

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL SOCIAL INCLUSION THEME REPORT ON DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Introduction

1. This is a report to the Social Inclusion Ministers of the British Irish Council administrations, on work carried out and lessons learned on disability and access to employment, education and training. Work took place between the Social Inclusion Ministers' meeting in Wales in July 2004 and the end of 2005.

2. The report:

- Sets out broad definitions of both disability and employability.
- Presents up-to-date figures illustrating across the BIC administrations the problems that employability strategies need to address.
- Sets out the key issues identified by Social Inclusion Ministers for study by officials and the activities that have been undertaken to carry out the workplan agreed in July 2004.
- Reports on the key information that was shared, the main learning points and opportunities identified for further policy development.
- Includes annexes from each administration about recent developments in the field of disability and access to employment.

Definitions

3. As agreed by Ministers in July 2004, a broad view of disability was adopted for officials' work, encompassing mental health problems, learning disability and long term ill health. This followed the social, rather than the medical, model of disability. This model sets the problems faced by disabled people in their social context, suggesting that it is not disabled people who are a problem because they are different, but that it is society's failure to accommodate that difference which amounts to discrimination.¹ It was acknowledged that some people experience the onset of disability while they are already in employment. The emphasis throughout our work was on disabled people's potential capacity, rather than their incapacity, to do some paid work.

4. The group also adopted a broad definition of employability. We took this to include supporting people to prepare for, get and sustain meaningful and rewarding jobs. Employability needs to be seen in the context of both the current and the future state of the labour market and employers' requirements for particular skills. In the time available, the group was not able to look in detail at access to Further and Higher Education, although acknowledging this could be important in improving employment prospects. This might merit further study at a later date.

¹ Social model of disability adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government, 2002.

Snapshots of the problems to be tackled

5. Annex A compares statistics on disability and employment from across the BIC administrations. These are consistent across both large and small administrations. For example:

- Up to 1 in 5 people of working age have a disability.
- Disabled people are twice as likely to be economically inactive as those who are not disabled.
- There are strong links between disability and the risk of poverty and deprivation.
- A substantial proportion of disabled people want to work.
- However, barriers facing disabled people include a much greater probability of having no qualifications.

Workplan agreed in July 2004

6. Social Inclusion Ministers identified a number of key issues for study at their meeting in Cardiff in July 2004 and these were subsequently developed further by officials for Ministerial approval. The workplan set out the following aspects for study:

- The broad social inclusion benefits that can result from improving access to employment for disabled people.
- Taking the views of disabled people into account in formulating policy.
- Influencing public and employer perceptions of appropriate access to employment for disabled people.
- Institutional factors such as benefits systems that play a critical role in promoting access to employment and supporting people at important transition points.
- Joining up policies and partnerships, for example looking at the role of health services in promoting access to employment.
- Effective pathways and models for supporting sustained employment for disabled people.

7. The workplan set out to achieve as outcomes:

- Exchanges of information on programmes and services in each administration.
- Sharing good and innovative practice, through study visits and meetings with those directly involved with services.
- Examining the potential for any joint activities across administrations.
- Raising the profile of the topic of disability and access to employment across administrations.

8. Factual background work has been carried out to support work on the topic:

- The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned and have now published on the BIC website a short literature review.
- Basic statistics on the scale of the issues across BIC administrations have been compiled, based on a template provided by Northern Ireland.
- Each administration has provided a note on relevant benefits and other targeted schemes and programmes, to assist in understanding each other's starting points and terminology used.

9. The following officials' meetings and study visits have been held:

- London, November 2004. DWP presented analytical information and research evidence on disability and employment programmes, including information underpinning current policy changes to incapacity benefits.
- Northern Ireland, April 2005. Study visits to services for people with learning disabilities, offering interesting examples of practice. The Officials Group also met the PSI Working Group on disability, consisting of major disability NGOs and others currently advising the Government.
- Jersey, June 2005. Study visit, including visits to employers offering employment opportunities to disabled people and discussion with a range of employers.
- Isle of Man, October 2005. A presentation on the development of the Isle of Man's Disability Employment Service. There was also a presentation of research by the BIC Knowledge Economy strand of work on Access to information communication technology for people with disabilities, carried out by Highlands College, Jersey.

Context

10. Improving access to employment for disabled people is part of more general approaches to promoting equality and diversity. Not so long ago there was a consensus among many that disabled people should be 'protected' in care environments away from the world of work. These views still linger in some quarters, but in the main here has been a major shift in attitudes towards embracing the right to work, built on an evidence base which clearly shows the benefits that work brings to individuals and their communities. In Great Britain, disability discrimination legislation enshrines disabled people's rights to participate in society, through application to employers, service providers, schools, colleges and others. From 2006 a new duty will be placed on the public sector to promote disability equality including promoting participation and positive attitudes. In Northern Ireland an equivalent duty is placed on public authorities by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and strengthened by the recent Northern Ireland Disability Discrimination Order (2006.) Ireland launched a National Disability Strategy in 2004, which is a framework of positive action measures to support participation by people with disabilities in Irish Society. One element of this strategy is the Disability Act 2005, which provides for a number of outline programmes, including one that deals specifically with disability and employment issues. The Act also created a statutory basis for a 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities by public bodies. Thus legislation promotes individuals' rights and sets a framework for widening opportunities, including the chance of appropriate and rewarding employment. This represents significant cultural and attitudinal change.

11. There are also strong economic factors underlying increased access to employment for disabled people. In many areas across BIC administrations, there is full or near-full employment. This has influenced employer willingness to recruit and retain people who might otherwise be unemployed or economically inactive, but who are keen to work. Employers, particularly larger employers, understand this business case approach, in addition to the increased emphasis now placed on meeting social responsibilities.

12. In recent decades, a combination of technological change and lower barriers to trade has meant that high skills have become more important to labour market success across much of the developed world. Individuals with low skills are increasingly likely to be economically inactive. The Welsh Assembly Government report that, compared to many other developed economies, the problem of low skills is more severe in Wales than across

the UK as a whole. The proportion of the workforce with no qualifications and with basic skills needs is highest in those parts of Wales where economic activity rates are lowest. The 'excess' inactive in Wales are also disproportionately older, self-reported sick and on incapacity benefits. In September 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government published its 'Raising Economic Activity Rates' report, which set out a number of immediate to long-term recommendations across a range of policy areas to help raise economic activity levels in Wales. The Want2Work project, which has been designed and developed as a result of one of the specific recommendations for action in the short term, commenced in January 2005 and is currently running in three of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales.

13. The disability and access to employment topic was timely for many BIC administrations whose policies in this area are in transition. For example, the UK Government is undertaking a major programme of welfare reform, designed to help people return to work and to progress in employment. The Scottish Executive has been drawing up an employability framework, focusing on three groups – those particularly excluded from the labour market, those who are closer to employment, and those in low paid/low skilled work – and creating a smooth pathway to improving their employability. In Ireland a recent review concluded that support into employment for disabled people needs to be more systematic and effective, and a consultation process is currently underway on a sectoral plan for disability and employment issues, focusing on facilitating and improving access to vocational training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Northern Ireland has been reviewing its Employment Support Schemes and Disability Advisory Service. Jersey has created a Trust to improve co-ordination, service development and customer access between the Education, Health and Social Security Departments. Guernsey amended its social security legislation in 2004 to introduce a range of back-to-work benefits, with particular focus on people claiming incapacity benefit.

Joined up policies and partnerships

14. Many of the services studied have underlined the need for disabled people to get properly joined up support to improve their employability, through a single point of contact such as a job coach or keyworker. They may require a range of assistance, some of it directly related to a specific job, but some of it more general, for example support with confidence and self esteem, or working as part of a team. In addition, people may need practical help, such as transport or technological support in order to work. Contact with a dedicated support person, able to bring different types of support together when needed, is a major success factor in achieving appropriate and sustained employment.

15. Officials heard how government strategies and the delivery of employability services need to reflect this joined up approach. For example, health and social care services must identify when and how to improve their clients' employability. Where necessary, clients should move on from health and social care support towards more employment-focused services (and in some cases it may be beneficial for the health and social care support to move with the individual.) Annex B describes how the Department for Work and Pensions are developing direct payment schemes to help disabled people manage the support provided by various agencies.

