

*WRC Social and Economic Consultants*

# Measure Study of Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

Measure 16 of the EHRDOP  
Implemented by FÁS

## **WIDER EQUALITY MEASURE STUDY**

*Supported by*

**Equality Studies Unit, Measure 33A of the EHRDOP**



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

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# 1. Introduction

In the context of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (EHRDOP), the Equality Authority is implementing Measure 33a: Technical Assistance - Equality Studies Unit (ESU). The ESU is mandated to examine labour market inequalities and their implications for labour market policy. Its focus is exclusion and discrimination in the labour market as covered by equality legislation and for four groups named in the EHRDOP (i.e., older workers, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups in particular refugees, and, members of the Traveller Community). These four groups are also the reference groups for the Wider Equal Opportunities Principle (WEOP). The WEOP is concerned with understanding, monitoring and supporting the participation of people from the four groups covered by the principle in the measures of the EHRDOP. Following on from the mid-term review of the EHRDOP, 10 measures are now required to identify and report on the actions they are taking to apply the WEOP (see Annex I for a list of measures).

In this capacity the Equality Authority is implementing a rolling programme of Measure Studies. These studies seek to identify and promote changes required in the planning, design and delivery of the measures comprising the EHRDOP to enhance their capacity to promote equality and accommodate diversity. In order to accomplish this, measure studies are designed to a standard that challenges.

Measure studies draw on the analysis developed in the ESU publication '*Accommodating Diversity in Labour Market Programmes*'. Specifically the programme of measure studies seeks:

- To support new learning on the promotion of equality and the accommodation of diversity in labour market measures. It achieves this by seeking out good practice while also examining gaps, deficiencies and other issues;
- Through the manner in which it is implemented, to build the capacity of implementing agencies to identify and engage in actions to effectively promote equality and accommodate diversity; and,
- To agree recommendations for priority actions for promoting equality and accommodating diversity in the measures examined and in the broader work of the implementing agencies.

In seeking to support a process of change, the measure studies require the full engagement of those responsible for the design and delivery of the measure concerned. To this end, the measure studies are undertaken in a way that achieves ownership of the process by the relevant implementing agency. The measure studies are, therefore, pursued on the basis of a partnership approach between the Equality Authority and the organisation responsible for the measure. Within the partnership:

- The Equality Authority leads in relation to standards for the study. Terms of reference need to be established and then agreed within the partnership. These must ensure measure studies are challenging, stimulate change and extract learning;

- The Equality Authority leads in relation to quality control for the measure study. In particular, ensuring that the terms of reference are applied and convening a meeting of the partnership to discuss the action plan arising out of the measure study.
- The organisation(s) responsible for the measure leads in relation to implementation of the measure study. The final outputs of the study are subject to the decision of the implementing agency. This includes actions to enhance the capacity of the measure to promote equality and accommodate diversity. The study is therefore owned by the organisation(s).
- The Equality Authority will lead in relation to assessing the progress made in implementing agreed recommendations.
- The Equality Authority will lead in relation to dissemination of learning, in particular through the framework of the EHRDOP. This will require electronic publication of the studies, development of synthesis reports that draw from a number of measure studies, and other activities.

This report presents the findings of the measure study of Vocational Training and Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities (Measure 16). The Measure is implemented by FÁS through employment services, supports and programmes it directly manages itself (e.g. Wage Subsidy Scheme) and through sub-contracting with what are termed Specialist Training Providers or third party providers of training on a segregated basis for people with disabilities. This latter aspect of the Measure provides the focus for the Measure Study.

These third party providers differ in size (e.g. ranging from large national organisations such as the National Learning Network, formerly known as NTDI, to smaller organisations such as Prosper Fingal) and in emphasis / specialisation (ranging from organisations providing services for people with mental health issues such as Schizophrenia Ireland to organisations providing for people with mobility impairments, such as the Irish Wheelchair Association). A full list of the 20 third party providers is provided at Annex 2.

