

**Response to**



**Outline Sectoral Plan**

**of**

**The Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment under the  
National Disability Act 2005**

**Submitted by**

**The Irish Association of  
Supported Employment**

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## **Appendix**

## **IASE Five Year Strategic Development Plan 2005 - 2010**

## **Executive Summary**

The Irish Association of Supported Employment welcomes the opportunity to respond to the outline Sectoral Plan published by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and welcomes the work undertaken by the NDA (National Disability Authority) towards ensuring relevant groups participate in the consultation process to this plan.

The National Disability Strategy, of which the Sectoral Plans form part, constitutes an historic opportunity to move government policy on disability to a new plane, to significantly increase resources to address the concerns and needs of people with disabilities and to ensure full inclusion for disabilities is truly integrated into policy, planning and service delivery at all levels.

**The Department of the Taoiseach should provide high-level leadership to drive the process of finalising the Sectoral Plans and co-ordinate the consistent implementation of the National Disability Strategy across departments.**

The IASE calls for a consistent approach across the six Government Departments in finalising their Sectoral Plans, with each Sectoral Plan containing certain key components, as well as addressing the sector-specific issues. Otherwise, the risk is that the final Sectoral Plans may be too limited in scope; very disparate in terms of content and depth; and that issues calling for cross – Departmental co-ordination and action will fail to be adequately addressed.

## **The Organisation**

IASE is a national voluntary organisation which was established in February 1994 with the aim of promoting and developing supported employment at a national level. In 2006 IASE is the representative voice of almost 500 members in Ireland, who in turn are working with over 5,000 people with disabilities.

IASE is currently funded by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under the white paper for voluntary services. IASE's mission is to promote best practice in Supported Employment for people with disabilities in Ireland.

### **Aims of the IASE.**

- To promote the concept of Supported Employment.
  
- To facilitate the exchange of information between interested parties.
  
- To respond to the training needs of affiliated members.
  
- To actively participate in the European Union of Supported Employment.
  
- To assist members with networking and promoting the model of Supported Employment.

## The National Executive

IASE was established in 1994, it is a company limited by guarantee and currently has 11 Directors.

Name/Position	Organisation	Representative
Dermot Cunningham Chairperson	Employment Response North West	North West Region
Stephen MacWhite Vice Chairperson	SMTDC, Dublin	East Region
Eithne Jarrett Company Secretary	Roscommon Supported Employment Service	West Region
Teresa Mallon Treasurer	Menei Services, St John of God, Dublin	East Region
Greg Barry Public Relations Officer	Work Web West, Co Mayo	West Region
Helen Grant Company Director	Louth Supported Employment Services	North East Region
Teresa Haughey Company Director	Worklink North West, Co Donegal	North West Region
Catherine Murphy Company Director	Connect Employment, Co Wicklow	East Region
Alice O'Carroll Company Director	Clare Supported Employment Service	West Region
Tony Reilly Company Director	Midland Employment Support Agency	Midlands Region
David Ryan Company Director	Work Access, Limerick	Southern Region

## **Definition of Supported Employment**

Supported Employment enables people with disabilities to find, secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market.

On the job training and individualised long-term supports are key elements of Supported Employment.

## **The Beneficiaries of Supported Employment**

### **People with disabilities**

People with disabilities who wish to work are successful in gaining employment in the open labour market

### **Employers**

Employers receive backup support of a professional service, they gain a valuable employee and they can introduce an equal opportunities policy within the organisation

### **The Wider Community**

The community benefits through the individuals personal and monetary input into the local economy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

IASE recommend the following key elements should feature in the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment:-

- How the mainstream service of DETE and the agencies under its aegis, plan to provide for disabled people as part of their normal remit (“mainstreaming”) s.26 of the Disability Act sets out the new statutory requirements.
- How the Sectoral Plan on disability will be embedded in the statement of strategy and the business plan of the DETE.
- How will DETE address cross-cutting issues and co-ordinate linked measures across departments?
- Proposals for involvement of people with disabilities in preparing and implementing plans in their monitoring and review.
- Targets on quality and standards.
- How DETE plan to meet their statutory obligations under the following sections of the Disability Act 2005 on accessibility of public offices (s.25) accessibility of services supplied to the public body (s.29) and accessible information (s.28)
- How DETE plan to address recruitment, promotion and retention of staff with disabilities, and meet their statutory obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act.

## **ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS**

### **Issue**

The National Supported Employment Programme funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment is not all inclusive and does not meet the needs of all people with disabilities and it also does not meet the needs of many employers.

While the pilot phase of the Supported Employment Programme resulted in a significant number of people with disabilities entering the open labour market and enabling them to make a valuable contribution to society, it should be noted that IASE members have significant levels of experience and expertise with regard to the model as many have delivered supported employment on the ground for years prior to the introduction of the National Programme.

### ***The main areas of concerns for the IASE to address are as follows:***

One of the benefits of the model of Supported Employment is that it was designed originally for people with the most significant disabilities. In the pilot phase of the programme there were people with more significant disabilities who have been successfully integrated into the labour market.

