

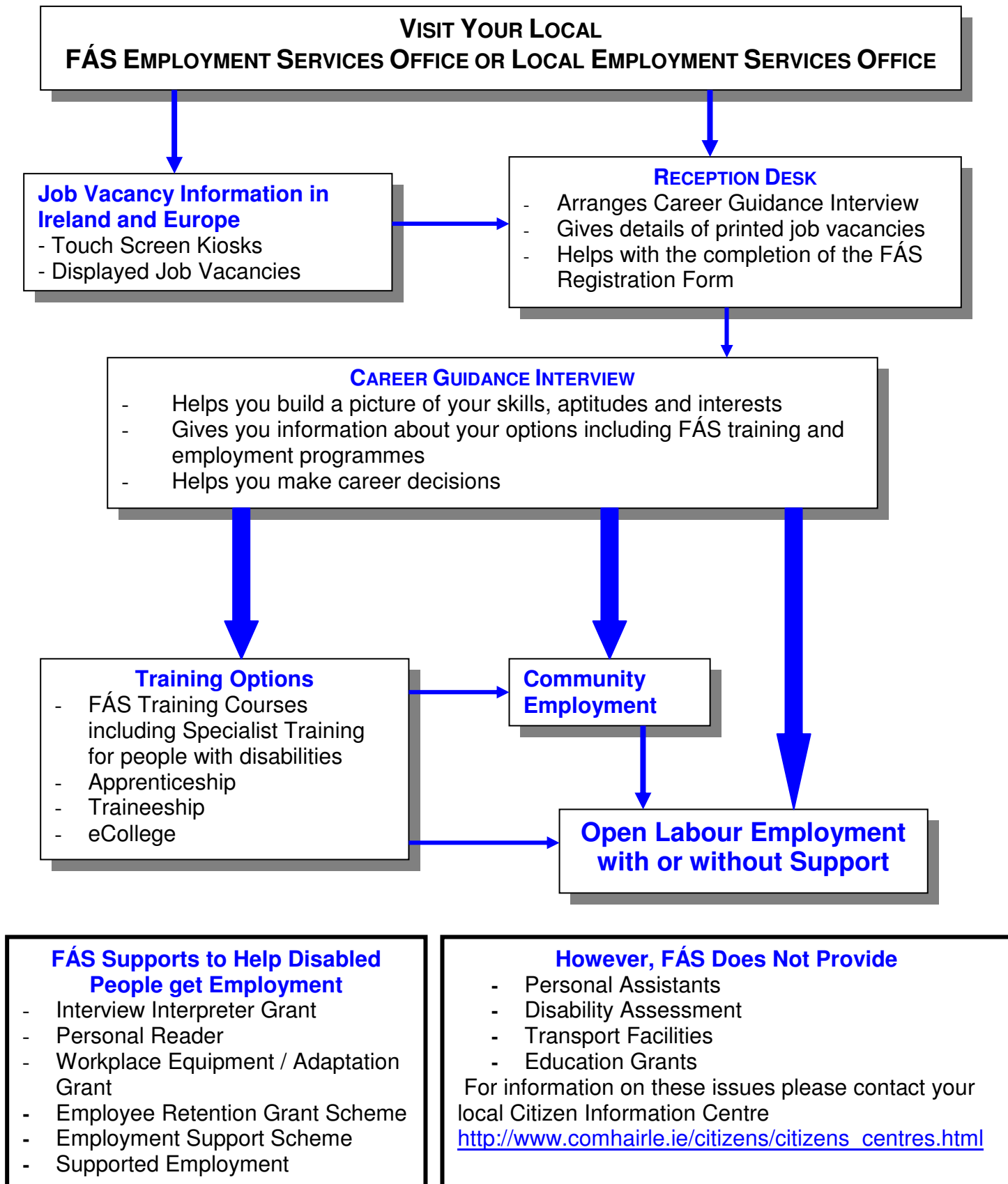


**FÁS Disability Policy and Development Unit
Newsletter
January 2005 Issue 4**

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FÁS provides a range of services to help people find paid employment.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED TO DO



Brochure developed in conjunction with the Forum of People with Disabilities

Ireland's First Ever O2 Ability Award Winning Companies Announced

The winners of the first ever O₂ Ability Awards will be announced next Wednesday, 2nd February 2005. These winners, which represent a huge cross-section of business sectors, will attend a special gala evening in Dublin Castle, where the two overall O₂ Ability Best Practice Companies 2005 will be announced by the Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern TD.