16. Study visits underlined that small administrations may be more flexible and agile in their response to disabled people's individual needs, through "one-stop" approaches. The challenge for larger administrations is to make it easier for disabled people to navigate the spectrum of different services required to improve employability. Services are likely to involve a mix of public, private and voluntary sector provision. Planning and

commissioning of services thus requires a strategic overview, keeping the client's journey towards employability at the centre.

Facilitators and barriers

17. The Officials Group looked at similarities and differences between benefits rules across the BIC administrations. The group was particularly interested in how well benefits systems support people at transitional periods, for example where they may undertake a work "taster" or increase their hours gradually as they become more confident about and capable of employment. The UK Government operates the Permitted Work arrangements to allow people on Incapacity Benefits to undertake some paid work while remaining on benefits, and these have been recently changed to improve the support and guidance available from personal advisers. DWP have also announced changes to make it easier for people on incapacity benefits to undertake test-trading in preparation for self-employment while remaining on benefit. Where possible, it is desirable to keep people within the benefits system at such transition points, or allow simple, fast track recourse to benefits, if paid employment does not work out as planned. As part of the Irish social welfare Budget package for 2006, a new tapered withdrawal of Disability Allowance and Blind Pension is being introduced to improve the incentives for employment participation for recipients of these benefits. Further details are contained in Annex B. Examples of how this is done on Guernsey and the Isle of Man are provided in the annex.

18. Benefits and support systems can also assist individuals greatly through providing specialised help with adaptations to the workplace and with individual needs such as transport.

19. Attitudes of health and social care staff have already been mentioned above. The Officials Group identified that most BIC administrations are now moving from "deficit" to "capacity" approaches. Instead of focusing on what disabled people cannot do, or the types of work they can no longer undertake, the emphasis is increasingly placed on the skills and abilities that people do have and the types of work for which they are suited. The key role of medical practitioners was noted, both in formal certification of capacity/incapacity and in seeing work as good for their patients' health, wherever appropriate. It is vital however that all staff and organisations, in touch with disabled people about any aspect of their employability, adopt a positive approach and know when and how to refer their client to other and specialist types of support that they require. Training and capacity building across disciplines will underpin the necessary shifts in attitudes and working practices. Some of this will be for professions individually, some of it could usefully be delivered in multi-disciplinary settings.

Participation and empowerment

20. The Officials Group observed several examples of participation by disabled people in both policy development and service delivery. Examples are included at Annex B for individual BIC administrations.

21. At the policy making level, there are a number of different possible approaches. These include advisory groups on disability issues such as the Welsh Assembly Government's Learning Disability Implementation Advisory Group co-chaired by a person with a learning disability. Where broad strategies are being reformed or reviewed, it may be appropriate to pose open questions and seek a range of ideas and proposals from a wide variety of sources. Where wider policies are already in place, views can be sought on more specific

issues from a restricted group. Mixed groups of policy makers, disabled people and disability NGOs can be a powerful approach to creative but realistic policy formulation, as the Northern Ireland Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability has learned. Lessons from the NI experience include:

- Need to manage expectations with achievable and resourcable recommendations
- Ensuring the buy-in of all government departments from the outset
- ‘Consultation fatigue’ is a growing problem within the voluntary sector
- A huge amount of research and information is generated by the process – managing this is time/resource intensive
- Need to disseminate information in a variety of formats (braille, large print, PDF’s etc)

22. Officials saw a number of NGOs and social enterprises involved in delivering employability services directly. In some cases, these represent the interests of particular groups of disabled people or their families. It was noted that there can be tensions, for example where small groups compete for scarce funding resources. While it is not always desirable for services to focus on particular groups with closely defined characteristics or disabilities, there can also be considerable drive and innovation in such approaches. There is a balance to be struck here between cohesion and diversity in the employability and support sectors.

23. There is a significant potential role for advocacy in promoting access to employment. Independent advocates can provide support, motivation and a role model. In Jersey’s experience advocacy plays a vital role, not least in helping officials move away from “Government knows best” approaches. Ireland has also done a considerable amount in developing advocacy services, particularly for people with disabilities. Furthermore, the development of advocacy services is provided for in new disability legislation. This work, as well as initiatives in England and the Isle of Man, are described in the annex.

24. The issue of risk taking was also discussed. The Group agreed that moving towards and into employment can be risky for disabled people and their families, financially, physically, emotionally and in other ways. Disabled people may fail or be perceived to fail. The Group considered, however, that such risks were worth taking, at both an individual and policy level, in order to pursue the big objectives of equality of access and opportunity.

Employer aspects

25. The Officials Group was able to meet with a range of employers and discuss the role that they can play in promoting employment for disabled people. Employers quoted the drivers for them as including both the business case for committed employees with appropriate skills and social responsibility factors within the company ethos. In all cases, though employers felt that jobs must offer real and meaningful work, where possible with a chance of future progression. Employers also noted the benefits for other staff, for example where buddy systems operate alongside job coach roles. Employers clearly value the job coach/keyworker model, which is seen as a support for both them and their employees. The role may diminish over time, but the post-employment support that can be offered is valued and seen as cost effective.

26. There are opportunities to improve employer involvement. Officials noted the need for a clear and co-ordinated approach by employability services linking up with employers

to provide jobs for disabled people. This requires a more sophisticated “job development” or sales function than most services currently have.

27. There may also be opportunities within business contexts and networks to recognise good practice in the employment of disabled people, recognising progressive attitudes that see disability and diversity as important to business success.

Role of ICT

28. The Jersey research mentioned above uncovered limited knowledge of current levels of IT support for disabled people. Some examples of current practice within BIC administrations are quoted at Annex B.

29. Depending on the nature of the job ICT may be a core skill. For example, Jersey’s Learning Centre tries to ensure that those without such skills (disabled or not) acquire basic competence in them. Further research and policy development is needed on the potential uses of ICT for improving job-related skills for disabled people, as well as for seeking information about job opportunities and submitting applications. It was noted that many visually impaired people do already make extensive use of ICT and there are many appropriately-designed systems for them. Less is known, however, about ICT and other specific disabilities. The Officials Group considered it would be particularly helpful to share and publicise examples of good and interesting practice.

30. The Welsh Assembly Government will be launching the Communities @One initiative early next year. The initiative seeks to achieve ‘digital inclusion’, social inclusion through the use of technology, in the most deprived (Communities First) areas of Wales. The rationale of the project is ‘to enable communities and individuals to use ICT in ways relevant to them to enhance their quality of life, overcome difficulties and allow them to fulfil their social, economic and cultural potential.’ Community Brokers, embedded locally across Wales, will work with community groups in Communities First areas to help them determine their priorities and to access a £4.5 million grant fund. Good practice examples from the initiative will be shared.

31. In Ireland an e-Inclusion Fund has been established to support the participation of vulnerable groups in an inclusive Information Society, with a particular focus on initiatives targeted primarily at people with disabilities and older people. Furthermore, an assistive technology website - www.assistireland.ie - has been established aimed at assisting the elderly and people with disabilities in daily living situations such as employment.

Conclusions

32. The Officials Group identified some core themes common to all the countries. These can be summarised as:

- the prevalence of low employment skill levels among disabled people;
- the importance of the attitudes of employers and the public towards disabled people, both as enablers and barriers to employment, education and training;
- the existence for disabled people of structural barriers and disincentives in benefits systems;
- the increasing importance of legislation in this area and the growing emphasis placed on the rights of disabled people;

- the importance of advocacy in helping provide access to opportunities for disabled people;
- the continuing development of policy in this field in all administrations, and the importance for all countries of participation by disabled people in the further development of policy in this area.

33. In tackling the challenges thrown up by these themes the Group concluded that there was a need to take forward the following:

- better co-ordination of services, both at Departmental and local delivery level, to ensure that agencies are aligned in their approach and that policies do not cut across each other;
- better engagement with employers, making the case that there is a genuine business rationale for providing access to employment for disabled people;
- addressing challenges with the voluntary sector and working to harness and maximise their contribution;
- more effective management of individuals' transitions into work, education and training.