Whereas the various elements of the components that go to make up the measure are briefly introduced, the primary focus of this study is the Specialist Training Provision (STP) provided by third party organisations under contract to FÁS and with a focus on identifying good practices that may be transferable to the mainstream setting.

Total planned expenditure for Measure 16 over the duration of the Operational Programme is €240.69 million representing 1.6% of the total OP planned expenditure. Detail in relation to actual expenditure on the various components of the Measure is provided in Section 4 below.

As Measure 16 is one of a number of targeted measures in the EHRDOP, the two main objectives of this study are to: (i) enable an examination of how the measure sets about catering for people with disabilities and to identify lessons that are relevant to improving the capacity of other measures that are not targeted toward specific groups of people to accommodate people with disabilities among their beneficiaries; and, (ii) to examine the results of the measure in terms of addressing the labour market inequalities experienced by people with disabilities, particularly in terms of the outcomes of the measure as defined by progression to employment or participation in further educational and training measures.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology employed for this measure study largely involves desk-based research and review of documentation as well as face-to-face and telephone-based discussions and interviews with representatives of organisations that play a key role in the delivery and direction of provision covered under Measure 16 with a particular emphasis on those involved in the delivery of training to people with disabilities both within FÁS and within certain specialist training providers.

It involved:

- Collecting and reviewing programme level documentation including the Programme Complement, reports to the Monitoring Committee as well as implementation procedures (e.g., roles and responsibilities of various organisations / personnel);
- Collecting and reviewing previous studies / reports relating to the provision of vocational training for people with disabilities;
- Obtaining and analysing data on programme participants, all of whom are people with disabilities and, where possible, cross-referencing this with data in relation to other grounds covered under the WEOP (older people, members of minority ethnic groups and members of the Traveller Community) and the equality legislation more generally;
- Reviewing data collection and programme monitoring procedures;
- Obtaining and reviewing documentation on policies, practices and initiatives in the area of equality and promoting diversity; and,
- Meeting with and interviewing personnel responsible for programme delivery to discuss the above from an equality perspective (see Annex 3 for list of interviewees).

## 3. Implementing Body

### 3.1 Role and Operations

FÁS (the National Training and Employment Authority) was established in January 1988 under the Labour Services Act 1987 to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. Its functions as laid down in the Act are:

- training and re-training;
- designated apprenticeships;
- recruitment service;
- employment schemes;
- placement and guidance services;
- assistance to community groups ;
- advice for people returning to Ireland and those seeking employment in the EU;
- consultancy and human resource related services, on a commercial basis, outside the State (through FÁS International Consulting Ltd.).

The statutory functions of the organisation also include the collection and publication of information relating to the labour market and the provision, to the Minister of State for Labour Affairs and the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, of information, reports and other documentation on matters within FÁS' remit.

Responsibility for vocational training and employment in the open labour market for people with disabilities transferred from the Department of Health and Children to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in June 2000 as part of the Government's policy to mainstream services for people with disabilities. This meant that vocational training and employment services, formerly administered by NRB on behalf of the Department of Health and Children, would now be administered by FÁS.

The organisation has its headquarters in Dublin but operates through a regional structure (8 regions) throughout Ireland in which there is a total of 18 Training Centres and 70 Employment Services Offices through which it employs 2,300 staff of whom 48% are male, 52% female. Managers account for 11.5% of all staff and 21.6% of managers are female. Forty per cent of staff members are over 50 years of age and 11% of this group are due to retire by 2009, including 15% of all managers.

Total non-capital expenditure incurred by FÁS in 2005 was €908.77m. of which €340m. (37%) was in the form of direct social welfare substitution payments i.e. allowances paid to trainees. Within the Direct Cost budget heading for 2005, a total of €751.77m. was spent as follows:

- 19% was spent on training for the employed;
- 25% was spent on training for the unemployed;
- 39% was spent on Community Employment Programmes;
- 10% was spent on other employment programmes; and
- 7% was spent on other employment supports.



