

Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

2015-2024



Government of Ireland

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Foreword

The National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan contains a commitment to publish a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities. I am delighted to acknowledge the assistance of the National Disability Authority and of the full range of Government Departments in bringing this Strategy to fruition. In publishing this comprehensive strategy, we are ensuring a coordinated approach to support persons with disabilities to progress into employment. This is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and state agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities.

The Strategy's six strategic priorities are:

- Build skills, capacity and independence
- Provide bridges and supports into work
- Make work pay
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work
- Provide co-ordinated and seamless support
- Engage employers

The Government has already taken a number of key decisions as recommended in the Strategy:

- the public service employment target of people with disabilities will be increased on a phased basis as set out in the Strategy from 3% to 6%
- special public service competitions for people with disabilities will be arranged and we will open up alternative recruitment channels for people with disabilities
- the complex nature of the strategy requires a cross governmental approach which is why a group to oversee its implementation will be established and chaired by Fergus Finlay. This group will monitor the progress of the six strategic priorities of the strategy ensuring that each Government Department is fulfilling their obligations and meeting any necessary targets. Although this group will be

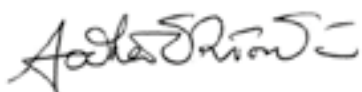
independent of Government, it will make periodic reports to the relevant Minister updating him or her on the development of the strategy

- an employer helpline will be provided with the assistance of the National Disability Authority, to provide expert guidance and peer support to employers in relation to the employment of staff with disabilities.

The Strategy sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities, who could and want to work, are supported and enabled to do so.

Implementing the strategy will require continuing interdepartmental co-operation and a joined-up approach to supports and services for jobseekers and workers with disabilities. The implementation of the strategy will be subject to regular monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years.

My Department is currently undertaking a consultation process with a view to putting in place a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2019. The consultation process – which will continue to the end of 2015 - allows interested parties to make recommendations in key areas such as service provision, accommodation, health, employment, and education. We have an opportunity now for the first time in many years to address the issues of concern to people with disabilities in a sustained way. This Employment Strategy is one of the key building blocks in that process.



Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, TD
Minister of State for New Communities,
Culture, Equality and Drug Strategy

Introduction

This strategy sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities, who are able to, and want to work are supported and enabled to do so. Having a job brings economic independence, social inclusion, and personal fulfilment. This is why a Government strategy for employment of people with disabilities is important.

People with disabilities are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age. The reasons for this are complex, and include level of education and skills, fears around loss of benefits, employer know-how, low expectations, and limited re-entry to work following onset of a disability, as well as a higher incidence of ill-health. Therefore even at the height of the economic boom the employment rate of people with disabilities remained stubbornly low. This strategy will ensure that people with disabilities will not be left behind as employment recovers.

The employment strategy is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and state agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities. In tandem with that, it seeks to ensure there will be joined-up services and supports at local level to support individuals on their journey into and in employment.

This strategy and the annual actions within it will form part of the Action Plan for Jobs.

The strategy extends across the range of people with disabilities, whatever the kind of impairment – people with physical or sensory disabilities, those with mental health conditions, those who acquire a disability, those with intellectual disabilities and those with autism. The focus of the strategy includes not only those who are job-ready and have minimal or no support needs, but also those who, given the right supports, can work.

This strategy document is set out in two parts. The first part sets out the overarching strategic approach. The second part is the implementation plan for the first three years of the strategy 2015-2017. This initial action plan builds the foundations for the more extensive action programmes to follow, as individual actions are scoped, trialled, evaluated, and then progressively scaled up and rolled out. While some initial targets have been set in the action plan, more detailed targets will be developed as new initiatives are trialled and then scaled up.

Vision and underpinning values

The vision for this strategy is that **People with disabilities can get a job and enjoy a rewarding career**. The following values underpin this strategy:

- People with disabilities are enabled to **have jobs**, earn a living and make a contribution
- People with disabilities are supported to **maximise their potential**
- The focus is on a **person's capacity** not their incapacity
- The strategy covers people across the **spectrum of disability**
- It **pays** to have a job
- People with disabilities get the **supports** they need to work
- Support systems that cross departmental or agency boundaries are mutually coherent and provide a **joined-up** system and joined-up pathways
- Actions in this Strategy are built into the **mainstream** national employment strategy

Strategic priorities

The strategy's six priority areas are:

- Build skills, capacity and independence
- Provide bridges and supports into work
- Make work pay
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work
- Provide co-ordinated and seamless support
- Engage employers

Minimise the flows into joblessness

A core feature of the strategy is to minimise people becoming jobless in the first case. Key areas of action are to enhance education, training and pathways into work for young adults with disabilities, and to support people who acquire a disability in the course of their working life to reintegrate into work.

Achieving increased employment

The aim of this strategy is to increase the numbers of people at work, and the proportion of people with disabilities in a job. The measures set out in the strategy aim to address the barriers to employment and improve pathways to work, with the impact on employment building up over time. The overall number of people with disabilities at work will depend not only on the measures in this strategy, but also on conditions generally in the labour market, which are uncertain over the medium term. Based on an analysis of a range of medium-term jobs forecasts, and the likely impact of measures set out in this strategy, particularly those aimed at stemming the flow to joblessness, it is a reasonable expectation that the employment rate of people with disabilities will increase by 15% from its 2011 level, with an increase in the employment rate from 33% to 38% by 2024.

The overall employment forecast has been derived by examining

- a range of forecasts for net increase in jobs as the economy recovers
- the scale of annual job vacancies, and the competition to fill them
- the likely contribution a reduction in flows into joblessness could deliver over the ten year period of the strategy
- international experience of return to work rates among people with a disability who are long-term out of work
- the potential upper limits to labour supply by people with disabilities, given levels of illness and incapacity, even if employment conditions and support arrangements were ideal
- an exercise examining employment rates by reference to European experience, taking account of national differences in the measurement of disability
- a synthesis of what could be realistically achievable, taking both supply and demand sides of the job market into consideration

Raising employment levels of people with disabilities is a long-term project:

- Measures to reduce the flows into joblessness take time to make an impact on the numbers. These measures focus on young people with disabilities entering adulthood, and on adults experiencing onset of disability
- A key element of the strategy is to improve education, raise expectations, and expose post-primary students with disabilities to work opportunities. Work with today's young teenagers may take a number of years to bring results
- A high proportion of those not in work have moderate to high support needs, and it may take time to reorient current systems of support to address those needs

Some people with disabilities have problems of ill-health, poor stamina, or serious difficulties with everyday tasks and functions. These can affect people's availability for or capacity for work. The proportion of people with disabilities experiencing such difficulties is higher than for the population at large, so as a result, the percentage in employment is always likely to be lower than among the population at large.

How the strategy was developed

Building on an established body of national and international research evidence about what works, this strategy was developed following detailed interdepartmental discussion across Government departments and agencies, a consultation process with disability interests including input from the Disability Stakeholder Group, and discussion with employer and trade union bodies.

Implementation

Implementing the strategy will require continuing interdepartmental co-operation and a joined-up approach to supports and services for jobseekers and workers with disabilities. An Implementation Group will also be established to monitor the progress of the six strategic priorities of the Strategy and present periodic reports to the relevant Minister on the same. The implementation of the strategy will be subject to regular monitoring, and there will be a review and renewal every three years.

1 Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities

This comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities sets out a strategic approach by Government over 10 years to ensure that people with disabilities who want to work in the open labour market are supported and enabled to do so.

The strategy framework is accompanied by a detailed, phase-one, three-year action plan covering 2015-2017. This action plan has over 80 time-bound commitments, which constitute the building blocks for the implementation of the full strategy. Revised action plans will be developed at three-year intervals over the lifetime of the employment strategy.

The cross-governmental approach used in the strategy, brings together actions by different departments and state agencies, in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities. It provides for development of joined-up services and supports at local level to support individuals on their journey into employment and to develop and sustain a career.

The strategy aims to be comprehensive in that it

- Includes people with physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health disabilities, and people with autism
- Ranges across the spectrum of abilities and degrees of impairment
- Addresses both the demand side and the supply side of the labour market
- Covers a range of employment drivers including education, transport, welfare policy, activation and direct supports
- Covers both public and private sector employment

Process to develop the strategy

Work on the detail of the strategy was conducted by a group of senior officials from Government Departments, working together with the National Disability Authority, and with Christy Lynch.¹ This built on a wide body of research evidence of key issues and successful practice in employment of people with disabilities.

Consultation

The National Disability Authority invited written submissions, and 47 were received from disability organisations, employment organisations, social partners and individuals. It also conducted a consultation session with disability organisations. Key points from the consultation are summarised in Appendix C.

Successive drafts of the strategy were presented to the Disability Stakeholder Group² and to the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group³ for their views, and amended drafts were prepared following these discussions.

¹ CEO of KARE, founder member of the Irish Association of Supported Employment, was invited by the Minister of State to work with the National Disability Authority in co-ordinating development of the strategy by Government Departments.

² The Disability Stakeholders Group consists of the main national disability umbrella bodies, along with a number of individuals with lived experience of disability. It was appointed by the Minister of State for Equality, with a remit in relation to implementation of the National Disability Strategy.

³ The National Disability Strategy Implementation Group consists of senior officials from Government Departments, the County and City Managers Association, the National Disability Authority, and the Disability Stakeholders Group. It is chaired by the Minister of State for New Communities, Culture, Equality and Drugs Strategy.

Vision

People with disabilities can get a job and enjoy a rewarding career

Values

The following values underpin the strategy:

- People with disabilities are enabled to have jobs, earn a living and make a contribution
- People with disabilities are supported to maximise their potential
- The focus is on a person's capacity not their incapacity
- The strategy covers people across the spectrum of disability
- It pays to have a job
- People with disabilities get the supports they need to work
- Support systems that cross departmental or agency boundaries are mutually coherent and provide a joined-up system and joined-up pathways
- Actions in this Strategy are built into the mainstream national employment strategy

Stemming the flow into joblessness

A strong core theme emerged from in-depth research into the constraints on people with disabilities in finding employment: that the most effective way to address joblessness is to prevent its occurrence in the first instance.

Consequently, an overarching focus of the employment strategy is to stem the flow into joblessness of

- Young people leaving the education system
- Those acquiring a disability in adult life

The employment strategy therefore takes a life-course approach which provides pathways for entry and re-entry into work.

