Employers for Change
for
Change

Employer Disability Information Service

Employer Toolkit

There are more than 1 billion people in the world living with some form of disability. This corresponds to about 15% of the world's population. (WHO, 2020)

In Ireland there are circa 650,000 people living with a disability. Research shows that people with disabilities have far fewer employment opportunities when compared to their non-disabled peers. Only 36.5% of people with a disability (aged between 20 and 64) are in employment compared to 72.8% of people without a disability. (CSO, 2016)

Employers for Change empowers employers with all the information and advice needed to hire, employ, manage and retain staff with disabilities.

Employers should aim to implement best practice for all employees, whether they are a person with a disability or not.

In relation to employing people with disabilities, best practice includes:

- recruiting a diverse and inclusive workforce,
- providing disability awareness training,
- ensuring premises are accessible ,
- ensuring that company policies are inclusive and accessible (Handbook, PEEP/ Health and Safety), and providing accessible technologies.

As part of the Employers for Change- Employer Disability Information service, we have compiled this Toolkit to provide employers with some key information relating to disabilities and employment.

Understanding Disability

There is no definitive list of conditions that constitute a disability. Disability can be visible or invisible and may or may not be disclosed. There are some notable definitions, which have been used in legislation and official documents.

The Disability Act (Government of Ireland, 2005) defines disability as:

"a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.'

For more definitions look at The Equality Acts (Employment Equality Acts & Equal Status Acts) (1998-2015) and the 2016 Census.

Acquired Disabilities

An 'acquired' disability is a disability that has developed during the person's lifetime i.e. as a result of an accident or illness rather than a disability the person was born with. Acquired disabilities can be visible and invisible.

There is no definitive list of acquired disabilities but examples include:

Accident related injuries

- Head trauma
- Spinal injuries
- Loss of vision
- Loss of hearing
- Injury/ loss of limbs

Illness and health related

- Post stroke disability
- Post-traumatic stress
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Arthritis
- Motor Neurone Disease
- Mental Illness
- Stress

According to the 2016 census, 70% of people with a disability aged 20-64 acquired their disability after the age of 16. Therefore many people are employed prior to acquiring a disability and it is important that they are helped to stay in employment.

Hidden Disability

A 'hidden' disability refers to disability that may not be visible at a glance, but can have a major impact on people's lives. They can arise from conditions such as epilepsy, autism, diabetes and acquired brain injuries. Invisible disability, or hidden disability is an umbrella term that captures a whole spectrum of disabilities or challenges that are primarily neurological in nature.

Examples:

- Autism
- Attention Deficit-Disorder or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder(ADD/ADHD)
- Brain injuries
- Crohn's Disease
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Chronic pain
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, and other mental health conditions
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, and language processing disorder
- Lupus
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Visual and auditory disabilities- These may be invisible if someone wears contact lenses and a hearing aid

Mental Health

Mental health is something we all have and it's an essential part of each of us. There can be many different understandings of mental health and it can mean different things to different people. Our level of mental health can change as we go through life, and even on a daily basis. There are things we can do to look after our mental health. Making sure we get enough sleep and enough exercise, making sure we eat healthily and to take time out to relax and do the things we enjoy.

One of the most important things we can do is to talk to someone. This can be a trusted friend or family member if there's something bothering us. Talking about how we feel and sharing our thoughts and worries can help us to feel better and can help us to come up with ways of coping with our feelings and emotions.

Language

As an employer you should create an open, accessible and comfortable environment for each and every employee and potential employee.

Language matters and you should always be respectful of others and their feelings. When it comes to disability, some people advocate for the use of 'people first' language, which places emphasis on the person first and the disability second i.e. a person with a disability. On the other hand, some disabled people, say the disability is not inside of them: they are not a 'person with a disability,' but rather they are a 'disabled person.'

Irrespective of which language is used, the person is central and should not be objectified by using language such as 'the disabled.' If in doubt about what language to use, listen to how the individual talks about their disability or ask what their preference is. The person themselves is best placed to tell you what they are comfortable with.

Inclusive Recruitment

There is a strong business case for hiring people with a disability. By employing someone with a disability, employers are building and retaining a team that best reflects the community around them.

