



**FÁS Disability Policy and Development Unit  
Newsletter  
June 2005 Issue 5**

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No:</u>
<b>Disability and Work – the Picture we Learn from the Official Statistics 1</b>	
<b>Assistive Technology in the Workplace – A practical Guide for Employers and Managers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Disability Discrimination Summer School 2005</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards 2006 ... the competition is now open</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Suite of Workway Materials</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>European Quality Mark for Web Accessibility</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Second Season – Three60</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>National Advisory Group Update!</b>	<b>7</b>

**Disability and Work – the Picture we Learn from the Official Statistics.**

This Report published by the NDA' Research Unit earlier this year has some revealing statistics about the situation of disabled people and the labour market in Ireland. The data was taken from the Census 2002, the Quarterly National Household Survey 2004 and the Living in Ireland Survey 2000. The following is a selection of the findings that may have some implications for agencies involved in developing labour market policies for disabled people:

- People with a disability are two and a half times less likely to have a job than non-disabled people.
- 85% of people of working age who have a disability have an acquired disability.
- Even people who indicated in the 2002 Census that their disability did not pose a difficulty in working, had a significantly lower employment rate than their non-disabled peers. A total of 13,000 people fall into this category.
- People with disabilities are more likely to work part-time. This is almost certainly related to another figure indicating that 40% of disabled workers report that there are restrictions on the amount of work they can do.
- 45% of people with disabilities left education after primary school. The figure for the overall population is 18%.
- Only 13% of men and 6% of women describe themselves as unemployed or seeking their first job i.e. they are economically inactive.

One of many noteworthy figures above that may cause most surprise is the last bullet point. This indicates that the vast majority of disabled people do not consider employment in the open labour market an option. It is a matter of some urgency to examine this cohort of people to ascertain what their requirements are. Is there anything FÁS and other training agencies need to do to assist this group enter the labour market? What are the barriers that need addressing before they feel comfortable in doing so?

This study also highlights the poor education record of disabled people. Is this a significant factor in the high unemployment among this group? Does this help explain the lack of progression among disabled people who are in employment or why so many are on low wages? Whatever questions it raises, it suggests that training programmes for the disabled should include an education input.

The Report highlights something that has been often stated before i.e. the contribution of the 'benefits trap' to the high unemployment rate. A disabled person entering employment will most likely lose many secondary benefits including their medical card. These losses can be a major disincentive to a disabled person accepting an offer of employment. The Report suggests that this issue is best addressed by a Cost of Disability payment paid to the disabled person whether in employment or not.

The Report concludes that the reasons for such high unemployment for disabled people are many and complex and that it requires a multi-faceted approach to deal with the issue. Many initiatives have been introduced to assist and FÁS, not least, has an extensive suite of employment supports for the disabled. However, much remains to be done, and this Report provides important statistical information, which can be utilised as a launching pad for further actions to achieve the goal of integrating disabled people into the open labour market.

Seamus Moriarty DPU

### **Assistive Technology in the Workplace - A Practical Guide for Employers & Managers**

Enable Ireland's National High Tech Assistive Technology Training Service has undertaken a series of employer seminars over the past 18 months with a view to promoting awareness among employers about the benefits of Assistive Technology. These benefits are of interest not only to prospective employees with a disability, but also to employees who are at risk of developing work-related injuries such as RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury).

As a result of discussions with employers, it was clear that a real information deficit existed in relation to the provision of readily accessible information on assistive technologies for the workplace. It was for this reason that Enable Ireland teamed up with IrishJobs.ie to publish a guide for employers, which was launched last December 3<sup>rd</sup>

on the International Day of People with Disabilities, by Minister Tom Kitt, Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach.

Assistive Technology (AT) is about supporting employees at work and promoting good practices in a wide range of work settings.

AT encompasses everything from alternative ways of using computers to communication aids that use synthetic speech, power chairs operated by switch-controlled interfaces and environmental-control systems offering total remote control of lights, doors and windows.

It is hoped that this guide will stimulate employers to develop and promote a work environment that is better for everyone. With growing emphasis on reducing the risk of cumulative and repetitive stress injuries due to poor work and tool design, the ergonomic needs of people with a disability become effective templates for improvements in job and workplace design for all. AT is a resource for employers and employees who wish to prevent the development of work-related injuries, and for employees who acquire a disability during their working life.

Seven out of ten economically active disabled people of working age will have become disabled during their working life, according to The Employers Forum on Disability in the UK. Losing the services of an employee who becomes disabled deprives organisations of a considerable asset and investment in terms of their skills and experience. It can also be very expensive.