34. The Officials Group was particularly struck with the contribution to wider social inclusion activity that can be made through increasing access to employment for disabled people. Work is not only the best route out of poverty, it also improves health, boosts dignity and self-esteem and creates links to the wider community. Work need not necessarily be conventional, full-time employment. For some disabled people, sheltered employment remains the appropriate model. However, opportunity should always remain available for people to move onto new challenges and realise their potential more fully.

35. Making progress requires shifts in attitudes by employers, disabled people and their families and wider communities. Influencing employers through well organised contacts with employability services and demonstrating the business case for employing disabled people is vital. The group felt that more could be done in this respect through employer networks that reach small and medium size enterprises as well as large businesses with well developed human resources and social responsibility strategies.

36. Various approaches to participation by disabled people and their families will help to change attitudes and have the potential also to transform services over time. The sharing of experience across BIC administrations during this work strand has been particularly fruitful in encouraging new forums and approaches to participation. For example, the work has been a particularly helpful contribution to Northern Ireland's development of policy in this area and has done much to provide added momentum to their formulation of strategies in this field.

37. More generally, BIC administrations have been particularly interested in the drivers for and pace of change in promoting access to employment for disabled people. These have varied, with smaller administrations sometimes being able to move more quickly and lead the way in developing approaches that integrate the contribution of different interests, such as employers, and support and training organisations. The topic has been particularly timely, given major policy shifts under way, such as the UK Government's welfare reform programme and the Scottish Executive employability framework, and the development of Ireland's National Disability Strategy.

Opportunities for further development

38. The Officials Group considered how best to review progress against the various challenges identified. One option would be to use attendance at the European Union of Supported Employment conference in Belfast in 2007 as an opportunity for officials to meet and revisit relevant issues.

39. Another area of potential further work for individual members to consider concerns ensuring that employers and government departments are fully engaged with this agenda. This may be an area where in due course further work would be beneficial.

40. Ministers are invited to:

- **Discuss specific aspects of work on disability and access to employment and identify the value for their administration.**
- **Agree that the work commissioned by the Ministerial meeting in July 2004 has been largely completed. However the network of contacts at official level should be maintained and the BIC website can be used to exchange information in future.**
- **Report back accordingly to the next BIC Summit.**

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS ON DISABILITY

These comparisons are illustrative only and do not necessarily compare like with like, particularly in the case of Ireland, whose statistics are derived from surveys that differ to those conducted in the UK. Not all administrations have been able to supply information.

The Irish National Disability Authority has recently published a report 'How far towards equality – measuring how equally people with disabilities are included in Irish society', which draws together statistics on people with disabilities from a variety of sources.

- **Up to one in five people of working age have a disability** (GB 16%, Scotland 1 in 5, Wales 1 in 5, NI 20.1%, Ireland 10.9% - Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) 2004)
- **Incidence of disability in the population increases with age from 1 in 10 at ages 18-24 to 4 in 10 at ages 60-64**
- **Disabled people of working age are twice as likely to be economically inactive as non-disabled people** (GB 48% compared to 16%, Wales 57% compared to 16.5%, NI 62% compared to 20%, Scotland 52% compared to 13%. Source: Annual Scottish Labour Force Survey 2004-05.) Ireland: Work participation rate for people without a disability is 70% compared to work participation rate for people with a disability 38% Source: QNHS 2004)
- **Disabled people and their families are much more likely to be poor.** In Scotland, around a quarter (26%) of all individuals living in households with at least one disabled adult were living in low income, compared to 17% of those in households with no disabled adult. These proportions were comparable to those for GB as a whole. Source: HBAI 2003-04. In Ireland in 2003 51.7% of households who were headed by persons whose Principal Economic Status was ill/disabled were at risk of poverty i.e. persons with an equivalized income below 60% of the national median income. The corresponding figure for 2004 was 47.3%. Ireland also has a national poverty measurement called consistent poverty, which combines the at risk of poverty rate with enforced deprivation of basic goods and services, which are regarded as essential for living in Ireland today. In 2003 the consistent poverty rate for those whose Principal Economic Status was ill/disabled was 22.4% and in 2004 it was 21.7%. These rates for both at risk of poverty and consistent poverty are about 2 to 3 times the national rates Source EU-SILC 2003 – 04.
- **There are more disabled people living in the most deprived areas. In 2001, more than 4 times as many working age people in the 10% most deprived areas in Scotland (33%) had a limiting long term illness than those in the 10% least deprived areas (8%).** Source: 2001 Census.
- **Disabled people are more than twice as likely to have no qualifications** (GB 28% compared to 12%, Wales 31% compared to 13%, NI 45% compared to 20%, Scotland 31% compared to 11%). Ireland 41.9% compared to 17.0% - QNHS 2002

- **The most common disabilities among those who are not working, but who want to work, are musculo-skeletal problems and depression.** Ireland: People with mental or emotional disabilities have the lowest rate of work participation – work participation rate 22% in 2002 - QNHS.
- **Disabled people who do work are more likely to work in part-time positions** (GB 29% compared to 23%, Wales 28% compared to 24%, NI 31% compared to 21%, Scotland 29% compared to 23%. Source: Annual Local Labour Force Survey 2004; Ireland 24.7% compared to 15.8%: QNHS 2002)

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN WALES

The Learning Disability Implementation Advisory Group

1. An external Group established by the Welsh Assembly Government to:
 - provide the Minister for Health and Social Services with advice about the development and implementation of the health and social care aspects of the learning disability strategy as it relates to adults; and
 - more generally to provide advice to the Welsh Assembly Government about the development and implementation of a wider range of policies that affect people with a learning disability eg education; housing and training/employment.
2. The Group's membership comprises representatives drawn from a number of professions including psychiatrists, nurses; psychologists, therapists and GPs as well as social services and NHS learning disability service managers, learning disability academic institutions and the National Public Health Service for Wales. The learning disability voluntary sector is also represented by Mencap Cymru, People First Wales, the All Wales Forum of Parents+ Carers and SCOVO. Three people with a learning disability are members of the Group one of whom is the co-chair of the group.

The Wales Employment Advisory Panel

3. The Wales Employment Advisory Panel is an Assembly Advisory Panel which advises the Welsh Assembly Government on the development, implementation and delivery in Wales of the New Deal and other Welfare to Work programmes. It aims to help shape Welfare to Work provision to meet the particular circumstances and needs of communities and people throughout Wales, and to contribute to the Assembly Government's work to increase economic activity levels throughout Wales.
4. The Wales Employment Advisory Panel examines closely measures to help disabled people, or those with a work-limiting health condition, who would like to work, to make the transition into employment. The interests of disabled people are represented specifically on the Panel's membership; one member is the Director of RNID - Cymru, while another is Head of Business Services at Remploy. In Addition, the Chair of the Panel has recently taken up the post of Director of RNIB - Cymru.

New Deal for Disabled People

5. Jobcentre Plus Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government worked together on a project to offer training, support and employment to disabled people within the Assembly itself under the New Deal for Disabled People programme. Full evaluation has been completed which found that the project was successful in placing 12 disabled people into jobs in the Assembly. Of these, 3 remain on their NDDP contract, 5 have left to take up other employment outside the Assembly, and 4 have been successful in open and fair competition in gaining a permanent contract, 3 at a higher grade. The evaluation report recommended repeating the project and to expand it to vacancies at a higher grade.

Access to Work

6. Jobcentre Plus Wales held a focus group with a number of deaf customers who were in receipt of Access to Work to obtain their views on how it could improve the service. A criticism from the group was that there was no suitable medium of communication for the deaf or hard of hearing. For example, deaf customers did not understand written English as BSL (British Sign Language) was their first language. As a result, Jobcentre Plus Wales has worked with the British Deaf Association and produced a CD Rom with sign language and subtitles. This has been quality assured by deaf institutes and has been circulated for use by regional Access to Work teams.

Communities @One

7. Communities @One is the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative to "enable communities to use ICT (Information Communication Technology) in ways relevant to them to enhance their quality of life, overcome difficulties and allow them to fulfil their social, economic and cultural potential". The initiative is administered by the Wales Co-operative Centre on behalf of the Assembly.