Employees with a disability add value to teams by bringing a range of skills, talents and abilities that the traditional workforce may not have.

People with disabilities have a right to work and to enjoy equal rights and opportunities to participate in economic, social and cultural life and to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Equality Employment Acts 1998-2015 prohibit discrimination under nine grounds in employment, including vocational training and work experience. Employers may not discriminate against employees or prospective employees on the basis of any of the nine grounds, including disability.

A diverse and inclusive company employs people with disabilities. However, many employers worry that they aren't equipped to include people with disabilities in their recruitment process.

To help alleviate those fears, use our six step inclusive recruitment toolkit.

Six steps to inclusive recruitment

Job Analysis

This is the first step in any recruitment process and the best way to ensure a good job-individual match. By analysing the job, we're getting up to date information about the core functions of the job, how it is organised, the environment and the qualifications required. Don't forget - a job analysis describes the job, not the individual who fills it. It also helps to ensure you have the support of senior and middle management to guarantee success. They play a key role in decision making and influence the company's approach. To encourage the employment of people with disabilities, develop a competency based job description.

Applications

Flexibility in how someone can apply for the role is a key positive action for people with disabilities. Jobseekers and employers rely heavily on online recruitment, so make sure your hiring site is accessible for all.

- Welcome applications from people with disabilities by stating that you accommodate the needs of candidates with disabilities.

- Provide an alternative means for people with disabilities to contact the company to request accommodations at interview.

- If you are unsure how to provide the accommodation, seek help to find out.

- Make sure the job information is available in accessible formats, if requested.

- Allow applicants with a disability as much time as they need to fill in forms, if they are timed.

- If you are using a recruitment agency, have you assessed its ability to accommodate prospective candidates with disabilities?

- Contact disability organisations and supported employment schemes to encourage applications from diverse communities.

Shortlisting

At this stage, applicants with disabilities are often screened out of the process. Their CVs and applications look different to other applicants and they may have gaps, less work experience and alternative qualifications.

- Remember that people with disabilities are creative thinkers, problem solvers and exceptionally resilient.

- Take into consideration that they have had to navigate their lives and work in a different, and often more difficult way than their peers without disabilities.

- When shortlisting, consider stating that applicants who meet the qualification requirements and have disclosed a disability on their CV or application form will be automatically invited to interview. This will communicate your commitment to inclusion and encourage the disclosure of a disability.

Testing

Some companies use assessment centres and online testing. These tools can be a barrier to applicants with disabilities, in particular non-visible disabilities. Consider whether you can waive this requirement for applicants with a disability. A work trial or placement may be a better way to assess the abilities of applicants with disabilities.

- Ensure that the testing location and materials are accessible for all types of disability, including neurodiverse applicants, specific learning difficulties like dyslexia and those with sensory and physical disabilities.

- Make sure the test or assessment is flexible and accessible to people with all types of disabilities. Ask the test developer if unsure and consider if assistive technology is required.

- Consider using other measures of assessment to evaluate applicants. Decisions based only on these results won't ensure a diverse mix of candidates.

Interviews

The main purpose of an interview is to establish whether applicants have the skills and capability to do the essential and core elements of the job. You don't need to change your interview process – just ensure it is competency based to get the best result.

- Members of the interview panel should be appropriately trained in disability awareness.
- Ask all candidates the same open and direct questions about their ability to perform the functions of the role.

- Don't concentrate on the disability or how it may impact at work. Focus on the ability of the candidate.

- Be open-minded as to how the job can be done – people with disabilities will approach tasks differently.

Getting Supports

There are financial support grants available and the Employers for Change team are always available to help you make your workplace a more inclusive and understanding place. Contact details at the back of this booklet.

Useful Links

- AHEAD   https://www.ahead.ie/publications for employers?id=60&qstring=

- Hays Recruitment: https://www.hays.com.au/diversity/disability recruitment

- IHREC: https://www.ihrec.ie/guides and tools/human rights and equality for employers/positive action in relation to disability/

- Inclusive Recruitment and Retention Practices e learning: https://asiam.mykademy.com/inclusive recruitment and retention practices

Managing Disability in the Workplace

Induction

The purpose of induction is to gradually introduce a new or existing employee who has acquired a disability, to their new work environment.