In developing this guide, it is hoped that employers will provide people with a disability the opportunity to become productive and competitive members of the workforce. It suggests ways that AT may improve and expand the career and employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

More and more, access to rewarding employment for people with disabilities is becoming easier, and technology has played a significant part in making this happen. Today there are many people with a disability pursuing successful careers in a wide variety of jobs. People with disabilities have excellent skills and employers need to look beyond the disability to realise that this talent can be tapped in ways which benefit the organisation as a whole.

This guide was written by Debbie O'Halloran of IrishJobs.ie, and is available on line at: [www.enableireland.ie/at/atguide.html](http://www.enableireland.ie/at/atguide.html). It is also available in hard copy format, free of charge from: Siobhan Long, AT Manager, Enable Ireland: [slong@enableireland.ie](mailto:slong@enableireland.ie) or at 01-4992357.  
Siobhan Long

---

### **Disability Discrimination Summer School 2005**

The Law Faculty at the National University of Ireland, Galway, has been closely involved in the debate concerning the legal rights of persons with disabilities in Ireland and abroad and is set to host the first ever European Summer School on disability discrimination law this summer.

The Summer School is supported by the European Commission as part of its general campaign against disability discrimination. It will explore the European Union Framework Employment Directive (2000/78/EC) in a disability context. This new EU Directive offers substantially enhanced legal protection for disabled Europeans who number at least 45 million. The Summer School will take place from **4<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> July** in the National University of Ireland, Galway, and is open to all members of the public as well as their legal advisers interested in finding out more about the new Directive as well as its potential uses for and on behalf of persons with disabilities.

The teaching Faculty includes many who have had direct litigation experience before courts such as the US Supreme Court, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights. Highlights will include a series of talks by Professor Peter Blanck who is a leading disability rights litigator before the US Courts and by Professor Christopher McCrudden of Oxford University. The main aim is to equip the participants with the practical skills needed to begin making use of the EU anti-discrimination law in the disability context.

The Director of the Summer School, Professor Gerard Quinn says "we are proud of our research track record at NUI Galway in the field and view this Summer School is a logical development. It is designed to provide persons with disabilities from all over Europe with a unique learning opportunity to find out more about their rights at a European level and to begin exercising them more forcefully. We expect a diverse range of disabled participants from all corners of Europe, which will be a huge learning opportunity in itself. The knowledge provided to the disability groups and their legal advisers should enable them to craft better legal strategies at both the European and Irish levels.

We are especially proud that a major EU initiative of European significance would take place in NUI Galway".

A dedicated website has been set up for the Summer School  
[http://www.nuigalway.ie/law/Disability\\_summer\\_school/index.html](http://www.nuigalway.ie/law/Disability_summer_school/index.html)

Disability Discrimination Summer School  
Disability Law & Policy Research Unit  
Faculty of Law  
National University of Ireland, Galway

Tel: + 353 (0)91 492085 (direct line)  
Fax: + 353 (0)91 495569  
Email: [disability@eusummerschool.info](mailto:disability@eusummerschool.info)  
SMS/Text messaging: +353 (0)87 6660634

---

## O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards 2006 ... the competition is now open

Organisations across Ireland are being invited to enter the O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards 2006, which acknowledge and profile Irish organisations recognising the contribution that people with disabilities make to business. All Irish businesses – large and small – are being encouraged to get involved. “These Awards are about recognising organisations who understand that diversity is good for business. The Awards aim to promote examples that others can follow and give organisations an environment to learn and improve. They are primarily business Awards where we recognise organisations that strategically endeavour to make equality part of their overall success,” Caroline Casey, Founding CEO, The Aisling Foundation. The aim of the O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards is to reward organisations who value people with disabilities both as employees and customers. It is about focusing on what IS being achieved rather than what is NOT. As in the previous year, the programme will involve an assessment and education process ultimately leading to a number of awards for general and specific areas of best practice. Out of these, up to 50 organisations can receive an O<sub>2</sub> Ability Award, six will receive category awards including a new award for Retention and Well Being and two organisations will be named overall winners – one for the private sector and one for the non-private sector. The O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards 2006, will be driven by The Aisling Foundation in partnership with Access Ability and Disability Management Consultants, who manage the assessment process. Other organisations supporting the awards are; The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, The Irish Times, FÁS, Newstalk 106fm and RTE. The deadline for applications is **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005**. If you have any queries please contact The Aisling Foundation on 01 634 0018. Applications can be made online at [www.theabilityawards.com](http://www.theabilityawards.com)

Sarah Conroy

---

### Suite of Workway Materials.

Workway is an IBEC/ICTU initiative that aims to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. Workway 2 was funded by FÁS to test and pilot some of the materials developed under Workway 1 (which was funded by DETE). The lead role taken by IBEC & ICTU has resulted in the project gaining a wider audience and level of credibility and acceptance than would have been possible if Workway had developed from the disability sector alone.

