Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Identifying Employment Opportunities and Programmes for People with Intellectual Disability in the Republic of Ireland

Report by Trinity Centre for People
with Intellectual Disability (TCPID)
February 2022

Contents

Foreword

For the last five years EY has proudly supported the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities. As sponsors of the Trinity Development and Alumni, we have been working closely with TCPID to create the Trinity Programme for Employment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (The Programme) whose primary purpose is to create employment opportunities for their graduates by encouraging, educating and supporting other potential employers through:

· Raising awareness
· Sharing Case Studies including work practices playbooks, and
· Amplifying the voice of our graduates with Intellectual Disabilities

Our support and sponsorship is directly aligned to EY's Global purpose of 'Building a better working world'.

As the Managing Partner of EY Ireland, I am passionate about ensuring that diversity, equity and inclusiveness remain core to who we are and how we work. Our EY purpose of "Building a better working world" guides us in how we lead within EY and in how we serve our clients and our local communities. As an organisation, our culture is built on our collective commitment to foster an environment where all differences are valued, practices are equitable, and everyone experiences a sense of inclusion and belonging. EY is a place where people engage with curiosity, build relationships on doing the right thing and have the courage to lead in an inclusive manner on a daily basis – something I and my fellow partners are very proud of.

Our experience of working with the TCPID has contributed significantly to our people experience while positively supporting our inclusive culture, ensuring we can continue to deliver exceptional services to our clients through diverse teams.

This report provides a valuable insight into the supports that are available to Employers and Parents/Carers. It is a "game changer" in creating opportunities for graduates and persons with intellectual disabilities. I look forward to the programme going from strength to strength in the years ahead and it is a true privilege for EY to be at the forefront in supporting and promoting this inspirational and important programme.

Frank O'Keeffe | Managing Partner, Ireland

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Ackowledgments

TCPID had valuable support in developing this report.

We would like to express our appreciation to the following People:

- Elochukwu Uzor carried out the background research and produced an initial draft of this report. We are indebted to Elochukwu for her dedication and commitment to this project.

- Nick Davies made a significant contribution to the production of this report. We are very grateful for his knowledge and expertise that informed all aspects of this report.

- Des Aston, as always, has been very helpful in reviewing this report and providing technical support.

- Jennifer Banks has proofread the report and we are very grateful for her expertise.

Note: The bulk of this report was developed as of December 2020 with an extensive delay in editing and publishing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the contents cannot be considered exhaustive given new and emerging policies and initiatives.

Glossary of Acronyms

AT - Aiseanna Tacaiochta (also known as AT Network)

CES - Comprehensive Employment Strategy

CSO - Central Statistics Office

DCU - Dublin City University

DEASP - Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

ESF - European Social Fund

ESRI - Economic and Social Research Institute

HSE - Health Service Executive

ID - Intellectual Disability

NDA - National Disability Authority

SEN - Special Educational Needs

TCPID - Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities

WAM - Willing Able Mentoring

Executive Summary

This report has been designed to document the current employment opportunities for People who have an intellectual disability and evaluate the success or otherwise of the many initiatives developed to enhance employment prospects for this marginalised cohort within Irish society. This report examines the challenges experienced by this cohort in accessing meaningful employment and how these barriers have been addressed through a series of Government and voluntary initiatives. Current Government management of facilitating employment opportunities for People who have an intellectual disability is reviewed. An analysis of the economic benefits to the State of enabling these People to be gainfully employed has also been prepared by Nick Davies, a contributor to the report. In conclusion, based on the evidence gathered in this report, a series of recommendations are proposed.

Research Methodology

The methodology used for this report was primarily desk-based research combined with a series of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Government initiatives to promote employment for People who have an intellectual disability are documented along with more localised interventions, often located in service providers. A Social Return on Investment (SRoI) document has also been prepared to examine whether investing in employment opportunities for young People with ID has long-term economic benefits for the state. Current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic severely limited opportunities to engage in field work data collection. Instead, eight in-depth interviews, via Zoom, with experts and practitioners in the field were conducted to gain additional insights into how People with an intellectual disability participated in employment within their local communities.

Overview

In 2013, the Irish Government published its *National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015* that was designed to address the social exclusion of people with disabilities within Irish society. Key goals were identified including access to employment for People with disabilities which led to the development of a comprehensive employment strategy: *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024.*

Kelly and Maitre (2021) identified the evident gaps between those People with and those without disabilities in attaining employment in Irish society. Having a disability had a very

negative impact on the likelihood of accessing employment and in the European context Ireland had the fourth lowest employment rates for People with disabilities and one of the largest gaps in employment rates between those with disabilities compared to those without. People with disabilities in Ireland were at much higher risk of experiencing poverty compared to their counterparts across Europe. In addition, People with disabilities in employment were at higher risk of poverty compared to People without disabilities in employment. People with disabilities had not benefitted from the economic recovery compared to their non-disabled peers and by 2019 they had not achieved their pre-recession employment levels.

Employment and People who have an intellectual disability

People with Intellectual Disability (ID) traditionally face high levels of unemployment in the Irish Labour Market. Kelly and Maitre (2021) reported that 14.7% of this population were in employment in 2016 and were much more likely to have poorly paid and precarious employment compared to their disabled (disability other than intellectual disability) and non-disabled peers. People who have an intellectual disability experience many barriers to accessing meaningful employment including:
(i)   lack of appropriate educational qualifications;
(ii) discrimination and employer attitudes and misconceptions;
(iii) lack of reasonable accommodations in employment setting policies and practices; and
(iv) lack of funded transition programmes from education to employment.

Many initiatives have been developed to address these barriers to employment by Government departments, the voluntary sector and to a limited extent the business community:
- Government initiatives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for People with an ID in Ireland.
- Advocacy groups and service providers that assist People with an ID secure employment opportunities in the Irish labour market.
- Business led initiatives/programmes that help to increase employment opportunities for People with an ID.
- Vocational programmes that enhance People with ID skills, competencies and qualifications for employment in the Irish Labour Force.

Government initiatives have focused principally on policies designed to improve access to employment for young People who have an intellectual disability. Central to Government policy

has been the development of the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) (2015-2024).* The seven priorities of the strategy include:

1. Building skills,
2. capacity and independence;
3. Providing bridges and supports into work;
4. Make work pay;
5. Promote Job retention and re-entry into work;
6. Provide Coordinated seamless support*;*
7. Engage with employers.

Key initiatives designed to address the six priorities identified consisted of:

- Make work pay for people with disabilities;
- Rehabilitative training programmes;
- Employer information and disability awareness;
- Public service employment target*;*
- Implementation of targeted interventions.

Financial incentives have also been offered by various Government departments to encourage employers to employ People with disabilities. These initiatives tend to be generic and do not have a specific focus on the employment of People who have an intellectual disability. The financial supports that have been developed include:

(i)   Wage Subsidy Scheme;

(ii) Reasonable Accommodation Fund;

(iii) The Disability Awareness Support Scheme;

(iv) Employee Retention Grant Scheme;

(v)   The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.

It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of these schemes in achieving their aim of increasing employment as a systematic evaluation of their effectiveness does not appear to have been carried out by the relevant Government departments.

A wide range of Government supported vocational programmes, some national, many local, have been designed and developed to improve employment for People who have disabilities including those who have an intellectual disability. National programmes include the HSE Rehabilitative Training schemes and the more recently initiated Ability programme specifically aimed at young People who have an intellectual disability.

The Ability programme has been subjected to a rigorous evaluation and the mid-point report (Pobal, 2020) reported many positive outcomes including obtaining work experience, achieving education accreditation, increased confidence and independent living skills and reduced social isolation. The greatest predictor of future participation by these young people in paid employment was whether their service provider offered paid work experience.

Many service providers for People who have an intellectual disability have engaged in supporting their service users to become engaged with employment initiatives. Some of these service providers have successfully participated in the Ability programme referenced above. Others have developed social enterprises that employ People who have an intellectual disability, often focusing on hospitality. However, many of these initiatives, are locally based and it is difficult to judge their effectiveness in the absence of rigorous evaluations.

More recently, innovative employment programmes have emerged from the business community, some influenced by local factors, others arising from international initiatives located within multinationals based in Ireland. Transition programmes linking educational accreditation with employment opportunities have also appeared in a small number of university settings in Ireland.

Review of employment opportunities for people who have an intellectual disability

From this review of employment related policies and initiatives designed to support people with disabilities, it is evident that, with a few notable exceptions, opportunities for these young people to access meaningful employment are significantly limited compared to peers without disabilities. A number of critical factors have contributed to this situation including:

- Traditional post school pathways for these young people overwhelmingly directed towards disability day service providers funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE).
- Limited post school options designed to equip these young people with the requisite knowledge and skills to participate in open employment.
- Significant gap in parental knowledge in relation to rights and entitlements of their children after leaving formal education (Scanlon and Doyle, 2018).
- Responsibility for education, health, welfare and the life course of these young people fragmented and divided between many Government departments with very few examples of joined up thinking.
- Limited number of targeted initiatives (Ability/Employability) specifically designed to enable these young people to access meaningful employment.

- Few initiatives subjected to rigorous evaluation where learnings can be documented and disseminated among stakeholders.

Review of Government Policies and Procedures

The Disability Stakeholder Group (DSG) was introduced in 2006. It is an established group recognised for the important role that it plays in the monitoring of the Government's disability policy and strategies. It is a voluntary group of individuals with expertise and lived experience of disability. The DSG acts as an expert advisory group and monitors the implementation of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy. However, the DSG does not have capacity nor authority to act on implementation other than bringing constructive suggestions for improving implementation and providing coordinated advice.

Currently whilst there is a national strategy created by the National Disability Authority (NDA), the implementation and support by Government is fragmented and not aligned. It would appear in Government, whilst an overall strategy exists and the DSG is responsible for monitoring the policies, there is no one Governmental Department with overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy. Also, it appears that there has been no evaluation of the cost benefit of any support strategies which have been implemented.

Best practice is to equip a strategy or strategic plan with specific objectives and actions, all of which are then aligned to achieve the strategic goals. These actions, are monitored at an appropriate governance level using SMART principles. It would appear in Government, whilst an overall disability strategy exists, there is no one department with overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The allocation of this role to a single department would include ensuring that all activities are achieving the strategic objectives as set out in the NDA strategy. This is highlighted by the Matrix below which shows the various departments who have responsibilities for the development and employment of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. The matrix below very effectively illustrates the involvement of multiple Government departments in policies and initiatives designed to shape and support the lives of young people who have an intellectual disability aged 15-25, a critical transition stage for these young people to become engaged with meaningful education, training and employment.

Government Departments

● 13-16   ● 16-18   ● 18-23   ● 23-29

Department	Role	Programmes and Initiatives
Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Provide Employment Opportunities	National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility
Education (Schools)	Support Young Persons up to 2nd Level	*Youth Reach* National Educational Phsycology Service Leaving Cert Applied Special Education School Inclusion Model (Pilot)
Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation	Support Young Persons in 3rd Level	Solas Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme >21
Children, Equality, Disability and Integration, and Youth	Implementation of the Policy for young persons with Disabilities	National Disability Strategy United Nations Convention Comprehensive Employment Strategy National Youth Strategy
Social Protection and Rural & Community Development	Ensure Young Persons with Disabilities are employable and supported with Welfare funding	Make Work Pay Strategy Intreo Service Employability Service Ability Programme Empower Change Transition Programme Community Employment Programme Community Services Programme Social Inclusion Activation Programme
Health	Assessment of Need/Interventions/Clinical Support Support of Rehabilitative Training and Adult Day Care Services	New Directions
Justice		
Public Expenditure and Reform	Allocation resources and VFM assessment	National Job Shadow Initiative

Economic Return on Investment

In respect of the funding provided by the various departments, there does not appear to be an overall analysis of the economic benefit of a coordinated strategy which would ensure that as many individuals with an intellectual disability as possible could contribute to society.

In the table below, the analysis (based on key assumptions and 2020 rates) demonstrates what would be the potential 'return on investment' if as many individuals as possible were supported effectively in the transition into work from 2nd level education establishments.

