account accessibility criteria for people with disabilities.

Insofar as it is relevant to certain aspects of procurement planning, the Department undertakes to reference such accessibility considerations in the development of its corporate procurement plan, and in any associated procurement training curricula that it proposes to deliver.

#### **9.5 Information Provision and Access - Section 28**

The Department provides a range of information and services to the public and the business community. In providing such services, the Department adheres to the Principles of Quality Customer Service, which include a commitment to provide information which is clear, timely, accurate, available at all points of contact and which meets the needs of people with specific requirements. These commitments are articulated in the Department's Customer Action Plan 2005 – 2007.

The Department will ensure, as far as practicable, that all written and oral information available to the public in general is available to people with disabilities in alternative formats as required and on request. The Department will devise procedures for processing requests from people with disabilities for accessible formats that may be provided, having regard to the practicability of providing the form of support requested.

The Department will also strive, in so far as possible, to provide the accessible formats in-house, so as to minimise delay and inconvenience to the requestor. However, where the relevant facilities or expertise necessary to provide the accessible information are unavailable in-house, the Department will devise procedures for the sourcing of accessible formats or services. In establishing these procedures, regard will be had to the range of alternative formats available and formats appropriate to the individuals concerned.

With regard to information provided via the internet, the Department has taken significant action to enhance its accessibility to those with visual, motor and cognitive disabilities. The Department's website now complies with Priority 2 (AA) of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0. The Department will continue to review the status of the website to ensure that it continues to conform to the highest standards of user accessibility.

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

#### **9.6 Timescale for compliance with Part 3**

The Department is committed to the implementation of the necessary measures to ensure compliance with Part 3 of the Act by end 2006 (Sections 26 – 28 & 39) and end 2007(Section 25).

Progress in relation to implementation of these measures will be subject to close monitoring by a committee headed at senior level and comprising representatives of the business units involved in delivering services to people with disabilities. The Committee will also have regard to the standard of service provided by the Department to people with disabilities through regularly seeking feedback and the involvement of people with disabilities in the formulation of procedures and liaison with other Government Departments to ensure the adoption of best practices.

#### **9.7 Compliance with Part 3 by the Bodies under the aegis of the Department**

The public bodies under the aegis of the Department are aware of their obligations under Part 3 of the Act. Measures are being taken or planned by them to implement the various provisions and the Department has established preliminary arrangements to monitor progress in this area. As per Section 12 – Monitoring & Review the Department will put in place formal procedures to monitor compliance by the bodies under its aegis.



In order to assist bodies in their implementation of the Act, and to ensure the consistent application of the provisions of the Act by the Department and its agencies, the Department will make available appropriate guidelines outlining how the needs of people with disabilities are to be accommodated.

A list of the public bodies under the aegis of the Department is given at Appendix 4.

## **10. Complaints & Redress Structures**

### **10.1 Procedures**

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment will ensure that the Department and each of the public bodies under its aegis will have in place by end 2006 adequate procedures and structures to deal with complaints of alleged non-compliance with the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and this sectoral plan. All such procedures and structures will be published by the Department and the bodies concerned and will include the following:

- procedures for the making and investigation of complaints and such other matters relating to complaints as are considered appropriate,
- the name and contact details for the person(s) within the body to whom complaints may be addressed.

A person, or persons so nominated shall be referred to as: "inquiry officers", responsible for the conduct of investigations of complaints made under Section 38 in accordance with the above-mentioned procedures; and "complaints officers" who will be responsible for the conduct of investigations of complaints in relation to any matters which are the subject of this Plan. Such "inquiry officers" and "complaints officers" will be independent in the performance of their functions.

When drawing up procedures in accordance with the above, the Department and its public bodies will have regard to the following Ombudsman's publications (available at <http://www.ombudsman.ie>):

### **10.2 Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints**

A person may make a complaint to the Ombudsman in relation to a decision of a complaints officer. Procedures prepared in accordance with the above shall make provision for informing all complainants of this right.