Induction involves gaining insight into:

- The reality of a new job i.e., the specific aspects of the work (how it is performed), the expectations of the employer and initial on-the-job training;

- How an organisation works i.e. the role of the new employee within the overall work environment and how that employee interacts with and relates to supervisors, team leaders and other work colleagues.

It is best practice for companies or organisations to provide some form of induction, either informally (sit and watch) or through more formal procedures.

Induction is a process which may take place irrespective of whether or not there is an official probationary period. It is usually led by a supervisor and involves the collaboration of work colleagues. For people with disabilities who have successfully come through the interview process, effective induction is critical.

Depending on the nature and severity of the disability, it is at this stage that initial physical, communication, attitudinal and other barriers manifest themselves, requiring an appropriate response.

The induction process should be regarded as the initial phase of an integration programme which identifies particular needs and provides appropriate accommodations and ongoing support, as necessary.

It is equally important to remember that a new employee with a disability got the job on the basis that they are capable of undertaking the work, with (or often without) some form of accommodation or assistance. The induction process is about how to do the job and what forms of assistance are required to realise that capacity.

It may be necessary to review the way this training is delivered in order to take account of the needs of the new employee. Remember to give sufficient time and to ensure that training materials and job instructions are available in the employee's preferred format, such as large print, Braille, tape or disc.

A company/organisation may already have a well-established induction process, influenced by a disability/equality officer who is more aware and experienced in dealing with such issues. Such a person will recognise the importance of the induction phase, be aware of potentially prevalent reactions or attitudes among management or the workforce, and will provide relevant training and consult those concerned in order to influence misconceptions and address problems at the earliest possible stage.

EXAMPLE

An employee with a learning disability is undergoing induction and on the job training at a company. He has been hired to deliver messages. It is noticed during his training that he often mixes up messages for 'R. Naughton' and 'T. Naughton'. The supervisor knows about his disability, suspects that the performance problem is linked to it and knows that this particular employee may be unable to ask for a reasonable accommodation because of his disability. The supervisor asks the trainee about mixing up the two names and asks if it would be helpful to spell the first name of each person. When the trainee says that would be easier, the supervisor instructs the receptionist to write the full first name when messages are left for one of the Naughtons.

Alternatively, a company may be in the position of employing a person with a disability for the first time, in the presence or absence of a formal induction process. In such circumstances, the person with the disability will be breaking new ground and, generally speaking, managers, supervisors and co workers will not be aware of the issues involved. There is clearly scope for such a company to gain insight from the induction processes of other organisations through the exchange of best practice. A person with a disability in these circumstances should try to discuss their situation with a person with similar experience and contribute to ways of overcoming barriers

Disability Awareness Training

Appropriate and targeted training is key to improving communications, addressing misconceptions and building a positive environment before or during induction. The training should be available to all relevant personnel, tailored to reflect the individual roles and responsibilities in the company i.e. managers, supervisors, health and safety officers/representatives and colleagues. It is advisable to schedule disability awareness training even if there are no people with disabilities currently employed. Some disabilities may have a changing impact on a job over time, either positively or negatively. Issues which were identified and addressed during induction may need to be revisited and appropriate actions taken.

Disability awareness training grants are available through the Department of Social Protection. Such training should be undertaken as part of the working schedule and activities to ensure good attendance.

Integration into the Workplace

The nature of the relationship between new employees with disabilities and their managers, supervisors and work colleagues will influence the extent to which integration is achieved. A relaxed, supportive management style will encourage ongoing dialogue and closer relationships. In comparison, a highly structured and direct management style will provide a more formal, less personal environment which may suit people who feel less comfortable with intense dialogue about their disability. There are a variety of management styles. Appropriate awareness training should give managers insights into how to deal with individuals who are more sensitive about disclosing or discussing the impact of their disability.

