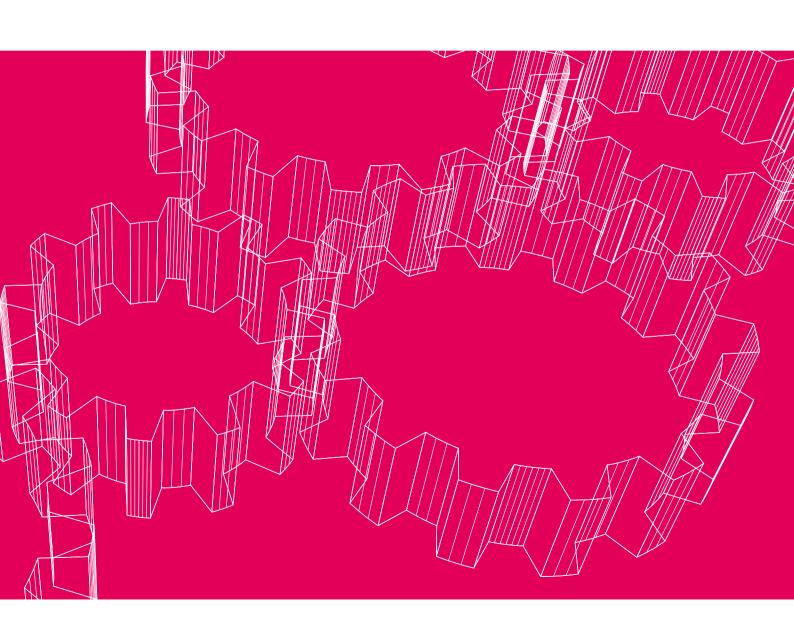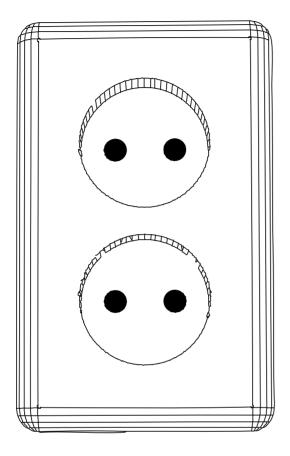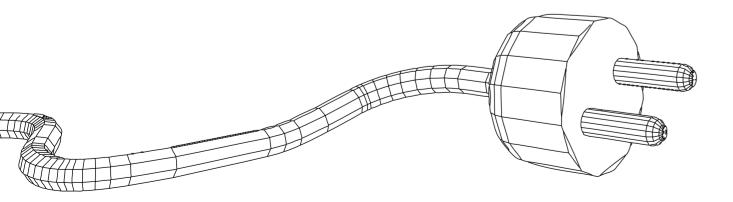# Make It Work

Make It Work

This booklet is an introduction and guidelines to how to make your organisation's trainee programmes and internships open and accessible to everyone. Use the booklet as help to get started, as a checklist in your ongoing accessibility work or simply as inspiration.