8. Due to be launched early in 2006 and targeted at the Communities First geographic areas across Wales, Communities @One provides a framework of support for communities, building on what already exists, to strengthen community organisations and individuals' Information Communication Technology skills to help achieve social inclusion.

9. Support will be provided by Community Brokers who will work with local community groups, including Communities First Partnerships, to develop a flexible programme of activities to meet the needs of local people. Brokers will be based in local organisations but will be centrally contracted to the Wales Co-operative Centre. This support will be complemented by a £4.5 million grant fund which community organisations can bid into to support their priorities.

The DATA (Disability and Adaptive Technology Awareness) project

10. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 came into force in October 2004. Virtually all businesses and organisations, large or small, must be made accessible to people with disabilities. The DATA project is a free service within the Objective One areas in Wales which can help businesses comply with the Act. The project aims to encourage the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in employment, and is part funded by The European Social Fund and the Welsh Assembly Government. The project helps by promoting the awareness and use of technology developed for people with disabilities (adaptive technology). It provides practical support and demonstrations on a range of adaptive measures and guidance and signposting on issues relating to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). www.rnib.org.uk

Meet the Mouse/Llywio'r Llygoden Programme

11. The programme provides a two-hour introduction to using a computer for people with no experience at all. Taught in Welsh or English, attendees learn how to use a mouse and keyboard, to search the Internet and to use e-mail. The team visits a town for a day or two, then moves on, throughout Wales.

12. Key Achievements in 2004-05 include holding 178 workshops, including one in Powys for people with profound hearing impairments. Key objectives for 2005-06 include providing more workshops specifically for people with physical impairments.

ELWa

13. Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) provides supplementary funding to Further Education Institutions and work based learning providers to make their mainstream provision accessible to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). Part of this funding is for IT support including laptops, braille etc.

“Trailblazer” Project

14. The North Glamorgan NHS Trust - Remploy “Trailblazer” Project was launched in October 2003, and is one of only two such schemes to operate in the UK. This innovative scheme aimed to assist in the recruitment and retention by the Trust of people with a disability or a health condition. Prior to the 'Trailblazer', the number of local people claiming incapacity benefits who gained work with the Trust was negligible. 'Trailblazer' introduced training and job trialling, and close partnership working with the Trust. When the project ended in April 2005, it had achieved 22 job starts with the Trust for people from the hardest to help client group, and in addition, a further 38 people were helped back into work with other local employers.

Want2Work: Collaborative Initiative with Jobcentre Plus Wales

15. *Want2Work* is a joint Welsh Assembly Government/Jobcentre Plus Wales initiative developed to help those people already claiming benefit (mainly Incapacity Benefit), who express an interest in finding work, to move voluntarily into sustained employment.

16. It is funded through a mix of Objective One and Three EU funds totalling £11 million and has been fully operational since February 2005 in wards within the three local authority areas of Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Cardiff.

17. *Want2Work* offers specialist Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser support and an enhanced financial package that includes a Job Preparation Premium and a Return to Work Credit. For those with a work limiting health problem who find work, there is access to advice from a health professional working alongside Jobcentre Plus advisers.

18. Delivered in partnership through outreach provision in local community outlets, *Want2Work* is helping more people into work, improving health, and building strong and safe communities where people want to live and work.

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN SCOTLAND

Employment and People with Disabilities

1. The Executive is currently finalizing its **Employability Framework**. Working with key stakeholders including many in the disability field, the Executive is looking to develop effective ways of helping people into work, including those who face many barriers to gaining employment. The Framework therefore places an emphasis not only on getting people into jobs but also on supporting sustained employment in meaningful work where there can be opportunities for progression. Targets have been set to reduce worklessness in specific geographic areas and to encourage large and public sector employers to recruit people from vulnerable groups.

2. The Executive has established a **Strategic Disability Working Group** to look at the priorities for both the Executive and partner organizations to promote equality for disabled people in Scotland, and to develop proposals on longer term mechanisms for engagement with the disability sector. The Group includes disabled people and representative organisations. An employment sub-group has been working to develop recommendations for promoting employment of disabled people. It has not yet completed its work but it is expected that it will reach its conclusions early in 2006.

Employment and People with Mental Ill-Health

3. People with mental health problems are among the most disadvantaged groups in terms of securing and sustaining employment. Employment rates of 8% - 20% have been found amongst mental health service users, while employment rates for those with psychotic problems were found to be even lower, at 4% - 12% (Perkins & Rinaldi 2002). This compares unfavourably with the UK figure of 49% employment of disabled adults of working age, although the Scottish rate for disabled people is lower, at 39% (OECD 2002).

4. The Executive has established a National Programme for Improving Mental Health & Well-being, which includes employment and working life as a priority area for action. The National Programme aims to raise awareness of mental health and to support mainstream services and employers to engage with those with mental health problems, in ways that improve an individual's employability and consequently improve their mental health.

5. The National Programme supports the delivery of sustainable workplace training initiatives aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination amongst the general workforce. Specifically, it targets attitudes and behaviours of line managers, occupational health and human resources personnel. In addition, the National Programme has commissioned research into employment & mental health to:

- establish an evidence base of the characteristics of the population with experience of mental ill-health who are unemployed.
- explore the nature of the multiple barriers to work faced by people with mental health problems, such as financial concerns, confidence and self-esteem, and discrimination.
- Identify the types of interventions which help people with experience of mental ill-health overcome barriers to employment.

6. The National Programme also funds an Employment Support Project in Fife, run in conjunction with NHS Fife and Fife Council and covering vocational rehabilitation and job retention. This innovative approach provides a case manager/rehabilitation consultant for people experiencing mental health problems in the workplace.

Employment and People with Learning Disabilities

7. *The same as you?* (SAY) review of services for people with learning disabilities published on 11 May 2000 found that services need to improve and reshape, to include people with learning disabilities in community life, education, employment and leisure and recreation. There was also a need for services to be designed with the individual at the heart of the decision-making process.

8. Implementing SAY is a 10-year programme that is now at the halfway point. It will radically alter the way that learning disability services are provided, leading to more innovative person-centred services which support people with learning disabilities to live the life they want.

9. The SAY Implementation Group report on employment *Working for a change?* was published in December 2003. The Executive will follow up the recommendations of this report with the Disability Rights Commission, DWP and Inland Revenue.

Further & Higher Education for People with Disabilities

10. The Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn irrespective of their background or personal circumstances. In further education, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council are developing a needs-led model of support that ensures students receive the support they need rather than the support historically associated with medical conditions. The Scottish Executive is also working with the Scottish Further Education Unit to produce a multi-level toolkit to support students in both further and higher education with mental health difficulties.

11. For many people with additional support needs, participation in further education depends on a package of support being put in place. This requires a cross-agency approach from those involved in supporting students with additional needs. The Scottish Executive published *'Partnership Matters – A Guide to Local Authorities, NHS Boards and Voluntary Organisations on Supporting Students with Additional Needs in Further Education'* in January 2005. This document set out the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in supporting students with additional support needs and encourages genuine partnership working.

12. In relation to students with complex additional support needs, a number of young people with such needs are experiencing barriers to participation in further education. Currently there is no specialist FE provision in Scotland and a lack of local authority financial support often means that alternative places in English colleges cannot be taken up. A recent consultation aimed to find out about current funding policies and arrangements of local authorities across Scotland and the experiences of young people and stakeholders. Ministers are currently considering options on how best the needs of students with the most complex needs can be met.

ICT and support for Employment

13. The Scottish Executive recognizes that there is a digital divide in interaction with and opportunities offered by the Information and Communication Technologies to disabled and non-disabled people with a danger of already excluded groups such as the disabled being potentially left further behind.

14. To this end as part of a wider Digital Inclusion policy review, the Scottish Executive is in discussion with various bodies including public, private and voluntary organizations as well as individuals on how best to address the digital divide. Through our policy review and a subsequent strategy we aim to achieve more cohesive working with stakeholders to develop future Digital Inclusion activity. The emphasis will be on supporting and encouraging activities which are sustainable, have potential for national rollout and are evidence based, while addressing the needs of the disadvantaged groups.