The decision relating to each complaint will be notified by the inquiry officer or the complaints officer to the appropriate person (within the Department or public body) with responsibility for accessibility matters. That person will be required to consider the matter(s) complained of and, where appropriate, will bring forward proposals to ensure compliance with the complaint officers decision, having regard to the following Ombudsman publication (available at <http://www.ombudsman.ie>):

### **10.3 Ombudsman's Guide to the provision of redress**

Each body that carries out a complaints investigation function under this plan will be required to report to the Minister annually in relation to complaints concerning alleged non-compliance with the provisions of this plan, and the changes brought forward, or proposed, to ensure improved access to the services covered by this plan.

Each body that is required by statute to prepare and/or publish an annual report will be required to provide a yearly progress report on the implementation of this Sectoral Plan in each of their annual reports.

## **11. Implementation - Collaboration with other Stakeholders**

### **11.1 Cross-Departmental Co-ordination**

Effective cross-departmental co-operation is necessary to achieve many of the goals, objectives and strategies of an overall employment strategy. Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005, provides for the preparation of Sectoral Plans by six Departments, including the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and

Employment, the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, and the Minister for Health and Children, and for appropriate co-operation between these Ministers in relation to the development and co-ordination of services for persons with disabilities.

Protocols have been agreed with these Departments which commit them to working closely together and to harmonise their endeavours to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of services for people with disabilities, including:

- measures to encourage and support persons of working age, particularly marginalised groups, to take up work, training and/or educational or development opportunities;
- promoting the removal of disincentives and financial barriers to work experienced by people with disabilities seeking, accepting or improving employment;
- continuing the work of the National Coordinating Committee relating to services provided by the HSE and FÁS;
- planning and developing joint bridging programmes between health funded day services and FÁS training and employment services.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue to actively participate in interdepartmental co-ordinating and monitoring structures for the National Disability Strategy, including the sectoral plans under the Disability Act, 2005. It will also participate in arrangements to be put in place to ensure a continued constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the National Disability Strategy as a whole. This will include bi-annual meetings between senior officials and other stakeholders in line with the commitments contained in the social partnership agreement, 'Towards 2016'.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS also participate in the National Coordinating Committee, which provides a liaison service between FÁS and the Health Service Executive. The Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Social and Family Affairs and Health and Children are represented on the FÁS National Advisory Committee. In addition, social partners, representative bodies of people with disabilities, service providers, organisations and ADM are also represented on this committee. Its function is to assist and advise FÁS on matters relating to the development and provision of effective vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities.

As part of the consultation process required under the Disability Act, 2005 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, together with the Departments of Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs, have agreed protocols on actions to address issues which require inter-Departmental co-operation. These are outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 of this Sectoral Plan.

### **11.2 Consultative Forum on Employment Strategy**

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will establish a Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy. It will include representatives of people with disabilities, service providers, relevant Government Departments, social partners and agencies. The Forum will provide a channel for members to put forward their views on broad strategic issues that directly or indirectly impact on vocational training and employment.

The Consultative Forum will complement the work of the FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability. This Committee assists and advises FÁS on the implementation of vocational training and employment services for people with disabilities. The Forum will liaise and consult with other similar consultative fora established in other relevant Government Departments.

The Forum will address issues such as the interaction between welfare, vocational training and educational programmes that aim to incentivise people with disabilities to take up work or other training options.

## **12. Monitoring and Review**

### **12.1 Departmental Monitoring**

This Plan will cover the period 2006 –2010. It will be reviewed in 2009. Training and employment programmes aimed at enhancing the employment prospects of people with disabilities will be kept under review with a view to enhancing their individual effectiveness and complementarity over the duration of this Sectoral Plan.

Necessary baseline information on people with disabilities will be assembled to allow for more rigorous testing and assessment relating to:

- Engagement strategies
- Participation rates
- Retention rates
- Certification rates
- Standards
- Outcomes
- Value for money

Progress on the implementation of the labour market measures contained in this Sectoral Plan will be monitored by the DETE in consultation with the Consultative Forum on the Employment Strategy referred to above.