Strategic priorities

The six strategic priorities are as follows:

- Build skills, capacity and independence
- Provide bridges and supports into work
- Make work pay
- Promote job retention and re-entry to work
- Provide co-ordinated and seamless support
- Engage employers

Strategic Priorities – focused areas of action

Strategic Priority I: Build skills, capacity and independence

Statement of Intent

Each person with a disability will have the education, skills, competence and independence to obtain employment.

Actions include the following:

- Promote positive expectations around the person's capacity from birth or onset of disability
- Promote expectations of employability
- Support for students with disabilities to learn
- Develop and foster each student's independence during their school-years
- Plan young people's transitions from school to training and further education

Raising achievement raises employment

On average, people with disabilities have lower skills and qualifications than the population at large.⁴ As job prospects and earnings are strongly linked to education levels raising the educational achievement of young people with disabilities in turn can only have positive results in terms of employment rates.

⁴ NDA, (2006), A Strategy of Engagement towards a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

Actions under this heading focus on developing the education, skills, competence and independence of people with disabilities, and in particular of young people, so that they will have the capacity and confidence to obtain employment.⁵ This is rooted in the evidence that these factors are linked to success in obtaining and retaining employment. The actions set out under this goal are also aimed at fostering positive expectations around the potential of people with disabilities.

Planning ahead in the school years

Putting employment on the agenda for young people with disabilities during their school years has a positive impact on longer-term employment prospects. The UK ‘Getting a Life’ project, as part of the ‘Getting Employment Now’ programme, focused on helping young people with disabilities to plan for future lives and careers after school. Results from this programme show that a focus on employment and career planning need to start as early as age 13 or the first year of post-primary school rather than leaving it to the last year or two of school life.

Work experience

Research evidence shows that young people with disabilities who take part in work experience during their school years, and in particular, paid work, have a significantly higher employment rate.⁶

⁵ OECD (2010). *Sickness, disability and work: breaking the barriers. A synthesis of findings across OECD countries.* Paris: OECD

⁶ Wehman P, Revell WG, Brooke V (2003). *Competitive Employment: Has It Become the “First Choice” Yet?* *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, V14(3), pp 163-173

Strategic Priority 2: Provide bridges and supports into work

Statement of Intent

People with disabilities will be provided with individualised bridges and supports to secure jobs in the open labour market.

Actions include the following:

- Expand the INTREO service on a phased basis to cater for people with a disability who present at an INTREO office
- Promote and support self-employment as a viable option for people with disabilities
- Continue to develop accessible transport
- Promote work sampling

Some people with disabilities will secure jobs in the open labour market without difficulty. But for others, some supports are required to enable them to obtain a job in the first case, through active engagement with employers and job placement. Others may need initial or ongoing assistance in settling into a job or in managing issues that may arise.

The Department of Social Protection operates a number of schemes to support people with disabilities to get a job and to stay in work. These include the EmployAbility Programme of supported employment, a wage subsidy scheme and supports to private sector employers with the cost of adaptations or assistive technology.

Intreo will become a gateway to employment activation for people with disabilities, commencing on a phased basis from February 2015.

Managing transitions

Successful planning and management of transitions from education to employment is critical. A good practice from the US is that in the final three years of special schooling, Individual Education Plans become Individual Transition Plans.

Work experience which allows people with disabilities trial different work options in a meaningful way can provide the opportunity to test their skills and preferences for different types of work.

Transport

Transport to get to work is essential. About one in six people with a disability not in work who would be interested in a job cite transport or parking as an issue for them. Those with sight, mobility or intellectual disabilities are most likely to cite transport as an issue for employment.⁷ For people with disabilities, travelling as a car passenger is the most common mode of transport. This employment strategy, among other transport measures, will pursue car-pooling initiatives to support people with disabilities get to and from work.

Universally-designed public transport that is accessible to people with disabilities is also a key element. Significant progress has been made under the National Disability Strategy in developing accessible public transport; for example, the entire Dublin Bus fleet is accessible for wheelchair users, as are Bus Éireann services in major cities, while the Rural Transport programme has developed a series of door-to-door services in rural areas.

⁷ National Disability Survey (2006) Vol. 2, Table 7.30

Strategic Priority 3: Make work pay

Statement of Intent

Work will pay, and will be seen to pay. People who get a job and have to leave it will have a streamlined return to disability payments.

Actions include the following:

- Develop ready reckoners to show how someone with a disability will fare financially if they take a job
- Maintain a streamlined way for people to resume their disability payment if they have an episodic condition or have to leave a job

People with disabilities need to know that it pays to work. This involves not only addressing disincentives to work in the system, but also ensuring that people know with confidence what they will take home when in work compared to their entitlements on welfare. Accurate, trustworthy and widely-available knowledge in this area has an important role to play in making the decision to work. Research shows that fear of losing entitlements, and fear about not requalifying for benefit if it doesn't work out, can deter people from seeking employment.

Since 2007, not only was the first €120 of earnings from employment disregarded in the means-test for Disability Allowance, but a sliding scale was introduced for earnings up to €350. However there is evidence that employment is often pitched at the lower limit and that full use is not being made of the opportunity offered by the earnings taper on higher levels of income.

The medical card is of particular benefit to people with disabilities, and valued by them and their families, not only because people with disabilities are more likely to experience ill-health than the population at large, but also because certain supports are linked to the medical card, including assistive technologies. The Keane report (2014) has made recommendations in relation to a continuing use of discretion in the award of medical cards to people with severe

medical conditions, and in relation to decoupling certain entitlements from the medical card and dealing with them separately. Work has also begun towards a wider reconfiguration of entitlement to medical care, with the intention to introduce, in stages, free GP care at the point of use, as a step towards introducing universal health insurance.

An interdepartmental group is being established, under independent chairmanship, on making work pay for persons with a disability. This group will look at the complex interactions between the benefit system, including the medical card, the additional costs of work associated with a disability, and the net income gains in employment, with a view to devising workable solutions to difficulties identified.

Strategic Priority 4: Promote job retention and re-entry to work

Statement of Intent

Individuals who acquire a disability during their working years will be supported to obtain, retain or regain employment, as appropriate.

Actions include the following:

- Develop guidelines to promote intervention in early stages of absence from work
- Pilot new approaches to integrating work into the recovery model of mental health integration, including job coaches in mental health teams
- A continued programme to train trade union ‘disability champions’ to support colleagues returning to work following onset of disability

About seventy per cent of people of working age with a disability have acquired their condition in their working years.⁸ Some have

⁸ National Disability Survey 2006.

done so when no longer in employment, but for others, the onset of a disability is a trigger to leave work, and the prospect of a return to work diminishes sharply the longer the individual is absent. Early intervention to support return to and reintegration to work can help reduce the outflow to joblessness.

Strategic Priority 5: Provide co-ordinated and seamless support

Statement of Intent

The services provided by public bodies to support people with disabilities in their pathway to work and to sustain them in employment, will be both seamless and co-ordinated.

Actions include the following:

- Work to develop a co-ordinated policy approach to assist individuals with high support needs to obtain and retain employment
- Develop interdepartmental protocols for cross-referrals at national and local level

Many Government Departments and agencies have a role to play in supporting people with disabilities in their pathway to work and in sustaining them in employment, including the education and training system, the employment activation and support system, HSE-funded disability support services, and transport services.

A core purpose of this national strategy is to ensure that both national policies and local delivery are consistent and co-ordinated between the different agencies involved, so that from the perspective of the individual, it is a seamless system. This will be underpinned by the development of clear protocols between agencies, and by co-ordination of implementation of this strategy by senior officials of all the key Departments.

Strategic Priority 6: Engage Employers

Statement of Intent

Employers will be supported and encouraged to employ people with disabilities, to support job retention and to facilitate return to work after the onset of a disability.

Actions include the following:

- Encourage employers to provide work experience for people with disabilities
- Engage employers in actions that promote the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in open labour market employment
- Disseminate information to employers on the supports that are available to facilitate the employment or retention of people with disabilities
- Explore the idea of expanding internships as a recruitment route for both public and private sectors, in discussion with a range of stakeholders
- Employer Peer Support Network. IBEC will work with ICTU, Chambers Ireland and the NDA to input into the development of a national employer peer support network

The active commitment of both public and private sector employers is crucial to any job strategy for people with disabilities. This involves an openness to employ people with disabilities, commitment to inclusive workplaces, and the know-how to manage and support staff with disabilities.

In the public sector, the long-standing target of 3% of employees with disabilities, which is on a statutory footing since 2005, has raised employment levels, and has helped develop a body of expertise across the public sector around employment of people with disabilities.

The Government will progressively increase the statutory target of 3% of employees with disabilities in the public sector towards 6% by 2024.

As normal recruitment to the public service resumes after a period of embargos, the public sector can play its part in providing job opportunities for school leavers. The use of internships and new recruitment avenues will be examined, along with the provision of special competitions restricted to qualified applicants with disabilities. Strategies to support people with disabilities in employment, and measures to encourage return to work and job retention after the onset of a disability will continue.

Private sector employment is not based on any mandatory quotas. Nonetheless, many private sector employers successfully employ staff with disabilities. However, in other cases, there may be apprehension or a lack of know how. Provision of authoritative information and expert advice can support those employers who are new to this area. Peer support and sharing peer learning between employers can help build confidence and know-how. If more employers take on or retain staff with disabilities, this will also increase the pool of employers who have experience and competence in supporting employees with disabilities and thus widen the pool of potential job vacancies people will be considered for in the future.

The Government will fund the establishment of an employer helpline to provide expert guidance and peer support to employers in relation to employment of staff with disabilities.

2 Evidence and context

This employment strategy is grounded in evidence of the barriers to employment for people with disabilities, and the evidence of what works in addressing those barriers. This section sets out this evidence, along with the wider policy and economic background.

People with disabilities in Ireland are only half as likely to be in employment as others of working age. The reasons for this are complex, and include level of education and skills, fears around loss of benefits, employer know-how, low expectations, and limited re-entry to work following the onset of a disability.

Importance of work for people with disabilities

Work has a central role in most people's lives, offering meaning and purpose, social contacts and support, social identity and status, involvement, purposeful activity and use of time, and a sense of personal achievement, as well as an income.⁹ These are all important issues for people with disabilities, as for others in our society.

The evidence shows that for some people with disabilities, work contributes towards their recovery. Work is important both in maintaining mental health and in promoting the recovery of those who have experienced mental health difficulties.¹⁰

The National Economic and Social Forum (2007) report on Mental Health & Social Inclusion stated that

“Meaningful occupation, whether paid or unpaid, is central to recovery and...full social inclusion and participation in society is the key goal, whether in or outside the labour market. Nevertheless, work remains a key route to social inclusion for many.”¹¹

⁹ Shepherd (1989) The value of work in the 1980s. *Psychiatric Bulletin* 1989

¹⁰ People with mental illness are known to be sensitive to the negative effects of unemployment and the loss of structure, purpose and identity which it brings (Rowland & Perkins, 1988).