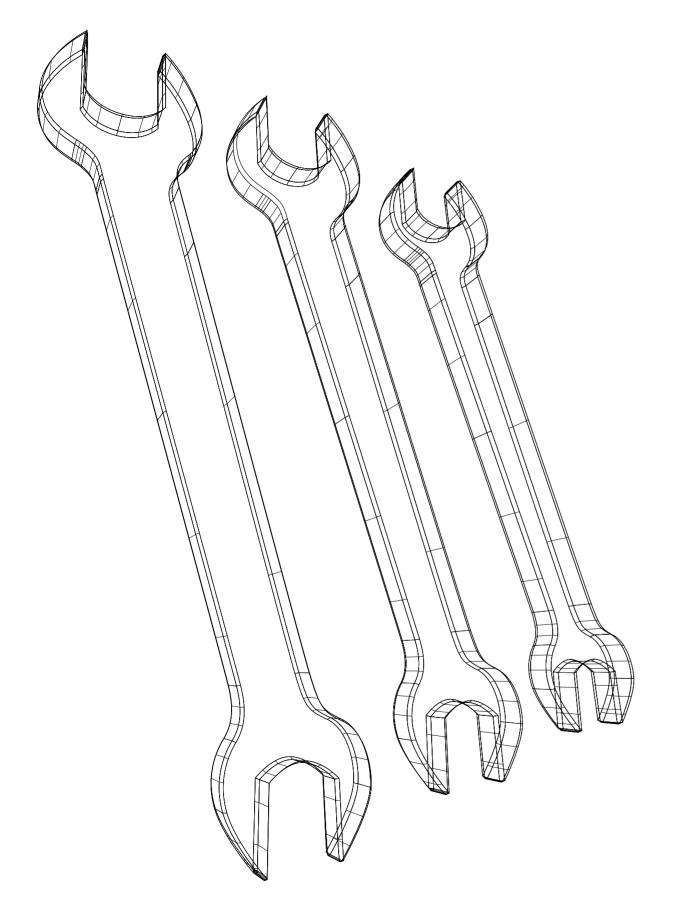# Labour shortages in many sectors yet high unemployment among people with disabilities

Europe is currently undergoing demographic changes such as a shrinking workforce, an increase in the population above working age and declining birth rates. These developments lead to labour shortages in a growing number of professions and trades in several European Union countries. As a consequence, many organisations in the public and private sector will be forced to consider hiring strategies that approach diverse population groups that up to now have been under-represented in the employment market.

While Europe is facing increasing labour shortages, people with disabilities who make up a large part of the EU population still have rates of labour market participation as low as 40 per cent as compared to 64 per cent for the total population.

One solution to alleviating labour shortages and structural unemployment might be to increase the exposure of all youth, including those with disabilities, to preparatory work experiences. This could be achieved by widening the opportunities for on-the-job training through traineeships and internships. Today, European countries vary widely in the extent of and the forms of this approach.

Government agencies, public authorities and state-owned companies are in the best position to be leaders in this development and to provide examples of good practice that other public and private entities can emulate.

In many countries, expertise and often state subsidies are available. Thus, to include young persons with disabilities among the trainees or interns in your organisation might be easier than you think. This booklet provides an overview of the required steps.
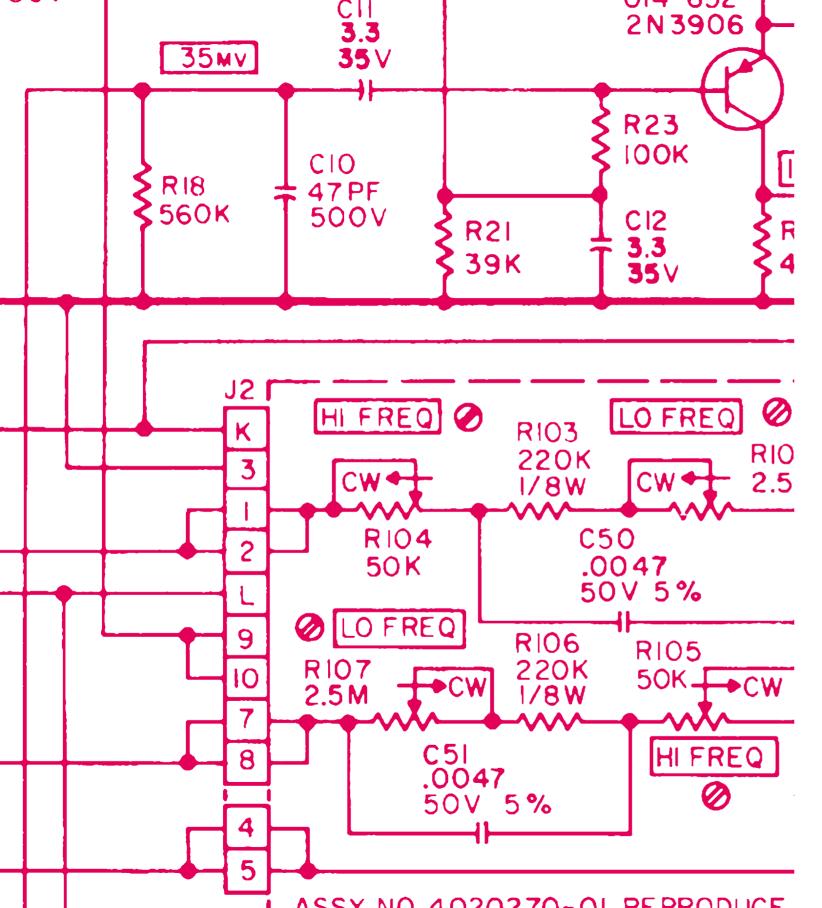
Traineeships and internships as recruitment tool