Equally, the relationships formed with work colleagues are critical. Developing collaborative approaches during induction will assist in ensuring the cooperation of the workers on an ongoing basis. As the impact of the disability or work practices themselves may change over time, it is important to be in a position to respond and to be able to rely on the support and cooperation of

Assignment of Roles and Responsibilities

The assignment of roles and responsibilities in any company is essential to ensuring the effective integration of the employee with the disability. Dealing with disability issues often requires the engagement of a range of people, including the person with the disability, who are in a position to discuss, reflect and understand problems and to contribute to or deliver a solution. This requires disability awareness training, problem-solving skills and ongoing commitment to engagement

Mentoring

A mentoring system should be considered for new employees with disabilities. This should be agreed between the new employee and the potential mentor and should have a specific timeframe. The system should operate during working hours or work-related social events. Employees with disabilities should also be trained as mentors. Everyone can benefit from the guidance of a more experienced worker, irrespective of disability.

Involvement

Employers and managers need to be careful to integrate employees into whatever workplace arrangements prevail. Where such arrangements involve teamwork, employees should have opportunities not only to work with others on group projects, but, when appropriate, to assume leadership roles. Where there is no formal team approach and the work is organised in a more traditional system, employees with disabilities should be involved in staff meetings and service/event planning. Employees with disabilities should also be involved in union meetings if they are members. This degree of involvement should also extend to social events, informal employee gatherings e.g. sporting activities.

Disclosure

Disclosure is making a disability known or revealing a hidden disability. Once the employer is aware of the disability, they can ensure the required supports and accommodations are available, and comply with their responsibilities under equality and health and safety legislation.

Employers should be aware that:

- A person with a disability has the choice whether or not they tell you about their disability.

- There are a number of benefits to the employee in disclosing their disability to you as their employer as you have a duty to make reasonable adjustments or accommodations and ensure the workplace is accessible. Ensure they are aware of these and that you accommodate all disabilities in your workplace.

- Employers can create a workplace culture where disclosure is embraced by asking all employees whether their needs are being accommodated and opening up discussions about supports available in the workplace with all staff.

- You should be clear on the competencies required for a job from the initial stages of advertising and provide as much information as possible.

- At interview stage, you should provide multiple opportunities and avenues for disclosure of an applicant's disability.

- You should have clear procedures in place when someone discloses a disability including why you need to know, what will happen with the information, how it will be used and who will have access.

- Whether a person applying for a job in your company tells you during the recruitment and selection process that they have a disability or, if a person working for you tells you they have a disability it is important to treat the information in the same manner.

- Medical terms, names or categories of disability tell us very little about an individual's capability. Focus on the abilities of the person and what might be impacted as a result of a disability. Work with the person to facilitate supports and accommodations.

- Don't be afraid of not knowing anything about disability – the person with a disability is the expert and disability affects everyone differently. Ask the person for guidance on the supports they may need at work.

- Remember that the person with a disability is also anxious about disclosure. They are often not sure how to approach their disclosure and worry about how it will be received. They might want to make their employer aware but are afraid of any negative consequences or stigma. Consider whether a job applicant or employee has attempted to disclose. They may think that they've told you about their disability without being explicit e.g. there may be something on their CV or they may have talked about working with a disability charity in a volunteer capacity.

- There are many grants available to financially support employers.

Guiding Principles for Disclosure

Approach the treatment of the information with an open mind and in a positive and constructive manner, acknowledging the challenge of disclo-sure of disability in recruitment or job retention circumstances.

Actively listen to what the individual has to say and take notes of the ex-act nature of the impact of their disability.

Give time to the person to explain their disability to you as they may be nervous about confiding such personal information with a stranger/ employer and may be wary of a negative reaction.

Confidentiality of information shared should be protected at all times.

Ask about whether they will require any supports in employment. They may even be able to tell you what supports they require or where to ac-cess the information.

Contact your local Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection office for information on the types of grants and supports that are available to you. A person with a disability may be unsure of what supports they require if they are returning to employment having acquired a disability or if they are   applying for a job.

At interview, do not diverge from the list of interview questions. It is very important to ask the same questions of all candidates.

Do not ask any questions about their disability which do not relate to job performance or supports required in the workplace.

Assume that it is possible to accommodate the person's disability. This can be discussed at a later stage if the person is successful.