In 2004 over 150,000 people in employment received FÁS funded workforce training. Over 45,000 people availed of FÁS funded training courses and another 36,000 people participated in employment programmes such as Community Employment and the Job Initiative.

During 2004, about 82,933 clients registered with FÁS and the organisation had a total of 369,772 people on its database. Fifty thousand people (50,000) were referred directly to FÁS by the Department of Social and Family Affairs under the National Employment Action Plan (NEAPs) activation process. Some 105,525 job vacancies were notified to FÁS through its National Contact Service of which 11,966 were work permit vacancies.

The organisational structure of FÁS comprises seven Assistant Directors General (ADGs) reporting to its Director General across a range of headings, for example: Corporate Services; Employment Services; Regions; Training Services; Services to Industry; HR Development/Finance; Community Services). A number of Directors report, in turn, to the ADGs.

It is also important to note that, following the publication of Building on Our Vision: FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009 a Social Inclusion sub-committee of the Board of FÁS was established to pursue Objective 6 of that Strategy as it refers to Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity.

Finally, for the purposes of this study the Regional Managers of FÁS, the Manager of Community Services and the Community Service Officers are of particular relevance as they interact with the Special Training Providers on an on-going basis. Employment Services Division is also important as it acts as the Gateway to all FÁS supported services, including special training provision.

### 3.2 Equality Policies and Practices

The FÁS Equality for Customers Policy was approved by its Board in early 2007 and training for the good practice guidelines is being piloted in the first half of 2007. The organisation's commitment to equality policies and practices is further expressed through a range of corporate documentation (e.g., Customer Charter, Strategy Documents, and its Quality Assurance Policy currently in development). During 2005 and into 2007 there has been considerable development in relation to FÁS policies in the area of equality. These developments are reflected in the conclusion of a pilot programme on Equality Proofing in FÁS Employment Services, the publication of a Statement of Strategy 2006-2009, incorporating Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity as one of the eight high priority goals of the organisation, and agreement and adoption of an Equality for Customers Policy and Equality for Customers Guidelines.

**Strategy Statement 2006-2009** Prior to the publication of Building on Our Vision: FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009 explicit commitments to promoting equality tended to focus on gender equality and the development of capacity to provide services for people with disabilities. More generally, commitments were made in respect of the need to provide employment and training opportunities for persons experiencing disadvantage in the labour market as, for example, is illustrated in the following quote from its Statement of Strategy 2003-2005:

*“generate employment opportunities for all, paying particular attention to those who are socially disadvantaged, such as early school leavers, long-term unemployed people, those with literacy and numeracy difficulties, ethnic minorities and travellers. Part of this approach, to tackling inequalities, includes a co-ordination of efforts between all relevant state agencies.”*

The Core Values of the organisation as detailed in its Strategy Statement 2006 to 2009 “reflect a stronger emphasis on customer-oriented service, higher quality Programmes and Services, innovation, flexibility and value for money” (p. 3). Those values are:

- Caring, Inclusiveness and Equality (demonstrated through a corporate culture that nurtures mutual respect and values the contribution of each staff member and customer; ensuring that all policies, programmes and services are equality-proofed and the provision of a safe and accessible working environment for all staff and customers supported by relevant policies and procedures)
- Proactive Customer Service (anticipating customers’ needs, responding to customers through mutual identification of needs and working with them to achieve agreed outcomes in an ethos of quality and service excellence)
- Innovation and Flexibility (developing innovative approaches that meet and anticipate changing labour market needs);
- Trust and Partnership (amongst staff, customers and stakeholders);
- Professionalism;
- Cost-effectiveness.