The Department is currently developing a number of high-level performance indicators and targets, in the context of both the Management Information Framework (MIF) programme and the Reform of Estimates exercise. These indicators, when completed, will reflect the high level Departmental objectives outlined in the Department's *Statement of Strategy* as they relate to the development of improved opportunities for people with a disability. When

finalising the selection of MIF performance indicators, the Department will consider the feasibility of including targets and indicators with a disability focus.

### **12.2 Monitoring of obligations on Public Bodies**

DETE will put in place procedures for monitoring compliance by the public bodies under its remit with the requirements under the Disability Act 2005. As part of the monitoring procedures, the public bodies will be requested to submit an annual report on the progress achieved. Such a report will, where appropriate, include details of its compliance with Part 5 of the Act regarding employment in the public service.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PROTOCOL FOR INTER - DEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS**

Part 3 of the Disability Act, 2005, provides for the preparation of sectoral plans by six Departments, including the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, and for appropriate co-operation between the Ministers and their Departments in relation to the development and co-ordination of services for persons with disabilities.

The mission of the **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment** is *to work for Government and the people to increase quality employment and national competitiveness.*

The main functions of the Department in the developing policy for people with disabilities are:

- to develop the skills of people with disabilities to enable them to access employment and to achieve vocational progression
- to stimulate awareness among employers of the contribution that people with disabilities can make to their businesses and to materially encourage them to recruit more people with disabilities
- to provide employment supports and services for people with disabilities and for employers

The mission of the **Department of Social and Family Affairs** is *to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families.*

The main functions of the Department which include the provision of services to people with disabilities are:

- To formulate appropriate social protection policies;
- To administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social and family schemes and services; and
- To work with other Departments and agencies in the delivery of Government priorities

This protocol recognises the commitment of both Departments to work closely together to harmonise their endeavours and so to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of services for people with disabilities.

In the context of progressing the commitments within the sectoral plans, the table below outlines the objectives, actions and timeframes which the two Departments will work together to achieve.

Objective	Action	Timeframe
Effectively engage with persons of working age, particularly marginalised groups and provide services directly and in co-operation with other agencies to encourage and support these people in taking up relevant work, training and educational or development opportunities	<p>In the context of the Memorandum of Understanding and Framework for Co-operation between Social Welfare Services and FÁS, develop the level of engagement between the organisations at local, regional and national level in a way that will best facilitate access to work and progression in employment for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Informed by the results of the Midlands Pilot Programme for Disability Allowance recipients aged 16-25, improve the level of multi-agency co-operation in implementing employment on activation measures and follow-up interventions.</p> <p>Develop the potential of the DSFA medical review and assessment process to assess occupational capacity and activation potential and establish a referral process to FÁS as a service provider</p>	<p>2006-09</p> <p>Evaluation of Midlands Pilot Project completed Sep 2006</p> <p>Develop and implement co-operation on activation strategy 2006-09</p> <p>Develop in line with DSFA model of Economic and Social Participation 2007-13</p>



Table contd.

Objectives	Actions	Timeframes
<p>Ensure income supports and associated benefits do not create financial barriers to people with disabilities seeking accepting or improving employment</p>	<p>Examine the effects of employment incentive measures in social welfare schemes on the participation rates in training and employment programmes and further develop policies as required to increase both participation and progression rates</p>	<p>2006-09</p>
	<p>Evaluate effects of change to withdrawal rate of Disability Allowance to participation rates and to the take-up of the Wage Subsidy scheme. Amend policy as required arising from this analysis to increase employment incentive measures</p>	<p>2006-09</p>
<p>Ensure that payments and supports for carers are efficient and effective and are adaptable to their needs in a changing care environment</p>	<p>Develop training initiatives, as priorities permit, which facilitate carers in carrying out their caring role and in re-entering the labour market when these responsibilities have ceased</p>	<p>2006-09</p>
	<p>Develop and monitor the Carer's Benefit and Carer's Leave schemes</p>	<p>2006-09</p>

## APPENDIX 2

### PROTOCOL FOR INTER - DEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN

The Disability Act, 2005, provides for the preparation of sectoral plans by six Departments, including those of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Minister for Health and Children. It also provides for co-operation and consultation between Ministers in the development and the co-ordination of services that they provide for people with disabilities. In that regard this protocol reflects the commitment of both Departments to work closely together to harmonise their endeavours to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of services and supports for people with disabilities.

