

**Response to**



**Outline Sectoral Plan**

**of**

**The Department of Social and Family  
Affairs 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 Social and Family Affairs 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 Social and Family Affairs:-

- How the mainstream service of DSFA 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 DSFA.
- How will DSFA address cross-cutting issues and co-ordinate linked measures across departments?
- Proposals for involvement of people with disabilities in preparing and implementing plans, and in their monitoring and review.
- Targets on quality and standards.
- How DSFA 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 DSFA plan to address recruitment, promotion and retention of staff with disabilities, and meet their statutory obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act.

## **OBJECTIVE**

- To set targets for the reduction of poverty among people with disabilities as people who can earn their own living are far less likely to live in poverty

***20.9% of people with disabilities are in 'constant poverty' at 60% level using basic life-style deprivation indicators***

***(ERSI: EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2002)***

- To address the benefits trap to make the world of work a more reasonable option for people with disabilities

### Issue (Benefits Trap)

People with disabilities who go out to work stand to lose a significant array of benefits. Alongside loss of the weekly welfare payment such as Disability Allowance, going to work will generally put someone over the income limit of a medical card, and entitlement to linked services such as free disability aids is also forfeit. The household benefit package, free travel, mobility allowance and rent allowance could also be lost by someone entering employment.

### **Solution**

**Allow retention of secondary benefits to people with disability entering the workforce particularly those on low income rates. (It pays to remember, employment is not a cure for disability!)**

### Issue (Benefits Trap)

For many people with disabilities in Ireland minimum wage is the standard when entering the work place. Even with the back to work scheme in place they will eventually be worse off financially by returning to full time employment. Unfortunately wages are not

increasing as benefits reduce. There are many extra costs in daily life for the individual because of their disability which their non disabled colleagues do not incur.

### **Solution**

**The disability allowance payment could change to be a cost of disability payment and remain with the person regardless of employment status (possibly means tested) the loss of DA is a disincentive to people with disability to take up full time employment.**

### Issue

There are disabled people in Ireland with no welfare support. Eligibility for social welfare disability payments rests on two tests. The first relates to disability, and is medically assessed. The second qualification is based either on the PRSI record or a means test. The main group who fail to qualify for social welfare if they cannot work because of their disability are those whose PRSI records are insufficient and whose spouse's earnings put them over the means limit. They are predominantly women who have been in home duties, but also included self employed people whose PRSI does not cover disability or invalidity payments.

People who fail to qualify for social Welfare disability payments also lose out on supports which are linked to those payments for example the free travel pass and back to work allowances.

### **Solution**

**IASE recommend the provision of a personal income in their own right to people with a disability who are not in a position to earn an income of their own.**

### Issue

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

### **Solution**

**That DSFA liaise closely with Fás, having consulted the relevant stakeholders and service providers (i.e. Supported Employment programmes, Industry Groups -IDA, and Training providers), to ensure there is a review of 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

The on going collection of data needs is not consistent to track the effects of national policy in the disability sector in Ireland.

### **Solution**

**IASE note with regret that the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions, the annual survey which has replaced the living in Ireland Survey for the purpose of monitoring poverty, no longer has a direct question on disability, other**

**than where someone's principal economic status is given as "ill or disabled". This means it will no longer be possible to ascertain to what extent poverty reduction targets are being met with respect to people with disabilities whose labour force status is not "ill/disabled", e.g. in work, in home duties or retired. IASE urge the Office for Social Inclusion to pursue this matter further at EU level.**

Issue

Supporting an individual with a disability interested in employment often uncovers barriers to employment.

**Solution**

**Department of Social and Family Affairs must specify how services for people with disabilities will work with other agencies to ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities are addressed in the areas of housing, transport, employment and social supports. These related needs all affect health status and the capacity for independence.**

Issue

While the 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**

**Department of Social and Family Affairs should examine the following:-**

- **How DSFA monitor and enforce the quota system**

- **What qualifies as “disability”**
- **Are DSFA human resource personnel aware of supported employment services**
- **Are DSFA human resource personnel aware of assistance available to support them employing people with disabilities**

#### Issue

IASE the national voluntary organisation was involved in the negotiations with the DETE and DSFA 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**

Addressing disability in the sectoral plan of DSFA does not cover all areas of the Department’s work.

#### **Solution**

**Extend the scope of the plan to include all areas of the Departments works and all agencies under its aegis, including family policy; the Office of Social Inclusion; the National Pensions Board and Combat Poverty Agency ensuring that disability is integrated into the statement of**

## **Strategy and business planning of the Department and all public bodies under its aegis.**

### 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

It is widely regarded that there is a large number of individuals registered long term unemployed who may have a hidden disability.

## **Solution**

**To introduce a self declaration initiative in conjunction with DETE, DOHC and other relevant agencies, the initiative could be three fold:-**

- 1. RESEARCH -By creating a clearer picture of the numbers of people with disabilities in Ireland (mental, sensory, learning, physical or hidden)**
- 2. STIGMA - By raising awareness toward reducing “stigma” for individuals with hidden disability.**
- 3. AWARENESS - By raising the awareness in supported employment services that are available nation wide to assist people with disability into the world of work.**

## 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 IASE were implemented by DSFA.**

## **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.