Do not make any firm decisions or conclusions based on a person's disability. Be open to difference and focus on their knowledge and abilities instead.

Accessing advice

There are a range of organisations providing assistance, advice and support on aspects of disability.

Supervisors, managers and work colleagues may also provide valuable assistance in relation to the organisation of work and how the job is to be performed if the   environment developed during induction is one of collaboration.

Useful Links

- AHEAD Guide to Disclosure: https://www.ahead.ie/publications for employers

- NDA Research: http://nda.ie/Publications/Employment/Employment of people with disabilities in the public service/

Reasonable Accommodation

The [Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015](#) oblige employers to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

'Reasonable accommodation' is where an employer makes a change to the tasks and structure of a job, or makes changes to the workplace environment to enable an employee to:

- have equal opportunities when applying for work;
- be treated the same as co-workers;
- have equal opportunities for promotion;
- undertake training.

Employers must also make accommodations to enable people with disabilities to return to work having acquired a disability, as well as to participate in the job application process and enjoy benefits and privileges accorded to other employees.

If you have to make changes to the workplace or work practices to accommodate a disabled employee, the demands should be 'reasonable' and should not impose a 'disproportionate burden' on you. In other words, the changes and the costs should be realistic for the business to bear depending on several factors:

- the nature and cost of the accommodation requested;
- the overall financial resources of the employer & number of employees;
- the impact of the accommodation on the operations of the business.

Under equality legislation, you as an employer are not obliged to provide special treatment or facilities if the cost of doing so is excessive or disproportionate. Employers must consider possible sources of funding, such as supports and grants provided by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection when assessing the cost of a particular accommodation.

5 Steps to Reasonable Accommodations

Accommodations should be made on a case-by-case basis and involve discussions between the employer and employee or applicant.

Step 1

Assess the impact of the disability and decide where there may be limitations in performing the essential functions of the job. The person with a disability is the   expert and knows how their disability will impact on them, if at all, in the workplace.

Step 2

Identify the employee's workplace accommodation needs by:

- Involving the employee who has the disability in every step of the process.
- Exploring ways of providing workplace accommodations.
- Using job descriptions and job profiles to analyse essential functions of the job.
- Consulting with the individual to ascertain the precise job-related functional limitations and how these could be overcome with potential accommodations.
- Deciding if and how co-workers who may be affected by any of the proposed accommodations will be informed.
- Consulting with rehabilitation professionals where necessary.

Step 3

Select and implement the most reasonable and effective accommodation that is also the most appropriate for the employee and employer. Remember, accommodations selected should be effective, reliable, easy to use, and readily available for the employee needing the accommodation.

Step 4

Regularly review the implemented accommodations with the employees. Over time, special provisions may no longer be needed or requirements may change. An employee should advise their line manager of any changes that are needed.

Step 5

Provide follow-up, if needed, by modifying the accommodation and/or repeating the steps outlined above, if appropriate. As an employer, you are not obliged to   provide employees with equipment they would normally provide themselves – for example, reading glasses or hearing aids.

If in doubt, ask the individual. Get assistance from specialist organisations or contact us for further information.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodation

- Adjusting or modifying tests and training materials.
- Accepting that there may be alternative ways of accomplishing a given task or objective which were not taken into account during the preparation of the job description or selection criteria.
- Providing company information in appropriate formats and assisting in communication, where necessary e.g. staff manuals, health and safety notices, etc.
- A talking lift with tactile floor buttons.
- Adjustable-height desks.
- Hands-free telephone sets.
- Later start and finish times.
- Organising the distribution of work tasks in a team so that staff members who are hard of hearing are not expected to take minutes. (HSA)

Reasonable Accommodation Fund

The department has responsibility for providing labour market services for people with a disability, assisting them with finding paid employment or preparing them for employment through a training or employment programme.

More information on this and other grants and schemes can be found in the Grants & Schemes.

Reasonable Accommodation Passport scheme

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and IBEC launched the Reasonable Accommodation Passport scheme. The passport system provides a confidential live record of the barriers people face and the accommodations that have been agreed to prevent or reduce its impact in the workplace.