Return on Investment (RoI)

Route to Employment	Preparation for work			Employment years	Benefits accruing to State				Payback in years based on Tax Revenue	ROI	Annualised RoI
	Training age span	Age at end of RT/FE	Cost		Tax take	Disability Allowance	Adult Day Services	Total			
			€'000		€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000			
Full Employment hours pw		37.5									
Rehabilitative Training%	18-22	22	56	44	30	292	566	887	82.6	1484%	6.48%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	28	278	525	832	123.6	940%	5.73%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	31	305	606	942	33.9	3826%	8.31%
Partial Employment Hours pw		21									
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	80	317	397	0	609%	4.55%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	76	294	371	0	363%	3.72%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	84	339	423	0	1663%	6.44%
Partial Employment Hours pw		12									
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	0	181	181	0	223%	2.70%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	0	168	168	0	110%	1.78%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	0	194	194	0	708%	4.65%
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	0	121	121	0	115%	1.76%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	0	112	112	0	40%	0.81%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	0	129	129	0	439%	3.73%

Key Assumptions

Salary based on	Min Wage	Hours	Weekly	Annually	Yearly Tax	Age
				€	€	
	10.2	37.5	383	19,890	678	
	10.2	21	214	11,138	-	
	10.2	12	122	6,365	-	
	10.2	8	82	4,243	-	
Disability allowance			203	10,556		
Disability allowance min remuneration			140			
Disability Allowance Tapered maximum			350			
Cost per year of						
- Adult Day Services				20,200		
- Supported Living (Residential)						
Assumed age for last year in Adult Day Services						50
Assumed retirement age						66
Assumed that if work less than 37.5 hours, will be in Adult Day services						

ROI	Amount Received per wk (Benefit of Work Estimator)		
	Net Pay	Disability Allowance	Total
	€	€	€
Full Employment hours pw 37.5	357	76	433
Partial Employment Hours pw 21	214	168	382
Partial Employment Hours pw 12	122	203	325
Partial Employment Hours pw 8	82	203	285

Government Departments providing funds

Funding/Finance	Department	Annual Funds
Rehabilitative Training	DoH	14
Adult Day Services	DoH	20
Further Education	DoEd	12
Disability Allowance	DoSP	n/a
Tax	DoF	n/a

In a recent working paper 'Living conditions and quality of life; Integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market: Irish case study' (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) April 21) it stated 'If the purpose of the system of supports is to increase the participation rates of people with disabilities in the open labour market, the lack of improvement in the numbers in work alone, testifies to a struggling system. There are significant issues contributing to the degree to which the system is struggling to balance its functions, grow and learn, these are:

- lack of strategic leadership and vision at a governance level,
- issues around framing of the issue, and
- capacity to balance tensions between different parts of the system to achieve purpose

It is imperative that authority and responsibility is given to a Department to ensure that all activities and initiatives being delivered by any Government Department are aligned and achieving the objectives set out in the NDA strategy. In addition, they would be responsible for ensuring there is an effective return on the 'Investments' made for the benefit of society as a whole.

Recommendations

This report has reviewed various initiatives designed to improve access to employment for people who have an intellectual disability. It is evident that despite substantial Government investment in these initiatives successful outcomes are limited. Systemic issues involving how initiatives are implemented have been highlighted, particularly how various Government departments are engaged with the process and who takes overall responsibility. It is also evident that, with a few notable exceptions, rigorous reviews of the effectiveness of the interventions have not been

conducted. As a result, employment rates for people with intellectual disabilities, despite significant Government investment, has not advanced over the last decade. Our Recommendations are designed to address the barriers to employment and the difficulties in the implementation of employment initiatives highlighted in this report. We suggest that engaging with these Recommendations in a constructive manner can enable all of us to create an environment where meaningful employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities become the norm rather than the exception.

Government Sponsored Employment Initiatives

This report presents the many challenges people with an intellectual disability have to face in the Irish labour market. Government policies including, the National Disability Strategy, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities and the Citizens Information Act recognises the need to promote job retention and re-entry to work for individuals with an intellectual disability in Ireland. The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Irish Government in 2018 gives added urgency to implementing these policies. The Irish Government has invested in developing a range of interventions designed to improve opportunities for people who have an intellectual disability to access employment. However, it is very difficult to assess the success of these initiatives as there is a dearth of evidence to indicate whether this cohort have accessed employment as a result of these initiatives. It is not clear whether any employment achieved is part-time or full-time and where the employment is located. Nor do they assess the softer elements such as the wellbeing of the individual and their parents/carers. As a result, it is difficult to generate any learnings from these initiatives and build on successful interventions or abandon those that are unsuccessful.

> **We recommend that** all Government sponsored employment interventions for young people who have an ID should be measured using qualitative and quantitative measures including demonstrable employment outcomes (part-time/full-time; temporary/permanent) and the key learnings from these initiatives need to be disseminated among families, young people who have an intellectual disability, policy makers, education providers and service providers. These measures should also focus on how parents/carers and organisations 'felt' i.e. very soft measures such as happiness and culture.

Promoting awareness of Potential for Employment

Young people who have an ID are much less likely than their peers who have other disabilities to engage in preparation for work and face significant barriers in gaining employment and making a successful transition into the workplace. International research has indicated that employer attitudes and misconceptions constitute a major barrier to employment for people with an intellectual disability (May-Simera, 2018). This research also reported that employers were more concerned with increasing their capacity to develop a more diverse workforce rather than receiving Government subsidies for employing people who have an intellectual disability.

> **We recommend that** employer organisations and individual employers are encouraged to engage with a national initiative designed to promote awareness of the benefits of including people who have an intellectual disability in employment and developing supports to enable these people to make a successful transition into the workplace. Current innovative programmes that facilitate the transition into employment of people who have an intellectual disability should be developed at demonstration sites and resourced to provide practical advice to employers wishing to employ someone who has an intellectual disability.

Transition Planning into Employment

A major concern for people with ID is at the transitional stage of their life. This transitional stage generally occurs when they are in the late teens. For both them and their parents/carers, they are seeking some form of independent living and need to make important choices about their future. To make informed decisions, there is a lack of accessible information available to them and other stakeholders such as employers. This information would facilitate attainment of independent living including participation in the workforce.

We recommend that two 'Portals' should be developed which will cover the following and is accessible to Persons with ID, Parents/Carers, Employers, and Support Organisations: ·

Portal 1 – Knowledge Platform. Information about what support is available to a person with ID and Employers. This should include:

Examples of success and good practice (these should demonstrate what could be achieved with the right approach and support, hence removing the barriers perceived by both Employers and Parents/Carers)

Which organisations that can help in the 'transition' to work and advocacy? Government policy and financial support available.

Portal 2 - Job marketplace. Employers promote opportunities for employment.

The Need for Focused Advocacy

In order for people with ID to have full inclusion and participation in the Irish Labour Market, there needs to be co-ordinated advocacy activities. Currently there are a few very active advocacy participants such as parts of Government (including policy makers), advocacy groups and employers. Many of these activities are focused on specific requirements and challenges for persons with ID or sub-groups and as such do not adopt an holistic approach.

We recommend that there is co-ordination of advocacy activities such that all agencies involved in advocacy are speaking with the same voice. This co-ordination should seek to use all mediums to promote the inclusion and employment of people with ID in the workforce.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of employment for people with disabilities

In 2013, the Irish Government published its *National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013-2015* that was designed to address the social exclusion of people with disabilities within Irish society. Key goals were identified including access to employment for people with disabilities which led to the development of a comprehensive employment strategy: *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024.* Arising from this Government strategy, the National Disability Authority (NDA) commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to investigate the workplace skills and abilities of persons with disabilities and more specifically to document the skills/educational capabilities and gaps among people with disabilities compared to those without disabilities in Irish society.

This ESRI report (Kelly and Maitre, 2021) identified the evident gaps between those people with and those without disabilities in attaining employment in Irish society. Having a disability had a very negative impact on the likelihood of accessing employment and in the European context Ireland had the fourth lowest employment rates for people with disabilities and one of the largest gaps in employment rates between those with disabilities compared to those without. In addition, people with disabilities in employment were at higher risk of poverty compared to people without disabilities in employment. people with disabilities had not benefitted from the economic recovery compared to their non-disabled peers and by 2019 they had not achieved their pre-recession employment levels.

While substantial progress has been made in enhancing the educational achievements by people with disabilities, it is very evident that people with disabilities experience significant difficulties in accessing employment at the same rate as their non-disabled peers and consequently are at much higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is within this context that we consider the employment landscape in Ireland for people who have an intellectual disability.

1.2 Purpose of the report

This report has been designed to document the current employment opportunities for people who have an ID and evaluate the success or otherwise of the many initiatives developed to enhance employment prospects for this marginalized cohort within Irish society. This report examines the challenges experienced by this cohort in accessing meaningful employment and how these barriers have been addressed through a series of Government and Voluntary initiatives. Current Government management of facilitating employment opportunities for people who have an intellectual disability is reviewed. An analysis of the economic benefits to the state of enabling these people to be gainfully employed has also been conducted. In conclusion, based on the evidence gathered in this report, a series of recommendations are proposed.

People with Intellectual Disability (ID) traditionally face high levels of unemployment in the Irish Labour Market. The current climate caused by the COVID19 Pandemic presents even greater challenges for people with ID who are seeking employment in the Irish labour market. This report examines employment opportunities for people with ID in the Republic of Ireland; The main barriers to employment for people with ID in Ireland are outlined and current supports and initiatives are identified that help people with ID gain employment in the Irish labour market. This report provides a detailed examination of the many and varied employment initiatives intended to enhance the employment prospects of people who have an intellectual disability:

■ Government Sponsored Initiatives/Policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities in the Republic of Ireland.

■ Business led initiatives designed to support employment opportunities for people with ID in the Republic of Ireland.

■ Advocacy and Service Organisations actively focusing on creating employment opportunities for people with ID in the Republic of Ireland; and

■ Vocational Programmes designed to enhance employment opportunities for people with ID in the Republic of Ireland.

In addition, the report presents recommendations on the actions required to improve employment opportunities for people with ID in the Republic of Ireland.

These recommendations include:

- Government sponsored employment initiatives

- Promoting awareness of potential for employment

- Transition planning into employment

- The need for focused advocacy

1.3. Research Methodology

The methodology used for this report was primarily desk-based research combined with a series of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. Government initiatives to promote employment for people who have an ID are documented along with more localised interventions, often located in service providers. A Social Return on Investment (SRoI) document has also been prepared to examine whether investing in employment opportunities for young people with ID has long-term economic benefits for the state. Current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic severely limited opportunities to engage in field work data collection. Instead, eight in-depth interviews, via Zoom, with experts and practitioners in the field were conducted to gain additional insights into how people with an ID participated in employment within their local communities.

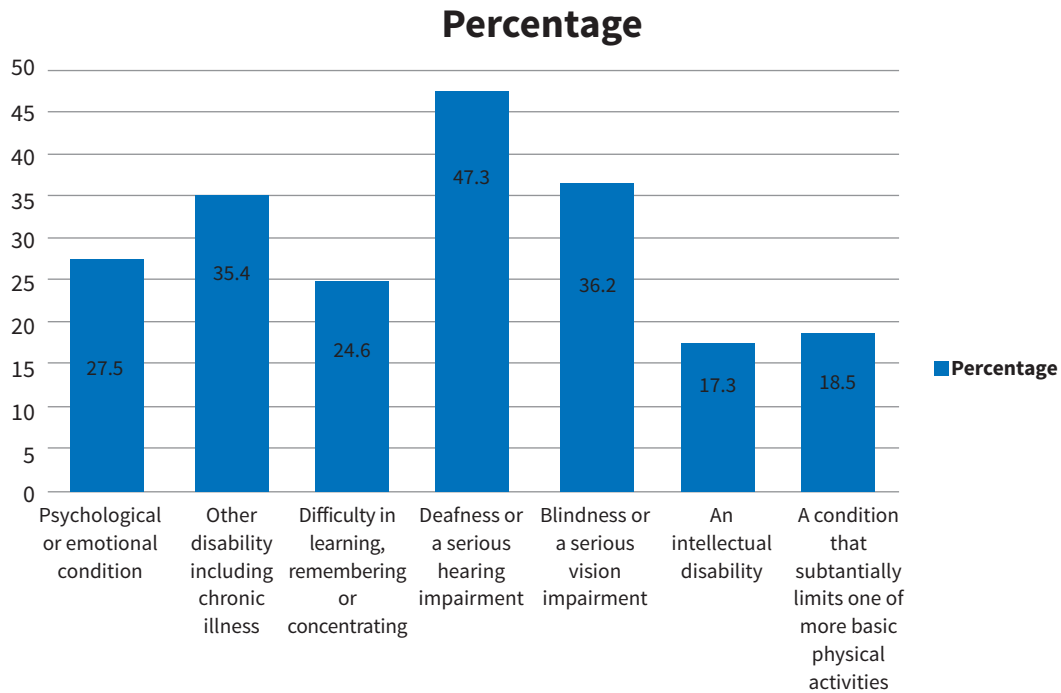# 2. Employment of people with Intellectual Disability in Ireland.

Employment is a common indicator within society used to signify adulthood. Currently, young people with disabilities are marginalised in gaining sustainable employment with prospects for advancement in the Irish labour market (Scanlon, Kamp and Cochrane, 2019). For young people with an ID, barriers and challenges are amplified due to many factors, including their lack of suitable educational qualifications, limited expectations for progression into employment and the marginalised position these young people occupy within society (Scanlon, Kamp and Cochrane, 2019).

It is estimated that there are 66,611 people (1.4% of the population) who have an ID in Ireland. This represents a substantial increase (15.4%) since the 2011 National Census (National Disability Authority, 2018). This increased population has been attributed to a number of factors including greater birth rates, reduction in death rates and increased migration (Hourigan, Fanagan and Kelly, 2017). Despite this increase in the prevalence of ID in Ireland, it is particularly alarming that the gap in employment participation has remained persistent over the last decade. This compares unfavourably to the workforce participation rate of persons aged between 15-74 without a disability at 62.1% in 2019 (Social Justice Ireland, 2019).