¹¹ National Economic and Social Forum (2007) *Mental Health & Social Inclusion*, pp. 170-171.

Enabling people to retain or gain employment has a profound effect on more life domains than almost any other medical or social intervention.¹²

Facts and figures

Disability and poverty

Employment has a key role to play in preventing poverty among people with disabilities. Research carried out by the ESRI shows a strong link between disability, joblessness, and risk of poverty, and conversely that employment is a safeguard for people with disabilities against experiencing poverty in their working years or on retirement. Over 80% of people who were ill/disabled and at risk of poverty were in households with nobody at work. Over 80% of those who were ill/disabled but not at risk of poverty had income from employment (67%) or a private pension from employment (14%).¹³

Employment

The 2011 census showed 33% of people with disabilities of working age¹⁴ in work, compared to 66% of non-disabled people. In total, there were 112,000 people with disabilities in employment. In international terms, Ireland's employment rate for people with disabilities is low, even allowing for inter-cultural differences in how people report themselves as having a disability.

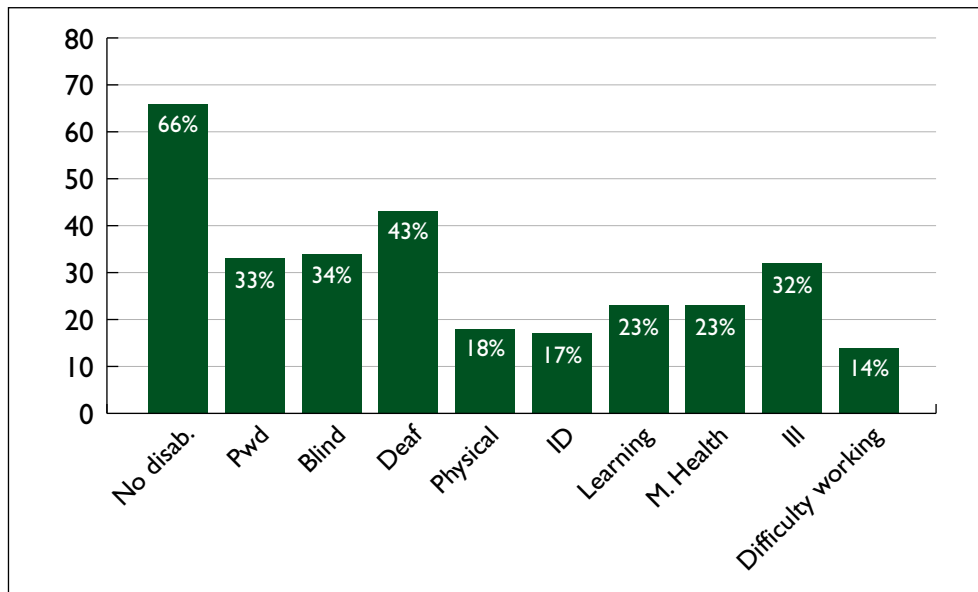
There are particularly low employment rates for people with physical disabilities, and those with intellectual disability or with mental health difficulties.

¹² OECD (2011) Sick on the job? Myths and realities about Mental Health and Work

¹³ Gannon and Nolan (2005) Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland, Dublin: Equality Authority and National Disability Authority. Tables 5.5 and 5.6

¹⁴ Age 20 to 64

Employment rate of people with disabilities, 2011, by disability type



Source: Census 2011

Interest in employment

People with disabilities experience higher rates of ill-health than the population at large, so there are many people with disabilities who would not be available for work. People with very complex disabilities may also be very restricted in their capacity to work.

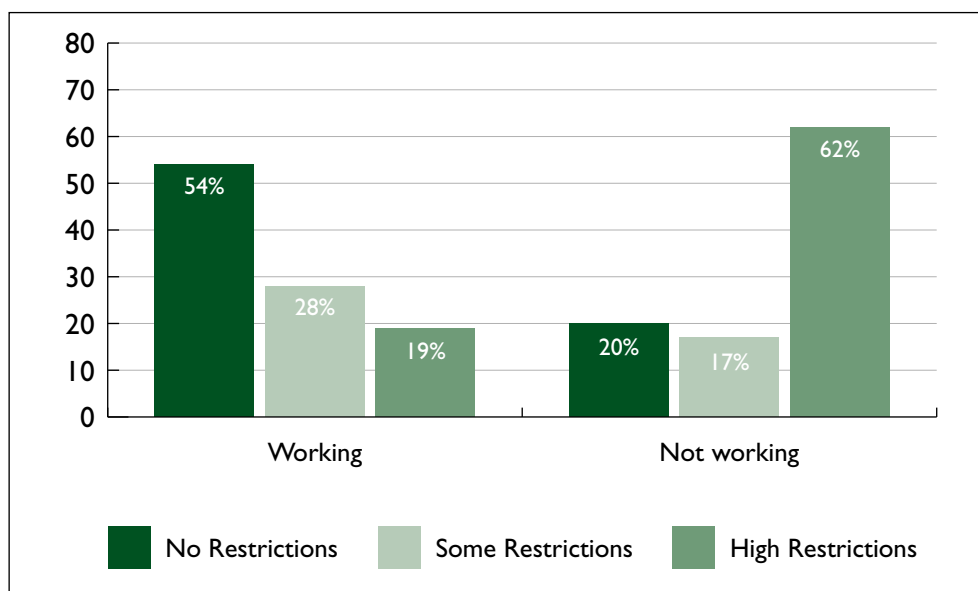
However, there is a significant group of people with disabilities who have expressed an interest in work, given appropriate circumstances. Almost two-thirds of younger people in the 18-34 age group and over one-third of all people with disabilities expressed an interest in having a job.¹⁵ Half of all those with mental health difficulties want to work.

¹⁵ National Disability Survey 2006, vol 2

Support needs

Compared to those at work, a higher proportion of those people with disabilities who are not in work are limited in the type or amount of work they could do. On the other hand, about 15% of those with difficulty working are in fact in work. This indicates that with the right supports, it can be possible that people overcome difficulties and engage in work. The single most frequent change that those who would like to work suggest is more flexible hours.

% of people with disabilities at work and not at work, by degree of restriction on amount of work they can do (2002)



Source: QNHS special module on employment and disability 2002

Educational attainment

Lower rates of employment reflect lower levels of education for people with disabilities in comparison to their non-disabled peers. Research indicates a close link between education levels, employment chances, and income earned over someone's lifetime.¹⁶

¹⁶ Census 2011

Some of the difference in education levels reflects the fact that people with disabilities are older than the average, but differences in outcomes still remain for younger people with disabilities.¹⁷

People with disabilities and with none 2011, by highest education received and impairment type

	None or primary	Lr sec	Upr sec	Cert or Diploma	Degree
No disability	12%	26%	22%	11%	28%
All pwd	37%	28%	16%	7%	13%
Sight	44%	24%	15%	6%	11%
Hearing	44%	26%	14%	6%	11%
Physical	46%	27%	14%	5%	8%
ID	67%	20%	8%	2%	3%
Learning	50%	26%	13%	5%	7%
Mental Health	32%	29%	18%	7%	14%
Other disability	36%	27%	15%	7%	14%

Source: Census 2011. pwd – people with disabilities. ID – intellectual disability. Lr. sec – Junior Cert.. Upr sec –Leaving Cert

Policy context

Legislative background

The legislative framework that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities at work includes

- Employment Equality Act 1998
- Equal Status Acts 2000
- Employment Equality Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005

¹⁷ Gannon and Nolan (2005) Disability and Social Inclusion in Ireland

¹⁸ F McGinnity, D Watson, G Kingston (2012) Analysing the experience of discrimination in Ireland – evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010.

The Employment Equality Acts (1998 and 2004) promote equality by prohibiting discrimination on certain grounds including disability. Research by the ESRI, based on CSO data, shows that between 2004 and 2010, work-related discrimination remained static for non-disabled people, but fell for those with a disability.¹⁸

The Employment Equality Acts outlaw discrimination against people with disabilities in the areas of recruitment, employment, promotion and training, and sets out what does and does not constitute discrimination. Employers are required to take reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of employees and prospective employees with disabilities where they can do the job if so accommodated. However, employers are not obliged to recruit or retain someone who could not undertake the duties of the job if so accommodated.

‘Reasonable accommodation’ may typically consist of modification to work tasks, to start and finish times, changes to the workplace or workstation, or the provision of assistive technology. ‘Reasonable’ in this context, means that the provision of such changes does not constitute a disproportionate burden to the employer.

There is some evidence that changes in workplace practices can have positive effects. A five country study found some limited evidence from Canada, Sweden and the UK suggesting that light duties and reduced hours were associated with the likelihood of returning to work after time off, and reduction in multiple absences; and that the chance to adjust work to reflect health after a long period of absence (adjustment latitude) increased the likelihood of return to work.¹⁹

¹⁸ F McGinnity, D Watson, G Kingston (2012) Analysing the experience of discrimination in Ireland – evidence from the QNHS Equality Module 2010.

¹⁹ Whitehead M, Burström B, Dahl E, et al. (2009). Helping chronically ill and disabled people into work: what can we learn from international comparative analyses? Final report. Public Health Research Consortium, York. www.york.ac.uk/phrc/papers

Public sector employment

Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 obliges public bodies in so far as is practicable to take all reasonable measures to support and promote the employment of people with disabilities, and, unless there are good reasons to the contrary, to achieve a target percentage of staff with disabilities, currently 3%.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been signed by Ireland, and the Government is committed to its ratification. The provisions of Article 27 are summarised below:

- People with disabilities have the right to work, on an equal basis, with others
- People with disabilities have effective access to vocational guidance, placement, and training
- Employing people with disabilities should be promoted through affirmative action and other measures
- People with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodation at work
- Work experience as a measure to employ people with disabilities should be promoted in open labour market

Programme of reform in disability and mental health services

An active programme of reform in both disability and in mental health services is being driven by a series of key policy documents:

- Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services (2012)
- New Directions, a Review of Adult Day Services (2012)
- A Vision for Change (2006) – national mental health strategy

The reform programme for disability services sees a move away from segregated centre-based day programmes, including sheltered workshops, towards supporting individuals with disabilities to participate in the everyday lives of their community, including engaging in employment. Guiding principles are that the support should be tailored to individual need, and would be person-centred and flexible.