Transition into Supported Education and Employment Project

15. The Executive is providing £200,000 over 3 years to the DARE Foundation for a project to build partnerships with young disabled people, education providers, school staff and employers. The project is also providing education providers and employers with a forum to develop sustainable collaborative strategies which allow young disabled people the opportunity to make informed career choices. The first stage reports are due to be published shortly.

LEAD Scotland – accessible ICT project

16. In 2003-04, the Executive provided £206,000 to LEAD Scotland to raise awareness with disabled adults and their carers of the benefits of the Internet. This included provision of 200 accessible ICT laptops on loan to enable disabled adults to access the Internet at home and develop basic ICT skills. The funding also supported specialist assessment on accessible ICT, support and confidence building to enable disabled adults and carers to learn how to access the Internet (eg use of Internet Made Easy basic web skills CD ROM), and provision of information to disabled adults about sources of funding/accessible ICT.

Service User Involvement Project – EQUAL Access

17. The Executive are providing funding of £79,000 over the next three years to 2007-08 to the Scottish Poverty Information Unit based at Glasgow Caledonian University. The main objective of the project is to monitor and evaluate the development of service user engagement in service development and planning amongst EQUAL Theme A projects, both individually and collectively. This will inform on the ability and capacity of projects to meet the needs of targeted disadvantaged client groups, including people with a disability, to develop an understanding of the issues involved in engaging services users in service development.

18. In Glasgow for example, *Equal Access to Employment* is a partnership between the city's main service providers, including the City Council, Greater Glasgow Health Board and Jobcentre Plus, that aims to ensure that people with health and social care needs have, amongst other things, a meaningful choice and opportunity to get and sustain a job and access to mainstream training and employment services as well as specialist support.

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN THE UK

1. There have been substantial developments in recent years, culminating in the further proposals set out in the Green Paper *A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work*² published on January 24th. This contains proposals for reducing the number of people coming on to benefits by helping them to remain in work; a complete replacement of the current Incapacity Benefit and Income Support on grounds of disability with a single, simpler Employment and Support Allowance; and additional support to help those on the benefit to return to work, beginning with a national roll-out of Pathways to Work, and including a review of our disability employment services.

2. remainder of this annex sets out briefly some of the key changes in the last few years. It is not intended to be comprehensive.

3. It is worth though reflecting as well that we have seen some improvements. The gap between the employment rate of disabled people, and that of all those of working age, has narrowed from 35 percentage points in 1998 to 28 percentage points in 2005. And the number of people on incapacity benefits has begun to fall, by 58,000 in the most recent year, after a lengthy period of consistent growth. While the employment rate gap is still far too wide, and the number on benefits far too high, these are encouraging signs.

4. **Improving the life chances of disabled people:** This report by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, published in 2005 set an ambitious 20-year vision to bring disabled people fully within the opportunity society. The report had a number of recommendations to help meet this aspiration, on which progress is being made. For example, a separate cross-Government Office for Disability Issues was set up from December 2005 to act as a focal point within Government and drive forward implementation of the overall strategy. The Government is developing individual budget pilots in 13 local authorities in England, which will build on existing direct payment schemes operated by social services departments to give severely disabled people more choice and control over the support provided by different agencies.

5. **Pathways to Work:** is probably the most important innovation of recent years. A way forward for helping those claiming Incapacity Benefits to return to work was set out in *Pathways to Work: Helping people into employment* in November 2002. Pilot programmes were launched for new claimants in October 2003/April 2004, covering roughly 9% of the country. Pathways has a number of elements: Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) for virtually all new claimants, as in the rest of the country, but delivered by Personal Advisers who have had substantially improved training; for most claimants, rather than the single WFI as in the rest of the country, a series of 6 at roughly monthly intervals; streamlined access to, and better information about the range of existing support available; new 'Condition Management Programmes', run jointly with the National Health Service, designed to help individuals to manage their condition in the workplace; improved financial incentives with a £40 a week Return To Work Credit, payable for a year, to those entering work and earning less than £15,000 a year.

6. Results so far from Pathways have been very encouraging. The proportion leaving benefit within 6 months has risen by an estimated 8 percentage points in the pilot areas,

² Cm 6730; can be downloaded from http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/welfarereform/docs/A_new_deal_for_welfare-Empowering_people_to_work-Full_Document.pdf

and qualitative evaluation has been very positive³. For example, customers generally have accepted that it is reasonable to ask them to attend WFIs, and many have been surprised at the range of help on offer; Personal Advisers feel substantially more confident in dealing with disabled people and in some cases have been surprised at what they have been able to achieve. Based on this early success, it was announced in the 2004 Pre Budget Report that Pathways would be extended further, to cover approximately one third of the country by October 2006. The programme has also been extended to some of those who were already on benefit when the pilots started; it is too early to say anything about the success of this.

7. And in the recent Green Paper, a national roll-out of Pathways by 2008 was announced.

8. **New Deal for Disabled People**: Following earlier pilots, a national NDDP was introduced in July 2001. This is an entirely voluntary programme open to all those on incapacity benefits. Participants register with a *Job Broker*, who may be from the public, private or voluntary sectors, and who receives payment based almost entirely on results (i.e. getting people into jobs) – how they do this is left almost entirely to them. Although take-up initially was low, at around 2%, it has increased to around 4% with the introduction of mandatory WFIs at the start of the claim, and to around 10% in areas operating the Pathways to Work pilots. There has been a wide range of evaluation, generally positive. Although the full impact assessment has yet to be published, the evidence to date suggests that the programme is cost-effective.

9. **Disability Employment Advisory Committee**: There has been a long history of advisory committees on disability issues. Building on the lessons from the past, the current Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC) was set up in 2002, to advise the Department for Work and Pensions on the barriers that disabled people face in getting and keeping work and what is needed to overcome those barriers. All Members have been chosen for their knowledge of disability and employment; most of the Members have personal experience of disability. Particular projects carried out by the committee include engaging employers and health professionals in the context of Pathways, what is needed to improve employment support for disabled people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and how to encourage more black and minority ethnic people to join the committee; working with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit on their report; *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, in relation to employment.⁴

10. The advice of the Committee is given in confidence to the Department, and is completely independent, and has been valuable on a range of other policy developments.

11. **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)**: The employment provisions of the DDA were extended in October 2004 to provide protection for an additional 600,000 workers. A further 7 million jobs and 1 million employers were brought within scope. Most recently, amendments to the DDA in 2005 require public authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

12. As well as these changes which have already taken effect, two additional areas of development are worth mentioning.

⁴ More details of the work of DEAC can be found in their Annual Report or from www.deac.org.uk

13. **Employer engagement:** We recognise the pivotal role that employers have. We have been working closely with the Employers' Forum on Disability to investigate ways in which we can better engage with employers. A report on that work will be published soon. We continue to discuss with the EFD, and also the National Employment Panel how best to take this work forward.

14. **Review of disability employment services:** Our disability employment services, delivered both through Jobcentre Plus and providers from the public, private and voluntary sector, already enable many people with a disability or health condition to lead a fulfilling working life. These services form an important part of the successful Pathways to Work initiative and will be even more critical in the future as we reform the welfare system. We are reviewing these services and intend to consult on our proposals later in the year.

15. We want to build on the lessons we have learned through extensive evaluation and the feedback we get about existing provision. Our aim is to continue to increase the effectiveness of support we offer to help people with a health condition or disability prepare for, and make a success of the job they take-up.

16. Recent Reports by the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, results from evaluations and feedback from customers, providers and employers tell us how these services need to be developed. Their key messages are that we need to continue to improve services to make them easier to use, more inclusive, more responsive to individual needs and better at encouraging people to achieve their full potential, whilst offering reliability and value for money.

17. We plan to promote greater inclusion and equality by ensuring that mainstream services are accessible to more disabled people. Better tailored support will enable people to realise their potential and achieve – where they can – independence in the workplace. A more coherent range of specialist services will respond more flexibly to the needs of disabled people and employers and will make better use of resources.