According to the European Commission Country Report for Ireland 2019, Ireland has one of the lowest employment rates for people with disabilities in the EU (26.2% compared to 48.1% in the EU in 2017). Ireland also has one of the highest employment gaps between people with and without disabilities (45.1% points). People with ID participate less in employment than other groups of people with a disability in Ireland (Inclusion Ireland, 2013). According to a survey conducted by the National Disability Authority of Ireland (NDA), there are only 17.3% people with an ID employed in the Republic of Ireland (NDA, 2019). Employment rates for people with ID (see Table 1 below) were surpassed by Deaf people or those who have a serious hearing impairment (47.3%); people who are blind or have a serious vision impairment (34.4%); and people with psychological or emotional conditions (27.5%) (NDA, 2019).

Table 1: Employment Rate of people with a Disability in Ireland

Source: NDA Factsheet 2: Employment (2019).

Percentage

Category	Percentage
Psychological or emotional condition	27.5
Other disability including chronic illness	35.4
Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating	24.6
Deafness or a serious hearing impairment	47.3
Blindness or a serious vision impairment	36.2
An intellectual disability	17.3
A condition that subtantially limits one of more basic physical activities	18.5

This is a major cause of concern for people with ID as they are unable to benefit from the financial, economic and social benefits of being employed in the Irish Labour Market. The exclusion of people with an ID from the labour market means that they are more reliant on welfare payments as their only source of income (Inclusion Ireland, 2013). A survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2010) of living conditions demonstrated that people with an ID in Ireland experienced poverty levels of 42% which was by far the highest level compared with unemployed people, students or older people. In relation to the employment of people with ID, there are only 6.6% of people with ID full-time employed in the Republic of Ireland (Watson et al., 2017). The employment rate for people with ID is particularly very disappointing given the growth in Ireland's economy over the years.

Many young people with ID experience difficulty in gaining employment because they have no third level qualification and a majority of organisations in Ireland require a third level qualification in order to access employment in the labour force (Humphreys, 2015). According to the National Disability Database Report (2017), there were only 84 (0.145%) people with a third level education out of a total of 57,872 people with an ID recorded in the study of day service provision (Hourigan, Fanagan & Kelly, 2017). A report by the Inclusive National Higher Education Forum (INHEF) states that many young people with an ID find themselves leaving compulsory schooling to end up in adult day centres or vocational rehabilitation courses (MacNeill, 2020). The main reason people

with an ID find themselves leaving school early is because of the lack of support services and transition programmes which are designed to guide and teach students independent living skills, vocational and employment skills available in Irish further and higher education institutions (NDA, 2019). For those with educational qualifications in employment, people with ID are more likely to be in low paid, temporary, part-time, or low skilled occupations. These outcomes have been attributed to negative employer attitudes towards their disability and their perceived inability to accommodate them in the workforce (Banks, Grotti, Fahey and Watson, 2018).

The current climate caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic may present challenges for employers in terms of accommodating employees with ID working remotely. For example, companies may need to accommodate employees with an ID who require assistive technologies as these technologies may only be available on the organisation's I.T. systems and not on their employees' devices at home. For employees who have assistive technologies at home, it may be challenging for companies to effectively implement new virtual collaboration software to all staff as the training resources of the programme itself may not be compatible with their screen readers at home (Policy Connect, 2020).

There is no published research on the effect of the current climate on the accommodation of employees with ID working remotely in Ireland. However, in the United Kingdom, there is an initiative in place that addresses the issue of accommodating employees with disabilities working remotely (Policy Connect, 2020). Robin Christopherson, Head of Digital Inclusion at AbilityNet, has developed 'Clear Talents', a free, online resource which helps identify barriers and provides clear guidance on reasonable adjustments for all protected characteristics under the Equality Act for concerned employers and staff with a disability (Policy Connect, 2020). 'Clear Talents' has recently been updated to take into account issues any employee may be experiencing as a result of the ongoing economic crisis. Christopherson anticipates that organisations will begin to implement new systems to help people with disabilities work from home, such as collaborative working and online meeting solutions (Policy Connect, 2020).

Limited employment participation of people with an ID relates not only to workplace characteristics but also to external environmental characteristics in which people with an ID continue to face discrimination and systemic barriers to full inclusion and participation in the Irish labour market. The next section of the report identifies three main barriers to employment that hinders the inclusion of people with an ID in the Irish labour market.

3. Barriers to Employment for people with ID in the Irish Labour Market

Barriers to employment have been defined as 'events or conditions, either within a person or in his or her environment, that make career progression difficult' (Mahani, Wittevrongel, Nicholas and Zwicker., 2018). This report examines three main barriers to employment for people with ID in Ireland including

(i)   discrimination and employer attitudes and misconceptions;
(ii) employment setting policies and practices; and
(iii) lack of funded transition programmes from education to employment.

3.1. Discrimination and Employer Attitudes and Misconceptions.

Discrimination has been reported to be a major cause of the unemployment of people with an ID in the Irish Labour Market. Bendick (2018) reported that disabled people were 27% as likely to receive a job offer over a qualified counterpart without a disability in Ireland. This has been described as a *'no foot in the door'* discrimination pattern, that gives no opportunity to people with a disability who are qualified for a particular role. For those who are already in employment, Russell, McGinnitty, Quinn, O'Rain (2010), reported that disabled people were three times more likely to report discrimination at work than those without a disability in Ireland.

These acts of discrimination occur because many employers believe that people with an ID are unable to meet work expectations (Souza, Macrow and Patnaik, 2020). Studies have shown that employers who have this perception of people with an ID have never worked or hired an individual with a disability in their workforce (Unger, 2002). While employers who have worked with people with a disability are more likely to employ people with an ID (Unger, 2002). Employers fear that people with an ID are unable to respond to team building, management, supervision and flexibility in their work interactions. Employers are also concerned that people with ID are unable to participate and maintain working relationships with their colleagues (Souza et al., 2020). Employer perceptions appear to be influenced by a traditional medical model of disability that takes a deficit-based approach to people with ID and deem them unable to integrate into the workforce due to their intellectual impairments (Souza et al., 2020).

This employer perception severely limits opportunities for people with ID to engage in meaningful employment (Hernandez, Keys and Balcazar, 2000) reported that employers are likely to rank potential employees depending on their type of disability, with employers more likely to express positive attitudes toward individuals with physical or sensory disabilities than those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. It is essential that employers are educated and trained on the different forms of disabilities and how to accommodate them in the workforce. Educating and training employers on the employment needs of people with an ID will not only improve their access to employment in the workplace but will also promote the inclusion of people who have diverse skills and capabilities.

Furthermore, after more than a decade since the enactment of the Disability Act (2005), the Equal Status Act (2000-2011) and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), along with a range of state and international anti-discrimination laws which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability in the workplace, there remains clear evidence of disability discrimination in the Irish labour force. Disabled people are three times more likely to report discrimination at work than those without a disability in Ireland and more attention is needed to drive equality in employment for people with disabilities in Ireland (Russell et al., 2010).

3.2. Employment setting Policies and Practices.

Souza et al., (2020) report that employers often fear the changes required to employment policies, practices and structure in order to accommodate and engage more meaningfully with people with an ID in the workforce. Many employers lack knowledge about the specific accommodations required to include people with ID in their workforce. Employing an individual who has an ID, it is perceived, will add an extra burden to managers, supervisors and human resource staff. Senior management would be expected to plan for and cost appropriate accommodations and ensure that the workplace is fully compliant with relevant employment and anti-discrimination laws (Kaye, Jans and Jones, 2011).

Research examining good practices for the employment for people with a disability in the public sector in Ireland concluded that there is no standardised approach throughout the public sector regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation for employees with an ID (NDA, 2018). The range of accommodations available include, providing information in accessible formats, plain English and easy to read formats in job applications, person centred supports, a quiet space free

of noise and distractions, adaptive assessments and flexible working hours for people with autism and people with ID (NDA, 2018). However, despite evidence of some good practice across the public service there is limited evidence that public service bodies use appropriate wording in job advertisements (NDA, 2018). Research has demonstrated that people with autism require additional provision prior to an interview session such as information about the interviewers and the types of questions candidates would face to alleviate anxiety about the event (NDA, 2018). It can be reasonably concluded that people with ID require similar levels of accommodations for interview sessions.

Anand and Sevak (2017) reported that making reasonable organisational adjustments in employment policies and practices will allow up to one-third of non-working people with ID to have better access to employment opportunities in the labour force. Accommodating people with disabilities in the workforce requires a set of key inclusion-based principles that can be applied in a flexible manner designed to meet the individual needs of a potential employee who has ID.

3.3. Transition Programmes from Education to Employment

Transition programmes have been used as a method of enabling people with disabilities to make successful moves into further education and the workplace (National Disability Authority, 2005). Transition programmes for young adults with an ID can have a significant and observable impact on behaviour, attainment and progression to employment (Beyer and Kaehne, 2008). Beyer and Kaehne (2008) reported that the majority of the participants in their study (10/18) gained employment through external transition organisations they had worked with while in school or college, while four participants found their job themselves or through a family member and a Government employment agency supported two participants into employment.

Scanlon and Doyle (2018) reported that employers are willing to provide work experience opportunities to young people with ID but usually require a structured support programme or mechanism to achieve this outcome. The input of projects like WALK PEER (WALK, 2020), EY Ireland/Trinity Centre for people with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID) Project (Shevlin et al., 2020), and Project SEARCH (ProjectSEARCH, 2020) have been beneficial in creating employment opportunities for people with ID as these projects provide a bridge between students and the employer. They provide a bank of knowledge and strategies that employers can rely on and provide guidance and mentorship for students, parents and schools. These projects since their

establishment have increased employment opportunities for students with an ID and have allowed students to gain valuable work experience in a range of employment settings (Project SEARCH, 2020; Shevlin et al., 2020; WALK, 2020).

Despite the impact transition programmes can have on the progression of persons with ID into employment, many of these programmes are under-resourced and have no direct support from the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education in the Republic of Ireland (DCU, 2018). The programmes are instead funded through philanthropic or charitable organisations. Without funding from the HEA and the Department of Education, these programmes can become redundant as occurred with the Inclusive Learning Initiative at Maynooth University (2011-2018) (INHEF, 2019).

In Ireland, there has been significant progress at primary and secondary-level with regards to the inclusion of students with ID, however, little progress has been made at third-level to ensure students with ID have clear pathways to post-secondary education and employment (O'Brien et al., 2009). The literature suggests common implications relating to post-school transitions for students with ID which include a lack of

- formal transition planning within special schools (Francis et al., 2018);
- training and resources (mainly time) for teachers to design and implement a coherent transition plan (Rehm et al., 2012); and
- Government supports and policy ambiguity to this end, with no clearly defined national policy on transition planning for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as they prepare to leave compulsory education (Conlon, 2014; Aston et al., 2021; Banks et al., 2022).

The transition planning process has been guided in part by disability legislation and related Government policies, such as the Citizens Information Act and the National Disability Strategy. According to a report by the National Council of Special Education there is little evidence that schools in Ireland are proactive in developing transition planning at an early stage in the school career of students with SEN (Conlon, 2014). In practice, co-operation in transition planning is often limited to staff in other education and employment bodies rather than professionals in the health and social care sector. Existing guidance on transition planning gives little consideration to matters beyond future education, training or employment. Lastly, healthcare or practical issues such as finance, accommodation, transport and travel for people with ID are not addressed in any formal guidance or policy (Conlon, 2014).

Conlon (2014) reported that the United Kingdom (UK) provides timely transition services for students with an ID comprising of a framework for transition planning and identifying potential employment opportunities in the transition plan. The transition guide highlights the importance of person-centred planning and effective multi-agency co-operation; and focuses on specific pathways to further and higher education, employment and adult social services . As a result, a number of nationwide transition programmes have been developed in an effort to standardise transition planning and to collect and share good practice throughout the UK.

The 'Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative' (2010-2014) is an example of a successful transition programme from education to employment which operated in 9 local authority areas in Wales (Beyer et al. 2014). The programme was primarily aimed at young people aged fourteen to nineteen who had severe complex needs, a learning disability or autistic spectrum disorder, that acknowledged the individual needs of young people at the transition stage of their lives. The programme delivered a model of support, tailored to their needs and has increased the skill base and employment prospects of these young people after leaving school. Supports include:
(i) individualised transition planning to employment;
(ii) supports for families in the transition planning process;
(iii) provision of summer or part-time jobs;
(iv) age-appropriate integration with non-disabled people, including peer mentoring in activities; and
(v) vocational training.

The project expanded significantly, with over 1,766 persons with ID participating in the programme, 879 persons securing work placement and 56 persons in paid employment.

Barriers to employment requires a concerted multi-pronged initiative and prolonged engagement between policy makers, employers and key stakeholders on how to accommodate people with ID in the workforce. Substantial and collective effort needs to be made by all parties to improve the employment rates of people with ID. With this in mind, the next section of report identifies the current supports and initiatives available in Ireland that aim to improve employment opportunities for people with ID.