Over a hundred companies took part in the awards programme and out of these, fifty will receive an O₂ Ability Award, five will receive a category award and two overall best practice awards will be given, one for the private sector and one for the non-private sector. The O₂ Ability Awards included several stages of assessment, which addressed all aspects of employment including environmental accessibility, policies, procedures and attitudes. Judging was carried out by experts in the fields of disability management, corporate and business affairs, equality management, and people with disabilities. The awards programme is the first of its kind in Ireland, and are set to change the way that Irish companies look at the employment of people with disabilities into the future.

Caroline Casey, founder of the O₂ Ability Awards programme said, 'All those companies who entered the programme and those who will be honoured have already demonstrated a commitment to those people with disabilities seeking employment in Ireland. A strong emerging theme is one of 'diversity' being a key driver of success in many businesses across all the industry sectors. Looking at people's abilities rather than their disabilities has helped many businesses enjoy significant growth and profit.'

"We are proud to support the O₂ Ability Awards," said Ms. Danuta Gray, CEO, O₂ Ireland. "We embrace the diversity and individuality of people's needs and are committed to developing our services to enable others get the most from mobile technology. Seeing things differently is something that we believe can help us all achieve anything. By supporting these awards we want to celebrate the organisations that recognise the contribution made by people with diverse needs to our businesses."

The Award process is being driven by The Aisling Foundation in partnership with Access Ability, Disability Management Consultants. The award is sponsored by O₂ and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, FÁS, The Irish Times and NEWSTALK 106FM.

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Sarah Conroy



The TeDUB system (Technical Drawings Understanding for the Blind)

For people with a visual impairment the computer is becoming more and more important, and the IT industry offers many employment opportunities. When building software, designers often use a special language to communicate with one another, namely Unified Modeling Language, or UML. The TeDUB project has designed software, which allows people with visual impairments to access to UML diagrams. This will help visually impaired programmers to take a more active part in UML based activities.

THE TeDUB SOFTWARE GIVES ACCESS TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF UML DIAGRAMS, SUCH AS:

- CLASS DIAGRAMS
- USE CASE DIAGRAMS
- STATE CHART DIAGRAMS
- SEQUENCE DIAGRAMS

TeDUB provides the user with an interface to navigate and annotate UML diagrams via a number of input and output devices. The diagrams can be imported directly from UML drawing programs (such as IBM Rational Rose or Poseidon) using the XML format.

You can use the TeDUB system to navigate through UML diagrams using standard interfaces, such as a standard screen reader and sound feedback. But you can also navigate through UML diagrams with joysticks.

On the TeDUB UML website, www.tedub.net you can find general information about the project, as well as the current version of the TeDUB UML software. This software can be downloaded free of charge, but we would like to have your feedback in return.

The TeDUB system requirements are:

- Windows '98, ME, 2000 or XP
- Jaws 4.01 or higher (or any other screen reader)
- Windows DirectX 8.0a or higher
- Internet explorer 6.0

There are some tutorials, which will help you to read different types of UML diagrams with the TeDUB software. If you have any useful suggestions or useful links you would like to see on the website, please let us know by sending an email to info@tedub.net.

Downloading the TeDUB UML Software

You can download the TeDUB UML software from the website. The only thing you have to do is fill in your name and email address. The size of the program is around 5 MB. If you are using Jaws as a screen reader, during the installation process of the software the necessary joystick scripts will be installed in the appropriate folder on your hard disk. This will not affect the working of other programs on your computer. Some demonstration UML diagrams are also supplied with the software. As we said above, it is possible to use a joystick with the TeDUB software, but it is not compulsory. If you are interested in trying the software with a joystick, please let us know, as we have several joysticks that you can borrow.

We are very interested in your experiences with the TeDUB UML system. You will find a feedback forms on the website. Please help us to make the software as useful as possible!

We can also provide demonstrations and tutorial sessions on the TeDUB UML system for small groups of people. We can give these sessions at your school, university or workplace. For further information, please email us as info@tedub.net .

Mark Magennis

Mini Call Up by Eircom

Eircom provide a similar service to “Type Talk” in the UK, for the hearing impaired by providing the hearing impaired person with a minicom on their phone and when they want to make a call they dial 1800 201 042 – this takes them through to an operator who acts as a middle man between the customer and the person they are calling.