Internships/traineeships provide several advantages to an organisation. They represent an excellent source of both temporary and permanent employees, since the organisation gets to evaluate prospective employees without making an expensive long term commitment.

An internship/traineeship is also an opportunity for the employer to introduce their organisation as a future work option for highly qualified job-seekers. Interns/trainees become familiar with employer practices while still at a formative level in their professional development. Many interns/trainees bring fresh ideas and perspectives which can be of considerable value to the organisation.

By offering internships/traineeships employers can access a new labour pool, resolve labour shortages and find the right person with the right skills.

The internship/traineeship experience benefits young persons in many ways. Identifying suitable training opportunities and following through with the application process is an excellent learning experience and a preparation for seeking employment. Internships/traineeships build self-confidence in the individual and help him/her to focus the career path. Interns/trainees get to apply their classroom knowledge to real world situations, gain insights in their strengths and areas of needed improvement, develop social and occupational skills and build up their network of professional and personal contacts.

How good is your agency's disability policy?

Your agency needs to get ready before you can offer training opportunities to qualified persons with disabilities utilising the untapped labour pool that people with disabilities represent.

Most likely your organisation already has a diversity policy. But does it specifically mention people with disabilities, as members of your workforce and your clientele? Here are some points to consider in the process from formulation to implementation of such a policy.

Does your disability policy explicitly include disabled people as part of the agency's clientele?

State authorities and other public agencies must be open to all citizens for the organisations' services, consultations or other meetings. European Union law can soon be expected to prohibit the de-facto exclusion of citizens from services, meeting and visiting areas and facilities by not removing obstacles to persons with disabilities. To guide your agency in the work of opening up the agency's activities to all citizens a coherent policy process is necessary.

Does your disability policy explicitly include disabled people as part of the agency's workforce including training opportunities?

In a number of documents starting with the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 the European Union has declared its goal of non-discrimination and social inclusion. In addition to the legal aspects, there are strong arguments, usually referred to as 'The Business Case', that outline the benefits accruing to private and public entities with inclusive hiring policies. Among them is a wider range of clientele that will be attracted by a more diversified workforce, a better public image arising from an organisation with a fair and inclusive hiring record as well as higher staff morale.

For these reasons state organisations must formulate, adopt, fund, implement, monitor, periodically evaluate and revise policies that stipulate

the agency's responsibilities and the measures that are to guarantee the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the agency's workforce including the training opportunities it might offer.