4. Employment Supports and Initiatives for people with Intellectual Disabilities in Ireland.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for managing and delivering all health and personal services for persons with disabilities in Ireland. 90% of all services offered to people with ID are offered by over 280 individual, non-profit organisations operating under the HSE (May-Simera, 2018). A working group report on service provision for people with disabilities described how disability is treated in law & policy health issues, with the majority of services to people with disabilities being the main responsibility of the health authorities (May-Simera, 2018). This means that Ireland's disability service system is based on an antiquated model which sees ID through a medical model lens rather than a rights based issue, requiring rehabilitative attention (Sinnott, 2014).

Supported employment services such as the Employability Programme set up with support from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) remains significantly underfunded with long waiting lists (May-Simera, 2018). Unfortunately, there is also no employment scheme to date that is personalised for persons with ID. In comparison, a report by the Department of Social Protection (2014) reveals that there are specific employment grants (Job Interviewer/Interpreter Grant & Personal Reader Grant) available for disabled people with hearing or speech impairment.

Lastly, many organisations and advocacy groups that provide employment services and vocational programmes for people with ID fear the possibility of closure to their services due to lack of sustainable Government funding. Organisations such as the National Platform of Self Advocates and the Disability Activation Project (DACT) who provided supported employment and who advocated for people with an ID have closed down due to lack of Government funding (Inclusion Europe, 2019). There is evidence to show that people with ID who participate in supported employment are more likely to have enhanced self-esteem and self-perception as a result (Wehman and Moon, 1986). Wehman and Moon (1986) reported that people with ID in supported employment learned to use public transport thereby giving them greater autonomy and independence. Therefore, the effects of the closure of these vocational and advocacy services and the lack of employment support available for people with ID limits their access to employment in the labour market.

This section of the report further explores a list of initiatives, Vocational programmes and resources that are applicable and available to people with ID in Ireland, such as;

- Government initiatives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with an ID in Ireland.

- Advocacy groups and service providers that assist people with an ID secure employment opportunities in the Irish labour market.

- Business led initiatives/programmes that help to increase employment opportunities for people with an ID.

- ocational programmes that enhance people with ID skills, competencies and qualifications for employment in the Irish Labour Force.

4.1. Government Sponsored Initiatives

The Government Sponsored initiatives in this report are divided into three sections; Government Policies; National Initiatives; and Employment Support. All the Government initiatives in this report focus on all groups of people with a disability. There is no Government initiative to date that focuses exclusively on the employment needs of persons with ID. Lastly, there is no published evidence on the effectiveness of some of these initiatives in increasing employment opportunities for people with ID in Ireland. The Government supports are highlighted below.

4.1.1. Government Policies

1. The National Disability Strategy (2017-2021)
The National Disability Strategy (2017-2021) was designed by the Department of Justice and Equality to improve the lives of people with disabilities. There are eight areas of focus in this strategy;

- Education;
- Employment;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Person Centred Disability Services;
- Housing;
- Transport and Accessible Places;
- Equality and Choice;
- Joined up Services.

The Mid-Term Review of Progress: The National Disability Inclusion Strategy and Indicators (NDA, 2020) evaluates Government progress towards achieving the key indicators under each of the eight themes outlined above. The employment theme focuses on enabling people with disabilities to achieve their employment ambitions. This theme is designed to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to enable people with disabilities to pursue work and a career. In addition, people with disabilities should benefit financially from participating in employment and employers should have access to the information required to ensure that people with disabilities can avail of employment opportunities.

Employment rates for people with disabilities fall far behind their non-disabled peers with the latest census results (2016) indicating that people with a disability aged 20-64 are twice as likely to be unemployed (36.5%) compared to their non-disabled peers (73%). Within the European context, people people with disabilities in Ireland fare the most poorly in employment rates (26.2%) compared to our EU partners (48%) (European Commission, 2019). While there is a Government commitment to increase the numbers of people with disabilities in The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, the NDA expressed a serious concern about the existing levels of employment among people with disabilities.

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) (2015-2024) has been designed to address the lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities and the subsequent low levels of employment among this population.

2. The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) (2015-2024).

The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (2015-2024) was designed to improve employment participation and outcomes for people with disabilities. The strategy sets out a 10-year approach to ensure that people with a disability in Ireland who are able to work and want to access employment are supported to be able to do so. The strategy applies to a wide range of people with disabilities, whatever form of impairment; physical, mental, health, intellectual and those with autism.

The employment strategy is a cross-Government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and state agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges to the employment of people with disabilities. The strategy aims to ensure that there will be integrated services and support at local and national level to support people on their journey into and within employment.

The six priorities of the strategy include:

- Building skills, capacity and independence.

- Providing bridges and supports into work

- Make work pay

- Promote job retention and re-entry into work.

- Provide co-ordinated seamless support

- Engage with employers.

Key initiatives:
1. Make work pay for people with disabilities (2017)
2. Rehabilitative Training Programmes
3. Employer Information and Disability Awareness
4. Public service employment target
5. Implementation of targeted interventions

1. Make work pay for people with disabilities (2017)

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) established an expert group to examine how to make work pay for persons with disabilities. The group has identified significant disincentives to people with disabilities taking up employment and for those returning to work. The group identified 5 major disincentives for people with disabilities in taking up employment (Make work pay for people with disabilities, 2017). They include:

- The risk of losing the medical card.

- The complexities of the system.

- The combination of the Medical card and Disability allowance earning; disregards at €120.

- The perception that it takes time to get benefits restored

- Loss of access to transport supports.

Supports for people with a disability entering employment included the retention of the free travel pass and the disability allowance for a period of 5 years (Finlay, 2017). In addition, people with disability can earn substantially more than previously allowed before their disability allowance is affected. Further work is also being undertaken to calculate the net benefits and financial implications of employment for people on a disability type payment.

2. Rehabilitative Training programmes

The **HSE** has established a Working Group that identifies current rehabilitative training good practice in supporting the implementation of New Directions. The aim of New Directions is to develop a new approach to day services for people with a disability and enable people with a disability to have the widest choice and options about how to live their lives. This initiative clarifies the HSE's role in regard to work and employment (Finlay, 2017). Within the policy, one of the supports available to people that require a HSE funded day service is "Support for Accessing Vocational Training and Work Opportunities" (Finlay, 2017).

In addition, the **HSE** has implemented some practical measures to promote the employment of people with disabilities in Ireland. This included a Disability Action Plan for employing people with a disability and the development of a diversity proofing recruitment guide for health service managers to support the practice of diverse recruitment (Finlay, 2017).

3. Employer Information and Disability awareness

Within the strategy, commitments have been made by the **NDA** and the Department of Justice and Equality to develop pathways to engage and support employers. These commitments include pathways to a work action plan, such as job-placement schemes (NDA, 2019). The NDA in collaboration with Irish Small and Medium Enterprise (ISME), Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and Chambers Ireland established an Employers Disability Information service. The service however concluded in 2019, which led to the development of the employers awareness campaign. This pilot project funded by the NDA was deemed to be effective in supporting employers with relevant information and developing a network of employers interested in employing people with disabilities. As a result, a follow-on Government funded service has been established and was launched in March 2021 (Open Doors Initiative www.employersforchange.ie).

Another disability awareness programme aimed at employers was funded by the NDA involving the participation of voluntary organisations such as REHAB, NLN, WALK, AsIAm, and Not so Different. An online disability awareness programme has been developed and will be made available to employers (NDA, 2020). The material addresses employers' needs as identified through a survey of employers conducted by the EDI (NDA, 2020). In 2019, the materials were piloted with the private and public sector with a view to launching the online platform in 2020. It is anticipated that this online disability awareness programme will become publicly available later in 2022.

4. **Public Service employment target**

Under the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2018-2021) the Government decided to increase the public service employment target for people with disabilities. The project aimed to ensure that people with disabilities in Ireland get the opportunity to work, make a living and progress in their careers (NDA, 2019). The Government set out to increase 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. The original initiative has been successful with many public bodies exceeding the target (NDA, 2019). In 2016, public bodies reported that 3.5% of employees employed in the public sector are people with disabilities (NDA, 2019). This is a slight decrease from 3.6 in 2015 and 2014. The total number of employees reporting a disability increased from 7,245 in 2015 to 7,457 in 2016. (NDA, 2019). However, employment data indicated that numbers of public bodies achieving or exceeding the minimum 3% target did not increase with 217 public bodies as compared with 218 in 2017. 183 (84.3%) of these public bodies exceeded or achieved the minimum 3%.

5. **Implementation of targeted interventions**

The **'Intreo Service'** introduced by the DEASP in 2012 puts in place a single point of contact for all disabled employees and income supports. It was designed to provide a streamlined approach to employment and offers practical, tailored employment services and support for jobseekers and employers (Finlay, 2017). To date, four named case officers are designated as contacts for people with disabilities in Longford, Mullingar, Athlone and Portlaoise and these case officers assist with the development of personal plans and identify appropriate supports.

However, according to research conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (Kelly, E. et al 2019), there is no consistent evidence that the Intreo service has had an impact on exits from the Live Register to employment or education either in Dublin or nationally (Economic

and Social Research Institute, 2019). The findings suggest that the Live Register (monthly series of the numbers of people registering for job seekers benefit) may be driven by efficiency gains for the DEASP through the early identification of invalid unemployment claims (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2019). The report authors conclude that it is vital that employment supports being provided to jobseekers are monitored continuously, including changes made to the delivery of employment services, to ensure that the needs of unemployed people are being met (Kelly, E. et al, 2019).

The **'Employability Service'** is an employment and recruitment service organised by the (DEASP) that helps people with a disability obtain employment. It provides a number of supports including ongoing support for both the employer and employee; a professional job matching service to help secure successful recruitment and additional advice and information on employment supports. For employers, services provided include free recruitment and employment service; database of skilled jobseekers; access to a committed local workforce; ongoing support from a professional team of job coaches and advice on employment grants and supports. The EmployAbility Programme of supported employment for individuals who are available to work 8 hours a week is funded by DEASP and supports an average of 3,000 clients at any stage, across 24 services, with a placement rate in the order of 40%. However, the Citizens Information Board raises concerns that the Employability Service can exclude people with a disability who want to work limited hours and those who are not job ready (Citizens Information Board, 2015). The service is also more successful with people who have moderate physical disabilities and less for those who require a high level of support, as there is no long-term individualised support available for them. Furthermore, individuals with high career aspirations fail to benefit from the service because the service has the tendency to list low paid jobs.

The **'Ability Programme'** was established in 2017 under the auspices of the Department of Social Protection and Family Affairs and was designed to address the significant under-representation of people with disabilities within the workforce. The programme aimed to support young people with disabilities aged 15-29 years to develop skills to progress in education, attain meaningful social roles, become 'work-ready' and/or enter employment. Twenty-seven service providers across Ireland were funded to provide the necessary person-centred supports to enable these young people to achieve the programme aims. Intellectual disability or learning disability were the most common disabilities reported by participants in the programme.

The Evaluation Mid-point Report (Pobal, 2020) provides interesting insights into how the programme has developed. No common overall model among the service providers was identified though the supports provided were aligned with best practice as identified in the research literature. Many positive outcomes were reported including obtaining work experience, achieving education accreditation, increased confidence and independent living skills and reduced social isolation. The greatest predictor of participating in paid employment was whether their service provider offered paid work experience. Voluntary or unpaid work was deemed to be less successful in enabling the young person to achieve paid employment. Many examples of good practice have been identified that focused on developing an appropriate support infrastructure through collaboration with existing education and employment providers. Good practice was also identified in developing the personal skills of the participants that will enable them to be successful in engaging in education and employment on a sustainable basis over the longer term.

3. 2nd National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020

The Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation (DBEI) launched the 2nd National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility 2017-2020 towards responsible business as a way to promote a culture of inclusivity and fairness in Irish society (Finlay, 2017). The DBEI aims to support businesses in Ireland to create sustainable jobs, embed responsible practices in the marketplace, embrace diversity and promote responsible workplaces. One particular step identified in this plan is to encourage businesses to develop strategies to integrate diversity and to promote the employment of people with disabilities (Finlay, 2017).

Implementation

- The DBEI set up a CSR Stakeholder Forum on Diversity and Inclusion that sets out to enhance understanding of diversity and inclusion through the identification of good practice and highlighting it through forum meeting presentations and or case studies. The key output of the Project team's work was a session on Diversity and Inclusion at the CSR Stakeholder Forum meeting in November 2018 (Government of Ireland, 2019). The session showcased the ability and capability of a range of marginalised groups and how they can reach their fullest potential and play active roles in business and society within a supportive and positive environment (Government of Ireland, 2019).

- In addition to the strategy, specific actions reported by the DBEI have been undertaken. For instance, Enterprise Ireland hosted a meeting with 30 of its client companies organised by the National Disability Authority. In this workshop, a Senior UX disability consultant spoke on supporting employers to recruit people with disabilities and on how to target customers with a disability (Finlay, 2017). Science Foundation Ireland also worked on a programme to include people on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within the SFI Discover Programme.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
justice.ie	Department of Justice and Equality
gov.ie	Make Work Pay Intreo Programme Ability Programme Employability Programme Department of Social Protection
hse.ie	HSE
nda.ie	National Disability Authority
enterprise.gov.ie	Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation

4.1.2. Government sponsored National Initiatives

1. SOLAS (An tSeirbhis Oideachais Leanunaigh agus Scileanna)

SOLAS is the Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland. It is responsible for assisting people with a disability and other marginalised groups seeking employment in Ireland by offering funding, planning and coordination training and further education programmes. SOLAS works closely with a wide range of stakeholders including learners, employers, Education and Training Boards, DGovernment epartments, state bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Institutes of Technology (IOTs) and representative organisations. Their aim is to build a clear pathway to employment for people with disabilities through further education and training.