There are people however, who may not be in a position to reach the 18-hour minimum. There are also employers who have offered employees part time positions (less than 18-hours) however under the current criteria, programme participants may not be allowed to avail of those jobs.

IASE recommend flexibility on a case by case basis in relation to geographical labour market conditions and the capacity of individuals who aspire to work towards the 18 hour target.

FÁS definition of "Job Ready" – "A person (with a disability) who has the necessary training, education, motivation and capacity to pursue a job and or career in the open labour market". This definition is a contradiction to a programme that alleges to be promoting the concept of Supported Employment.

Supported Employment was developed originally as an alternative to the "readiness model" which places heavy emphasis on pre-training before entry to the labour market.

It is important to include a provision for individuals to sample jobs during their assessment phase; this would assist an individual to identify their support needs during the vocational profiling phase.

Supported Employment while ensuring people enter the open labour market, has built into the concept a commitment to on-going support. The Irish Association of Supported Employment has significant concerns with the statement in the criteria for the Supported Employment Programme regarding an "exit strategy" from the programme. Under the pilot phase of the programme, there are many people with significant disabilities who have been extremely successful and continue to enjoy the benefits of participating in paid employment in the open labour market. It is essential however, that for those individuals who require some level of on-going support, that this is acknowledged within the programme and that adequate funding is provided to ensure that these job placements do not break down. In the Martin Evaluation of the pilot phase of the programme 96% of employers agreed with the statement that the on-going support provided by the job coach after the employee had been recruited was a vital element of the Programme.

IASE acknowledge that the supported employment programme is an open labour market initiative; however, supported employment recognises the on going issues that affect the lives of people with disabilities in an open labour market context.

An open Labour market initiative is based on quantitative outcomes in terms of reducing the number of people in receipt of state benefits; however IASE view mainstream supported employment as a route to social inclusion and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The National Supported Employment guidelines suggest a caseload of clients per job coach of 25 per year. This is based on job coaches assisting clients across four areas of needs assessment, job coach/job development, in employment with job coach support, independent job coach placement with after care/mentoring. This figure of 25 is unrealistic as it is significantly above established international norms.

The sharp increase in throughput from 6 to 25 has shifted the focus from 'employment' to that of merely progressing clients through a 'system'. Assisting 25 people through the four phases of the national programme is possible. However, 25 new people each year would be unrealistic without necessary resources being made available to service providers.

## **Solution**

**Change criteria in consultation with IASE, People with Disabilities and relevant practitioners to ensure that the National Supported Employment Programme meets the employment needs of all people with disabilities.**

*As the National Programme developed from 2000, so too has supported employment within other voluntary organisations. If we look at the 1999 research 'Mainstream Supported Employment' project it states that of more than 60 agencies were known to be delivering supported employment to an estimate 1,052 persons with disabilities in Ireland. Based on this research and the FAS evaluation in 2000 it would be fair to assume that Ireland has closer to 100 services providing Supported Employment and up to 5000 individuals availing of services.*

## **Issue**

No statistical data currently exists to provide a complete count of all supported employment services in Ireland, including the national programme. (This has been highlighted in the IASE 5 year strategic plan as a priority area, see page 35)

## **Solution**

**NDA in conjunction with the IASE to conduct extensive research into supported employment services in Ireland to create a comprehensive and accurate report on the status of services, providing qualitative and quantitative information.**

## **Issue**

The WSS (Wage Subsidy Scheme) in its current form does not meet the needs of people with disability who are capable of employment of twenty hours or less and People with Disabilities who are unable to be financially independent at the end of the scheme.

The fact that it can not be used in conjunction with the National Supported Employment Programme significantly reduces the numbers of People with Disabilities who can access and maintain employment.

A weakness of the Wage Subsidy Scheme which was devised to address productivity levels is that a key element of Supported Employment is the integration of People with Disabilities into mainstream employment. Strand III of the WSS encourages larger employers to employ more People with Disabilities; however, it also has the potential to create segregated work settings for people with disabilities.

## **Solution**

**Change criteria in consultation with IASE, People with Disabilities, employers and relevant practitioners to ensure that the Wage Subsidy Scheme can be used to its maximum potential for all creating further integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities.**

*For example if the Wage Subsidy Scheme could be utilized in conjunction with Supported Employment Services for a 12 month period, people with disabilities would have an opportunity to avail of employment as well as receiving the necessary supports required to maintain a job. In addition this change would increase the uptake in the numbers of people with disabilities and employers availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme making it a more attractive and successful scheme.*

*There will be no cost of doing this, it will only lead to a greater take up of the WSS, and the possibility that a large portion of the money allocated to the WSS will actually be used by people with disabilities and employers, and not just by the media to promote the scheme.*

## **Issue**

There is a lack of awareness in the employment of people with disabilities in Ireland among employers, employer's organizations and the public in general.

There has been poor uptake by employers of the FAS funded Disability Awareness Training Scheme. Why? Is it the cost factor?