Guidelines for formulating a disability policy

Your diversity policy should contain explicit references to "persons with disabilities" as members of your clientele and workforce and should include:

- a brief statement of your goals of and the rationale for a disability policy with references to pertinent legislation, if there is one in your country
- the name of the department and organisational level in the organisation in charge of the policy's implementation, including name and contact details of the coordinating officer(s)
- a clear description of the due process for grievance settlements
- examples of adaptations and accommodations already implemented
- answers to frequently asked questions, for example, about the level of the organisation's ambition in including persons with disabilities, its experience in accommodating people with different disabilities and where to get more information

Guidelines for presenting your organisation's disability policy on your website

Display the disability policy on your website in a manner which reflects the organisation's priority regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities as clientele, in its workforce or any training opportunities it may offer. This involves ease of navigation, clear and easily understandable language, web accessibility. Easy access should not be limited to the disability policy statement itself or other information of interest to visitors with disabilities but should apply to the organisation's whole website. For information on web accessibility see for example www.w3.org/WAI

In displaying the disability policy you might want to
- have no more than three mouse clicks between the organisation's homepage and the disability policy
- keep the pages with the disability policy updated (at least once a year)

Government Legislation on inclusive training opportunities

Legislation in this area falls under the following pieces of legislation:

Strategy for Equality 1996
- National Disability Authority
- Employment Equality Act 1998
- Equality Authority
- National Disability Act 2005
- Part of the National Disability Strategy

The department of Finance is responsible for the implementation of the new Disability act and has developed a code of practice for the entire civil service; the basic principles of which are as follows:

- People with disabilities who are capable of effective performance in the jobs which they hold or to which they aspire are not disadvantaged by reason of having a disability,
- That all reasonable efforts are made to meet the special requirements to which some disabilities give rise so as to maximize access to employment in the civil service for people with disabilities, and to enable staff with disabilities to make the fullest possible contribution to the work of their Departments.

General accessibility in the workplace

As a result of the European Union's commitment to non-discrimination and social inclusion Universal Design or Design for All is expected to become a guiding principle in member states' legislation regarding the entire built environment including places of work. Universal Design entails that work environments can be accessed and used, in comfort and safety, on equal terms, by all persons including people with allergies, physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychiatric disabilities.

Universal Design requires that the needs of these groups are automatically integrated as a matter of principle in planning, constructing and maintaining the organisation's **physical premises**, decision making and work related processes including recruitment and on-the-job training.

There are many ways to develop and form your organisation's accessibility work. This is one example of how to do it.

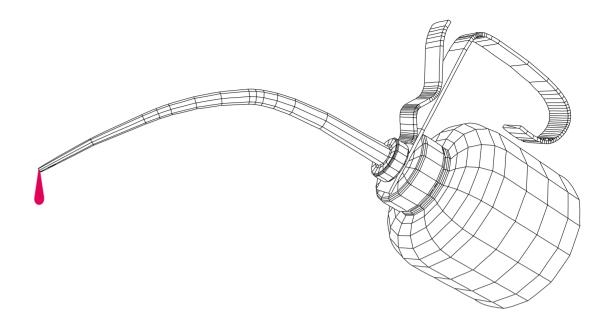## 1. What does your organisation mean by accessibility

Define the scope and level of accessibility that your organisation is committed to. What is your responsibility as an employer? What legislation are you as an employer compelled to follow?

2. Make someone responsible

Charge one person or a team, high up in the organisation's hierarchy, with the task of making the organisation and its activities accessible.

3. Assess your organisation's access needs

Conduct an accessibility audit that asses your organisation's premises and activities including purchasing, recruitment, on-the-job training and promotions in terms of the obstacles to persons with disabilities and the actions required to eliminate the obstacles. The audit's summary should be presented to the organisation's leadership.

4. Estimate the cost of the required actions

Estimate the costs of the individual actions deemed necessary for compliance with your accessibility policy.

5. Get a budget

Secure an annual budget for accessibility actions that reflects your organisation's commitment to diversity and accessibility.

6. Set priorities and adopt an action plan

Set priorities and decide which actions have to be done immediately, in the intermediate and in the long term. Adopt an action plan for the next few years.

7. Review and evaluate the work

The action plan is not a final document - it should be subject to periodic evaluation and revision. Make sure that the action plan contains a time plan that clearly states when reviews, evaluations and audits are to take place.