The benefits of Workway have been determined via the specific activities that have been undertaken. These benefits are:

- Raising awareness of the need to increase employment opportunities for disabled people and the issues associated with that activity.
- Identifying barriers to employment from the perspectives of employers and disabled people.
- Involving all parties in the search for practical solutions.
- Imparting information to assist in the integration of disabled people in the workforce.
- Informing public policy makers and service providers of the implications for developing employment and training services in the future.

### Suite of Workway Materials

- The Way Ahead - A Workway Policy Document.
- IBEC/ICTU Disability & Employment Guidelines.
- A Guide for Job Seekers with Disabilities.
- Ability in the Workplace - a disability training template.
- Disability in the Workplace DVD\*
- NetWorkway - the newsletter of the Workway initiative.

- Disability and Employment
- A Directory of Kerry Based Support Services
- A Directory of Cork Based Support Services
- Resourcing opportunities for disability in the workplace\*
- A Donegal wall chart
- A Galway wall chart

The suite of products launched will assist in the promotion of best practice in respect of employing disabled people and in changing the disposition of disabled people entering the workforce. Apart from raising awareness by means of the website and local Directories, they will assist the work of FÁS in a number of important ways such as:

- **The Way Ahead** – The Workway Policy document critically analyses the project experience in the context of the existing policy framework and its implementation at local level. This increases our knowledge of the significant and often unrelated barriers, which impede progress towards increasing the employment levels of the disabled.
- **The Joint IBEC/ICTU Disability Guidelines** – These have clearly identified the type of information required by employers, employee representatives and disabled people and has produced this information to address these needs. The guidelines have been piloted on Phase 2 of the project.
- **A Disability Training Module** – has been developed for integration into standard training programmes.
- **A Pre-Employment Template** – has been prepared to address the deficits at the pre-employment stage, and finally;
- **The establishment of a Workway Website** – that provides a one stop interactive information and employment address for the public in general.

All of these products are available for downloading on [www.workway.ie](http://www.workway.ie) or may be obtained by contacting IBEC/ICTU directly

(\* Please Note that these particular materials will not be available for downloading from the web site).

Alan Chapman DPDU

### European Quality Mark for Web Accessibility

There has been rapid growth in web-based products and services in recent years. This presents a great opportunity to improve access to such products and services for people who have disabilities. Many people with a wide variety of disabilities can effectively use the web, using appropriate assistive technologies, such as braille displays, speech synthesizers, alternative keyboards and key-switch inputs, etc. However: this relies on web sites being designed in such a way that they will work properly with such access technologies.

International guidelines for this have been set out by the World Wide Web consortium (W3) since 1999; and have been formally adopted in Ireland by the National Disability Authority since 2002.

In a number of European countries there now exist schemes to formally evaluate and certify the degree to which web sites meet these accessibility guidelines. Such a certification, or "quality mark", is good for the organisations gaining it, as it concretely demonstrates their commitment to non-discrimination in the online world. It is good for users, because they can readily identify organisations that have taken this important step.

However, in the naturally "border-free" world of the Internet it would be even better if organisations would avail of a single accessibility quality mark that was consistent and comparable right across the EU. The EU has therefore set an explicit aspiration for its "e-

Europe" plan that such a harmonised web accessibility quality mark should be made available. An EU-funded project to support this is now under way. The project is called "**Support-EAM**" ("Support eAccessibility Mark"). It is strictly based upon the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - the project is not concerned with developing new or competing guidelines, but only with independently evaluating and recognising conformance to the guidelines that already exist. DCU is one of seven European organizations, which are partners in the project.

Support-EAM, if successful, should offer a very valuable new mechanism for organisations to evaluate and demonstrate the accessibility of their web sites to all users, without discrimination. Most critically, it will allow them to ensure that they are following the very best international practice and expertise, and that this has been assessed objectively and effectively.