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability (PSI Disability)

1. The European Year for People with Disabilities (2003) and the subsequent Breaking the Barriers conference (February 2004) organised by the Department of Social Development and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), highlighted a range of barriers which exclude people with disabilities from full participation and interaction in social and economic life.
2. Consequently, the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability was established in November 2004, with a view of examining in greater detail, the barriers identified during the conference.
3. Consisting of 32 core organisations, the PSI Working Group includes within its membership:
 - All Northern Ireland Government Departments
 - Voluntary and Community organisations representing people with physical, sensory, mental ill health, hidden and learning disabilities
 - Statutory and public organisations which monitor policy and legislative progress.

The PSI Disability Working Group has created five subgroups (with a further 15 co-opted organisations) to take work forward across a range of topic areas– Access to Employment; Children, Young People and Families; Legislation, Citizenship and Attitudes; Transport, Access, Housing and Information; Lifelong Learning, Culture, Arts and Sport.

5. The groups have taken presentations from agencies, private sector companies and independent committees, across the Subgroup areas to ensure their working knowledge of the issues stays current and informed.
6. Consultation is and will be, at the heart of the PSI Disability work, with plans for a small, focused consultation with disabled people on the recommendations emerging from the subgroups, mid-way through the PSI process; and a full public consultation upon the final recommendations.
7. An Interim Report will be prepared around March/April 2006, with a final Report submitted to Ministers in late 2006. This report will also co-incide with the publication of the results of the Northern Ireland Disability Survey.

Disability Survey

8. In parallel with the process of PSI Disability, OFMDFM have commissioned a Disability Survey. Conducted by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, the Disability Survey will be the most comprehensive of its kind in Northern Ireland since the early 1990's. As well as measuring the social economic conditions of people with disabilities, the Survey will look at barriers across the issues being examined by the PSI Working Group and will inform the final recommendations in 2006.

9. In response to the need to gather other data, the Survey will also provide information on the impact of government / statutory services and issues around public attitudes, 'hate crime', and community safety.

Disability Order in Council

10. Work on the Disability Discrimination Order in Council is almost complete. The Order is expected to be made by mid-February and will introduce new and improved rights for people with disabilities in a variety of areas. Work on subordinate legislation arising from the Order is also underway.

11. Once enacted, the new legislation will provide greater protection for disabled people by broadening the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and building on existing coverage, ensuring that more people than ever before are protected by the DDA.

Department for Employment and Learning

Access to Work (NI)

12. Flexible programme designed to overcome employment related obstacles faced by people with disabilities. It can help with a wide variety of supports such as Communication Support at Interview, Special Aids and Equipment, Adaptations to Premises and Equipment, Travel to Work and Support Worker.

Eligibility

Available to all people with disabilities under the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act who are in work or about to take up a job

Provision

There are no upper limits to the assistance available. Support packages are agreed – for individuals, it is normally for three years. All cases are reviewed regularly by an Access to Work Adviser.

Job Introduction Scheme

13. A job trial grant of £75 per week for up to 6 weeks that is available to employers who may wish to see how a person with a disability performs in an actual job.

Eligibility

Available to all people with disabilities under the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Provision

Can be extended up to a maximum of 13 weeks, at the discretion of a Disablement Employment Adviser.

Employment Support

14. A scheme to help people into work, who are unable to achieve the standard output levels because of a severe disability.

Eligibility

Open to all people with disabilities under the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act whose work output is assessed at between 30 and 80% output in their actual job. Support is open-ended, until the person leaves the job or progresses to a non-subsidised level.

Provision

All cases reviewed regularly, and output reassessed.

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP)

15. A voluntary programme aimed at assisting people with disabilities who are on health related benefits find and retain work.

The main features of NDDP are:

- Improving a client's Jobsearch skills
- The Personal Adviser will work closely with the client to provide advice, guidance and support on how to get a job or prepare for work through training. The Personal Adviser maintains a network of contacts with employers, training and disability organizations.

Pre-employment Training

16. Under NDDP, training can be either part time or full time. A client may be allowed to complete more than one course using NDDP funding, providing these will clearly demonstrate progression towards sustained employment. However the total duration of the courses should not exceed 26 weeks with a total maximum funding of £750. Training providers or training locations cannot be based outside Northern Ireland.

Approved Work

17. Enables both client and the employer to assess each other's suitability without commitment and client remains on benefit during the Approved Work period.

Disabled Person's Employment Subsidy (DPES)

18. Is payable to an employer who employs a disabled person. This subsidy is payable to an employer, for a maximum of 18 weeks when they employ a client with a disability. The job should be expected to last for at least 52 weeks and there are three levels of DPES payable depending on the hours worked ie:

Level 1: 8 to less than 16 hours - £25

Level 2: 16 to less than 30 hours - £50; and

Level 3: 30 hours+ - £75

Eligibility

Open to people on health related benefits only. Must be in receipt of a qualifying health related benefit such as Incapacity Benefit, DLA, etc.

Provision

Maximum employment subsidy paid for 18 weeks.

Maximum cost of Pre –Employment Training £750.

Maximum duration of Pre –Employment Training 26 weeks.

Work Preparation (WP)

19. WP is being piloted in the 4 Targeted Initiative areas. It is an individually tailored, work-focused programme, enabling people with a disability to address barriers associated with their disability and prepare to access a labour market with the confidence necessary to achieve and sustain their job goal.

20. WP is designed to assist people with disabilities by addressing specific employment related needs that result from their disability and prevent them from retaining their job, taking up employment or vocational training of a type, which would otherwise be suitable for them.

Eligibility

Open to all people over 18 with disabilities under the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act. NB Available in Targeted Initiative areas only.

Provision

Maximum duration of 12 weeks.

Skills and Science Funding Package

21. *The N Ireland government will soon announce details of a 'ring-fenced' funding package resulting in significant additional spending up to 2008, with the aim of reducing economic inactivity. Whilst not exclusive to people with disabilities, it will be significant none the less, in providing funding to:*

- *Develop skills for the disadvantaged*
- *Develop entrepreneurship Skills*
- *Reduce economic inactivity and improve skills for employment*

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN THE STATES OF JERSEY

BACKGROUND

1. A decade ago, Jersey embarked on a series of initiatives to improve training and real work opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. The Strategy addressed:
 - Aspirations of people with disabilities
 - Employers' needs
 - Cultural Change
 - Partnership working
 - Integrated Service Delivery
 - Job coach and training / development programmes
 - Changes to the Benefit system

PROGRESS : GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

WIDENING THE TARGET GROUP

3. The Strategy initially concentrated on people with physical or learning disabilities but has gradually encompassed all with a “special employment need” – the social rather than the medical model of disability.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

4. The importance of employer support has been recognised and nurtured throughout. Listening to, and supporting, their needs and those of existing employees as well as the potential employee, has played a major role in changing attitudes and attracting more work opportunities. The ‘job coach’ model has proved invaluable in this respect. It also provides the continuing support as needed, thus improving job retention. Employers were encouraged, at an early stage, to set up their own organisation, the Jersey Employers Network on Disability. This provides a forum where members can share experiences and knowledge and promote employment of people with disabilities.

CAREER PROGRESSION

5. Over the period, there has been increasing integration of people with disabilities into the workplace and recognition of the abilities and commitment they bring to the job. Whilst most of the work so far has been at the low pay end, Jersey introduced a Minimum Wage this year to help protect the more vulnerable workers and those in the low pay industries. Despite this, feedback from people with disabilities, is very positive. The dignity of work seems to rate more highly than the pay though some, who have been in work for a few years, appear to be developing aspirations for work progression. This is an encouraging development in the progress towards a career path for all.

ADVOCACY

6. In order to help people with disabilities articulate their views and encourage their involvement in the development of services, a system of advocacy has been developed throughout the various programmes.

INTEGRATION OF SERVICES

7. A 'Trust' has been set up for the purpose of integrating services around the individual's progression to work. It brings together the work of the Employment, Social Security, Health and Education Services and provides a central assessment, training and development service.

REFORM OF BENEFITS

8. More effort is also being directed to keeping people with health conditions in work. Reform of the Incapacity Benefit system in 2004 and the development of an integrated Income Support system now underway, are aimed at supporting a return to work and reducing the financial barriers or disincentives to work.