Further Resources:
www.accessit.nda.ie
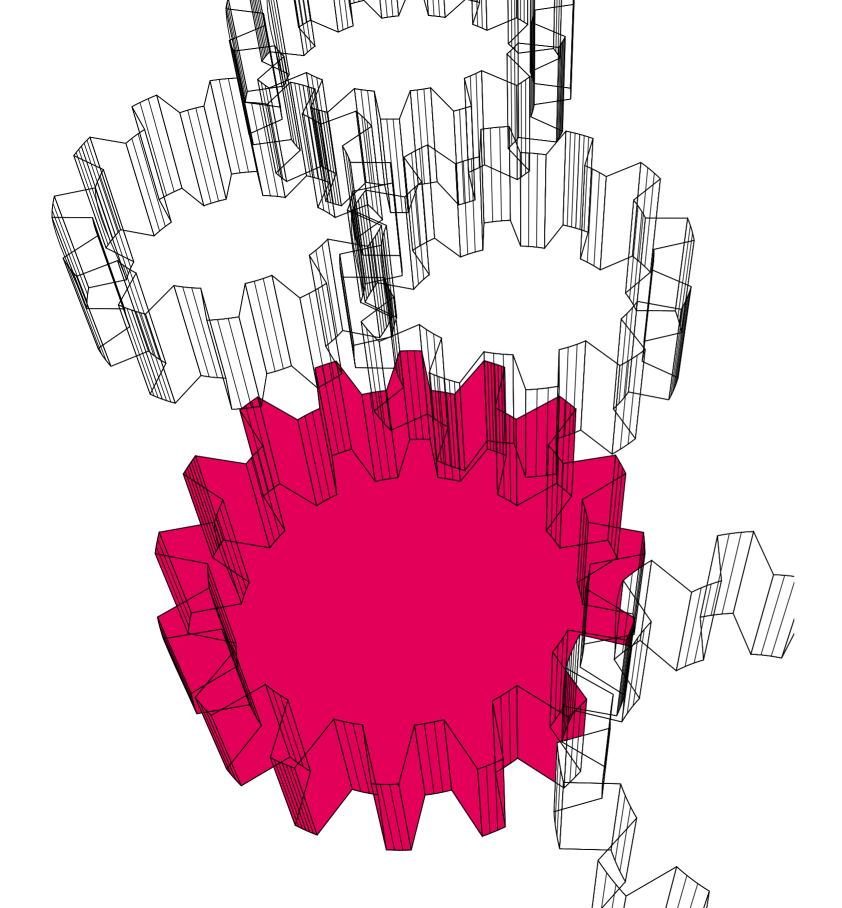www.accessible.ie
www.nda.ie
www.ahead.ie
www.environ.ie

A self-assessment tool for accessibility audits

The following questions are intended as an aid in assessing an organisation's ability to accommodate employees and trainees with disabilities. Your answers to these questions will be helpful information for prospective applicants as well for your own periodic internal monitoring purposes.

→ Does your organisation have a disability policy and an action plan, as integral part of its general plan, to safeguard equal access for customers, employees and trainees with disabilities regarding premises, operations, products and services?

→ Does your organisation have a budget for the action plan, a coordinating office and/or designated officers in charge of its implementation throughout the organisation system?

→ Does your organisation have a budget for making additional adaptations, over and above the general measures, for individual employees and trainees with disabilities? Are there state subsidies available for this purpose? Would foreign trainees have to contribute towards these costs?

→ When advertising job vacancies, internships and traineeships do you state that qualified people with disabilities are welcome to apply?

→ Is your organisation website fully accessible to people with different disabilities? Is printed material available in alternative formats?
Are there any way-finding aids (tactile markers, etc.) on the organisation's premises? Do the lighting conditions in the various parts of the premises take into account the needs of persons with sight-impairments?