The Mental Health strategy, *A Vision for Change*, recommends that evidence-based approaches to training and employment for people with mental health difficulties should be adopted and such programmes should be put in place by the agencies with responsibility in this area.

This employment strategy and these developments in disability and mental health services are clearly intermeshed.

Economic context

In 2011, Ireland had the highest proportion in the EU of 18-59 year olds living in jobless households, at 15.8% compared to an EU average of 11.1%. Ireland's expenditure on sickness and disability payments, as a proportion of national income, was the highest in the EU. Increasing employment and participation rates among people with disabilities can help to raise our national employment rate, and reduce the number of jobless households.

Fiscal context

The implementation of this employment strategy for people with disabilities is taking place within an ever-changing external environment that includes necessary fiscal adjustments and public sector reform. In spite of the challenging economic and fiscal situation, it is important to ensure that progress is achieved in supporting people with disabilities to gain and retain employment. The resources already in place for disability need to be deployed in an effective way that support and do not hinder job opportunities. The strategy is consistent with overall fiscal policy and, in particular, Government objectives with respect to achieving a balanced budget by 2018, as set out in the Mid-Term Economic Strategy.

Delivering increased employment

This strategy is designed to increase the numbers of people with disabilities in employment, and their employment rate. In particular the strategy aims to intervene early and provide clear pathways and supports into work, in order to reduce the numbers of those who never join the labour force or who leave it after onset of a disability. The impact of the measures will build up over time.

The likely impact of this strategy on employment levels and rates was based on an examination of

- a range of forecasts for net increase in jobs as the economy recovers
- the scale of annual job vacancies, and the competition to fill them
- the likely contribution a reduction in flows into joblessness could deliver over the ten year period of the strategy
- international experience of return to work rates among people with a disability who are long-term out of work
- the potential upper limits to labour supply by people with disabilities, given levels of illness and incapacity, even if employment conditions and support arrangements were ideal
- an exercise examining employment rates by reference to European experience, taking account of national differences in the measurement of disability
- taking a synthesis view of what could be realistically achievable, taking both supply and demand sides of the job market into consideration

The number of people with disabilities at work over the next ten years will reflect the interface between the supply of people with disabilities interested in work, and the demand by employers. Among the factors which influence this will be the overall performance of the economy, how well the skills and competences employers are looking for are matched by those on offer from people with disabilities, on good bridges and supports to make links between jobseekers and

employers, and on employer know-how to support and sustain someone with a disability to remain in work.

Even at times when unemployment may be static or even falling, over half a million new hires are made each year in the Irish economy.²⁰ It is a central goal of this Employment Strategy to ensure that people with disabilities are supported and enabled to get their fair share of current jobs, as well as the opportunity to grow the number of people with disabilities in employment as jobs are expected to expand over the next decade.

How the economy will do over the medium term will affect potential job opportunities for all, including for people with disabilities. Forecasting the future supply of jobs is always an uncertain exercise, depending as it does on developments in the international economy, especially in our trading partners, as well as what happens in Ireland.

The Irish labour market has shown a significant recovery since the 2008 economic collapse. Looking at the seasonally-adjusted figures for employment, an additional 94,000 people were at work in the third quarter of 2014 compared to the low point of Q3 of 2012.²¹

Based on an analysis of a range of medium-term jobs forecasts, and the likely impact of measures set out in this strategy, particularly those aimed at stemming the flow to joblessness, it could reasonably be expected to achieve over time an increase in employment levels from 33% to up to 38% by 2024. This would mean an increase of up to 15% on current employment levels.

This would be achieved progressively over time, with much of the increase occurring towards the latter end of the period. This is because many of the actions to achieve this will involve a preparation and foundation phase and would take time to fully roll out.

²⁰ CSO Job Churn database. www.cso.ie

²¹ Quarterly National Household Survey revised seasonally adjusted series. StatBank Table QNQ03 and QNQ20, www.cso.ie

Raising employment rates for people with disabilities is a long-term project that will take time to bear fruit, even with optimum policies in place, and optimum labour market conditions. Some of the measures will take longer to have an impact than others, for example, those focused on the earlier years of education.

Potential labour supply

People with disabilities are on average older than the workforce as a whole, and are more likely than their peers to experience poor health, restricted stamina, or complex disabilities. These factors mean that however good the economic conditions or however effective the employment strategy, the employment rate for people with disabilities would always be below their non-disabled peers.

Somewhat over a third of people with disabilities of working age express an interest in work, with the proportion significantly higher in younger age groups. Two thirds of those aged under 45 expressed an interest in a job, given suitable circumstances. People with disabilities in older age groups, those experiencing health challenges or significantly reduced energy or stamina are much less likely to express an interest in having a job.²² Fears also play a role in lowering the numbers interested in a job – a perception there are no suitable jobs available, fears of losing supports or benefits, worry about possible employer attitudes, possible isolation or discrimination.²³

People with disabilities who are outside the workforce have a very different profile with much more restricted capacity to work than those already in work.²⁴ So it would be expected that those currently economically inactive who take up employment would be more likely to opt for part-time rather than full-time work.

²² Overall, about half of people with disabilities report their health as being good or very good, with the rest from fair to very bad. Younger people with disabilities report better health, with 63% of 18-34 year olds compared to 37% of 55-64 year olds reporting their health as good or very good. National Disability Survey 2006, vol 2, Table 10.3

²³ National Disability Survey (2006) vol 2 Table 7.2I

²⁴ See Quarterly National Household Survey modules on disability 2002, 2004

Main requirements to be able to work

For those who are out of work, and would wish to work, the main perceived barriers are, in order of importance

- Flexible work arrangements (45%)
- Modified tasks (29%)
- Wage subsidy (24%)
- Transport/parking (17%)
- Accessible building (13%)
- Human support (7%)
- Assistive technology or physical adjustments (4%)²⁵

An important part of this strategy will be to work with employers to guide on how with flexible work arrangements or modified tasks, many people with disabilities could be accommodated to work at little or no cost; and to ensure that other supports or accommodations can also be made available through a mix of public and employer support. Universal design of workplaces could play an important role in ensuring disability-friendly work environments without further modification.

The number of jobless people with disabilities seeking work is likely to be sensitive to the perceived progress in the job market, as well as the pace at which different barriers to employment are being addressed. The success of this strategy in raising employment levels will be critically dependent on progress being made in the wider economy and job market.

²⁵ National Disability Survey 2006, Table 7.29

Drawing on research evidence

This strategy has drawn on a body of national and international research on disability and employment including

- The National Disability Authority's report **A Strategy of Engagement** – towards a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities
- A suite of reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on disability and employment 2010 to 2013 including '**Sickness, Disability and Work – Breaking the barriers**'
- UK Department of Work and Pensions (2013) **What works for whom in helping disabled people into work?**
- The World Health Organisation's **World Report on Disability** (2013)

Some of the national and international research reports drawn on in preparation of the strategy are cited in Appendix B.

In addition to the research evidence, the preparation of the strategy also drew on the learning from other equivalent national strategies, such as in the UK, Norway, Spain and Australia, and from the learning from a series of expert workshops held by the National Disability Authority on disability and employment, looking at what works in the employment area for people with different types of impairment.²⁶

Key learning

A core finding of the OECD is that Governments which have prioritised the employment of people with disabilities at a policy level, and that have embarked on a comprehensive reform involving both benefit and support systems, have seen the biggest changes in outcomes.

²⁶ See NDA's website www.nda.ie for further details on these seminar papers

Other key learning from the evidence is:

- Work is a realistic outcome for people with disabilities
- Ensuring people and their families have accurate information informs better decisions about work
- Preparing for work must start at school
- Transition plans must start early
- Goal setting and action plans are proven methods of supporting people with disabilities into further education, training or employment
- Employment experience, such as work placements while at school, play a significant role in securing employment. Paid work experience in particular brings longer-term results
- For many people with disabilities, a 'place and train' model works better than 'train and place', particularly where the nature of a person's disability makes it harder for them to transfer learning from one context to another
- Across the disability spectrum different approaches are necessary. A 'one size fits all' approach does not work
- The social aspects of real workplaces can be as important as the jobs themselves. These are difficult to replicate in day or training centres
- Demonstration/Pilot projects can help address how people think about work and disability, and may help in resolving blockages in the current system
- It is important to make the business case to employers around employing people with disabilities
- As the measures that can help realise the potential of people with disabilities to work span different policy areas and different Departments, effective working across agency and Departmental boundaries is essential

- Guidance and counselling alone are not enough to help people into sustained employment. This support needs to be enhanced by other elements of intervention²⁷
- There needs to be a balance between mainstream services and the provision of specialist knowledge and support for particular groups; in particular, it is important that disabled people are able to access mainstream services. Some countries have tried to address this balance. Denmark, for instance, has one expert for disability employment in each employment office, as well as one dedicated, central office focusing on the needs of disabled people
- A key element of the process should be a systematic profiling of clients' work capacity, as in Australia and Norway, combined with the facility for a swift referral to the most appropriate service, if required²⁸
- It is important to know whether unemployment is associated with an underlying mental health condition²⁹
- Early intervention, before absence from work where that is possible, is important to prevent sick absences becoming long-term one. This is particularly important where there is a mental health difficulty.³⁰ The longer someone is out of work, the less likely they are to return to work.

The World Health Organisation in its 2011 World Report on Disability³¹ documented some international good practice on promoting employment of people with disabilities, and has emphasised the importance of

²⁷ Greve (2009) cited in UK Department of EWork and pensions – What Works?

²⁸ OECD 2010

²⁹ OECD 2011. This found that generally public employment services in OECD countries do not have tools to identify mental ill-health. Many people with common mental disorders claim mainstream unemployment payments rather than disability/sickness benefits

³⁰ OECD 2011. In Australia, after a certain period of prolonged sickness absence, the person is called in for an assessment of both work capability and support needs. Other countries, such as Finland and Denmark, have introduced a categorisation so as to better identify cases at risk of developing into long-term absence

- Effective anti-discrimination laws
- Incentives for people with disabilities to work, and for employers to hire them
- Promotion of positive attitudes to employment of people with disabilities and instilling the belief that people with disabilities can work given the right support
- Mainstream employment services, vocational guidance and training programmes to cater for people with disabilities
- Employer disability management programmes to facilitate return to work of those who acquire a disability
- Supervisors and human resource personnel to be familiar with legal obligations on employment and reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities

Supported employment

Supported employment is a system which prepares, places and supports people with disabilities to obtain and remain in mainstream employment. It involves vocational profiling, job matching and in-work support. It can be described as a 'place, train and maintain model'.³² The person receives individualised support from a job coach, who works to prepare them for employment, to make the links with the employer, and to support the individual on-site in settling in and managing job tasks.