2. The National Job Shadow Initiative

The Civil Service Equality Unit and the Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) organised the National Job Shadow initiative. This is an annual initiative that showcases a wide range of employment supports and services available to employers and jobseekers. The project identifies and tackles challenges facing people with disabilities in gaining employment and to raise awareness of the competences, capabilities and contributions people with disabilities can make in the workforce. The benefits of this programme for job seekers with disabilities include exposure to a work setting which provides the opportunity to learn more about the job requirements and employer expectations. Job seekers with a disability also have the opportunity to evaluate how the skills they have learned can be used in the workplace and therefore make informed career decisions for their future. The initiative has some success stories over the years with a total of 2,165 disabled people participating and 78 disabled people employed from the year 2008-2013. In 2018 out of 94 people who participated in the initiative 12 disabled people were offered permanent positions (McHugh, 2019). The initiative is still operating for people with a disability seeking employment (McHugh, 2019).

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
solas.ie	SOLAS
irishjobs.ie	The National Job Shadow Initiative

4.1.3. Government Employment Supports

1. The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)

The WSS aims to increase the number of people with disabilities participating in the labour market. The scheme 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 subsidised hours per week. There are 3 strands to this stream;

- Strand 1 subsidy rate is €5.30 an hour for all hours worked and the maximum annual subsidy is €10,748 based on a 39-hour week (Citizens Information, 2020).
- Strand 2 is a payment to companies that employ more than 2 individuals with disabilities and covers supervisory, management and other work-based costs (Citizens Information, 2020). There is an additional 10% of the wage subsidy for 3 to 6 employees with disabilities to a maximum of 50% subsidy for over 23 employees with disabilities (Citizens Information, 2020).
- Strand 3 is a grant to companies that employ 30 or more people with disabilities (Citizens

Information, 2020). The grant is used to employ an employment assistance officer (EAO) at the company. The EAO supports and assists employees with disabilities with their employment needs. The grant is €30,000 per annum (Citizens Information, 2020).

The Wage Subsidy Scheme currently supports 1,696 employers availing of the scheme, who in turn are supporting 2,746 employees with disabilities.

2. Reasonable Accommodation Fund

The Reasonable Accommodation Fund is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and consists of:

- Workplace Equipment and Adaptation Grant,
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant,
- Personal Reader Grant, and
- Employee Retention Grant.

Expenditure on the Reasonable Accommodation Fund increased by 55% between 2016 (€77,822) and 2018 (€120,622).   However, despite the increased funding made available the NDA pointed to a number of difficulties with the existing scheme including limited awareness about the scheme among employers and consequent low levels of uptake. The DEASP has committed to reviewing the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (NDA, 2020).

3. The Disability Awareness Support Scheme

This scheme offers €20,000 funding to private sector employers to provide Disability Awareness training for staff who work with a colleague who has a disability. The end goal of this training is to deliver clear and accurate information about disability and to address questions or concerns that employers and employees have about working with people with a disability.

4. Employee Retention Grant Scheme

This scheme was designed to help employers retain employees who have an impairment which impacts their ability to carry out a job. It provides funding to identify accommodations and/or training to enable the employee to remain in his or her current position or re-train the employee so that he/she can take up another position within the companyPJob I.

Funding of 90% for eligible programmes' costs is available and up to a maximum of €2,500 towards the development of a written retention strategy for any one employee and €12,500 towards the implementation of a retention strategy for any one employee.

5. The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme encourages people receiving specific social welfare payments to become self-employed. Disabled people who are taking part in this scheme can retain a percentage of their social welfare payment for up to two years. An individual with a disability can only qualify for an Enterprise Support Grant (ESG) if they have been approved for the BTWEA. The ESG pays a total of €2,500 in any 24-month period and the recipient must be able to make a matching contribution of at least 10% to access grant support.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
citizensinformationboard.ie	Wage Subsidy Scheme
	The Disability Awareness Support Scheme
	Employee Retention Grant Scheme
	Rehabilitative Training Allowance
	The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

4.2. Vocational Programmes

The Vocational Programmes in this report are grouped into four sections; business, government, cBusiness, Government, ommunity based and bisability service based vocational programmes. Vocational programmes are designed to train and equip people with an ID with the skills and qualifications needed for employment. This report reveals how effective these programmes have been in increasing employment opportunities for people with an ID.

However, due to very limited information available online, there are a few initiatives which have no published evidence on their effectiveness in improving employment opportunities for people with ID. Finally, while some of these vocational programmes are centred around improving employment for people with ID, others focus on improving employment for all disability groups.

4.2.1 Government Supported Vocational Programmes

1. Empower Change Transition Programme

Empower is a local development programme situated in Fingal that runs a transition programme for young people with ID between the age of 15 and 29. This programme helps participants to

develop personal, social and professional skills; increased confidence and employment prospects. The programme is open to people with intellectual disability who are receiving a Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension or Illness Benefit for more than three months. The aim of the programme is that participants graduate from the transition programme into the wider Empower Employment Services. Some of the programmes supports include:

- An assessment of each individual's needs.
- A personalised progression plan.
- Regular one-to-one support from a job coach.
- Development of employment focused skills and experience including the development of an up-to-date C.V.
- Supported work placements with organisations who have participated in Disability Awareness Training
- On-going and continued individual support for the term of the Transition Project.

There is however no information available online on the effectiveness of this transition programme for people with ID to employment in the irish labour market.

2. HSE Rehabilitative Training

Rehabilitative training focuses on the development of life skills, social skills and basic work skills with the objective of enhancing the trainee's quality of life and general work capacity. The HSE appointed the Directors of Disability Services to deliver Rehabilitative Training services for people with a disability. The HSE has teams of guidance counsellors who offer information, advice and guidance on HSE rehabilitative Rehabilitative Training.

The HSE also offers a wide range of adult day services for people with a disability including:

- personal support service for care,
- community participation and inclusion,
- supported employment,
- education,
- voluntary work, and
- therapeutic work programmes.

The aim is to help people with disabilities make choices and plans to support their personal goals; to have influence over decisions that affect their lives; to achieve their goals and aspirations and to become independent members of the community.

3. Community Employment

Community Employment is an active labour market programme designed by the Government to provide long-term support to disadvantaged groups such as persons with a disability that provides an opportunity to engage in useful part-time work within their communities on a temporary, fixed term basis. This scheme helps people who are unemployed re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to a work routine and to assist them to enhance/develop both their technical and personal skills by providing opportunities for individual training and development. The programme is sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary organisations and public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) gives financial support in the form of allowances and funding to assist with the Community Employment programme, for instance wages, supervisor grants, material grants and training grants. The eligibility requirements for people with a disability are as follows:

- Persons aged 18 or over
- Currently in receipt of Disability Allowance
- Blind Pension
- Invalidity Pension
- Illness Benefits for 6 months or more.

4. Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

VTOS provides people with disability aged 21 and over who have been unemployed for at least 6 months an opportunity for second chance education/training courses for up to two years. The programme aims to provide participants with education and training opportunities that can help to develop and prepare them for paid employment or further education and training that leads to employment in the Irish labour market.

5. YouthReach

The YouthReach Programme is a programme co-founded by the Government and the European Social Fund (ESF). The Programme is designed for young people between the ages of 16-21 who have left school without formal qualifications. Young people below the age of 25 who are at a disadvantage, for instance people with an ID qualify for this programme (Thinking Disabilities, 2019?). The YouthReach programme offers education opportunities, personal development courses, vocational training and work experience. This programme continues for 1 to 2 years and has built-in flexibility depending on the individual's needs.

Despite the overall aim of the programme, reviews and evaluations conducted in recent years by the Department of Education and Skills have revealed various issues including disengagement and non-completion of the programme amongst young people. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) published a report on Youthreach centres in 2010 and noted that many participants failed to engage with their Youth Outreach programme. Evidence also suggests that the numbers of beneficiaries of the programme significantly decreased from 2015-2017 (Smyth et al., 2019). The Youthreach programme experienced a drop in beneficiaries from 10,675 in 2015 to 10,391 in 2016 with a further fall to 9,932 in 2017 (Smyth et al., 2019). Smyth et al. (2019) observed that the major reason for this decline was a result of the lack of linkages between the YouthReach centres and local and national agencies resulting in a gap in support and resources for Youthreach learners (Smyth et al., 2019).

6. Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SICAP)

The Social Inclusion Activation Programme (2018-2022) which is funded by the Government and administered by Pobal, supports unemployed people with a disability to overcome barriers to social inclusion (Pobal 2019). The programme has supported 4,521 people with a disability to improve the quality of their lives through the provision of lifelong learning and labour market support. There has been an increase in participants with disabilities from 2018-2019 (from 2,571 to 2,678) that SICAP has supported (SICAP 2019).

According to SICAP (2019), people with a disability received an average of three interventions in 2019 and these tailored supports included;

■ LifeLong Learning supports (LLL) (47%);

■ Personal development and well-being supports (39%);

■ labour market supports (27%), and

■ self-employment supports (8%).

Over half (51%) of people with a disability participated in the LLL activity in 2019 and 77% of these individuals successfully completed their placements at the end of the year. However, out of the total number of people with a disability who participated in this course only 3% secured employment in 2019. people with a disability were likely to be in part-time jobs and men (68%) with disability were more likely to secure employment than women (38%). Out of the total number of people with disability who had been supported by this initiative in 2019, 178 people secured employment and out of 112 who received a follow-up, 85 people had retained employment six

months after their start date. In terms of self-employment, only 2% (55) of people with a disability set up their own business in 2019 and a total of 8 of these individuals received enterprise start up grants through SICAP.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
empower.ie	Empower Change Transition Programme
hse.ie	HSE Rehabilitative training
citizensinformation.ie	Community Employment Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme YouthReach
pobal.ie	Social Inclusion Activation Programme

4.2.2. Business Based Vocational Programmes

1. Open Doors Initiative Training Programme

The Open Doors Initiative was founded by 14 Irish employers in 2018 to address issues of the employment of disadvantaged groups in the Irish Labour Market. They focus on creating employment for three main disadvantaged groups;

(i)   Refugees, asylum seekers and non-native English speakers;

(ii) Young people under 25 with educational barriers, and

(iii) people with disabilities.

Since 2018, the initiative has been very successful and now has over 80 partnering organisations employing people with disabilities (Open Doors, 2020). Open Doors offers a range of supports including:

- online training courses,
- Vocational programmes,
- internship positions, and
- employment opportunities to people with a disability.

The Open Doors Initiative also partnered with 'Valuable 500', encouraging all their business partners to join a global movement that advocates for disability inclusion on the business leadership agenda.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
opendoorsinitiative.ie	Open Doors Initiative

4.2.3. Community Based Vocational Programmes.

1. Local Training Initiative (LTI)

The LTI which is managed and led by local community groups offers grants to support projects which provide training and work experience. They also provide support to people with disabilities who are unemployed so that they can gain employment or progress further in their training. The programme is rooted in the community and encourages learners to develop their existing skills and acquire new skills in an environment that is tailored to meet their individual needs. The programme allows all learners to build on valuable employment related skills and knowledge while contributing to their community.

2. Festina Lente Foundation

The Festina Lente Foundation which is located in Co. Wicklow is an employment service that offers training and employment opportunities to disadvantaged people, including disabled people, who wish to follow a career in equestrian or horticultural areas. They provide a range of integrated training, occupational, learning and employment opportunities to people whose needs have not been met by mainstream services. Festina Lente Foundation is funded by SOLAS, HSE, Pobal Community Services Programme and the Riding School and Walled Gardens.

3. Tús

The Tús initiative is a locally led programme managed by local development companies and the Department of Social Protection (DSP, now titled DEASP) in 2011 and offers community work placement for unemployed people. People with ID can apply for these programmes in their local area. Tús helps improve the work readiness of unemployed people and supports them in returning to the labour market by offering them opportunities to experience different work environments and provide them with employment related experience to re-enter the labour force. The initiative is managed by a network of local development companies, including Údarás na Gaeltachta who deliver the programme in Gaeltacht areas. In addition, each company is awarded a specific quota of Tús placements at supervisory and participant level.

Contact details for each initiative are provided in the link below.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
tipperary.etb.ie	Local Training Initiative
festinalente.ie	Festina Lente Foundation
gov.ie	Tús

4.2.4. Disability Services Led Vocational Programmes

The Ability programme, referenced in an earlier section, supports a number of initiatives designed to enhance the job readiness of young people with disabilities aged 25-29. A number of these initiatives have been developed to specifically support young people who have an ID and a selection of these programmes are outlined below.