PARTNERSHIPS

9. Partnership with the voluntary sector is vital but remains challenging given the range and nature of the various organisations. Various initiatives have taken place to try to improve overall services, including working sessions designed to bring organisations and other interested parties together. Initially, the approach has been to share knowledge and experience. Ultimately it is hoped that policies and programmes can be developed in partnership.

SUMMARY

10. Considerable progress has been made in Jersey towards integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. Much more needs to be done to win over less committed employers and attract wider opportunities, but many barriers have been breached. This has largely been achieved by strong political and departmental "champions", integrated but flexible working, and giving reliable support where needed to all parties.

11. Resourcing has also proved to be challenging. Priority is currently being given to developing facilities which create the right environment to facilitate training and development where needed. There is no doubt that the support needed is staff intensive and, as aspirations increase, so too the demand on those resources. The rewards, however, are considerable not just in terms of the individual but their family and the community as a whole.

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN THE STATES OF GUERNSEY

1. Guernsey has approximately 33,000 employed and self-employed workers. Within this number there are just 200 (0.6%) unemployed. There are a further 400 people (1.2%) on short-term incapacity benefit at any one time, and 600 people (1.8%) on long-term incapacity benefit.

2. Until recently, Guernsey's social security scheme had adhered to the sharp division of capable of work or incapable of work, as regards entitlement to incapacity benefits. This was in common with the historic norm for most social security programmes. Also like other countries, Guernsey did have the limited scope of allowing a person on benefit to do work of a therapeutic nature, provided that the earnings were minimal.

3. Mindful of recent studies on the advantages of early intervention, and having observed that the above system gave no encouragement to customers or their doctors to signal any degree of capacity for work, Guernsey's Social Security Department moved an amendment to the law, which was given effect from 11 October 2004. The amendment inserted a new section under the heading of 'work rehabilitation' which gave the Social Security Department wide scope for introducing a range of initiatives, incentives and benefit modifications aimed at returning people to the workplace. Under the general banner of 'Back-to-Work Benefits', the following programmes have been put in place and are operational in Guernsey:

- Gradual Return to Work
- Back to Work Bonus
- Return to Work Plan
- Work Trial
- Voluntary Work
- Short-term training
- Basic Skills Training
- Job Start Expenses

4. The common theme in all of these programmes is the recognition by the Social Security Department that the step from benefit support back to paid employment can be too big for many people. Some transitional assistance, by allowing benefit to continue wholly or in part while work is attempted is a very small investment when compared with the longer term savings when a return to work is achieved.

5. The early results of these programmes have been excellent and the Social Security Department is convinced that this is the way forward. Of course, as with the introductory statistics on the number of contributors, the scale of these programmes is tiny compared with larger jurisdictions. But Guernsey's findings will almost certainly accord with those elsewhere.

6. The key finding has been the need to build the trust of the customer and the customer's doctor. This needs the dialogue with the customer to be undertaken with experienced social security officers who are empowered to approve a 'work deal' without the need for in-office referral and delay. The relationship with the doctor is also key. The Department has, however, been surprised by the enthusiasm which the doctors have shown for the new arrangements. There will be a need for regular reminders to doctors of

the programmes on offer. Among other things, the Department will be issuing brief single page bulletins on the back-to-work initiatives. Two have been issued since the programmes were introduced, the second of which gave 3 case summaries of successful outcomes. Feedback from the doctors has been very good.

7. With regard to disability, Guernsey's benefit coverage is narrow compared with other jurisdictions and there are no general disability living and working allowances. To date, Guernsey has preferred to offer substantial case-by case assistance under a far reaching power under its supplementary benefit law, rather than providing a universal benefit.

8. Guernsey's sparse coverage of disability benefits was remarked upon by the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, which reported on relative poverty in Guernsey in 2002. Furthermore, while the Townsend Centre noted the much valued assistance being provided by charities for particular client groups, it was observed that the communication channels with policy makers could be improved. In the light of this observation, Guernsey's Health Department, in October 2005, convened a forum on the needs of people with disability and their families. This is intended as the starting point for improved and more active communications in these areas. The need has been further recognised through a reorganisation of the internal structures of the Health Department. A directorate which has maintained a very effective and responsive service for people with learning difficulties has had its mandate extended to cover people with disability.

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES ON THE ISLE OF MAN

Strategic Approach

Social Services have recently taken a more strategic approach to improving access to employment for people with disabilities, considering carefully what we are aiming to achieve and developing programmes of work and initiatives which lead to the desired outcome. This approach is being developed in the context of producing an overall strategy for the provision of social care and support to all vulnerable adults in the Isle of Man. The strategy has several Quality of Life Themes, one of which is employment with the strategic goal of 'Helping people to prepare for, get and sustain meaningful and rewarding work.'

The DHSS (which includes Social Services, Health and Social Security) has entered a partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry to join forces to promote and facilitate the employment of disabled people and other vulnerable groups. The DHSS's objectives in the partnership are:

- Enabling people with disabilities to have rich and diverse lives, fulfil their potential and accomplish their aspirations.
- Enabling previously highly dependent people to gain confidence and become more independent.
- Facilitating the (re)integration of socially excluded people into mainstream society and interdependence with their community.
- Helping people with the potential for gainful employment to become more financially self-reliant and less dependent on social security benefits.
- Increasing the health and welfare of citizens of the Isle of Man as satisfying and rewarding work is recognised as a crucial factor in mental and physical well being.

The DTI's emphasis, on the other hand, is on increasing the skill base, providing a reliable labour force, encouraging enterprise, making the Isle of Man an attractive place for investment, securing high value commercial operations etc. These two contrasting perspectives have been proven, as far as we can see in the early stages of the partnership, to be compatible and mutually beneficial.

Partnership Programme Components

1 Emphasis on employability rather than disability.

We have worked with every individual service user to consider their employment applications and what they can realistically achieve with support by focussing on the abilities they have and the skills they can develop. This involves some attitude changing amongst social care providers, carers, and an outcomes approach to Individual Planning.

2 Integration with 'mainstream' employment services.

The former Disabilities and Supported Employment Services for people with physical disabilities and learning disabilities respectively have been merged and have been transferred to Job Centres to ensure people with a range of special needs access help at the same point as all other job seekers.

- 3 Tackling of physical, institutional, attitudinal **barriers to employment** rather than focussing on the weaknesses of individuals.

A carrot and stick approach has been taken with incentives such as grants and a Disability Access Guide encouraging employers and all providers of goods and services to facilitate access and remove obstacles and a Disability Discrimination Bill requiring them to do so.

- 4 Contact with employers and awareness of expansion areas and skill requirements. Promoting the employment of disabled people from a **good business sense perspective**.

The DTI's knowledge of the current and future labour market requirements can help us ensure we are preparing people for sustainable jobs rather than develop abilities in low skill, old fashioned activities as some training centres have tended to do. We hope to form an Employer's Forum where the commercial advantages and practical costs and benefits of investing in disabled people can be discussed.

- 5 Access to **additional funding** to expand the service from a Department where increasing a skilled, competent, reliable workforce is a top priority.

Given the huge range of demands on the DHSS budget employment will unfortunately always be a lower priority than for example hospitals, residential and respite care, emergency paramedic services. Opportunities for growth are higher within the DTI.

- 6 Making **connections with vocational learning** opportunities, careers guidance, job seeking advice etc to create multiple pathways to employment.

We are joining up the various forms of support available to job seekers on their journey from reliance on day care or isolation and enforced idleness to sustaining a fulfilling job and making an economic contribution. This includes for example ensuring the special needs of people with disabilities are considered in the Island Vocational Training Strategy. We have developed an office skills training programme/job taster where disabled people spend several weeks working and training in various government departments. A similar programme in the retail industry is in the pipeline.

- 7 Opportunities in small business start up schemes, **enterprise development** and social firm's creation.

This an area where we need to begin to connect the light industrial and arts and crafts activities being undertaken in sheltered workshops with business acumen and assistance to initiate social firms, self and collective/co-operative employment. The challenge is to ensure people with disabilities are at the forefront of the DTI's Vision for a Can Do Economy.

- 8 Closer operational management and **quality control**.