The mission of the **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment** is *to work for Government and the people to increase quality employment and national competitiveness.*

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will continue:

- to develop the skills of people with disabilities to enable them to access employment and to realise vocational progression
- to promote awareness among employers of the contribution that people with disabilities can make to their businesses and to materially encourage them to recruit such workers
- to provide employment supports and services for people with disabilities and for employers.

The Department of Health and Children will:

- Continue the work of the National Co-ordinating Committee and provide representation on the FAS National Disability Advisory Committee

The HSE will

- establish a clear framework for the delivery and enhancement of a range of targeted day services, including day care, like skills training and personal development and joint bridging programmes for people with disabilities, in response to individual identified needs and within the context of person centred planning provide appropriate health supports for people with disabilities, including those in supported employment
- maximise participation in the High Supports Process

The two Departments are committed to improving the effectiveness of the delivery of services to people with disabilities in the following areas:

- planning and developing a Joint Bridging programme between health-funded rehabilitative training services and vocational training services to ensure progression and vocational advancement for users who have the ability, skills, aptitudes, interest and potential to progress from rehabilitative to vocational training.
- establishing a Working Group to report to Ministers by the end of 2006 regarding the scope and arrangements for the phased transfer of appropriate employment services from the health sector to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

## APPENDIX 3

### FÁS Strategy for Vocational Training provision

#### Strategy under Mainstreaming

1. Develop a revised, and comprehensive, framework to increase staff capacity in working with Disabled People

In conjunction with Staff Development, a continuous action-learning model needs to be developed for use by staff in addressing issues and concerns around working with disabled people. Staff training needs in disability should be identified as part of the Initial Training Plan (ITN) and Performance Development System (PDS) process. Take-up of Equality Matters, the NUI/FÁS certificate in Equality Studies (Training and Development) and the Diploma (Working in more Inclusive Workplaces) needs to be more actively promoted, particularly to new staff in attaining their core competencies.

**Time frame:**

**Two Years**

**Responsibility:**

**Staff Development**

2. Increase referrals of Disabled People to mainline options

Disabled People referred to training will be monitored by the Disability Policy and Development Unit, in conjunction with the Employment Services Support Unit, to ascertain current referral patterns, and to develop strategies to promote referrals, consistent with course criteria, to mainline options.

**Time frame:**

**One Year**

**Responsibility:**

**Employment Services Support  
Unit/Social Inclusion Unit**

3. Set Targets for Disabled Person's Participation in all Areas of Training Activity, and review annually.

FÁS will set targets for disabled person's participation in training for the unemployed jobseeker and training for business and the employed. This should be implemented through regional benchmarking in the first instance, with reasonable and quantifiable targets to increase these numbers in the next calendar year.

Monitoring of these targets, nationally, should be undertaken by the Disability Policy and Development Unit, in conjunction with the relevant function.

<b>Time frame:</b>	<b>One Year</b>
<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Social Inclusion Unit</b>

4. Use The High Support Process to Assist Disabled People.

The High Support Process to be utilised as a tool to assist National Employment Services staff put in place agreed interventions to allow disabled people remove identified barriers and progress towards employment. Such supports should also be available to those undergoing apprenticeship training within FÁS; who traditionally have not been referred through the Gateway.

<b>Time frame:</b>	<b>One Year</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Employment Services/ Services To Business</b>

5. Facilitate Progression Between Rehabilitation and Vocational Training

To encourage progression from rehabilitation training to FÁS Training, FÁS will enter into discussions with the Department of Health and

Children, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Health Services Executive about the development of a bridging programme or module to facilitate this process. These discussions will take place through the National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC), chaired by Department of Health and Children.