1. Ability@Work Programme

Ability@Work, a programme established by the Cope Foundation, connects people with an ID and/or autism with local employers and job opportunities in Cork. The programme is designed to assist people with ID and/or autism to become work ready and secure employment. Services they offer include; career guidance and planning; vocational profiling; job search support advice; upskilling and training; interview techniques; work behaviour training; job coach support and assisted integration into the workplace. The Ability@Work held an Employers Breakfast Event in the Republic of Work (a business community in Cork that helps individuals grow and learn from valuable business connections) in 2019 to launch the programme (National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, 2019). The event was deemed a success, with over thirty companies in Cork attending. Since its launch in 2019, the initiative has companies such as Lidl, Mater Private Hospital in Cork and Sodexo employing their beneficiaries.

2. The Blossom Personal Empowerment Programme (PEP)

The PEP programme is designed to provide skills-based training to prepare young people with an ID for life as an adult. The programme focuses on skills they require to support them in the future. The programme also provides bespoke support, advocacy and information for both the individual and their family. The programme has delivered services for 386 young people with ID between 2011 and 2018. In 2019, they achieved the highest standard of governance as one of the only 60

charitable organisations to have achieved the Charities Institute of Ireland's Triple Lock Standard of governance.

3. The National Learning Network (NLN)

The NLN run by Rehab Care provides a range of rehabilitative training programmes to individuals with a disability. This includes supporting them to get into the world of work or to find a new direction in their lives. They offer community-based work experience, an information and advice service and rehabilitation programmes that are tailored to each individual's needs. They also offer a wide range of training and further education training programmes that help to increase the employability of people with disabilities. These vocational courses include Arts, Crafts and Media, Catering, Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, Business Studies and Administration, Computer and IT. The National Learning Network reported that 9 out of 10 people who complete their course progress to employment or further training and education (National Learning Network, 2020).

4. Down Syndrome Ireland's Ability Programme Online

In response to the COVID19 outbreak, Down Syndrome Ireland has launched an online version of their Ability Programme 'Ability Online' in 2020. Adults with Down Syndrome are given the opportunity to study a wide range of topics in the Adult Education Programme over a ten-week course that aims to equip adults with the skills to live and work independently. The course is open to members of Down Syndrome Ireland aged 18-29 years old. The project aims to have 220 school leavers and adults with Down Syndrome graduate the Ability Programme and gain meaningful employment in 2021. The programme to date has helped support adults with Down Syndrome gain employment opportunities with employers such as hair salons (hairdressing assistant training programmes); the hotel and catering industry; leisure centres and in office administration.

WALK

WALK advocates and offers training programmes and facilitates people with an intellectual disability to fulfil their employment and career aspirations. WALK have developed and piloted different innovative and supported employment programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with ID. Their WALK PEER transition programme is designed to support young people with an ID who are in education to successfully transition into the labour force by taking steps into further education and training and paid employment. They also offer real life training programmes that support school leavers with an intellectual disability to build their capacities and to develop their skills and passion so that they will be equipped to live self-determined lives in the community of their choice. The real-life training programme aims to ensure

that participants explore possibilities and meet objectives in relation to paid employment in the mainstream labour market, access training/education in mainstream settings as well as developing the personal skills?. The aim of the real-life training programme is to focus support on key transition points for individuals by delivering targeted interventions. WALK has a very high success rate with over 160 people supported in employment and 66 people employed in various companies in Ireland (WALK, 2020).

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
cope-foundation.ie/AbilityWork	Ability@Work
blossomireland.ie	The Blossom Personal Empowerment Programme
rehab.ie/national-learning-network	National Learning Network
downsyndrome.ie	Down Syndrome Ireland's Ability Programme Online
walk.ie	WALK

4.3. Advocacy Groups and Service Providers

This section provides a summary of what each advocacy group does, what kind of services they provide and how effective they are in improving employment opportunities for people with an ID. However, in common with other initiatives which have been presented in this report, most of these advocacy groups and service providers cater to all groups of people with disabilities in Ireland with few initiatives specifically offering services to people with ID. In addition, there is no published evidence of the impact of these initiatives on improving employment opportunities for people with ID. The list of advocacy groups/service providers are highlighted below.

1. The National Advocacy Service (NAS)

The National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities is a free, independent and confidential service. NAS is supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board and has a team of advocates around the country, who work directly with people with disabilities across a range of issues in their lives. NAS advocates help people with disabilities have their voices heard and express their opinions to services, authorities, family and friends. NAS advocates can help in

meetings, with writing letters and emails and making phone calls. People with disabilities are supported by NAS in relation to issues such as employment, healthcare decisions, personal finances, justice issues and family issues. People with an ID can use their services for their employment needs.

2. Enable Ireland

Enable Ireland is a disability service provider that offers an advocacy service for people with disabilities and provides an independent, confidential and free, representative advocacy service that works exclusively for the person using the service and adheres to the highest professional standards. Enable Ireland provides employment services to adults with disabilities and their families. The range of services they provide include, personal assistants, advocacy, supported employment, training and support during transition to adulthood from children's services.

3. The Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE)

The Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) is a not-for-profit organisation set up in 1994 that promotes a system of supported employment for people with a disability. The IASE supports agencies that provide free supported employment services to both employers and jobseekers all over Ireland. They have created over 5000 jobs for people from marginalised groups all over Ireland including people with a disability. The association also raises awareness about and promotes supported employment to jobseekers, employers, policy makers and the general public. IASE has over 340 members and four regional branches which meet regularly in a partnership model with representatives of job coaches from various disability services, SOLAS, and employer organisations. In these partnership meetings information, expertise and knowledge are shared which serve as useful resources for employers and job coaches. IASE have identified a need to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal and have been instrumental in developing and implementing employment supported services in these counties.

4. Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

The DFI advocates for the equal inclusion of people with disabilities in Ireland. They ensure that people with a disability have

- an equal chance of finding and keeping a job;
- have a sufficient income and stay out of poverty;
- get an education;
- easy access to transport, and
- easy access to buildings, shops, sports and other facilities.

In light of the recent COVID19 pandemic, the DFI have worked closely with the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, the Not-A -Profit association and the HSE Disability Services to resolve issues facing disability services. The DFI has grown over recent years and has 120 member organisations.

5. Ability West

Ability West is a Galway based organization which provides a range of services and support options to adults and children with ID. In 2019 Ability West provided services to and supported over 590 children and adultsan . Ability West has close links with Employability Galway and provides the required support to assist people who specifically have an ID to access employment. Many adults in this programme have successfully progressed through job profiling and job matching to find paid employment in a variety of occupations.

6. KARE

KARE is an organisation in Ireland that supports people who have an ID and their families. Their services are situated in South Kildare, East Offaly, West Wicklow and northeast Carlow. They support people through lifelong learning, supported employment, supports for living outside the family home and health and wellbeing. They offer an ID Support Programme that equips people with an ID with the competences necessary to support them to live independent lives. The programme is 48 weeks long and successful participants gain a QQ1 Level 5 Major Award in Intellectual Disability Practice. They also provide an Adult Support EmploymentEmployment and Childcare Community Employment Programmes, which allows people with an ID gain experience by playing an active role in organisation by working in services for adults, support or administration and in childcare settings working directly with children. Participants who embark in these programmes gain a QQ1 Level 5 Award in Early Childhood Care and Education or in other chosen areas of vocational training.

8. AHEAD

AHEAD is the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability. They are an independent, non-profit organisation that empowers students with disabilities to succeed in education and graduate employment. The organisation operates as a national centre of expertise on inclusion across education and employment and is the leading source of information on the participation

rates of students with disabilities in higher education. AHEAD has established and provided vocational training initiatives such as Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) and GetAhead.

WAM is a work placement programme established by AHEAD that aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and enhance the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace (AHEAD, 2020). Employers who participate in this programme collaborate with WAM to offer mentored paid work experience for graduates with disabilities. Since the WAM Programme was established in 2005 it has provided nearly 500 work placements for graduates with disabilities in some of Ireland's largest companies. In addition, the programme has organised a series of free training webinars in 2020 for potential employers and employees involved in the WAM programme. These training sessions include Unconscious Bias Training, On Boarding, Assistive Technology Training and Workplace Needs Assessment.

The GetAHEAD Programme also set up by AHEAD aims to improve work preparation and employment opportunities for graduates with disabilities who are looking for work. The programme aims to upskill graduates with a disability by providing training events and relevant information. These training and workshop sessions include:
- Volunteering and Work Experience
- Interview preparation
- C.V. Workshops
- Information on Job Seeking
- Legal Entitlements
- Grants Available
- Disability Disclosure

9. Disability Bray

Disability Bray is an organisation based in Bray, Wicklow, which provides information on disability services and other related information in the area of Bray. The platform offers information on how to get work, work related rights and entitlement and supports for people with disabilities in Bray. In addition, they offer information for employers on how to make their workplace more inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.

10. Sunbeam House Service

Sunbeam is an organisation based in Wicklow that provides self-directed support for people, including employment support for adults with an IF. Sunbeam aims to equip people who have an ID with the necessary skills to live full and satisfying lives as equal citizens of their local communities.

11. Empower

Empower is a local development company for Fingal and is responsible for a range of Government programmes to meet the needs of people with an intellectual disability. These include a local employment service and the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) for marginalised groups and people with a disability across Fingal.

12. REHAB

Rehab group has many years of experience of working with people with disabilities through community supports, education and training services and social enterprise. Rehab support many employers to engage with people with disabilities through work experience placements and employer-based training services.

13. Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)

The Irish Local Development Network offers a free service to disadvantaged communities. Some of their supports include a local employment service, jobs clubs, social inclusion programmes, pre-employment supports, community employment and community service programmes for people with a disability.

14. Disability Consultancy Services

The Disability Consultancy Service is owned and run by people with a disability and provides professional training in all aspects of disability awareness. This organisation provides awareness and equality training courses to employers and staff which will help them understand how to meet the needs of disabled people when employing them. They also provide training courses to people with disabilities, to equip them with the required skills to integrate into the labour force.

15. Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board is a statutory organisation which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social service. They provide

information on employment benefits, schemes and supports that are available to people with a disability.

16. National Federation of Voluntary Bodies

The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies is a national umbrella body for voluntary/non-statutory agencies that provide direct services on behalf of the HSE to people with an ID. Their 60 member organisations account for over 85% of service providers for people with an ID.

17. Valuable 500

The Valuable 500 initiative is a global movement set up in 2019 that advocates for people with disabilities by putting disability on the business leadership agenda. Their aim is to get 500 national and multinational, private sector corporations to influence change and help unlock the social and economic value of the 1.3 billion people with disabilities across the world. As of 2020, 240 companies have joined the movement including 13 companies from Ireland such as Accenture, Deloitte, EY, Lidl, Mastercard, Ornua, SAP and Salesforce and a total of 227 are in the process of joining the initiative (TheValuable500, 2020).

18. Dublin Regional Enterprise

Dublin Regional Enterprise advocates and provides training services for Ppople with a disability and employers who want to expand their knowledge and expertise to accommodate people with a disability in their organisation. In 2020, Prof. Tom Cooney worked in partnership with Dublin Regional Enterprise to identify a pathway for disadvantaged groups to engage in economic activity by hosting a Business Start Up Conference for people with disabilities. The aim of the event was to inform participants about the supports that people with disabilities can access when becoming self-employed. The webinar featured speakers from the IamRemarkable initiative organised by Google, Pobal, and StepUpIreland

19. Aiseanna Tacaiochta (AT)

Aiseanna Tacaiochta is an organisation that advocates for people with disabilities by promoting independent living and facilitating a direct payments model to people with disabilities. With this direct payments model people with disabilities can move from dependency on disability service providers to directing their own services.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
advocacy.ie	The National Advocacy Service (NAS)
enableireland.ie	Enable Ireland
iase.ie	Irish Association of Supported Employment
disability-federation.ie	Disability Federation of Ireland
walk.ie	WALK
abilitywest.ie	Ability West
kare.ie	KARE
ahead.ie	AHEAD
disabilitybray.ie	Disability Bray
sunbeam.ie	Sunbeam House Service
empower.ie	Empower
rehab.ie	REHAB
ildn.ie	Irish Local Development Network
employerdisabilityinfo.ie	Employer Disability Information Service
disabilityconsultancy.ie	Disability Consultancy Service
citizensinformationboard.ie	Citizens Information Board
fedvol.ie	National Federation for Voluntary bodies
thevaluable500	Valuable 500
enterprise.gov.ie	Dublin Regional Enterprise
theatnetwork.com	Aiseanna Tacaiochta

4.4. Business Based Initiatives

This section focuses on business based initiatives designed to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. There is however no business initiative to date that focuses solely on improving employment opportunities for people with ID. The list of business initiatives is presented below.

1. Step Up Ireland

Step Up Ireland is a Social Enterprise set up to empower adults with disabilities to become entrepreneurs within their communities. This social enterprise strongly advocates for inclusion, equality and empowering individuals to have valued social roles within Irish society and within

their communities. A person-centred approach is adopted which is led by and tailored to the individual so that they can achieve their vision. Individuals who are interested in this initiative must have a business idea in mind so that Step Up can offer links to the right supports that will help the idea to grow.

2. GOOGLE Initiatives

Google has established two initiatives that promote the employment of marginalised groups in their organisation. These initiatives are known as the IamRemarkable initiative and the BOLD initiative.