→ Do the acoustic conditions in the various parts of the premises take into account the needs of persons with hearing-impairments? Are there optical equivalent solutions for acoustic signals, e.g. emergency sirens? Are qualified sign language interpreters for deaf persons available or can they be recruited? Also for foreign trainees who might need these services?

→ Can employees and trainees with learning disabilities request that routines, instructions and supervision be adapted to their needs?

→ Is the air quality in the various parts of the premises suitable for persons with allergies, asthma and substance sensitivities?

→ In what way does the organisation's physical environment take into account the needs of persons with physical disabilities such as wheelchair users regarding parking, outdoor pathways, entrances, moving between different floors, hallways, offices, meeting rooms, production and storage facilities, cafeterias, gyms, toilets? Do geographical distances between different parts of the organisation require transportation for persons with ambulatory limitations and how is this need solved? What are the possibilities for trainees with disabilities to obtain suitable housing?

Adapting the workplace for an individual

The level of general accessibility is often not sufficient to accommodate the needs of all persons with disabilities. Individual adaptations of premises, workplace and work processes will sometimes be necessary to complement a workplace's general accessibility and usability.

Adaptation of workplace for an individual employee/trainee

Depending on an individual's capabilities and needs additional modifications might be required such as automatic door openers for people with limited arm strength, extra wide toilet stalls and differently positioned or specialised office furniture for persons using wheelchairs, induction loops for hearing-impaired persons or high contrast floor surfaces for sight-impaired persons for better orientation.

Assistive technology at the workplace for an individual employee/trainee

In many instances assistive devices can eliminate the need for individual workplace adaptations or further complement them. Examples might be, for persons with

- physical disabilities: headsets for hands-free calling, extra small keyboards, or
- sensory disabilities: extra bright lighting, Braille computer and OCR scanner, TTY (telecommunication device for people who are deaf), or
- cognitive disabilities: telephones with pictures of people instead of digits

Personal Assistance

Persons with extensive disabilities depend on assistance by others in the activities of daily living such as personal hygiene, eating, dressing, etc. Assistance at work may involve help with commuting, with meals, visits to the toilet, reading documents in case of sight-impairment, lifting heavy books and folders, photocopying or any such activities that the assistance user is either unable to perform or that would require an inordinate amount of time or energy.

For best results the user decides who is to work as assistant and the assistant reports to the disabled assistance user - not to the disabled person's superior. A person already employed by the organisation as assistant is seldom a satisfactory solution.

Adaptation of the work situation for an individual employee/trainee

In adapting work to an individual employee's or trainee's needs the work process is as important as the physical environment of the workplace. Here are some aspects that deserve consideration:

Job description
Altering job elements can make a huge difference in a person's ability to perform. Swapping some functions with a colleague can go a long way in terms of reduction of physical or mental stress, work satisfaction and performance.

Part-time
Is it possible for the work to be done on a part-time basis?

Flexible working hours
How does your organisation look upon flexible working hours? Perhaps employees could start their working day later and finish later.

Intermittent work at home
What are your organisation's policies on working from home, one or several days of the week, given today's IT-solutions?

Sharing a position with a co-worker
Another example of an adaptation could be to share the position with a co-worker.

Working in teams with shared tasks
Working in teams with shared tasks is another solution that might be helpful for the individual while maintaining the organisation's output.

In some countries, there are public authorities or private agencies to which human resources staff and traineeship/internship applicants can turn for advice, subsidies or assistance regarding equipment and/or individual workplace adaptation.

Caution: funding or tax incentives might be available to employees and not to interns or trainees.

In Ireland, the employment body FAS provides much information and support to assist people with disabilities to gain employment. They provide training programs to prepare people for employment, support schemes for jobseekers, or for those who want to change jobs. FAS also provide a range of grants and schemes aimed at both employees and employers:
• Supported Employment
• Employment Support Scheme (ESS)
• Personal Reader Grant*
• Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG)
• Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant (WEAG)*
• Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS)*
• Disability Awareness Training for Employers
* not available to public sector employees.