This needs to be explored as low levels of awareness and fears about employing people with disabilities impact upon the work of supported

employment practitioners. The lack of awareness creates high dependency among employers and co-workers on long term intensive support of job coaches and this dependency inhibits the transition to natural workplace supports for some individuals.

## **Solution**

**To provide Irish Association of Supported Employment with the necessary resources to deliver a strategic national supported employment promotional/marketing strategy for employing people with disabilities. The objective is to raise awareness among employers and the general public of the benefits of employing people with disabilities and the services and supports available to employers through supported employment.**

*Consultation is needed with employers, people with disabilities, IASE, company directors and staff operating the FAS National Programme to identify training needs of employers and co-workers in relation to supporting individuals at work.*

## **Issue**

At present there appears to be inadequate evidence to support the 3% quota in the public sector.

## **Solution**

**IASE recommend that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment work with relevant bodies and organisations to undertake specific research into the introduction of the 3% quota in the public sector.**

*IASE are aware of People with Disabilities interested in employment in the public sector who require job coach support. There is clear evidence that a very small number of people with disabilities are gaining access to the public sector through supported employment services.*

*This highlights the need for a proactive approach to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to access employment in the public sector.*

*IASE recommend closer links between public sector HR departments and supported employment agencies so that people with disabilities who require support to gain employment in the public sector are facilitated to do so.*

### **Issue**

While a quota system is in place in the public sector, the numbers of people with disabilities employed through Supported Employment remains low in the public sector.

### **Solution**

**Review of the quota system nationally, with particular consideration as to how the quota is monitored and enforced and also what qualifies as a disability and to ensure employers, human resource managers in the public sector know about Supported Employment Services and the assistance available to support them employing people with disabilities.**

### **Issue**

Many people with disabilities presenting to Supported Employment have had limited opportunities to gain work related skills or structured training.

### **Solution**

**That Fás, having consulted the relevant stakeholders and service providers i.e. (Supported Employment programmes, Industry Groups -IDA, and Training providers), review the training currently being delivered, with a view to focusing on accessible programmes that will equip people with disabilities with the skills they need to gain employment.**

### **Issue**

Established in 1994, IASE the National Voluntary Organisation was involved in negotiations with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to establish the FAS National Supported Employment Programme. This initial consultation, the commitment and collective expertise of its members and its involvement at National and European level would indicate that IASE should have an ongoing consultative

role and should therefore be represented on the current FAS National Disability Advisory Committee.

### **Solution**

**To provide IASE with representation on the FAS National Disability Advisory Committee.**

### **Issue**

IASE the national voluntary organisation was involved in the negotiations with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to establish the National Supported Employment Programme following the pilot programme. Since then IASE have not been given adequate opportunity to input into operational issues of the employment programmes delivered for people with disabilities in Ireland.

### **Solution**

**To provide IASE with representation on the Disability Legislation Consultative Group.**

### **Issue**

The Workway project concluded in 2005 and can no longer be considered as a key pillar of the Department's employment strategy.

### **Solutions**

**The Workway policy paper set out eleven recommendations which have also been acknowledged in the IASE Strategic Development Plan. DETE need to consider Workway recommendations in drawing up and implementing a comprehensive national strategy on fully inclusive employment of people with disabilities in Ireland.**

### **Issue**

At present there is a lack of cross Departmental co-ordination which leaves services in isolation and leads to schemes and services not meeting the needs of the end user.

## **Solutions**

**To ensure a consistent approach is taken across the Government departments in finalising their Sectoral Plans, for example there is scope to develop structured links between the social welfare system and FAS with a view to offering positive support and guidance in relation to employment to people receiving social welfare disability payments. Such links might be particularly beneficial in promoting job retention after the onset of disability or ensuring there is no loss of income when transferring from Social Welfare to the FAS programme or vice versa.**

### **Issue**

Mainstreaming in the sectoral plan of Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment addresses issues around accessing and maintaining employment only. The draft plan does not extend to all services under the Departments remit i.e. Enterprise and Trade.

### **Solution**

**Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment must adopt a mainstream approach to addressing disability which would involve each division of the Department developing strategies to serve and involve people with disabilities in the area under their aegis.**

### **Issue**

Currently Ireland has a buoyant labour market with one in ten workers coming from outside the state (CSO, National Household Survey) in spite of this buoyant labour market there are approximately 60% of people with disabilities of working age unable to access mainstream employment.

### **Solution**

**The forgotten workforce of people with disabilities currently unemployed could be mobilised if the recommendation of this response were implemented by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.**

## **Consultation**

Irish Association of Supported Employment would like to draw attention to the importance of consultation - in 2005 IASE compiled a five year strategic plan which involved an intensive consultative process, this process enabled members to assist form the strategy that would under pin the future work of IASE.

In developing this strategy, IASE consulted with people with disabilities, core members, regional networks and other stakeholders. Individual interviews, meetings and written submissions all contributed to the process.

This submission prepared by IASE in response to the outline Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment includes the weaknesses and opportunities identified during the IASE consultation process for the five year strategic plan 2005 – 2010.