The IamRemarkable initiative with Google is a programme designed for disabled people and other underrepresented groups in employment. This Google initiative aims to empower disabled people and other underrepresented groups and celebrate their accomplishments in the workplace. The programme also aims to improve the self-promotion, motivation and skills of disabled people and underrepresented groups and challenge negative social perceptions around self-promotion.

The Building Opportunities for Leadership and Development (BOLD) Internship program is a paid summer internship for rising undergraduates that are interested in business careers in the technology industry and full-time jobs at Google. The programme aims to open up career opportunities in the industry to underrepresented groups in Ireland and to prepare entry level talent to be ambassadors of diversity, equity and inclusion in their careers. Students from all schools and students who identify with a group that is historically underrepresented in the technology industry, including but not limited to Black/African, students with disabilities, American Indian and war veterans are encouraged to apply.

3. Specialisterne Ireland

Specialisterne Ireland is a specialist consultancy that recruits and supports people on the autism spectrum and those with similar neurodiverse challenges in gaining employment. The organisation partners with local service providers and businesses to establish sustainable programmes while developing mentoring/management models to enable employers to expand their recruitment to include graduates on the autism spectrum and those with similar challenges. Specialisterne Ireland provides an intensive employment interview skills programme for undergraduate students with autism. They include; individual student assessment; C.V preparation and guidance; interview

training and coaching. They have worked with graduates from National College of Ireland and have arranged for candidates to be recruited using an autism friendly process through employer partnerships. Specialisterne has also teamed up with SAP to recruit people with Autism into the workforce. SAP has committed to employing 1% of their workforce with individuals on the autistic spectrum.

4. ESB Accessibility Network

ESB provides a traineeship programme for people with disabilities through the WAM programme. They accept 10 applicants into the programme yearly out of 50-60 applications. Interviews are based on the applicant's C.V. and the job requires the applicant to have completed third level education. Successful candidates are given a needs assessment to complete and this identifies what kind of accommodations they will need to get the job done. However, this programme did not take place in 2020 as it was difficult to support remote working for people with disabilities. A total of 143 people have taken part in this programme since it began. People with little work experience have also been accepted into the traineeship programme and have secured full-time positions. ESB have also worked with organisations like Specialisterne to open up many job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
stepupireland.ie	Step Up Ireland
iamremarkable.withgoogle.com	Iamremarkable Initiative
specialisterne.ie	Specialisterne
esb.ie/accessibility	ESB Accessibility Network
bold-immersion/	Google BOLD Immersion Programme

4.5 Higher Education Led Initiatives.

This section of the report looks at Higher Education groups in Ireland that provide educational and employment opportunities for young adults with an ID in Ireland.

1. Advocacy Leadership and Independent Living: Limerick IT

(Inactive)

The Limerick Institute of Technology launched the Advocacy Leadership and Independent Living course in 2009 specifically developed for people with ID. It emerged from a perceived need for People with ID to develop a greater sense of self-worth and to develop their self-advocacy skills.

The programme delivers modules relevant to the lives of individuals with ID. It aims to encourage active citizenship and impact social change. The programme is tailored to the needs of each cohort of students within the course curriculum. It provides facilitative learning in Advocacy, Leadership, Human Rights, Independent Living, Community and Citizenship. Students attend college one day a week for a total of 14 weeks. The curriculum is delivered through lectures, workshops and collaborative learning with students from other programmes.

Since 2009 approximately 200 people with ID have graduated from LIT. The voice of the learner is central to all courses and learners are continuously consulted about the content of the programme to ensure that capacity building is taking place. The programme was shortlisted for the Aontas STAR awards on both occasions that the course was nominated by LIT.

2. Campaigning for Human Rights and Equality: Limerick IT

(Inactive)

The students and graduates of the Advocacy Leadership and Indpendent Living programme have been influential in raising awareness of issues relating to disability, diversity and equality within the LIT community and within their wider communities. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Government in 2018 inspired graduates to consult with LIT to develop a course of further study to put their learning to use as activists. This consultation informed the development of a follow-on course, entitled Human Rights and Equality, piloted in 2019 in the Ennis Campus. The main objective of both programmes is to assist individuals to live a more fulfilled life as active citizens, aware of their rights as equals in society.

3. DCU Ability: Dublin City University (DCU)
(Active)

DCU Ability supports adults with intellectual disabilities. The programme targets participants who may have limited work experience, and support them to take their first or subsequent steps towards employment. They offer the 'Works for Me' DCU campus course; the national online 'Introduction to Work' course; and the 'Next Steps' support programme. This project was funded for 3 years by Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2012 – 2020. It is currently funded by Government with support from the Dormant Accounts up to December 2022.

Since 2018, DCU Ability has supported young adults with disabilities aged between 18 and 29 years by offering practical and learner-centred interventions to enable them to move towards their work and education goals. DCU Ability has strong links with a large number of organisations and services who support people with disabilities. Participants can continue to avail of their existing support services, and are supported by their service in accessing our programmes. DCU Ability complements these services by providing training and work opportunities that specialise in work and employment. DCU Ability offers a part-time programme. This enables participants to explore and try out work opportunities whilst retaining existing supports, routines and social connections that are highly valued by participants within their own services.

4. Certificate in General Learning: Skills for Independent Living: Dundalk IT (DKIT)
(Inactive)

The Certificate in General Learning: Skills for Independent Living is a part-time programme which has been delivered in Dundalk Institute of Technology since 2009. The programme is delivered over 2 days per week for 2 academic years. It is a QQI level 3 programme with 10-14 students on the programme. The purpose of this award is to enable the learner with an ID to develop relevant knowledge and competence and to be able to use a range of skills under supervision. It is aimed that the learners will develop a lifelong learning ethos with the promotion of inclusion to third level education. The programme aims to develop the social skills of individuals with ID through peer interaction and to fulfil personal educational interests and personal effectiveness. Students are supported in class with support staff and work alongside students from other programmes to enhance inclusivity. While the programme is not currently running, due to the Covid-19 pandemic DKIT are currently engaged in discussions to have a new intake in the next academic year (September 2022).

5. Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice: Trinity Centre for people with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID)

(Active)

TCPID works in partnership with organisations such as Ernst and Young (EY) and Permanent TSB and has a total of 35 business partners that provide employment opportunities for students with ID in Trinity College Dublin (TCPID, 2020). The TCPID mission is to enable and empower individuals with ID to develop their potential through a combination of high-quality research, professional training, lifelong learning and work placement initiatives, with a vision that it will lead to long-term employment opportunities in the Irish labour force. They work closely with business partners to provide student work placements, paid internships, ongoing employment and funding to support the programme. For many of their graduates, the internship and work placement experience has been beneficial in terms of building their self-esteem and independence and developing employability skills. For business partners, the experience is highly rewarding and the internship allows them to work closely with and provide mentorship to students, which then helps their staff develop additional skills. TCPID provides guidance and support by working closely with businesses before, during and after the placement.

6. Certificate in General Learning and Personal Development (GDLP): Mary Immculate College (MIC) Limerick

(Active)

Since 2010, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) in Limerick has offered a programme designed to support the inclusion of students with ID in higher education. This programme, the (CGLPD), gives expression to the mission of the College and its commitment to social justice and enables the creation of a richly diverse learning community where the contribution of each person is valued.

Over the course of the two-year programme, learners participate in several modules and innovative learning workshops including maths and financial management, social studies, creative art appreciation, career development and work placement training. These modules are designed to support learners' holistic development and further their skill development and employability. The students work with peer mentors drawn from the Faculty of Education and take part in a range of lectures and workshops with other undergraduate students in the College. Learners on the programme form part of student governance structures and play an active role in decision making as representatives of the Students Union and as members of College clubs and societies.

7. Certificate in Contemporary Living Skills (CCL): University College Cork (UCC)

(Active)

The Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) is an innovative, two-year, part-time programme of study for people with ID, which is delivered in a third-level setting. It enables students to develop skills to support increased self-determination and to maximise their capacities for participation in, and contribution to, their own communities and the wider society.

The programme is underpinned by the values of respect, recognition of diversity and inclusivity, and is informed by a rights-based agenda. The CCL course facilitates structured opportunities for interaction between CCL students and the wider UCC student and staff bodies. This creates spaces for awareness raising and reciprocal learning, enriches the university as a whole, and enhances campus and community engagement

8. Certificate in Skills for Independent Living: Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

(Discontinued)

The Certificate in Skills for Independent Living WAs a 2-year part-time programme developed specifically for learners with ID aged 18 & over. The programme offered learners a range of modules including Personal Effectiveness; Communication; Computer Literacy; Health & Wellbeing; Numeracy Modules & Career Development. The overall aim was to support learners to develop skills & knowledge to become active participants in the world around them.

9. Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI): Maynooth University

(Discontinued)

The Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth, was a co-founder of the Inclusive Learning Initiative (ILI), a pioneering project in Maynooth University, in partnership with KARE, St John of God Services, Camphill and Stewarts' Hospital which ran between 2011 and 2017. It involved extensive consultation across the disability support services, university authorities, university departments and students to facilitate a fully inclusive model for students with intellectual disabilities in higher education. The individualised model of support meant that through person-centred planning students developed the confidence and skills to fully engage in the life of the campus, achieve their own learning goals and independently utilise the support services in the university. It supported 3-5 students in each of its 3 cohorts, with students

graduating with a special purpose certificate award. While the programme is not currently running, Maynooth University are currently engaged in research about the impact of the initiative.

10. Integrated Education Programme: Technological University of Dublin (TU Dublin), Blanchardstown Campus

(Active)

Like other college students, the students in this programme learn about: communication techniques, working as part of a team, personal and interpersonal skills, social skills, personal awareness, independence, the world of work, self-advocacy, and assertiveness skills. The programme offers the learner an opportunity to participate in the social and leisure activities of college life: socialising with other students, participating in the gym and some sports.

Through their participation in classes, learners develop confidentiality skills, memory skills, imagination and an understanding of other people's lives. In the different tutorials that learners attend, they develop: academic and artistic reasoning, problem solving skills in PDP (Personal Development Plan) class, drama, maths, computer class, work skills, horticulture, creative studies and health promotion.

The overall objective of the programme, and the benchmark by which it will ultimately be measured, is that the learner, having completed the programme, will be better equipped to attain employment and to maintain employment.

11. Certificate in Life Skills Studies: St. Angela's College Sligo

(Discontinued)

The Certificate in Contemporary Living programme was initially developed by Trinity College Dublin and was adapted by St. Angela's College. However, the delivery at St Angela's was quite unique as an inter-departmental initiative with tuition offered by the academic staff in the Department of Nursing, Health Sciences & Disability Studies, the Centre for Special Education Needs, Inclusion and Diversity along with the Home Economics Department. This inter-departmental approach resulted in the College developing its own Certificate in Life Skills Programme which commenced in September 2015 and ran independently until 2020 when the programme was discontinued.

12. Skills for Life: St John of God Service Partnership with Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT)

(Active)

Saint John of God Kerry Services in partnership with the Institute of Technology Tralee ITT), has for the past 14 years provided a college experience with QQI Awards at levels 1 and 2 for young adults with ID leaving school.

The Skills for Life course is the very meaning of community partnership. Between the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Institute of Technology, Tralee and Saint John of God Kerry Services , each partner brings vital components. The HSE funds, and fully supports, this model of service employed by St. John of God, Kerry Services to partner with the ITT and to recognise the Skills for Life course as a post-secondary education option for adults with mild to moderate ID.

The programme has developed symbiotic relationships across the ITT campus, supporting joint projects and collaborative learning opportunities for the Skills for Life students; the students of the Health and Leisure Adapted Physical Activity course and the students studying Social Care in ITT. Socially, the environment of the college campus offers a great learning experience for all students, and the Skills for Life students are no different. The ITT community fosters a natural support network for the growth and personal development of the Skills for Life students which cannot be duplicated or taught in a classroom.

Some important websites referenced in this section

Main Website Address	Initiative
ucc.ie/en/contemporaryliving/	CCL – University College Cork
mic.ul.ie/faculty-of-education/programme/certificate-in-general-learning-and-personal-development	Cert. GDLP – Mary Immaculate College Limerick
sjogkerryservices.ie/our-services/day-services/skills-4-life/	Skills for Life – Saint John of God Kerry Service and IT Tralee
tcd.ie/tcpid	Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disability
dcu.ie/ability	Dublin City University Ability
inhef.ie	INHEF – Inclusive National Higher Education Forum

4.6 Summary: Employment opportunities and young people who have an intellectual disability

From this review of employment related policies and initiatives designed to support people with disabilities, it is evident that, with a few notable exceptions, opportunities for these young people to access meaningful employment are significantly limited compared to peers without disabilities. A number of critical factors have contributed to this situation including:

- Traditional post school pathways for young with an intellectual disability people overwhelmingly directed towards disability day service providers funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE);

- Limited post school options designed to equip these young people with the requisite knowledge and skills to participate in open employment;

- Significant gap in parental knowledge in relation to rights and entitlements of their children after leaving formal education (Scanlon and Doyle, 2018).