**Goal 6** of the Strategy Statement is titled Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity and is described as follows:

*“To promote the removal of barriers and help provide supports which ensure access to Programmes, Services and Employment for individuals and groups experiencing exclusion, discrimination and labour market disadvantage” (p. 4).*

**Goal 5** (Service Excellence) seeks to place the customer at the centre of all programmes and services and **Goal 8** (Communications and Marketing) seeks to improve communications and relationships with all stakeholders and to communicate proactively with customers to enable them to make informed choices.

*Building on Our Vision: FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009 also acknowledges the “barriers to labour market equality” faced by particular groups of people in the labour market and goes on to state that it is the intention of FÁS:*

*To promote the removal of barriers, and help provide supports which ensure access to programmes services and employment for individuals and groups experiencing exclusion, discrimination and labour market disadvantage.*

The actions that FÁS is planning to undertake to achieve this goal, together with the performance indicators identified to measure progress in achieving this goal, are summarised in Box 3.1.

### **Box 3.1**

#### **Actions to Achieve Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity (Including Performance Indicators)**

- Analyse and highlight the barriers preventing individuals from taking up training and employment opportunities.
- Work with other agencies and Government departments to review policies and practices that act as barriers and assist with developing new policies to enable access and participation in the labour market.
- Implement programme and service changes within FÁS to address identified training and employment barriers and gaps in provision.
- Develop and promote supports and incentives for employers to recruit marginalised individuals.
- Promote specific employment measures and career progression supports for people with disabilities and other groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation.
- Raise awareness among employers of the contributions that persons from diverse backgrounds can make to their enterprise.
- Develop positive action measures, as allowed under equality legislation, for specified target groups.
- Provide the necessary training, development and supports to enable staff to champion social inclusion, equality and diversity.
- Implement the FÁS Equal Status Framework.
- Equality-proof all FÁS Programmes and Services to embed inclusiveness, equality and diversity in the development and delivery of programmes.
- Set targets for participation of specific groups within FÁS Programmes and Services.
- Promote a policy of mainstreaming marginalised people in the labour market.

#### **Performance Measurement**

- Number of Programmes and Services Equality Proofed.
- Levels of participation and outcomes for targeted groups on FÁS Programmes and Services.
- FÁS Equal Status Framework developed and implemented.

Finally, the Strategy notes that, despite the low level of unemployment in Ireland, there is a significant number of people within the 497,000 people in receipt of various welfare allowances, including those in receipt of disability allowances, who have the potential to contribute to and participate in the labour market. FÁS commits itself to overcoming barriers encountered by such individuals through the provision of quality public services that respond to the need of the customer, providing flexible and market-relevant training and through the facilitation of “‘joined up’ policy making among Government Departments and Agencies to remove barriers to vocational training and employment.

#### **Training Strategy**

The FÁS Training Strategy notes that “there is a need for a greater effort to support the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce” (p. 8) and commits the organisation to completing and implementing a strategy for training of people with disabilities and ensuring that people with disabilities have access to the full range of FÁS services. The training strategy refers

to various initiatives that have been undertaken in this regard but notes that “there is still a level of ignorance of the various schemes which reduces their effectiveness” (p. 46).

### ***Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People (2006)***

The FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People was adopted by the Board in March 2006. The opening section of the document describes and discusses the manner in which FÁS assumed responsibility for the vocational training of people with disabilities following the dissolution of the NRB in 2000 on foot of a recommendation from the Commission on the Status of People with a Disability that occupational guidance and training services for the disabled should be provided in an integrated vocational setting. Following FÁS’ assumption of these responsibilities, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (FÁS’ parent Department) commissioned a Review of Vocational Training for People with Disabilities in Ireland (Bearing Point, 2003), which acknowledged the role of specialist training providers in a segregated setting but suggested that there was room to increase the number of disabled people on mainline training, with the correct supports, and to improve operational provision within and between the various forms of provision.