**Time frame:** Two Years  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit

6. Provide Bridging Programmes to Support Progression within FÁS Provision

To support a seamless model of training delivery, pilot bridging programmes should be developed between STPs and FÁS training to facilitate mainstreaming. This should be a short (no more than 3 months) Introductory Course focusing on the soft skills necessary to prepare trainees to cope with a mainline training environment. To facilitate smoothness of transition, resources in STPs should be available to trainees on transfer where this continuing support is required. A mapping exercise identifying the skills, knowledge and aptitudes required should be developed in conjunction with the STPs, and the best mode of delivery decided. Programmes to assist progression from Bridging to Specific Skills Training within FÁS mainline provision should also be explored within FÁS Training Services.

**Time frame:** Two Years  
**Responsibility:** Community Services  
Training Services

7. Increase promotion of FÁS Services to Disabled People

FÁS will work with other stakeholders such as the Community Development Programmes and Family Resource Centres, the public media, business and government departments to achieve better take-up of

FÁS training provision. The establishment of Regional Networks for disabled people will also provide a mechanism to ensure efficient utilisation of existing FÁS resources within the regions by disabled people. In addition, FÁS is to conduct an evaluation of the Midlands Pilot project with Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and the Health Services Executive (HSE), to ascertain its added value in attracting more disabled people into FÁS service provision. Posters of 'Steps to Employment for Disabled People' will be distributed to Health Centres, Secondary Schools, Citizen's Information Centres, and others to promote FÁS labour market services for disabled people. Use of FÁS' National Call Centre in providing a dedicated telephone support service to disabled people interested in availing of FÁS services will also be explored.

**Time frame:**

**One Year**

**Responsibility:**

**Social Inclusion Unit**

### **Strategy under Training Programmes and Delivery**

#### 1. Develop Protocol for Entry to STPs

STPs, contracted by FÁS, should recognise the FÁS (ES and LES) Gateway as the appropriate independent occupational guidance service for disabled people seeking training. All referrals to these courses must be made by FÁS' Employment Services or LES. This should be in line with the Entry and Exit Strategy planned by Employment and Community Services.

A Protocol for Referral and Application to STPs needs to be developed. This should be consistent with the referral protocol for the Supported Employment programme, and should include a referral back to the ESO or LES Mediator at the end of a six-week period, if the individual did not attend or if the individual is unable to cope with the demands of the course.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Community Services  
Employment Services

2. Improve Identification of Supports for Disabled People Progressing to Training

Supports required for the disabled person to participate in training, identified at the 'Gateway', are to be communicated to the relevant provider, as per the procedures in FÁS Guidelines for Supporting Disabled People in Training. A 'checklist' of common supports, which may be required for training by disabled people, will be developed by the Disability Policy and Development Unit to support ESOs and LES Mediators. This will mirror the interview aids currently used for course recruitment. During 2006 an in-centre pre-training period of assessment within STPs will be piloted in two FÁS regions to evaluate its effectiveness in decreasing the drop-out rate from STPs.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit/  
Community Services

3. Pilot and Develop Innovative and Flexible Programmes with appropriate supports

FÁS should allocate an annual budget to pilot innovative and flexible means of training design and delivery for disabled people in FÁS mainline provision to advance the mainstreaming agenda. The structure of the training may be integrated or segregated, and could be delivered in any/all of the following ways:

- by existing FÁS trainers;
- by existing FÁS trainers with support from Specialist Training Providers or other external 'experts';



- by contracted training;
- by organisations or agencies for disabled people, delivered on FÁS premises;
- by using on line learning programmes combining in-centre support with modules available through eCollege. The eCollege LMS (Learner Management System) will be utilised to track trainee progress on these courses.

**Time frame:** **Four Years**  
**Responsibility:** **Training Services**

4. Enhance use of Traineeships

The Traineeship approach, involving a mixture of off-the-job and on-the-job training, can be a valuable route into some occupations for disabled people. This approach should be explored and implemented as part of FÁS' current training strategy.