This Passport is a tool to support individuals in fulfilling their potential and contributing to their own success and that of the organisation. It is hoped that it will form one of the supports to encourage the employment of people with disabilities and open up conversations around reasonable accommodation.

Useful Links

- http://www.ahead.ie/employer accommodations

- http://www.assistid.eu/aboutus/

- https://www.ihrec.ie/guides and tools/human rights and equality for employers/what does the law say/disability and reasonable accommodation/

- https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/training courses and supports

- Reasonable Adjustments Disability Passport.indd (ictu.ie)

Universal Design

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it.

Universal Design should incorporate both user-aware design and customisable design. User-Aware Design pushes the boundaries of 'mainstream' products, services and environments to include as many people as possible. Customisable Design minimises the difficulties of adaptation for users.

More information on Universal Design best practice at http://universaldesign.ie

Health & Safety

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 states that employers must 'ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees'. All employers regardless of the size of the business are required by law to carry out a risk assessment at their place of work and to keep a written record of that assessment. Risk Assessment is simply looking closely at what in your place of work or about your work activities could cause harm to your employees and visitors to your workplace and determining the control measures you can implement to minimise the risk.

Your risk assessment should take account of any particular risks for staff with disabilities. Identify if there are any particular hazards or risks for staff with different conditions such as:

- Restricted mobility;
- Limited dexterity;
- Impaired vision;
- Impaired hearing;
- Limited understanding;
- Health conditions such as heart problems, epilepsy or asthma.

Legislation

The Equality Employment Acts 1998-2015 prohibit discrimination under nine grounds in employment, including vocational training and work experience. Employers may not discriminate against employees or prospective employees on the basis of any of the nine grounds, one of which is disability.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 aim to:

- promote equality;
- ban discrimination across nine grounds;
- ban sexual and other harassment;
- ban victimisation;
- make sure suitable facilities for people with disabilities are available in relation to access to employment, advancing in employment and taking part in training;
- allow positive action to ensure everyone gets full equality across the nine grounds.

Discrimination on the 'disability ground' occurs where there is less favourable treatment of one person compared to another person because one has a disability and the other has not, or the other has a different disability.

More information can be found at www.ihrec.ie

Disability Act 2005

The Disability Act 2005 places a statutory obligation on public service providers to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

Public service bodies are required to:

- Promote and support the employment of people with disabilities. Section 47 (1) (a) of the Disability Act requires public bodies, insofar as practicable, to take all reasonable measures to promote and support employment by them of people with disabilities.
- Comply with any Statutory Code of Practice approved by the relevant Minister.

- Employ people with disabilities to make up at least 3% of the workforce.*
- Report on compliance with these obligations. Public bodies must report to statutory Monitoring Committees in their parent department every year by 31 March. For civil servants, the report is made to the Department of Finance Monitoring Committee.

*Under the [Comprehensive Strategy for People with Disabilities (2015 – 2024](#)), the Government has committed to increasing the public service employment target for persons with disabilities on an incremental basis from a minimum of 3% to a minimum of 6% by 2024.

Note: To report on compliance with the 3% target, public bodies need to know how many of the staff they employ have a disability. The Disability Act 2005 definition should be used to decide whether or not an employee is considered to have a disability.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force in Ireland on 19 April 2018.

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

The Convention includes Article 27 on work and employment. Article 27 – Work and employment states that:

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work."

More information on our website (www.employersforchange.ie) or you can find a comprehensive list of legislation on the NDA website (www.nda.ie).

Assistive Technology for Open Doors Website

Assistive Technology (AT) refers to any device or system that helps to improve the functional capacity of people with disabilities. It is a very broad field and may range from the very simple to the very complex. People with a disability use AT for a whole range of tasks. Whether it is simply accessing print media or communicating on the telephone, AT provides a vast array of solutions. It can allow a person who cannot manipulate a pen to write, enable those who have difficulty in speaking to communicate and assist people with visual impairments to read.

There are three categories of AT, ranging from 'Low-tech' such as a laptop stand or foot rest through 'Medium-tech' up to 'Hi-tech' including sophisticated communication and computer control systems for those with little independent functioning or communication ability.