Development of CIL’s National Advisory Group

The Center for Independent Living (CIL) Carmichael House was the first Irish CIL, established by and for disabled people in 1992. It offered advocacy and a campaigning representation role for disabled people, striving to bring about a social model of service delivery. By 1993 CIL also offered support and information to anyone establishing a local county. In 1996, Independent Living Community Services Ltd (ILCS) was set up by CIL Carmichael House and Rehab Services, to provide vision for CIL planning and development in Ireland, and offer CIL support around day-to-day operations, including Leader and Personal Assistant (PA) training, management structure, process and finances. ILCS ensured that each CIL kept a sense of independence and identity, whilst benefiting from others experience and being part of a larger movement.

Over the years, lack of funding, and the emergence of many groups with a strong regional presence, meant change was needed. It was held that the future meant working with key organisations, with a firm interest in Independent Living, considerable strength in community development, and who were in a position to offer support and implementation services similar to those offered originally by ILCS. The decision was made to re-integrate ILCS planning and development functions into the activities and roles of CIL, Carmichael House, and this process began in 2004.

CIL’s National Advisory Group

A key part of this re-integration was to initiate a **National Advisory Group (NAG)** – to advise and guide planning and implementation functions for CILs. Group members would come from a background and position of relevance within key organisations. They would help develop a system through which a CILs organisational, communication, training and local networking needs, among others, could be methodically established and identified. They would then identify a strategy through which existing organisations could be engaged to meet these needs.

An initial exploratory NAG group formed mid-2004 with membership drawn from CILs nationally, and organisations such as Disability Federation Ireland (DFI) and Comhairle. This interim committee is task oriented, with the dual purpose of writing NAG's Terms of Reference and its Strategic Plan. A facilitator from Meitheal – the community development support and training organisation – is greatly assisting the group complete these tasks. When completed in early 2005, a new NAG group will form in order to implement the plan.

The ultimate purpose of CIL's NAG is to ensure that support and resource needs of disabled people are met. The group must provide a forum for disabled people to highlight and share skills, experience and knowledge with other relevant groups and agencies, beginning a process of equal participation so that real change happens. The Independent Living philosophy is a central NAG value, and will be promoted in their strategic plan. It is hoped that this will bring about a new era for all CILs and an opportunity for the Irish Independent Living Movement to strengthen its solidarity.

CIL Carmichael House

CIL Carmichael House continues to fully support this new group through our various projects.

Current CIL priorities include continued work on National Leader Forum development – 'working to give a voice to Leaders' thinking around the country'. Dublin Inner City Partnership produced a Leader Forum paper from 'listening sessions' countrywide. Feedback on this document is being gathered from original Forum Leaders, as well as Leader Coordinators countrywide, and a two-day meeting and training event is being organised for early 2005.

Another CIL priority is the NUI Certificate in Disability Studies Course offered through NUI Maynooth. This newly redesigned course addresses real Independent Living issues, examining current models of disability, evaluating issues of power, gender, and oppression, and exploring the barriers to inclusion which disabled people experience. This course is running in three centres countrywide at present, and with the knowledge that only when key CIL decision makers work together, can a real difference be made, CIL Carmichael House are currently running this course specifically for fourteen CIL managers.

For more information on CIL's National Advisory Group as well as CIL activities, please visit the CIL website at www.dublincil.org, or email the CIL, Carmichael House office at info@dublincil.org

Derval Sheridan

Disability Management – the ‘new kid on the block’ in disability

Disability Management (also known simply as DM) is little known in Ireland, but there are indications that this is about to change.

DM seeks to return to the workforce the great untapped skill reservoir of people out of work due to illness or disability sustained while they were in employment. The cost in human terms of so many people being idle is obvious, as is the absence from the labour market of so much expertise at a time of high employment and skills shortages.

However, it would be naïve not to believe that the inspiration for DM is also financial. Whether it lies with employers, insurance companies or, as in Ireland's case the state, the financial burden of maintaining large numbers of people on disability incomes due to injury or disability, sustained while they were in employment, is considerable.

FÁS was represented at the second International Forum on Disability Management in Maastricht in September. The Forum explored various return to work strategies and countries with a record of implementing DM contributed their experiences.

Some elements of DM actually exist in FÁS, albeit those who introduced them may not have been fully conversant with the DM concept. Delegates were particularly interested in the Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS) as a vehicle to assist people to return to work with their employer.