**Time frame:** **Two Years**  
**Responsibility:** **Training Services.**

5. Increase STPs Accountability, Outcomes and Promotion

Current placement and certification attainment outcomes should be benchmarked and annual contracts should specify targets for placements, and certification attainment, from training. These targets should be monitored by FÁS Community Services, as part of their overall monitoring process. Targets should be increased incrementally, and this increase should form part of the terms for the rollover of funding. Courses not meeting their targets should be discontinued. STP contracts should also strengthen their role in promoting the fact that the courses are funded through FÁS. Training requires to be regularly monitored in STPs to ensure that it is taking place in compliance with agreed FÁS guidelines.

**Time frame:** Two Years  
**Responsibility:** Community Services

6. Update STPs Operating Guidelines

FÁS' Operating Guidelines for Specialist Training Providers needs to be reviewed and updated by mid 2006 to address the issues that relate to STPs in this report. Included in such a review should be the requirement that STPs comply with the FÁS National Quality Assurance Framework for Learning. The Guidelines should also copper fasten STPs' responsibility to place their trainees in employment on completion of training.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Community Services

7. Ensure that all training options available to disabled people is kept-up-to-date

All information on training available through STPs must be kept up-to-date on the FÁS website. Accuracy of information provides a resource for disabled people seeking vocational training, and as a support to NES staff in delivering occupational guidance.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Community Services

8. Increase STPs Labour Market Relevancy

FÁS Action Plan for Specialist Training Providers states that these courses should be evaluated regarding their relevance to the employment market and should include the skills identified by the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs. This recommendation will be implemented by the end of 2006.

**Time frame:** One Year

**Responsibility:** **Community Services**

9. Improve Job Seeking Skills

Workway's 'A Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities' could be adapted as the standard job search module for both STPs and mainline training centres to assist disabled people with access to employment. An in-company training and/or work experience segment will be a mandatory element of this module, as well as how to handle competence-based interviewing. This module should also include an overview of employer supports. It should be delivered as a mandatory module within STPs and as a stand-alone module in mainline training.

**Time frame:** **One Year**

**Responsibility:** **Social Inclusion Unit**

10. Provide Work Experience on all STP Training Programmes

To provide a minimum of four weeks work experience should be mandatory for all STP training programmes and the work experience should be directly relevant to the content of the training course.

**Time frame:** **One Year**

**Responsibility:** **Community Services**

11. Strengthen Equality Awareness on all FÁS Training Courses

Equality awareness should be part of the Induction and Career Planning modules on all FÁS courses to enhance equality appreciation and to assist the integration of disabled trainees onto courses.

**Time frame:** **One Year**

**Responsibility:** **Social Inclusion Unit**

## 12. Facilitate Access, Transfer and Progression

The learners should have high quality, comprehensive and accessible information and guidance on:

- Accessing FÁS programmes including information on awards.
- Appropriate support when participating in the programme.
- Possibilities for transfer and progression.
- Arrangements for participation in a variety of course modes and formats, including e-learning and the possibility of achieving an award by Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), if available.
- Access as appropriate to initiatives promoting equality in participation and to combat discrimination
- Examination and assessment arrangements and facilities for candidates with disabilities.
- Appeals procedures should be made available to learners.

**Time frame:**

**Four Years**

**Responsibilities:**

**Employment Services/  
Curriculum and Quality  
Assurance**

## 13. Explore Competence-based Course Target Profiling

Explore a competence-based approach towards identifying pre-entry requirements to courses, could be utilised, in conjunction with, or as an alternative to criteria based on educational attainment.

**Time frame:**

**One Year**

**Responsibility:**

**Training Services**

## **Strategy under Training Supports**

### 1. Update FÁS Disability Handbook and Guidelines for Supporting Disabled People availing of FÁS Training Services and Improve Dissemination and Use

The FÁS' Disability Handbook designed in 2000 to support FÁS staff in dealing with disabled people should be reviewed and regularly updated to reflect legislative and administrative changes. FÁS' Guidelines on Supporting Disabled People in Training should also be reviewed. Information on available supports within Region should also be included. The Access Officer(s), mandated by the Disability Act 2005, could potentially have responsibility for correlated information on local supports for disabled people within each region

**Time frame:**

**One Year**

**Responsibility:**

**Social Inclusion Unit**

### 2. Establish a Dedicated Budget for Training Supports

A dedicated budget for training supports should be available to FÁS training centre management to pay for Assistive Technology, Training Support Assistants, transport and interpreters and other supports, as identified.