- Responsibility for education, health, welfare and the life course of these young eople fragmented and divided between many Government departments with very few examples of joined up thinking;

- Limited number of targeted initiatives (Ability/Employability) specifically designed to enable these young people to access meaningful employment;

- Few initiatives subjected to rigorous evaluation where learnings can be documented and disseminated among stakeholders.

Review of Government Policies and Procedures

Parents and families of people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland and across Europe often characterise their interaction with the State as being caught in a Catch-22 environment (Inclusion Ireland, 2016). A Catchcatch-22 is a paradoxical situation with no apparent way out because of how conflicting or contradictory factors or rules keep you trapped within.

There are extensive support and services available from Government, but to avail of these is a challenge. A few real-life examples clearly illustrate the inherent challenges. Children are formally diagnosed as having an intellectual disability at birth or in early childhood by the Health Services and yet to access Government supports afterwards, families are repeatedly required to reconfirm or 're-apply' to access the services, seeking an updated diagnosis, which has not changed since the initial diagnosis. Another example focuses on the education of children and young people who have an ID who are often subject to lowered expectations through the limited educational opportunities made available. These children, young people and their families are expected to

avail of a predetermined pathway through 'special' Health/Social Care/Education services. Any attempt to take the mainstream pathway available to their non-disabled peers is fraught with difficulties and requires considerable effort by the young people, their families and their advocates (Walk 2015). As a result, this approach also leads to costly and inefficient use of Government resources especially in the administration of the services available.

Currently whilst there is a national strategy created by the National Disability Authority (NDA), the implementation and support by Government is fragmented and not aligned. Also, it appears that there has been no evaluation of the cost benefit of any support strategies which have been implemented.

Best practice is to equip a strategy or strategic plan with specific objectives and actions, all of which are aligned to achieve the strategic goals. These actions, are then monitored at an appropriate governance level using SMART principles. It would appear in Government, whilst an overall disability strategy exists, there is no one department with overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The allocation of this role to a single department would include ensuring that all activities are achieving the strategic objectives as set out in the NDA strategy.GovernmentThis is highlighted by the Matrix below which shows the various departments who have responsibilities for the development and employment of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities. The matrix below very effectively illustrates the involvement of multiple Government departments in policies and initiatives designed to shape and support the lives of young people who have an intellectual disability aged 15-25, a critical transition stage for these young people to become engaged with meaningful education, training and employment.

Government Departments

● 13-16   ● 16-18   ● 18-23   ● 23-29

Department	Role	Programmes and Initiatives
Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Provide Employment Opportunities	National Plan on Corporate Social Responsibility
Education (Schools)	Support Young Persons up to 2nd Level	*Youth Reach* National Educational Phsycology Service Leaving Cert Applied Special Education School Inclusion Model (Pilot)
Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation	Support Young Persons in 3rd Level	Solas Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme >21
Children, Equality, Disability and Integration, and Youth	Implementation of the Policy for young persons with Disabilities	National Disability Strategy United Nations Convention Comprehensive Employment Strategy National Youth Strategy
Social Protection and Rural & Community Development	Ensure Young Persons with Disabilities are employable and supported with Welfare funding	Make Work Pay Strategy Intreo Service Employability Service Ability Programme Empower Change Transition Programme Community Employment Programme Community Services Programme Social Inclusion Activation Programme
Health	Assessment of Need/Interventions/Clinical Support Support of Rehabilitative Training and Adult Day Care Services	New Directions
Justice		
Public Expenditure and Reform	Allocation resources and VFM assessment	National Job Shadow Initiative

Economic return on investment

In respect of the funding provided by the various departments, there does not appear to be an overall analysis of the economic benefit of a coordinated strategy which ensures that as many individuals with Intellectual Disability as possible contribute to society.

In the table below, the analysis (based on key assumptions) demonstrates what would be the potential 'return on investment' if as many individuals as possible were supported effectively in the transition into work from 2nd Level education establishments.

Return on Investment (RoI)

Route to Employment	Preparation for work			Employment years	Benefits accruing to State				Payback in years based on Tax Revenue	ROI	Annualised RoI
	Training age span	Age at end of RT/FE	Cost		Tax take	Disability Allowance	Adult Day Services	Total			
			€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000			
Full Employment hours pw		37.5									
Rehabilitative Training%	18-22	22	56	44	30	292	566	887	82.6	1484%	6.48%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	28	278	525	832	123.6	940%	5.73%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	31	305	606	942	33.9	3826%	8.31%
Partial Employment Hours pw		21									
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	80	317	397	0	609%	4.55%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	76	294	371	0	363%	3.72%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	84	339	423	0	1663%	6.44%
Partial Employment Hours pw		12									
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	0	181	181	0	223%	2.70%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	0	168	168	0	110%	1.78%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	0	194	194	0	708%	4.65%
Rehabilitative Training	18-22	22	56	44	0	0	121	121	0	115%	1.76%
Rehabilitative Training & Further Education	18-24	24	80	42	0	0	112	112	0	40%	0.81%
Further Education	18-20	20	24	46	0	0	129	129	0	439%	3.73%

Key Assumptions

Salary based on	Min Wage	Hours	Weekly	Annually	Yearly Tax	Age
				€	€	
	10.2	37.5	383	19,890	678	
	10.2	21	214	11,138	-	
	10.2	12	122	6,365	-	
	10.2	8	82	4,243	-	
Disability allowance			203	10,556		
Disability allowance min remuneration			140			
Disability Allowance Tapered maximum			350			
Cost per year of						
- Adult Day Services				20,200		
- Supported Living (Residential)						
Assumed age for last year in Adult Day Services						50
Assumed retirement age						66
Assumed that if work less than 37.5 hours, will be in Adult Day services						

ROI	Amount Received per wk (Benefit of Work Estimator)		
	Net Pay	Disability Allowance	Total
	€	€	€
Full Employment hours pw **37.5**	357	76	433
Partial Employment Hours pw **21**	214	168	382
Partial Employment Hours pw **12**	122	203	325
Partial Employment Hours pw **8**	82	203	285

Government Departments providing funds

Funding/Finance	Department	Annual Funds
Rehabilitative Training	DoH	14
Adult Day Services	DoH	20
Further Education	DoEd	12
Disability Allowance	DoSP	n/a
Tax	DoF	n/a

In respect of the funding provided by the various departments, there does not appear to be an overall analysis of the economic benefit of a coordinated strategy which would ensure that as many individuals with an intellectual disability as possible could contribute to society.

In a recent working paper 'Living conditions and quality of life; Integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market: Irish case study' (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) April 21) it stated 'If the purpose of the system of supports is to increase the participation rates of people with disabilities in the open labour market, the lack of improvement in the numbers in work alone, testifies to a struggling system. There are significant issues contributing to the degree to which the system is struggling to balance its functions, grow and learn: lack of strategic leadership and vision at a governance level, issues around framing of the issue, and capacity to balance tensions between different parts of the system to achieve purpose'

It is imperative that authority and responsibility is given to a Department to ensure that all activities and initiatives being delivered by any Government Department are aligned and achieving the objectives set out in the NDA strategy. In addition, they would be responsible for ensuring there is an effective return on the 'Investments' made for the benefit of Society as a whole.

Recommendations

This report has reviewed various initiatives designed to improve access to employment for people who have an intellectual disability. It is evident that despite substantial Government investment in these initiatives successful outcomes are limited. Systemic issues involving how initiatives are implemented have been highlighted, particularly how various Government departments are engaged with the process and who takes overall responsibility. It is also evident that, with a few notable exceptions, rigorous reviews of the effectiveness of the interventions have not been conducted. As a result, employment rates for people with ID, despite significant Government investment, has not advanced over the last decade. Our recommendations are designed to address the barriers to employment and the difficulties in the implementation of employment initiatives highlighted in this report. We suggest that engaging with these recommendations in a constructive manner can enable all of us to create an environment where meaningful employment opportunities for people with ID become the norm rather than the exception.

Government sponsored employment initiatives

This report presents many challenges people with Intellectual disability have to face in the Irish labour market. Government policies including the National Disability Strategy, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with Disabilities and the Citizens Information Act recognises the need to promote job retention and re-entry to work for individuals with an intellectual disability in Ireland. The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Irish Government in 2018 gives added urgency to implementing these policies. The Irish Government has invested in developing a range of interventions designed to improve opportunities for people who have an ID to access employment. However, it is very difficult to assess the success of these initiatives as there is a dearth of evidence to indicate whether this cohort have accessed employment as a result of these initiatives. It is not clear whether any employment achieved is part-time or full-time and where the employment is located. Nor do they assess the softer elements such as the wellbeing of the individual and their parents/carers. As a result, it is difficult to generate any learnings from these initiatives and build on successful interventions or abandon those that are unsuccessful.

We recommend that all Government sponsored employment interventions for young people who have an intellectual disability should be measured using qualitative and quantitative measures including demonstrable employment outcomes (part-time/full-time; temporary/permanent) and the key learnings from these initiatives need to be disseminated among families, young people who have an intellectual disability, policy makers, education providers and service providers. These measures should also focus on how parents/carers and organisations 'felt' i.e. very soft measures such as happiness and culture.

Promoting awareness of potential for employment

Young people who have an intellectual disability are much less likely than their peers who have other disabilities to engage in preparation for work and face significant barriers in gaining employment and making a successful transition into the workplace. International research has indicated that employer attitudes and misconceptions constitute a major barrier to employment for people with an intellectual disability (May-Simera, 2018). This research also reported that employers were more concerned with increasing their capacity to develop a more diverse workforce rather than receiving Government subsidies for employing people who have an intellectual disability.

> **We recommend that** employer organisations and individual employers are engaged with a national initiative designed to promote awareness of the benefits of including people who have an intellectual disability in employment and developing supports to enable these people to make a successful transition into the workplace. Current innovative programmes that facilitate the transition into employment of people who have an intellectual disability should be developed as demonstration sites and resourced to provide practical advice to employers wishing to employ someone who has an intellectual disability.

Transition planning into employment

A major concern for people with ID is at the transitional stage of their life. This transitional stage generally occurs when they are in the late teens. For both them and their parents/carers, they are seeking some form of Independent Living and need to make important choices about their future. To make informed decisions, there is a lack of accessible information available to them and other stakeholders such as employers that facilitates attainment of Independent Living which includes participation in the workforce.

> **We recommend that** two 'Portals' should be developed which will cover the following and is accessible to Persons with ID, Parents/Carers, Employers, and Support Organisations: ·
>
> Portal 1 – Knowledge Platform
>
> Information about what support is available to Person with ID and Employers. This should include:
>
> - Examples of success and good practice (these should demonstrate what could be achieved with the right approach and support and hence remove the barriers perceived by both Employers and Parents/Carers)
>
> - Which organisations that can help in the 'transition' to work and advocacy? Government policy and financial support available.
>
> Portal 2 - Job Market place
>
> Employers promote opportunities for employment.

The need for focused advocacy

In order for people with ID to have full inclusion and participation in the Irish Labour Market, there needs to be co-ordinated advocacy activities. Currently there are a few very active advocacy participants such as parts of Government (including policy makers), advocacy groups and employers. Many of these activities are focused on specific requirements and challenges for Persons with ID or sub-groups and as such do not adopt an holistic approach.

> **We recommend that** there is coordination of Advocacy activities such that all agencies involved in advocacy are speaking with same voice. This co-ordination should seek to use all mediums to promote the inclusion and employment of people with ID in the workforce.

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Ability@Work	cope-foundation.ie/AbilityWork
AHEAD	ahead.ie
Aiseanna Tacaiochta	theatnetwork.com
Down Syndrome Ireland's Ability Programme Online	downsyndrome.ie
Blossom Personal Empowerment Programme	blossomireland.ie
Citizens Information Board	citizensinformationboard.ie
Community EmploymentVocational Training Opportunity SchemeYouthReach	citizensinformation.ie
Disability Bray	disabilitybray.ie
Disability Federation of Ireland	disability-federation.ie
Dublin City University Friendly University	dcu.ie/students/autism-friendly
Dublin Regional Enterprise	enterprise.gov.ie
Employer Disability Information Service	employerdisabilityinfo.ie
Empower	empower.ie
Empower Change Transition Programme	empower.ie
Enable Ireland	enableireland.ie
ESB Accessibility Network	esb.ie/accessibility
Festina Lente Foundation	festinalente.ie
Google BOLD Immersion Programme	bold-immersion/
HSE Rehabilitative training	Hse.ie
Iamremarkable Initiative	iamremarkable.withgoogle.com
Irish Association of Supported Employment	iase.ie
Irish Local Development Network	ildn.ie
KARE	kare.ie
Local Training Initiative	tipperary.etb.ie
The National Advocacy Service (NAS)	advocacy.ie
National Federation for Voluntary bodies	fedvol.ie
National Learning Network	rehab.ie/national-learning-network
Open Doors Initiative	opendoorsinitiative.ie
REHAB	rehab.ie
Social Inclusion Activation Programme	pobal.ie
Specialisterne	specialisterne.ie
Step Up Ireland	stepupireland.ie
Sunbeam House Service	sunbeam.ie
Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disability	tcd.ie/tcpid
Tús	gov.ie
Valuable 500	thevaluable500
WALK	walk.ie

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