The Strategy notes that there are 20 Specialist Training Providers working through 55 sites to “deliver vocational training to disabled people who require more intensive support than would be available in the mainline options” (p. 4). It also notes that of the 24,953 people in FÁS sponsored training (excluding Apprenticeships and employment and other programmes such as Community Employment (CE), 6% of all trainees (n=1,555) were people with disabilities<sup>1</sup>. Of the 1,555 disabled people in training, 75% (n= 1,175) were accommodated through a specialist trainer in a segregated setting.

The Strategy references and adopts the three guiding principles adopted by the Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities, i.e. Equality, Maximising Participation, and Enabling Independence and Choice. The Strategy states that “the principles of equality mean that the delivery of services for disabled people by public bodies should be via the same services they provide to the general public with extra supports, as required... In practice, this means actively and openly taking into account, at the planning and development stage, exactly how labour market services and programmes impact on disabled people. It includes equality of participation and involvement of the disabled in mainline activities, including training. To achieve this objective, positive action measures are required to address barriers experienced by disabled people when accessing FÁS services” (p. 5). Equality of choice “requires equal access to training course and ultimately to employment for disabled people [and] this includes the need for programme adaptation, the provision of in-process supports, or possible provision of new variants or formats of programmes” (p. 6).

The Strategy also states that “mainstreaming also makes FÁS responsible for training to be delivered, where practicable, to the disabled beside their non disabled peers in an integrated setting. As with other FÁS programmes, training for disabled people should prepare participants for open employment. FÁS Training Strategy specifies its concern that much training for disabled people remains segregated. Segregated training, namely that provided by Specialist Training Provides (STPs), should only be used where it is necessary and only in those circumstances where the disabled customer cannot meet the trainee profile in mainline training” (p. 6). Referral to a specialist provider may be necessary where mainline training cannot provide appropriate level supports and where the trainee needs to avail of:

- Additional training duration;
- Adaptive equipment;

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as those in receipt of disability payments such as Disability Benefit, Disability Allowance, Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension.

- Enhanced programme content;
- Reduced trainer to trainee ratio; and/or
- Staff specially qualified in training disabled people.

FÁS' Management Information System will be used to monitor the rate of referrals and quantitative targets will be introduced in respect of the participation of people with disabilities in mainline training.

Particular reference is made to specialist training providers regarding the labour market orientation of services provided as follows:

“Traditionally, some agencies providing training on behalf of FÁS in Specialist Training Providers have their origins in ‘caring’ for people with a disability. It should be emphasised that when they are delivering training on behalf of FÁS, it is open for market employment and have (sic) identical progression criteria as all other FÁS courses. If STPs lose their capacity to place trainees into employment on completion of training, they also lose their capacity to deliver demand-led courses” (p. 13).

In that regard, FÁS' follow-up surveys indicate that nearly 50% of STP participants do not acquire nationally recognised certification, which is considerably below the 80% target in the Operating Guidelines for Specialist Training Providers (2001).

Due to the low levels of educational attainment amongst the disabled population, the strategy recognises that “entry requirements to mainline courses in particular need to be adapted to accommodate course applicants whose skills and aptitudes may, often through no fault of their own, not be reflected in educational qualifications” (p. 14).

The Strategy also commits FÁS to providing a dedicated budget for training supports to training centre managers with a view to paying for assistive technology, training support assistants, transport, interpreters and other supports as necessary.

### ***Code of Practice***

The Code of Practice for staff emphasises the following core values without explicitly mentioning equality:

- Flexibility;
- Professionalism;
- Caring;
- Proactive;
- Trustworthiness.

The guiding principles for all staff are given to be: honesty; integrity; and public accountability.

### **Customer Charter**

In its Customer Charter, the organisation says it ‘cares about its customers’ and that it is ‘responsive and flexible’ vis-à-vis their needs. Specifically in relation to equality it says it will: “Provide [its] services to all customers in a courteous, fair and impartial manner and in full compliance with all equality legislation. Facilitate access to FÁS services for people with disabilities.”