Research findings underpin the value of supported employment in assisting people, particularly those with greater challenges, to get and keep jobs. A successful supported employment programme requires a coherent national approach with structured methods of support and maintaining links with employers.³³

³¹ WHO/World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability, Chapter 8

³² Beyer and Robinson (2009) A Review of the Research Literature on Supported Employment: A Report for the cross-Government learning disability employment strategy team. London: Cabinet Office

³³ Purvis, A., Foster, S., Lane, P., Aston, J. and Davies, M. (2013). 2011 Early Implementation and 2012 Steady State Waves of the research, DWP Research Report No. 846. London: Department of Work and Pensions

Research evidence shows promising results for the Individual Placement with Support model, a form of supported employment developed in the mental health area.³⁴

Issues for employers

Some of the obstacles from an employer perspective are illustrated in the findings of a 2007 FÁS employer study. Some companies which had not considered employing someone with a disability reported the opportunity never arose (22%) or they had never had a disabled candidate apply (16%). Other companies stated as reasons for not employing staff with disabilities that employing someone with a disability was not suitable within the company (18%), the work was specialised (7%), the work was too physical (5%), the premises was unsuitable (4%) or perceived health and safety reasons prevented it (2%).

Financial incentives to employ people with disabilities

Employers are frequently concerned that the cost of employing a person with a disability will outweigh their productivity level. There are a small number of schemes, in different countries, that seek to address this concern, by providing employers with financial incentives and supports. Ireland's Wage Subsidy Scheme is one such programme. Others include Denmark's Flexijobs scheme, a Finnish flat-rate wage-subsidy, and wage subsidies associated with the Austrian supported employment programme.³⁵

³⁴ Rinaldi, M., Perkins, R., Glynn, E., Montibeller, T., Clenaghan, M. and Rutherford, J. (2008). Individual placement and support: from research to practice, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* Number 14: 50-60. This paper draws on evidence from a number of randomised controlled trials in the US reporting employment rates of 30-40% for an Individual Placement and Support approach, compared to 10-12% for other approaches; OECD (2011) *Sick on the job? Myths and realities about mental health and work*. Paris: OECD. A Cochrane review of vocational rehabilitation for people with severe mental illness found that Individual Placement and Support was more effective than other approaches in helping individuals to gain and retain competitive open employment

³⁵ UK Department of Work and Pensions (2013) *What works for whom in helping disabled people into work?*

Universal design

Universal design of workplaces would facilitate employees with disabilities to avail of employment opportunities without need for further adaptation. The National Disability Authority's **Building for Everyone** provides detailed design guidance on all aspects of building design including entrances, horizontal and vertical circulation, signage, and accessible bathrooms. A universal design approach to the design of transport and other services would enable people with disabilities, as well as others to travel with ease and get to and from work, also increasing employment options.

3 Implementing the Strategy

Three-yearly Action Plans

The Strategy will be implemented through a series of three-yearly Action Plans. The first such Action Plan is published with the strategy. Over the lifetime of an Action Plan it will be refined on an ongoing basis as individual actions are completed and the next step is put in place. At three year intervals, new Action Plans will be put in place for the subsequent three-year period.

Implementation and monitoring structures

The Government is committed to fully implementing the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. Implementation will be supported by a multi-layered monitoring framework that includes:

- Delivering on actions within Departments and through cross-departmental working and corresponding joint problem solving
- Detailed measurement and reporting of progress on specific measures in the 3-yearly Action Plans, including key performance indicators and adherence to timeframes
- Annual review by the Disability Consultative Committees³⁶ for relevant Departments of the specific actions committed to by such Departments and their agencies
- Periodic advice papers from the National Disability Authority to independently assess progress and guide on implementation
- Annual review by the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group of overall progress and cross-cutting issues³⁷

³⁶ Membership of these Committees includes Departmental officials, representation from the Disability Stakeholders Group, the National Disability Authority, and other disability representatives.

³⁷ This is comprised of the Senior Officials Group on Disability, the National Disability Authority and the Disability Stakeholder Group

- Relevant actions for a given year will be included in that year's Action Plans for Jobs, and monitored and reported on through that structure
- Annual reporting of implementation to two Cabinet SubCommittees both chaired by an Taoiseach – the Cabinet SubCommittee on **Economic Recovery & Jobs**, and the Cabinet SubCommittee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform

Implementation in practice

Responsibility to implement

Individual Departments and agencies will take responsibility for delivering the actions they own in the initial Action Plan, and in subsequent 3-yearly Action Plans developed under the Strategy. These actions will be co-ordinated via the Senior Officials Group on Disability, and other established interdepartmental fora as appropriate.

Oversight of delivery

The Minister of State with responsibility for Disability Co-ordination³⁸ will be responsible for oversight of delivery of the actions in the Action Plan, and for ensuring periodic review and updating of the Action Plans. The Minister, as chair of the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group, will work with the Implementation Group to monitor delivery of the strategy and identify practical solutions if difficulties arise. The Minister will submit annual reports on progress to the Cabinet SubCommittee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform.

Inclusion of actions in mainstream Action Plan for Jobs

Specific actions under this strategy will be included in the Government's annual Action Plan for Jobs, an annual plan co-ordinated by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation which details

³⁸ In 2015, this is the Minister of State for Disability, Equality, New Communities, Culture and the Drugs Strategy.

actions taking place in the given year to promote employment. Any elements of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities which form part of the Action Plan for Jobs will be reported on through the mainstream mechanism to monitor delivery of the Action Plan for Jobs. This includes reports into the Cabinet SubCommittee on Economic Recovery & Jobs, chaired by an Taoiseach.

Specific monitoring process

Each year the Chairperson of the Implementation Group will write to each Government Department and their agencies requesting information on progress to date. All actions will be monitored in line with the Key Performance Indicators and timelines set out in the Action Plan. Reporting will follow a standard template, which will include progress towards delivering the action, data on outcomes and impact, and the next steps.

The collated Progress Report will be considered by Departmental Disability Consultative Committees who will review progress on departmental actions, and advise on next steps. It is also through these consultative committees that people with disabilities through their representative bodies will have an opportunity to consider the detail of the actions.

The National Disability Strategy Implementation Group on an annual basis will review overall progress, review interdepartmental issues and any issues of strategic importance emerging. In line with established practice, the National Disability Authority will present an independent advice paper to the Group setting out key issues for consideration. Feedback from discussion at the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group will inform continued implementation.

The Minister with responsibility for disability coordination will then report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform.

Review

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy is published with an initial Action Plan which covers the first three years of the strategy, and lays the foundation on which successive measures under the strategy will be built. Action Plans will be added to as particular phases of work are completed and the next stage begins, so it is a living document.

A full review of delivery of the first three-year Action Plan will inform preparation of the next Action Plan for the subsequent three year period. Two such reviews will take place over the ten-year time span at approximately three year intervals.

National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority in its capacity as the independent state body providing expert advice on disability policy and practice to the government will, over the lifetime of the strategy, undertake the following programme of work

- Deliver the specific actions it has undertaken to do as set out in the 3 year Action Plan
- Participate in Departmental Disability Consultative Committees
- Advise and guide Departments on actions as the independent expert body
- Engage with partners to this strategy who are outside of Government, such as employer and trade union bodies
- Advise the Minister and the Department of Justice and Equality on implementation of the strategy
- Prepare advice papers to guide annual monitoring of delivery and periodic review of the Action Plans
- Liaise with the Central Statistics Office and others on production of statistics to monitor achievement of employment for people with disabilities
- Engage in bilateral discussions with Departments, review the evidence, and consult with people with disabilities to inform the advice

- Be available to act as honest broker to assist in finding workable solutions to difficult issues
- Conduct annual statutory monitoring of employment of people with disabilities in the public sector, under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005, and engage in follow-up actions where appropriate
- Conduct research on employment issues to inform continued alignment of the strategy with evidence-based approaches

Monitoring employment outcomes

Over the ten-year period, progress being achieved in employment rates for people with disabilities will be tracked using national employment statistics compiled by the Central Statistics Office. Progress on employment of people with disabilities will also be compared with progress being achieved on employment more generally.

The main data sources are the 5-yearly Census and the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS).

Some caution must be exercised in interpreting short-term fluctuations in the QNHS as this survey is not weighted to contain a constant proportion of people with disabilities. Therefore short-term fluctuations in the data may be due to sampling error. A rolling measurement over longer intervals tends to be a more reliable indicator of underlying trends.

APPENDICES

A Phase one Action Plan 2015-2017 with key performance indicators and timeframes

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SPI - Build Skills, Capacity and Independence

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
I.1	Promote positive expectations Provide key messages from point of diagnosis of disability to emphasise the person's positive potential.	HSE - Multi Disciplinary Teams and others.	Preparation of 'knowledge packs' (build on Informing Families to include all disabilities) to provide positive messages regarding potential.	Guidance Group established by HSE Q.1 2015. Guidance Prepared Q.3 2015.
			Key message providers all receive knowledge packs/ guidance. Rollout of knowledge packs and incorporation of guidance into ongoing practice	Dissemination Strategy agreed & commenced Q.4 2015. 25% providers 2016 50% providers 2017 25% providers 2018
I.2 (a)	Raise awareness and expectations Raise awareness of training and employment options among school-goers, via parents, schools, occupational guidance officers and guidance counsellors. Raise the expectations that education and employment are real options post school.	DES, Solas, HEA, ETBs, NDA, DSP, DOH, HSE, libraries, schools, NCGE NCSE.	See SP 1.6	
I.2 (b)	Raise awareness and expectations HSE to liaise with special and mainstream schools to provide information in regard to the supports service provided for young people with disabilities.	HSE and partners	Enhanced awareness in schools. Liaison structure developed Select 2 CHO areas and pilot liaison structure Review and amend Roll out 7 other CHOs	Continuous. 2015 2016 2017 2018
I.3	Development of revised allocation model for additional teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs.	DES.	Gather data to support implementation of proposed new model and undertake consultations with stakeholders.	2015.