Our monitoring of the employment service to enable us to judge its success rates needs attention. We are developing performance indicators and quantitative and qualitative measures to help assess impact, target resources, and plan service improvements.

Conclusion

The strategic partnership with a programme of practical projects appears to be working well. It ensures we can focus simultaneously on both the needs of individuals for a more fulfilling and integrated life and the needs of the Isle of Man for the contribution people with disabilities can make to the economy or public services. It is one part of building a more socially and economically inclusive and cohesive community in which more people benefit from the advantages of a prosperous Island with a reasonably high average standard of living and low unemployment.

In the future the partnership needs to expand to involve other Government Departments – such as Education and Home Affairs – the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector and private enterprise. We also need to scrutinise and revamp the benefits system to ensure it better supports entry or return to work. The Isle of Man has learnt lessons from other BIC partners on these and other issues over the last year which we need to plan to adapt and implement.

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BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL: DISABILITY AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

National Disability Strategy

The overarching framework for progressing employment and indeed other opportunities for people with disabilities is within the National Disability Strategy and the specific provisions that will be articulated in Government Departments' sectoral plans. These Plans must be laid before the Oireachtas (Parliament) by July 2006.

In this context, the Disability Act 2005 provides for appropriate co-operation between the Departments of Social and Family Affairs, Health and Children, and Enterprise Trade and Employment in relation to the development and co-ordination of services provided for people with disabilities. This naturally includes employment support services.

Department of Social and Family Affairs

A key objective of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, as set out in their Strategy Statement 2005/2007, is to move away from the passive payment of income support to people with disabilities to a situation whereby a more active engagement occurs and where employment potential is explored with the individual concerned.

Some of the work already undertaken or in progress to move this agenda forward includes:

- A Departmental working group has been established to examine activation measures, what is working well, what has potential to work well, and identify gaps in services currently being provided by both the Department and other agencies. The group will identify a national long term vision for activation and define a structured delivery programme.
- A pilot project is examining the employment potential of young persons with disabilities (16-25) in receipt of disability payments.
- Proposals on the operation of existing exemptions schemes for Disability Benefit and Invalidity Pension recipients are being considered with regard to active engagement with the Department's Facilitation Service.
- Of particular significance has been the introduction of a new tapered withdrawal of Disability Allowance and Blind Pension to improve the incentives for employment participation for recipients of these benefits. As part of the 2006 social welfare budget, a new 50 per cent withdrawal rate will be introduced above the current €120 income disregard to an upper maximum earnings limit of €350 per week, after which Disability Allowance/Blind Pension will be withdrawn at 100 per cent. These new arrangements will mean that a single person can earn up to €390 per week (compared with current figure of €275), before Disability Allowance/Blind Pension is fully withdrawn. This new measure will come into effect in June 2006.

Wage Subsidy Scheme

A new Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) was launched by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment on 19 July 2005, and is now being implemented by the national training and employment authority, FAS. The WSS offers financial support to employers to encourage them to employ disabled people who work in excess of 20 hours per week, whose level of productivity is below 80 per cent of normal work performance. Financial supports for employers are structured under three separate strands:

Strand I is a wage subsidy payment provided to an employer which compensates them for a productivity shortfall that may arise as a result of the disabled employee's impairment.

Strand II provides grants to cover additional management and supervisory costs and other work based costs which may derive from a firm's decision to employ more than two disabled people.

Strand III provides a grant towards the employment and expense of an Employment Assistant Officer where an enterprise exceeds 30 disabled employees.

The WSS is available to all employers outside the public sector. Persons employed under this Scheme will be subject to the same conditions of employment as other employees, including Pay Related Social Insurance contributions, annual leave, tax deductions and the going rate for the job. Unlike other schemes, the potential exists for both the employee and the employer to receive an incentive.

EQUAL Community Initiative Programme

Development Partnerships funded under the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme, which have a focus on people with disabilities, include:

Willing Able Mentoring Programme (WAM), which aims to develop a new and innovative mechanism, in the form of structured mentoring supports that will accelerate the number of graduates with disabilities getting into the workplace and securing employment opportunities appropriate to their level of qualification. The programme also seeks to develop creative solutions in the workplace to support and enable GWD (Graduates with Disabilities) to do their jobs.

The objectives of the WAM project include:

- Establishing an Action Group of employers and GWD to inform, discuss and share experiences and expertise and apply this knowledge together dynamically to real work place problems;
- To design, develop and deliver a Creative Work and Personal Skills Module for GWD and a mentoring training programme for employers;
- To provide GWD with internship opportunities across a range of occupations appropriate to their type and level of qualifications;
- To create guidelines and materials that can be used in a variety of environments to share the lessons and skills learnt in this project.

The Education for Employment (E4) project aims to increase the employability of people from marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, through up-skilling participants to work as Technical Support Officers in Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) and Assistive Technologies (AT). The objectives of E4 include:

- Establishing a lifelong learning pathway to employment for participants through the provision of foundation courses at rehabilitation centres and progression to colleges of further education
- To provide internships and work experience placements through partnership with industry.

Workway

Workway is the first initiative in Ireland to bring together employers, people with disabilities, trade unions and other groups representing the interests of people with disabilities in networks established under the initiative to improve their employment

opportunities. It is the first such known partnership initiative in Europe to seek to address the high levels of unemployment among people with disabilities in the private sector. This initiative was conceived under a national partnership agreement, which acknowledged that social partners have a major role in raising awareness and promoting the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector.

Workway adopted a partnership approach steered by a National Committee involving key players in the area of disability and employment. The project operated in four regions of Ireland, Cork, Kerry, Galway and Donegal. Local networks were set up in each of the regions with the membership comprising employers, union representatives, people with disabilities and relevant service providers to provide a forum for network members to share their knowledge and perceptions of the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

Three key objectives were agreed for phase 2 of the project:

1. The development of a Pre-Employment Preparation Template to address a range of issues identified at key pre-employment stages for people with disabilities accessing employment;
2. The piloting of Workway Employment Guidelines in a number of companies, with people with disabilities and with various service providers to test the robustness of the information and the practicality of the advice and;
3. The restructuring of the website – www.workway.ie – to turn it into a one-stop interactive and the most comprehensive website on employment and disability in Ireland.

0₂ Ability Awards

The 0₂ Ability Awards recognise the contribution that people with disabilities make to business and award Irish business for best practice in the employment of people with disabilities. Examining all aspects of employment, the Awards recognise progressive attitudes, namely in those organisations that see disability and diversity as a corporate opportunity and key to its success. The Awards were created and designed by the Aisling Foundation in association with Access Ability Disability Management Consultants and receive support from title sponsor 0₂ Ireland and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Awards are now in their second year and the winners were announced on 16 January 2006. The two overall winners, one from the private sector and the other from the non-private sector, were announced on 15 February. Further details on the Awards can be found on the following website: www.theabilityawards.com

Advocacy

In recent years advocacy has become a focus of interest for people who are disadvantaged with many seeing it as a way of enhancing equality of opportunity. In Ireland, advocacy services have begun to come on stream, particularly self-advocacy for people with disabilities. The development of advocacy services has become part of the new approach in Ireland with much new disability legislation incorporating an advocacy element. This approach is reflected in draft legislation, which will provide for the development and delivery of advocacy services to people with disabilities including the provision of a Personal Advocacy Service.

A support programme for community and voluntary organisations providing advocacy services for particular groups is also being developed. Thirteen advocacy projects are currently being funded and one of these is organised by the National Representative

Council (NRC) and the National Learning Network (NLN). The NRC is the representative advocacy forum for people using the NLN, which is the training, education and employment access division of the Rehab Group. The Rehab Group is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, which provides training, employment, social care and commercial services in Ireland and the UK for, amongst others, people with disabilities.

A professional advocacy service will involve training, review and support, some of which has begun to be provided by the Equality Authority and the Irish Advocacy Network. Advocacy is also covered in Comhairle's accredited Information Providers course. In an innovative move, Comhairle, Sligo Institute of Technology and the Equality Authority are jointly developing a distance learning course in Advocacy, which is fully accredited and provides transfer and progression within the third level system. The first students enrolled in autumn of 2004. The aim is to develop the course to degree level in 2007.