**Time frame:**

**One Year**

**Responsibility:**

**Social Inclusion Unit**

### 3. Define and mainstream the scope and structure of a Disability Support Service

The future strategy for the implementation of a Disability Support Service should be finalised for national implementation in the light of the recommendations in the Martin Review. Included in this structure should be 'peer-mentoring type' service to build the capacity of FÁS training

personnel. This service should be piloted, within the training centre network, by external contractor.

**Time frame:** Two Years  
**Responsibility:** Training Services

4. Expansion of additional supports for disabled people in Mainline Training  
The range of training supports should be systematically examined to identify additional supports that would encourage more disabled people avail of FÁS mainline training.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit

5. Appointment of Access Officer(s)  
FÁS should appoint one Access Officer per region. The Access Officer will be an access point to coordinate supports for disabled trainees, whether these supports are available within FÁS or from local support organisations for disabled people. The Officer will keep an updated directory of local support services to assist occupational and training services staff in FÁS.

**Time frame:** Two Years  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit

### **Strategy under Facilities and Redress**

1. Schedule access audits of premises to assess FÁS requirements to ensure compliance with Disability Act 2005  
To ensure compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations a schedule of access audits should be carried out across the range of FÁS services. An action Plan should be developed following the audits to identify

shortcomings. The FÁS Gateway should be an immediate priority. An action plan, including timescales, should be developed to rectify any areas of non-compliance.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit/  
Building Services

2. Ensure Compliance with the NDA's Code of Practice on Accessibility of Services and with Section 25 of the Disability Act 2005

An Access Audit should be carried out across FÁS services and premises to highlight areas for corrective action as per the above Code. An action plan, including timetable, shall be developed to rectify areas identified.

**Time frame:** Three Years  
**Responsibility:** All Functions

3. Ensure Public Publications, and Training materials, are available to Disabled People in Alternative Formats as required by Section 28 of the Disability Act 2005

All publications for the public (literature, brochures, curriculum materials, etc.) should be in formats that are accessible to disabled people. To assist this process, guidelines for the publications, etc. will be developed and disseminated for FÁS staff use in conjunction with Corporate Affairs.

**Time frame:** One Year  
**Responsibility:** Social Inclusion Unit/  
Corporate Affairs/  
All Functions and Regions

#### 4. Implement Redress Procedure for Disabled People

FÁS should draft a Grievance Procedure that is accessible to disabled trainees and ensure that such procedures are integrated with the existing FÁS Complaints Procedures. An independent Inquiry Officer is required to be appointed to investigate any complaint made by a trainee in relation to Sections 25 to 29 of the Disability Act 2005.

<b>Time frame:</b>	<b>One Year</b>
<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Social Inclusion Unit/ Legal Affairs</b>

#### Recommendations under Costs

Enact recommendations contained within DETE's 'Value for Money' evaluation

An action plan incorporating the recommendations contained within DETE's Value for Money evaluation, including timeframes is to be developed.

<b>Time frame:</b>	<b>One Year</b>
<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Community Services/ Management Accounts/ Social Inclusion Unit</b>



## **Appendix 4**

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

Companies Registration Office  
Competition Authority  
County Enterprise Boards  
Crafts Council of Ireland  
Employment Appeals Tribunal  
Enterprise Ireland  
FÁS  
ForFÁS  
Health & Safety Authority  
IDA Ireland  
Inter-trade Ireland  
Irish Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority  
Labour Court  
Labour Relations Commission  
National Standards Authority of Ireland  
Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement  
Office of the Registrar of Friendly Societies  
Office of Director of Consumer Affairs  
Patents Office  
Personal Injuries Assessment Board  
Science Foundation Ireland  
Shannon Free Airport Development Company Ltd