1.4 (a)	Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) in School Link SNA support to individualised planning for each pupil. Focus is on developing students' independence skills. 2014 circular outlines SNA role to promote child's independence.	DES, NCSE.	Circular issued 2014.	DES Circular 0030/2014 Revised allocations made in Sept 2015. Monitoring and reporting of implementation are ongoing.
1.4 (b)	Special Needs Assistants in School Periodic review of pupils' needs for Special Needs Assistants in schools	DES, NCSE.		
1.5 (a)	Transition Planning Consider recommendations of NCSE Research Report on Moving to Further and Higher Education. Work together to ensure the effective transition from school to further and higher education for students with special education needs.	DES, Solas, ETBs NCSE, DSP	Work commenced to develop a multi level transition process.	Q.1 2015.
		DES, Solas, ETBs NCSE, DSP	Report delivered.	Q.4 2015.
		DES, Solas, ETBs NCSE, DSP	Incremental Targets agreed.	Q.4 2015.
1.5 (b)	Transition Planning To ensure effective links with the National Oversight Group and the New Directions Implementation Group to address school leaver issues	DES, NCSE, Solas, HSE, DOH.	Links operating effectively.	Q.4 2015.
1.5 (c)	Transition Planning To promote the use of the Education Passport to provide information to parents and post primary schools (post-enrolment) on students' achievements.	DES, NCCA, Schools.	Schools using the Education Passport.	Q.4 2015.
1.6	Publish mapping of further education and training supports for people with disabilities.	NCSE.	Report published.	Done
1.7	Work together to consider how Guidance Counsellors can effectively support students with disabilities in guiding them on further education, training and career options, for example: Guidance and training provided for Guidance Counsellors Counsellors provided with the skills to develop individual FET options.	DES, NCSE, schools.	Action plan agreed. All guidance counsellors in post primary and Further Education and Training settings, as part of their initial training and on-going CPD to consider how they can effectively support students with disabilities and thereafter to implement such support.	Q.1 2015.

1.8 (a)	Further Education and Training Sector Further to publication of a 5 year strategy for further education and training, to develop a specific action plan with targets for people with disabilities.	Solas, DES, DSP.	Establish national and local targets for people with disabilities.	Q.4 2015.
1.8 (b)	Further Education and Training Sector Ensure new structures (ETBs) enhance the provision of services previously delivered by VECs.	Solas, DES.	Establish national and local targets for people with disabilities.	Q.4 2015.
1.8 (c)	Further Education and Training Sector Solas to link their action plan with Intreo activation process	Solas, Intreo.	Links to Intreo agreed.	Q. 4 2015.
1.8 (d)	Further Education and Training Sector Memorandum of Understanding between Solas and DSP to include targets and outcomes for people with disabilities	Solas, DSP, DES.	MOU signed.	Q. 4 2015.
1.9 (a)	Joined Up Working for Effective Pathways NCSE Guidelines on transition of students with Special Education needs	NCSE.	Guidelines produced.	Done
1.9 (b)	Joined Up Working for Effective Pathways Transitions in school and from school and post school options involving key stakeholders. As part of the transition planning process opportunities should be created for learners with disabilities to experience training, work experience and employment sampling during their school years. These measures will assist students on a pathway to a career.	DES, teachers, DSP, HSE.	Structured systematic transition planning process developed.	Q.4 2015.
1.9 (c)	Joined Up Working for Effective Pathways Ensure that where available, access to Transition Year is open equally to all students including students with disabilities.	DES, teachers, HSE.	Structured systematic transition planning process developed.	Q.2 2015.

I.10	Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in consultation with the NDA and other key stakeholders will develop a programme of work to include people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within the SFI Discover programme. In particular, in the Discover Primary Science and Maths and Smart Futures initiatives, in terms of their potential for supporting teachers and schools to engage young people with ASD with Science Technology, Education and Maths education and career paths.	SFI.	Develop and deliver a pilot of Discover Primary Science and Maths inclusion, developed in consultation with NDA.	Q.4 2015.
			Commence broader roll out of Discover Primary Maths and Science inclusion.	Q.4 2015.
			Review of work.	Q.3 2018.
			Develop Smart Futures careers profiles with role models with ASD, in consultation with NDA.	Q.4 2015.
			Promote careers profiles through Smart Futures portals.	Q.3 2015.
			Review of work.	Q.3 2018.
I.11	Examine the effectiveness of the current Rehabilitative Training programme in supporting people, including those with mental health difficulties, to transition to training and employment	DOH, HSE.	Within current Rehabilitative Training programmes identify those that are successful for people with disabilities, including those with mental health difficulties, to progress to Vocational Training and Employment	Plan developed 2015 Streamline application process for new entrants 2015 Monitor demo programmes 2015/17 Use learning and agree restructure 2018
I.12	Receiving Income Support. Enhance process to engage with people with disabilities using results of analysis of existing database of people with disabilities receiving income supports from DSP (to be carried out in 2015), to include outcomes of the DACT Projects and the review of EmployAbility service.	DSP.	Review and develop engagement methods.	Q.4 2015.
			Pilot engagement.	Q.1 2016.
			Review & implement.	Q.3 2016.
I.13	Learning from relevant Disability Activation Projects, which addressed the needs of younger people with disabilities and the transition from education into work, will inform policy development.	DSP.	Projects End	Q.2 2015.
			Evaluation Completed. Implementation of learning for Activation, Benefits Employers Education systems	Q.4 2015. Phased as necessary commencing Q.1 2016

	Learning from relevant Disability Activation Projects, which addressed the needs of younger people with disabilities and the transition from education into work, will inform policy development.		3 year review of measures.	Q.1 2019.
I.14	Higher Education Sector The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2014-2016) will include new targets to increase participation by under-represented groups, including students with physical, sensory and multiple disabilities.	DES, HEA.	Set targets for people with disabilities.	Q.1 2015.
			Review target.	Q.1 2018.
I.15	Transition from Higher Education to Employment Examine existing programmes that provide students/graduates with disabilities in higher education with the chance to develop work-related skills and experience, to assess the feasibility of developing similar provision across all HEIs. Examine the possibility of developing an individualised ePortfolio system, with the aim of supporting successful transition from college to employment. This should incorporate access to a variety of individually-tailored disability and careers specific resources and supports as required	Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) HEA, NCSE in consultation with AHEAD	Track the development and establishment of disability and career specific resources and supports.	Under discussion
			ePortfolio developed and used.	
			Track the destinations of students with declared disabilities as they graduate from college.	
			Undertake qualitative interviews with students on graduation to track and monitor their transition from college to employment	
I.16	Develop proposals for redefining the Disability Access Route to Education scheme for approval of the participating Institutions for January 2015.	Higher Education Institutes	Roll out of new DARE scheme	Q.4 2015 (September 2015).
			Applicants enter colleges through new DARE scheme	Q.4 2016 (September 2016).

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SP2 - Provide bridges and supports into work

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
2.1	Planning to be progressed to appropriately transition people currently involved in sheltered employment.	Co-operative Engagement between DOH, HSE and other departments.	Identify people currently engaged in sheltered employment within HSE services.	Q.3 2015.
			Agree plan for transitioning of people involved to appropriate support. Commence transition to more appropriate training	Q. 1 2016. 25% 2016 50% 2017 25% 2018
2.2	Employment Supports. Implement recommendations from the review of Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)	DSP.	Change operating rules for WSS.	Q.1 2015.
2.3	Work sampling DSP to promote work sampling for a defined period of time through programmes including the EmployAbility Service	DSP.	Guidance on Work sampling as a feature of DSP programmes	Q.4 2015.
2.4	DSP to work proactively with employers to provide work placements.	DSP.	Produce guidance on business case for placements.	Q.3 2015.
			Disseminated by DSP	Q.4 2015.
2.5	DSP to explore the idea of expanding internships as a recruitment route for the private sectors. (DPER to explore alternative recruitment routes see action 6.7)	DSP.	Outline path into work through internships.	Q.3 2015.
2.6	Activation. Use Intreo as a gateway to employment activation for people with disabilities. On a phased basis from February 2015 a person with a disability will be offered an interview with an employment officer. The employment officer in conjunction with the individual will draw up an appropriate action plan. The person will also be recorded on the Department's records as being an INTREO customer Learning from first Phase together with training of staff and general operational issues will be taken into account in determining the extension of the service to other locations.	DSP.	Front line Intreo Staff trained.	Q.2 2015.
			People with disabilities case managed along with live register cohort.	Q.3 2015.

2.7	Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the EmployAbility service; explore whether the service can be more responsive to the needs of people with continuing or with episodic support needs; and consider the merits of the 'place and train' model.	DSP.	Review completed.	Q.3 2015.
2.8	Employment Supports. Assess outcomes from DACT projects and develop strategy for implementing key learning.	DSP.	Evaluation Completed	Q.4 2015.
2.9	HSE funded services use Person Centred Planning to discuss training and employment services with service users.	HSE	Best Practice Demo sites identified Awareness and training package developed for providers and commence dissemination	2015 2015 25% 2016 75%
2.10	Support and promote self-employment as a viable option for people with disabilities, including equal access to mainstream supports and schemes. Disability proof Local Enterprise Offices' (LEOs) services. The LEOs should: Implement and promote their policies of providing inclusive, comprehensive services for people with disabilities, as per s.26 of the Disability Act 2005, in conjunction with their respective Local Authority. Provide staff with training to ensure they are skilled to provide inclusive services	DJEI	Training provided to LEO staff on accessible/inclusive services and supports.	Constant from 2015 - a period of time will be required for changeover to LEO structure following dissolution of CEBs.
			Data on take up of Self employment for people with disabilities – published.	Q.4 2016.
2.11	Develop the concept of car-sharing beyond the car sharing website and voluntary car schemes that currently exist and tailor that provision for those with a disability.	National Transport Authority.	Voluntary car scheme available in each local authority area.	Q.4 2015.
2.12	Develop the passenger assistance concept further for assisting people with a disability to plan their public transport journeys.	National Transport Authority.	Assess the current provision and demand for the service.	Q.2 2015.
2.13	Examine the introduction of conditions on licensed commercial operators of public transport services to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles.	National Transport Authority.	Regulatory assessment completed and amendments to licensing requirements made.	Q.1 2015.
2.14	Simplify the fares structure across the public transport modes to make them easier to understand.	National Transport Authority.	Make incremental changes to fares structures.	Continuous.
2.15	Develop the functionality and the availability of the Leap card so that it simplifies the payment for travel for those with a disability.	National Transport Authority.	Liaise with disability groups to see what changes need to be made.	Q.1 2015.