More detailed information is available at the following web sites:

Support-EAM Project:<http://www.support-eam.org/>

DCU/RINCE e-Accessibility Lab:<http://eaccess.rince.ie/>

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative: <http://www.w3.org/WAI>

NDA IT Accessibility Guidelines: <http://accessit.nda.ie/>

Barry McMullin, Dublin City University

[barry.mcmullin@dcu.ie](mailto:barry.mcmullin@dcu.ie)

---

### **Coming Soon...to a TV near you Second Season...Three60**

After recently attending a preview of the upcoming season of Three60 shows, I would urge everyone to mark the date in their diaries **–Monday, June 27<sup>th</sup> – 7.30pm –** and watch the new series.

There are nine programmes in the series, the first of which introduces the viewer to David Jordan who has Asperger's Syndrome. David is currently studying for his PHD at Trinity. The programme succeeds in giving information about, and an understanding of, the disability in a very positive way. Many viewers will be surprised at realising how many false impressions and misconceptions they may have about this condition. The second story in this programme centres on Louise and Stef, who both have physical disabilities, and preparations for their wedding.

On Monday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, the programme opens with a segment on Anna from Belarus who was adopted by a couple in Cork through the Adi Roche Chernobyl Children's Foundation. Anna has multiple disabilities but nothing seems to stop her participation in school and sport activities. Again, this is an excellent story, well presented with a strong emotional draw. After the powerful emotional impact of Anna's story, the viewer will be treated to a segment featuring Francesca – a comedienne who featured on the O<sub>2</sub> Ability Awards Show.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the Omagh bombing, there is a full-length programme dealing with the aftermath and lasting effects of post-traumatic stress associated with the bombing. Although I did not see a preview of this programme, I've been told it is very powerful.

Other programmes in the series cover topics including dyslexia, Lourdes and an artist with a disability. The last programme will air on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. All in all, this is a series highly recommended for viewing.

Joan Kavanagh – DPDU

---

## **National Advisory Group Update!**

The National Advisory Group (NAG) was formed in 2004, with initial members from Centres for Independent Living (CILs) nationally, Disability Federation Ireland (DFI) and Comhairle, and facilitated by Meitheal – the Community Development Support and Training organisation. NAG's purpose was set out to help advise and guide planning and implementation functions for CILs, holding the Independent Living Philosophy as a central value, and ultimately ensuring that support and resources needs of people with disabilities are met, through a process of equal participation. NAG members were to come from a background and position of National Operational relevance within key organisations. They would help develop a system through which a CILs needs could be methodically established and identified, then identify a strategy through which existing organisations could be engaged to meet these needs. The initial exploratory groups first task was to draw up Strategic and Operational plans and at this stage we contacted as many stakeholders as possible for feedback.

Much work has been done since this period of consultation. A tremendous amount of feedback was received – both from CILs and many other stakeholders. Many CILs held facilitated consultation sessions with their own boards, members and staff around this time, with many also attending the National CIL Network Meeting on February 26th to discuss NAGs progress and plans. The feedback from other stakeholders to whom the plan was circulated was also tremendous – these included Government Departments, Statutory and Disability organisations. As a result, the National Advisory Group postponed their March completion deadline and decided on a strategy to do justice to the quantity of feedback received.

Two NAG sub-groups were formed – one to address many general feedback issues in a contextualised, comprehensive introduction to the Strategic Plan. The second sub-group worked on the main themes and issues emerging from the feedback to ensure that they were specifically reflected within the plans themselves. Each group developed a range of recommendations, and at a meeting of the full NAG group on 20 April last, the final shape of the Strategic and Operational Plans was agreed upon. Final drafts were received from Meitheal, the NAG facilitators, on 27 April, and with one final NAG meeting on 12 May, the content was finalised.

### **Next Steps**

Currently the process of identifying and approaching prospective members to the permanent NAG Committee has begun, working from the results of a vote on preferred Statutory and Disability Agency members which was taken at the CIL Network Meeting in February last. It is planned to have all members in place for an inaugural meeting of this second NAG group on July 28th next. It was decided to launch the NAG Strategic and Operational plans, and also to officially hand over to the new NAG group in September, thereby giving some time for the new group to meet and settle in, and also allowing for the traditional inactivity of the month of August. This will also allow development time for some work items from the Operational plan, some of which have already begun.

For more information on the National Advisory Group as well as CIL activities, please visit the CIL website at [www.dublincil.org](http://www.dublincil.org), or email the CIL, Carmichael House office at [info@dublincil.org](mailto:info@dublincil.org)

Derval Sheridan

---