It is important to note that FAS does not provide the following services:
• Personal Assistants
• Disability Assessment
• Transport Facilities
• Education Grants

For information on these services, contact any local Citizens' Information Centre www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Further Resources:
The Irish Wheelchair Association: www.iwa.ie
Rehab group: www.rehab.ie
The Institute for design and disability: www.idd.ie
People with disabilities in Ireland: www.pwdi.ie
The National association for Deaf people: www.nad.ie
National Council for the Blind in Ireland www.ncbi.ie
Assist Ireland www.assistireland.ie

Suggested policy for inclusive training in the absence of general accessibility

We do not want to give the impression that your agency needs to be completely barrier-free before you can think about recruiting qualified persons with disabilities for internships, traineeships or employment. Not all disabled people have the same needs. An environment can be inaccessible to one person but perfectly accessible to another one. An office on the second floor without elevator may present an insurmountable obstacle to a wheelchair user but not to a person with a sight-impairment. What is necessary, however, is a willingness on your part to discuss an individual applicant's needs.

The following disability policy statements are provided as illustrations without judgment:

City of Sacramento
www.cityofsacramento.org/adaweb/disability_policy.html

Leicestershire County Council
www.leics.gov.uk/index/your_council/council_plans_policies/disability_policy.htm

Appendix 1
References to resources

Supported Employment Scheme

In addition to these services, FAS also provide a Supported Employment programme; this is a free service for people with disabilities who face difficulties entering the labour market. FAS organise job coaches for the job seekers to provide support in finding a job as well as providing ongoing support to both the jobseeker and the future employer.

Employment Support Scheme

This scheme is mainly available to private sector employers. It is intended to encourage them to employ people with disabilities whose work productivity levels are between 50% and 80% of normal performance for at least 20 hours per week.

FAS, the employer and the employee agree on the productivity level of the employee and an application form is completed. The employer then pays 100% gross salary as advertised, and FAS pays a grant to the employer to cover the cost of the productivity shortfall.

Personal Reader Grant

The FAS Personal Reader Grant is available to private sector employees who are blind or visually impaired, and who feel that they would benefit from assistance with work related reading, FAS will normally pay a fee per hour, in line with minimum wage. It enables the staff member to employ someone to help with reading at work on a part-time or ad-hoc basis for a period up to 16 weeks and a maximum of 640 hours per year.

FAS, the employer and the employee agree the number of reading hours required and an application form is completed. The grant is then paid to the employee who in turn pays their personal reader directly.

Public sector employees

Public sector employees are not entitled to claim this FAS grant. Public sector employees with a visual impairment who require assistance with reading should contact their Human Resources Unit.

Public sector employers are required to make these services available from their own resources.

Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG)

People who have a hearing or speech impairment, who feel that they would benefit from having an interpreter present at job interviews, can apply to FAS for a Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG).

FAS will normally pay a fee of 106.68 euro for a three-hour period. Travel costs for the interpreter are paid at a set rate.

Individuals must source the interpreter themselves and complete an application form. At the interview stage, the form is then signed and stamped by both the employer and the interpreter. There is no limit to the number of interviews a person can attend with an interpreter.

Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant (WEAG)

If a private sector employee with a disability requires their workplace to be made more accessible, or adapted equipment to do their job, they or their employer may be able to get a grant towards the cost of adapting premises or equipment.

A maximum grant of 6,348.70 euro is available for adaptations such as minor building works (e.g. ramps or modifications to toilet facilities), alarm systems with flashing lights, voice synthesisers etc.

Applicants identify the adaptation required and complete an application form. The grant is then paid to the applicant once the costs for the adaptations have been agreed.

Public sector employers and their employees with disabilities are not entitled to claim this FAS grant. Public sector employees who require adaptive or assistive technology or changes to their workplace should contact their Human Resources Unit. Public sector employers are required to make these services available from their own resources.

Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS)

In cases where a private sector employee acquires a disability or an illness and requires retraining or alternative duties, the Employee Retention Grant scheme is available.
Public sector employers and their employees with disabilities are not entitled to claim this FAS grant. Rather, public sector employees who require adaptive or assistive technology or changes to their workplace should contact their Human Resources Unit. In other words, public sector employers are required to make these services available from their own resources.

Disability Awareness Training for Employers Scheme

In an effort to promote the employment of people with disabilities, a grant is now available to private sector companies to cover the cost of delivering disability awareness training to their employees.

FAS will cover 90% of training costs in year one and a further 80% in subsequent years. The maximum available in any one year is 20,000 euro. A list of disability awareness trainers is available directly from FÀS.

What other schemes are available?

There are a number of other schemes available through Social Welfare including:

• Back to Work Allowance (BTWA)
• Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
• Employer's PRSI Exemption Scheme
• Revenue Job Assist – double deduction

Back to Work Allowance (BTWA)
This scheme is available to those who have been in receipt of disability allowance, the blind pension or invalidity pension for 15 months (or 12 months if aged over 50 years) and those in receipt of disability benefit for 3 years.

Social welfare will pay (in addition to their wage) a weekly amount to those who return to work for a minimum of 20 hours a week.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BWEA)
This scheme is available to those who wish to become self employed and who have been in receipt of disability allowance, the blind pension or invalidity pension for 15 months (or 12 months if aged over 50 years) and those in receipt of disability benefit for 3 years.

Employer's PRSI Exemption Scheme

Employers who recruit a person who is in receipt of the Back to Work Allowance Scheme for the first time, are exempt from paying PRSI for a period of 2 years, provided the person continues on in their employment.

Revenue Job Assist – double deduction

This scheme is open to employers who recruit a person who has been unemployed for 12 months or longer, giving them a double wage deduction for a period of three years.

Further Resources

The Citizens Information Board is the national support agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services.
www.citizensinformationboard.ie

FÁS is Ireland's national training and employment authority.
www.fas.ie

Oasis (Online Access to Services, Information and Support) is an Irish Government website which provides information on social and civil rights.
www.oasis.gov.ie

The Department of Social and Family Affairs has information on disability benefits.
www.welfare.ie

The Equality Authority works towards the elimination of discrimination in Ireland.
www.equality.ie

The National Disability Authority (NDA) promotes and helps secure the rights of people with disabilities.
www.nda.ie

This website promotes the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector and provides supporting information on employment guidelines, accessibility of the workplace and best practice in employment of people with disabilities.
www.workway.ie

Appendix 2
Regional legislation

Under Section 26, 27 and 28 of the Disability Act 2005 the following priorities are made:

Accessible public service premises (s.25)

- A public building means a building, or that part of a building, to which members of the public have access and which is occupied or controlled by a public body.
- The Act requires that all public buildings must be accessible to people with disabilities "as far as practicable"
- Public Buildings must be in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulation by 31 December 2015.
- Some exceptions to this, such as if modifications "would fundamentally change the nature of the business/trade/service etc" or "constitute a risk to the health and safety or welfare of any person"
- Each head of a public body must authorise at least one of his/her officers to provide or arrange for and coordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to persons or people with disabilities in accessing its services.

Accessible bought-in services/products (s.27)

- Sub-contracted services to be accessible (where practicable)
- e.g. health services from voluntary bodies
- Contracts for goods supplied to public bodies should also specify accessibility (where practicable)

Accessible information (s.28)

- Communication by public bodies with people who have hearing or vision impairments must suit the needs of the individual
- E.g. (vision impairments) Phone call, Large print, Audio, e-mail, Braille (hearing impairments) Written/ Irish Sign Language

Websites that are compatible with computers for vision impaired. (see www.accessit.nda.ie)

Acknowledgements