2.16	Facilitate the increase in the numbers of wheelchair and accessible taxis across the state by allowing smaller vehicles and incentivising purchase or adaption of those vehicles.	National Transport Authority.	Increase the percentage of wheelchair taxis in the state.	Regulatory change made and grant scheme in place.
2.17	Provide a subsidy to fund the provision of public transport services throughout the state.	National Transport Authority.	Adequate subsidy to be provided.	Continuous.
2.18	Invest in bus fleet to increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles in the provision of public transport services.	National Transport Authority.	Increase percentage of wheelchair accessible bus fleet on subsidised services.	Dublin Bus already 100% accessible. Bus Éireann is 100% accessible in regional cities. Continuous improvement on other fleet.
2.19	Invest in supporting infrastructure to increase their level of accessibility i.e. bus stops, bus and rail stations, bus ramps.	National Transport Authority.	Increase percentage of wheelchair accessible bus stops, stations etc. on subsidised services.	Continuous.
2.20	Develop the information tools that are currently available to ensure that they include the information that a person with a disability needs to know in order to take a public transport journey e.g. the National Journey Planner on www.transportforireland.ie is being developed to have an option to plan a journey with no steps.	National Transport Authority.	Complete project.	Q.1 2015 and continuous improvement.
2.21	Implement on-board announcements of next stops on all public transport to assist those with a visual impairment.	National Transport Authority.	Develop proposal for regional city services.	Q.4 2015.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SP3 - Make work pay

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
3.1	Implement ready reckoners that provide people with disabilities with information of what they could earn over a period of time if they take a job	DSP, CIB, NDA, DOH.	Ready reckoner developed.	Q.3 2016.
3.2	Employment activation Continue to support people with disabilities to access further training and employment opportunities through the relevant programmes that include the EmployAbility Service, the Wage Subsidy Scheme, the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, JobBridge and the Back-to-Education Allowance.	DSP.	Support. Review inclusion of people with disabilities in Intreo process (in context of Action 1.12).	Constant action. Q.2 2016.
3.3	Income/employment support interaction. Review range of income supports for people with disabilities to ensure consistency, enhanced links between income support and employment, appropriate access to supports and effective controls.	DSP.	Review of Partial Capacity Benefit.	Q.2 2015.
			Overall review of illness schemes.	Q.4 2015.
			Legislative changes made as required.	Q.1 2016.
3.4	Continue to ensure that resumption of welfare payment is as streamlined as possible for people who may be in and out of work due to the episodic nature of their disability.	DSP.		Continuous.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SP4 - Promote job retention and re-entry to work

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
4.1	Promote and support strategies for intervention in the early stages of absence from work due to acquired disability. These strategies will be based on evaluation of the relevant DACT project. They will also include people with mental health difficulties.	HSE and DSP.	Working group established to develop guidelines on interventions.	Q.4 2015.
			Guidelines issued to all stakeholders.	Q.4 2016.
4.2 (a)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties Promote and support the role of work in the Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties. Use the Individual Placement Support Model as part of rehabilitation process that includes co-ordinated support for employers and employees at local level by job coaches and community health teams.	HSE and DSP.	Work commenced to develop pilot.	Q.1 2016. Suggested target of 90 coaches for 90 community health teams, subject to outcome from pilot
4.2 (b)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties Pilot model.	HSE and DSP.	Pilot completed and evaluated.	Q.4 2017.
4.2 (c)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties To consider outcome of pilot.	HSE and DSP.	Guidelines for job coaches and community health teams.	Q.4 2018.
4.3	NDA to work with the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) to disseminate guidance for employers and employees on job retention and re-entry into work.	NDA, IOSH.	Joint programme agreed.	Q.1 2016.
4.4	Training programme ICTU to develop training programme for disability champions, trade union reps and shop stewards to assist employers to support employees with an acquired disability to return to work.	ICTU.	Training programme developed tested and disseminated to target audience.	Dependent on budget. If budget allocated then pilot programme rolled out by Q. 2. 2015. Final programme rolled out Q. 4 2015.
4.5	National Vocational Rehabilitation Service. Produce a research report/document on good practice in organising national vocational rehabilitation services across a number of jurisdictions.	NDA.	Research completed.	Completion of NDA research by Q.4 2015
			NDA advice paper.	Q.2 2016.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SP5 - Provide co-ordinated and seamless support

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
5.1	To work together to develop an effective co-ordinated policy approach (and draw up an implementation plan based on that approach), to assist individuals with disabilities, including those who require a high level of support, to obtain and retain employment having due regard to the implementation of New Directions.	DOH, HSE, NDA and DSP	Approach agreed.	Q.4 2015.
			Implementation plan finalised.	Q.4 2016.
			Commence roll out of implementation plan.	Q.4/Q.1 2016/17.
5.2	Interdepartmental protocols for cross-referrals at national and local level and within organisations.	DSP, Intreo, DES, Solas, NDA, HSE.	Agreed Implementation.	Q.2 2016.
5.3	Develop the Real Time Information system both on-street and on web and smart phone applications to be more accessible and to include real time information that is of value for a passenger with a disability e.g. wheelchair symbol on real time information identifies services that are wheelchair accessible.	National Transport Authority.	Liaise with disability groups to see what improvements can be made.	Q.1 2015.
5.4	Develop the model of door-to-door community transport provision that is currently being provided in isolated rural areas.	National Transport Authority.	Increase the number of services and coverage.	Continuous.
5.5	Ensure that employment rights and entitlements are safe-guarded and enforced for people with disabilities.	DJEI, Equality Tribunal.	Cases heard in a timely manner	Continuous.

Comprehensive Employment Strategy: Strategic Actions

SP6 - Engage Employers

	Actions	Responsible Body	KPIs	Timeframes
6.1	Promotion of employer awareness Raise awareness among employers of the benefits of employing (and retaining in employment), people with disabilities. Enlist their participation in actions to promote the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in open labour market employment.	DSP.	Range of services to employers highlighted at DSP road shows.	Underway – constant action.
6.2	Work with employers to develop more inclusive recruitment and workplace practices.	DSP, others, NDA.	NDA Conduct research on Public Sector Employment. (See 6.13)	Q.3 2016.
			Disseminate learning.	Q.4 2016.
6.3	Encourage employers to provide work experience for people with disabilities.	DSP, DES.	Prepare Information pack for employers on providing work experience.	Q.4 2015.
6.4	Disseminate information on the supports that are available to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities or to retain employees who acquire a disability, including the EmployAbility Service, workplace supports and the wage subsidy scheme.	DSP.	Range of services to employers highlighted at DSP road shows.	Continuous.
6.5	Subject to the provision of appropriate links by relevant Departments and Agencies, DJEI will, through its website, highlight the supports that are available to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market, or to retain in the workforce employees who acquire a disability. This will operate through appropriate links made available by the relevant Departments and agencies to the DJEI's website.	DJEI, DOH, DSP.	Information prepared for DJEI website.	Q.1 2015.
			Information placed on website.	Q.1 2015.

6.6	<p>Work Placements</p> <p>Explore the idea of expanding internships as a recruitment route for both public and private sectors, in discussion with a range of stakeholders. The roles of the Public Appointments Service, Pobal, Local Employment Services and job facilitators need to be discussed in this context. NDA will discuss this further with the relevant departments and agencies.</p>	NDA, DSP, other relevant departments and agencies.	NDA discussion with relevant Departments.	Q.4 2015.
			Plan developed.	Q.4 2016.
6.7	<p>Proactive recruitment strategies for the public sector.</p> <p>The public service is committed to implementing a pro-active approach to employing people with disabilities in line with Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005.</p> <p>This approach will include an examination of current recruitment processes and channels, consideration of special competitions for people with disabilities and other measures to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the public service.</p>	DPER, PAS.	DPER to commence review of the CPSA Code of Practice and PAS recruitment models to ensure that both fully support the employment of people with disabilities in the public service.	Q.3 2015.
			PAS to examine the introduction of an alternative recruitment model for people with disabilities.	Q.4 2015.
			DPER to review the application of the new sick leave regulations in terms of their impact on people with disabilities and/or long standing conditions.	Q.3 2015.
6.8	<p>IBEC, Chambers Ireland and ICTU will work in partnership with each other and the NDA to:</p> <p>Engage and support employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.</p>	IBEC, ICTU, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	Action plan developed.	Q. 4 2015.
6.9(a)	Increase employers' awareness of DSP employers' supports and other relevant guidance by disseminating information to the business community about these supports.	IBEC, ICTU, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	IBEC disseminates employer supports' information via IBEC website and via alerts in the IBEC newsletters on an continuous basis as appropriate.	Continuous.
6.9(b)	Increase employers' awareness of DSP employers' supports and other relevant guidance by disseminating information to the business community about these supports.	IBEC, ICTU, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	Disseminate information on DSP's employer supports to employers and trade unions.	Continuous.

6.9(c)	Increase employers' awareness of DSP employers' supports and other relevant guidance by disseminating information to the business community about these supports.	IBEC, ICTU, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	Chambers Ireland disseminates employers supports' information through their communications channels.	Continuous.
6.10	ICTU will work on engaging and supporting trade unions to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities.	ICTU.		Continuous.
6.11 (a)	Employer Peer Support Network IBEC will work with ICTU, Chambers Ireland and the NDA to input into the development of a national employer peer support network.	ICTU, IBEC, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	A national employer peer support network established.	Q. 4 2015.
6.11 (b)	Employer Peer Support Network ICTU and Chambers Ireland will work with IBEC and the NDA to develop a national employer peer support network.			
6.12 (a)	Produce new guidance for employers Work with IBEC, Chambers Ireland and other stakeholders e.g. employers, to produce new relevant guidance to assist employers to employ people with disabilities. This guidance will building on key points in the previous Workway guide and on the experience of ICTU's DACT project.	ICTU, IBEC, Chambers Ireland, NDA.	Guide produced and disseminated to employers and relevant agencies.	Q. 4 2016.
6.12 (b)	Produce new guidance for Line Managers Produce guidance to assist employers/ line managers to support employees with autism	NDA and partners	Guide produced and disseminated to employers and relevant agencies.	Q. 4 2016.
6.13	Training Programme ICTU to train former disability champions and trade union reps in how to: Support employers to employ people with disabilities Support people with disabilities to retain employment Deal effectively with any workplace/ employment issues	ICTU.	Training programmed developed, tested and disseminated.	If finances available, programme rolled out Q.4 2015.
6.14	Investigate establishment of an employer helpline.	NDA, DJE, DSP.	Establish Advisory Committee Helpline Established.	Q1 2016 Q4 2016

6.15	Conduct research to document good practice in the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector and to highlight how barriers are being addressed.	NDA.	Liaise with disability groups to see what improvements can be made.	Q.3 2016.
6.16	Evaluate employer-related Disability Activation Projects, co-funded by the ESF.	DSP.	Projects evaluated.	Q.4 2015.
6.17	Review access to and marketing of Enterprise Ireland and Local Employment Office programmes to entrepreneurs with disabilities	Enterprise Ireland.	Review completed.	Q1 2016
	Enterprise Ireland will review how to ensure employers are aware of needs and potential of employees with disabilities	Enterprise Ireland.	Review completed	Q1 2016
	Engagement between Enterprise Ireland and the NDA's Centre for Excellence in Universal Design to examine routes to commercialising universal design product ideas from NDA's annual Design Challenge	Enterprise Ireland, NDA.	Commercial path for universal designed products are produced with guidance from the NDA	Commenced Q2 2015

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C Outcome of public consultation process

NDA received 47 submissions from disability organisations, employment organisations, and social partners on suggested actions, following a mail shot and an invitation on the website in 2013. Consultees were asked to slot their suggestions within the strategic framework and to give a rationale for any proposals.