Few other countries have a similar support. That so many Irish employers appear to be unaware of ERGS may perhaps be an indication that DM is still in its infancy in Ireland.

Of course, other FÁS employment supports, such as Employment Support Scheme and Workplace Equipment and Adaptation Grant, are also excellent DM tools.

Central to DM is the explicit expectation of a return to work on behalf of all recipients of work related benefits. There is overwhelming evidence that the longer a person remains off work due to injury or disability, the less likelihood that they will return to the workforce.

If DM is to have a similar impact in Ireland, as it is having in North America and Europe, it will need a change in the mindset of the Department of Social and Family Affairs towards developing supports that prevent people going on long term disability payments, rather than assisting them when they have done so. For instance, a condition of the Back to Work Allowance is that a recipient with a disability must be 15 months unemployed (12 months if over 50). Practitioners of DM however would claim that such supports are only of value in the early stages of an individual's absence from work. They can produce evidence that anyone absent from work for 12 months or more due to illness or injury has only a 20% likelihood of resuming employment. Six weeks was the period mentioned most often at the Maastricht Forum by which engagement should have begun.

Many would consider a coalition between agencies having the laudable aim of integrating people with a disability into the open labour market and economists anxious to cut costs to be an unholy alliance. Be that as it may, it appears that DM will have an increasing influence on those of us involved, directly or indirectly, in assisting people with a disability to partake in the workforce.

Seamus Moriarty



EUROPEAN LABOR PROJECT CONFERENCE: Learning from Best Practice in Training & Employment of People with Disabilities in Europe

At the invitation of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, in partnership with CNEASTA and IASE, hosted the final conference of the Leonardo funded European LABOR project in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin, on Thursday 7th and Friday 8th October 2004.

This conference provided a forum to consider the findings of the LABOR project and provided an opportunity for discussion on current EU policies regarding disability and employment. Over 50 speakers and 320 delegates from 21 countries participated in the conference - representing service users, service providers, employers and legislators.

Mr. Michael Aherne, Minister for Trade and Commerce, Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment gave the opening address and welcomed everyone to this important event and gave particular commitment to the issues being discussed. The Conference Keynote speaker, Ms. Wallis Goelen, Head of the Unit for the Integration of People with Disabilities, European Commission, highlighted the Commission's perceptions of the key challenges involved in the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market.

Parallel Workshops, including a Services Users Forum, were organised around the following themes:

- Community-Based Employment
- The Role of Vocational Training
- Role of Sheltered Work and Transition to Community Jobs
- Improving the Labour Market Opportunities for People with Disabilities
- Changing to and Setting Up Supported Employment Systems
- Innovative Approaches to Assessment and Vocational Training
- Current and Future Issues in Delivery of Inclusive Employment

Key policy issues emerged from each of the workshops and these issues were explored further during the conference closing plenary debate, which was chaired by Ms. Kathy Sinnott, MEP.

Background to the Conference

The LABOr project was financed by the Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Union and run by EASPD and sixteen other partners throughout Europe, including the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies. The central aim of the project was the collection of material on training and employment measures for people with intellectual disability throughout Europe and the dissemination of this information through the development of a web-based Knowledge Centre. The LABOr partners collected information on legislation, labour market policies, methods and approaches, case studies, good practice measures and individual success stories. All material was then made available to the Knowledge Centre. A summary of the main findings of the LABOr project is available in a document entitled [From Disability to Ability - A Pathway to Equal Employment of People with Intellectual Disabilities](http://www.start-labor.be/filedir/LABOR%20BROCHURE%20ENGLISH.PDF) at [HTTP://WWW.START-LABOR.BE/FILEDIR/LABOR%20BROCHURE%20ENGLISH.PDF](http://www.start-labor.be/filedir/LABOR%20BROCHURE%20ENGLISH.PDF)

The Knowledge Centre is a web-based centre offering information that is tailored to the needs of different stakeholders and is based on the material gathered by the LABOr Partners and on scientific review of good practice.

Information is added and updated regularly. The knowledge gathered while setting up this Knowledge Centre will be used to support providers in fine-tuning their training and employment services and to advise the local, regional, national and European authorities in order to increase the employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. The Knowledge Centre can be accessed at www.start-labor.org and all conference papers are now available on this website.

Caroline Looney and Breda Casey