If you have an employee or potential employee with a vision, hearing, speech, mobility impairment or specific learning difficulty, there are assistive technologies to assist in all of these areas, examples include:

- Alternative keyboards, featuring larger or smaller than standard keys
- Touch screens
- Joysticks, manipulated by hand, feet, chin to control cursor on screen
- Screen enlargers/magnifiers/ readers
- Speech recognition programs
- Simple adjustments to a car can enable people with physical disabilities to be mobile

Computer-based AT applications help overcome some of the functional barriers created by disability. It increases the independence, employability and productivity for an individual living with a disability and in many cases can be at little cost.

Learning Spaces

FreedomTech provides an active learning space around accessible and assistive technology across education, employment, independent living and health. They advocate for a coherent infrastructure of supports for people with disabilities and have proposed an AT Passport. They host regular gatherings on different topics including employment. The Community Hub for Assistive Technology (CHAT) facilitates and creates cross-disciplinary opportunities to learn in an atmosphere that supports equality, collective and individual sharing. This makes the most of people's expertise to identify better challenges, gaps and to consider solutions regarding AT.

Examples of different types of AT:

'AT Hive' is a new resource brought to you by AHEAD and DAWN (the Disability Advisors Working Network) that aims to raise awareness about Assistive Technology (AT) in the Education and Employment Sectors. AT Hive has about 50 examples of free and paid AT that can help with reading, writing, organisation, recording, communication, collaboration and more. These assistive technologies come in many forms like apps, websites, software, devices as well as in Office 365 and Google Workspace, to just name a few. If you are new to AT, or have some used AT already, then explore AT Hive to see the wide range of technologies that are available that can help people in any ways. Funding is through the Workplace Equipment Adaptation grant (See Grants).

Useful Links

- http://sightandsoundtechnology.ie
- https://www.sess.ie/links/sen-ict-and-assistive-technology
- http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Richard-Wynne-presentation.pdf
- https://www.chime.ie/services/technology-for-you
- https://www.enableireland.ie/services/assistive-technology/services-employers
- https://www.myaccesshub.io/

Grants & Schemes

Below is a non-exhaustive list of grants and schemes available to employers for employees with a disability. We are always looking to capture feedback from employers who have used these grants and schemes, if you are an employer and wish to contact us about this, please do so, at info@employersforchange.ie

Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme (DATSS)

This scheme is for employers to provide training and awareness. Grant assistance of 90% of eligible training to max €20,000 in year 1 and 80% in subsequent years.

The goal of the training is to deliver clear and accurate information about disability.

The training should be aimed at providing those taking part with an understanding and awareness of the issues surrounding disability. Also an overview of relevant anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation.

It should also provide specific information on:

- disabilities and abilities focusing on mobility and sensory issues
- perceptual awareness exercises that aim to dispel common myths
- disability etiquette to clarify appropriate language and behaviour.

The training should include information on dealing with mental health issues in the workplace. To apply, please contact your local Intreo Centre.

Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)

This scheme (WSS) provides financial incentives to private sector employers to employ people with a disability who work 21 hours per week or more, up to a maximum of 39 hours per week. The financial supports for employers available through this scheme are structured under three separate strands and employers could benefit under one strand or under two or three strands simultaneously, as the case may be.

Details on how to apply for this scheme can be found at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/37c057-wage-subsidy-scheme/

If it is approved, you will receive a letter from your DEASP Case Officer. If not, they will request a visit with you and your employee. Making contact with the relevant office in advance should facilitate the smooth running of this process.

The Reasonable Accommodation Fund

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DESP) is responsible for providing labour market services for disabled people, assisting them with finding paid employment or preparing them for employment through a training or employment programme.

Under the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, the DESP can also help you as an employer to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability or impairment to have access to employment by providing the following grants and schemes:

- the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant (WEAG)
- the Personal Reader Grant (PRG)
- the Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG)
- the Employee Retention Grant (ERG)

More details and forms on how to apply can be found at www.gov.ie

Workplace Equipment/ Adaptation Grant (WEAG)

Grant assistance is available for employers, employees and self-employed disabled people who need to adapt the workplace or purchase specialised equipment for staff with disabilities. As an employer you may be able to get a grant towards the costs of adapting premises or equipment for an employee with a disability.