The NDA project team held a special session with Disability Stakeholder group, and other key disability/employment stakeholders in 2013. This discussion focused on the ideas received in the submissions and explored other possible actions for inclusion in the framework document.

Key themes emerging from this consultation process were

- To embed the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities into the national employment framework e.g. Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work
- To give people with disabilities access to mainstream employment initiatives

Submissions were received from a number of agencies including the following:

- Acquired Brain Injury Ireland
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD)
- Camphill Communities
- Catholic Institute for Deaf People
- Centre for Independent Living
- COPE Foundation
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Daughters of Charity
- DeafHear
- Disability Federation of Ireland
- Employ Ability
- Employment Strategy CoAction West Cork
- Drumlin House Training Centre

- Dublin Airport Authority
- Epilepsy Ireland
- HSE Training and Occupational Guidance Service
- IBEC
- Inclusion Ireland
- Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists
- Irish Association of Supported Employment
- Irish Small and Medium Enterprise Association
- Irish Stammering Association
- Leitrim Association of People with Disabilities
- Mayo Mental Health Service
- Mental Health Ireland
- Mental Health Reform
- MS Ireland
- National Learning Network
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- NCBI
- Occupational Therapy service (HSE)
- Pobal
- RehabCare
- Rehabilitation & Recovery Team
- Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland
- Spinal Injuries Ireland
- Steadfast House
- STEP supported employment
- St Christopher's Services
- St Michael's House
- WALK (Walkways project)

as well as from a number of individuals.

Points raised

Strategic goal 1: Build skills, Capacity and independence

- Address the barriers for people with disabilities in education and work environments - more support is needed
- Place the aim of securing employment at the heart of education and training programs. Ensure training matches labour market vacancies to facilitate transition to employment and it incorporates on-the-job training
- Better guidance on types of courses/employment opportunities that are suited to particular conditions (general sense that guidance is poorly tied to actual opportunities)
- Support services/transitional services for people who move between educational institutions and/or into open employment
- More supported employment/on the job employment and support for those unable to access competitive employment
- Address transport issues to and from employment/education – have dedicated travel training
- Empower people with a disability to expect to work from a young age (enhanced career advice from a young age) – vocational training to start from age 14 where appropriate for people with a disability

Strategic goal 2: Provide bridges and supports into work

- Consult with people with disabilities on what they need to help them
- Implement supported employment for people with mental health difficulties e.g. the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment
- Provide training in ways that is not always exam based
- Positive discrimination towards people with a disability in the public sector
- Ensure that public procurement promotes equality
- More information on training courses suitable for people with disabilities
- Develop a process/pathway that will encourage and facilitate people with disabilities either to enter or return to employment and keep supports for a time after they have entered employment

- Young people with disabilities and particularly school leavers need to be targeted for activation and progression into employment
- Provide more information on supported employment
- Provide easy to read job contracts
- Flexible employment is needed (e.g. reduced hours, shorter working week)
- Disability competency training for employers/colleagues so they know how to support staff with disabilities (provide successful case studies)
- More work experience/placements/job shadow schemes for people with disabilities
- More Personal Assistance support in the workplace
- More traineeships and apprenticeships for people with disabilities
- Earmark some of the internships for people with disabilities, increase time that people with disabilities spend on internships
- Promote self-employment

Strategic goal 3: Make work pay

- Income supports need to be flexible to allow people enter/leave the workforce in times of illness (automatic reverting to relevant benefits if person has to leave labour force)
- Address the benefits trap – let the people with disabilities keep secondary benefits (medical card especially important but so to is free travel pass)
- Review and address shortcoming of Disability Allowance disregard
- Address supports for those wishing to be self employed
- Jobs plus schemes must be made available for people with disabilities
- Costs of living with a disability must be taken into account when assessing income levels - social welfare supports should be maintained to create the conditions where people with disability can access meaningful employment
- Provide financial support for those taking up training/education
- Give employers a tax break to employ people with a disability (where it can be shown they are less productive)

- Provide employers with a realistic sense of how much it costs for reasonable accommodation

Strategic goal 4: Promote job retention and re-entry to work

- More on the job training and work adaptations
- Promoting diversity, acknowledge difference and provide support for businesses to adapt to change
- Promote the inclusion of a designated disability contact person on employment sites
- Engagement with employers and employer organisations to promote effective work strategies and human resource policies and practice that facilitate employees with a disability return to/remain in the workplace
- Compile a directory of supports on available supports around employment issues
- Work preparation courses running in social care and educational settings prepare people for re-entry into work after a time away due to illness or acquired injury
- Allow people with disabilities to become paid carers
- Monitor statistics on unemployment among people with disabilities
- Advertise the employee retention scheme
- Allow wage subsidies scheme to be used where an employee develops a disability
- Change rules around sick leave so that it is not a cost to employers

Strategic goal 5: Provide co-ordinated and seamless support

- Provide a point of contact for both the employer and employee regarding advice, advocacy and support throughout employment (one stop shop)
- A need for a cross Departmental/coordinated/joined up strategy: Employment, health and welfare will work together and invest in keeping people with disabilities well and in work; this needs clear and transparent pathways
- Look at models in different countries e.g. the Danish model of “Flex-jobs

- Ensure national strategies are working together; link up different agencies with different strategies
- Share learning from best practice that works e.g. WAM project for employers, Work4You assessment
- A person-centred planning approach could assist with seeking employment
- Use the same definition of disability across all sectors and government departments i.e. for welfare benefits, unemployment statistics and the Census as well as for the comprehensive employment strategy
- Reducing the Live Register figures is currently prioritised, which affects pathways available to those on Disability Allowance via training and employment opportunities provided via Department of Social Protection, Intreo or Solas
- Co-location of employment support workers with other services/ support teams
- A national strategy to build recovery-oriented services working towards recovery for individuals with mental illness
- Make transitional planning the norm. When a person with a disability is at school leaver stage ensure that they are offered planned vocational education to suit their needs for work
- Implement the New Directions policy in relation to a new model of supports to people with disabilities to engage in mainstream community activities as against centre-based day services
- Develop national occupational standards in supported employment
- Reduce delays in Garda vetting

Strategic goal 6: Engage employers

- Inform and raise awareness with employers of the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities (confront myths/fears of [legal] cases)
- Raises awareness of funding sources including Wage Subsidy Scheme
- Work with established work agencies in the public and private sectors to provide and promote employment for people with disabilities
- Ensure employers have access to a good support systems
- Provided annual funding to Irish Association of Supported Employment Job Shadow Initiative and National Supported Employment Week awareness campaign
- Broaden PRSI exemption for long term unemployed to support employment of people with disabilities
- Ensure all employers are informed on the various supports/schemes available re employment of people with disabilities.
- Encourage employers to take on people with disabilities through the use of supported schemes. Create incentives to engage in social responsibility employment by rewarding such activities
- Employment of people with disabilities should also be on the agenda of all unions and form part of all national labour agreements
- Greater engagement with employers is needed in relation to the design and delivery of education/training interventions and workplace training programmes
- Provide an employer helpline to offer guidance to employers on how to respond appropriately to people with mental health difficulties

D Action Plan for Jobs

The 2014 Action Plan for Jobs contained the following action

203	Publish a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities.	
Steps Necessary For Delivery	Timeline	Responsible Body
Draft comprehensive employment strategy, in collaboration with the Departments of Social Protection, Health, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and Education and Skills and in consultation with relevant stakeholders	Ongoing	National Disability Authority
Approval of comprehensive employment strategy by National Disability Strategy Implementation Group	Q4	D/Justice and Equality
Publication of approved comprehensive employment strategy	Q4	D/Justice and Equality

The 2015 Action Plan for Jobs contains the following action

Action 128 – Implement the actions agreed under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.

(D/Justice and Equality)

128	Implement the actions agreed under the comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities.
Timeline	Ongoing
Responsible Body	D/Justice and Equality

E Glossary of acronyms

AHEAD	Association for Higher Education and Disability
APfj	Action Plan for Jobs
CIB	Citizens Information Board
CPD	Continuous professional development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DACT	Disability Activation Project
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSG	Disability Stakeholders Group
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
FET	Further education and training
HSE	Health Service Executive
Intreo	Single point of contact for employment and income supports
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IOSH	Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
KPI	Key performance indicator
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NDA	National Disability Authority
NDSIG	National Disability Strategy Implementation Group
PAS	Public Appointments Service
PtW	Pathways to Work
QNHS	Quarterly National Housing Survey
SOLAS	Further Education and Training Authority
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

F Government Committees and membership

Economic Recovery & Jobs

Taoiseach (Chair)

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation (Convenor)

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection

Minister for Finance

Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform

Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine and Minister for Defence

Minister for Education & Skills

Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government

Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources

Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport

Minister of State Nash (Business & Employment)

Minister of State English (Skills, Research & Innovation)

Minister of State Humphreys (Employment, Community & Social Support)

Social Policy and Public Service Reform

Taoiseach (Chair)

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection

Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform

Minister for Finance

Minister for Justice & Equality

Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine and Minister for Defence

Minister for Children & Youth Affairs

Minister for Health

Minister for Education & Skills

Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government

Minister of State Lynch (Primary Care, Mental Health & Disability)

Minister of State English (Skills, Research & Innovation)

Minister of State Coffey (Housing, Planning and Co-ordination of the
Construction 2020 Strategy)

Minister of State Harris (OPW, Public Procurement & International Banking
(incl IFSC))

Minister of State Humphreys (Employment, Community & Social Support)

Minister of State Ó Ríordáin (New Communities, Culture, Equality
and the Drugs Strategy)



Government of Ireland