Funding can be provided for the following:

- Minor building modifications such as ramps or modified toilets;
- Alarm systems with flashing lights;
- Equipment adaptation such as voice synthesizers for computers or amplifiers for telephones.

A maximum grant of €6,350 is available towards the cost of adaptations. This grant can also be used to upgrade adapted equipment. There are two forms in the application process.

Applications forms and Regional contact details for the Workplace Equipment/ Adaptation Grant can be accessed at www.gov.ie

Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS)

This scheme assists employers to retain employees who acquire an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on their ability to carry out their job.

Funding can be provided for the following:

- Identify accommodation and/or training to enable the employee to remain in his/her current position;
- Re-train the employee so that he/she can take up another position within the company.

The Employee Retention Grant Scheme is open to all companies in the private sector.

The scheme is open to companies where an existing employee, at any level and occupation within the company, acquires an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on his/her current ability to do his/her job.

The claim form can be downloaded from www.gov.ie

JobsPlus

JobsPlus is an employer incentive which encourages and rewards employers who offer employment opportunities to the long term unemployed including people with disabilities, who are in receipt of jobseekers benefit, jobseekers allowance or signing for jobseekers credits but NOT disability allowance.

Regular cash payments will be made to qualifying employers to offset wage costs where they recruit jobseekers from the live register.

This incentive is designed to encourage employers and businesses to focus their recruitment efforts on those who have been out of work for long periods. The level of payment is increased for the recruitment of those out of work for more than two years.

From the 1st of August 2020 the following rates apply:

- Under 30 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 104 days in the previous 6 months, or in receipt of Covid Pandemic Unemployment Payment: €7,500 payable over 2 years
- Between 30 and 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 312 days in the previous 18 months, or in receipt of Covid Pandemic   Unemployment Payment: €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Persons with refugee status and in receipt of jobseekers allowance (no qualifying period applies): €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Former one parent family payment customers whose youngest child is at least 7 years and under 14, who transfer to the live register and are now in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance transitional: €7,500 payable over 2 years.
- Jobseekers under 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 936 days in the previous 42 months: €10,000 payable over 2 years.
- Jobseekers over 50 years of age, on the live register and unemployed for at least 312 days in the previous 18 months: €10,000 payable over 2 years.

- Jobseekers not in receipt of jobseekers payment and signing for PRSI jobseeker credits will be also be eligible once they are the required number of days on the live register.

Employers should register online at www.welfare.ie and Jobseekers should also register online at www.welfare.ie. Further information available from your lo-

AHEAD Student services

AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation. Visit www.ahead.ie for more information.

The WAM Programme

Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace.

Participating employers (WAM Leaders) collaborate with WAM to offer mentored, paid work placements for graduates with disabilities. This partnership brings graduates with disabilities and WAM's network of employers together so that both can benefit from each other - ensuring genuine learning opportunities for all.

Visit www.ahead.ie for more information.

National Learning Network

National Learning Network can help you overcome obstacles and move forward with your career and your life. They provide a wide range of vocational training and education programmes, funded by SOLAS, as well as rehabilitative training, funded by the HSE. Visit www.nln.ie for more information.

EmployAbility

The nationwide EmployAbility Service provides an employment support service for people with a disability. They also provide a recruitment advice service for the business community.

Your local EmployAbility service will:

- Provide you with employment assistance and access to a pool of prospective employees with varying levels of skills, abilities and training;
- Provide ongoing support for both the employer and employee throughout employment;
- Provide a professional job matching service to help ensure successful recruitment;
- Provide advice and information on additional employment supports.

Visit www.welfare.ie for more information.

For more information and application forms visit individual grant pages. We are always looking to capture feedback from employers who have used these grants and supports, if you are an employer and wish to contact us about this, please do at info@employersforchange.ie or by call, text or WhatsApp to 0851579603. Request a video call by email, text or WhatsApp.

Contact Us

www.employersforchange.ie

info@employersforchange.ie

085 1579603

@EmployforChange

/Employers-for-Change