## **3.3 Other Equality Related Matters**

### **Equality Proofing Pilot Project**

FÁS has carried out an Equality Proofing Pilot Project in its Employment Services division with the support of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Beginning in late 2002, the project was planned with the Social Inclusion and Equality Unit to assist FÁS to proactively enhance its capacity to be the leading Irish state agency in achieving equal access, participation and outcomes for the nine groups covered by equality legislation.

One of the key concerns of the pilot project was to determine the actions required by service providers to overcome past and current obstacles to participation for groups covered in the equality legislation and experiencing disadvantage in the labour market. The final report on the project was presented to the Equality Proofing Steering Group in February 2005. Action Plans will subsequently be developed for equality proofing within Training Services and Services to Businesses modelled on that experience. There is a commitment in the new FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006-2009 (see Section 3.2) to implement the lessons and recommendations of the Equality Proofing Pilot Project, as is illustrated by:

*The recommendations of the Equality Proofing Report will be implemented, including the establishment of an Equality Proofing Monitoring Committee and the updating of Best Practice Guidelines (p. 46)*

### **Equality for Customers Policy and Good Practice Guidelines**

The Board of FÁS has recently adopted an Equality for Customers policy and training in respect of associated good practice guidelines is being piloted in the first half of 2007. Both the policy and the guidelines relate primarily to the organisation’s interaction with its customer base and are designed to support staff and management in that regard.

### **FÁS Intranet Support for Equality and Staff Training**

Through its intranet system, FÁS provides Good Practice Guidelines on Equal Opportunities aimed at supporting staff in dealing with clients from an equality perspective and explaining their responsibilities under the Equality legislation. It also operates a Disability Portal through its internet site. In addition, equality has been embedded into on-going staff training and development, for example in the inclusion of Equality Matters into the Certificate in Training and Continuing Education provided through NUI Maynooth. FÁS, in association with NUI Maynooth, has also developed a Certificate in Equality Studies in Training and Development and is also involved in the co-development of a Diploma in Inclusive Workplaces.

Between 2001 and 2002 FÁS was particularly active in providing its staff with various types and levels of training designed to enhance the organisation's capacity to deliver services to people with disabilities:

### **1. Training of Employment Service Officers in Guidance of People with a Disability**

Up until September 2002 almost 300 officers were provided with training delivered by a consortium led by the Central Remedial Clinic. The programme was of three days duration and addressed the following skill and knowledge areas:

- Equal Opportunities issues;
- Mental Health Issues;
- The Guidance Process for a person with a disability;
- Assistive Technology.

The programme had a strong emphasis on case studies and links to FÁS materials.

### **2. Dispersal of information on disability matters to the regions.**

In order to ensure that accurate information was available to field staff, certain employment service staff members were trained and they, in turn, made available accurate information to their colleagues.

### **3. Training in Monitoring of the delivery of specialist training.**

In 2001 FÁS prepared guidelines for the delivery of specialist training. FÁS prepared and delivered training related to the implementation of these guidelines. The programme, provided to community service officers, covered design, delivery and monitoring of specialist training programmes.

### **4. Training of Instructors in Supporting People with Disabilities in Training**

Supporting People with Disabilities in Training is a five-day training programme developed for Training Centre Instructors, piloted in February 2002. This comprehensive programme covers modules on assistive technology, mental health and the impact on learning, networking and local resources. This training programme compliments FÁS' "Guidelines for Supporting People with Disabilities in Training". In addition, a three day training programme in using JAVs for Windows with different applications was provided for Computer Application Instructors.

### **3.4 Other Initiatives and Developments Related to Accommodating Diversity / Promoting Equality**

#### ***Sectoral Planning Process under the Disability Bill (2004) - Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (D/ETE).***

As part of the Government's National Disability Strategy the D/ETE is one of six departments required to prepare a Sectoral Plan setting out service provision for people with disabilities. The Sectoral Plan will have implications for FÁS as D/ETE is its parent Department.

The Plan targets the development of a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities through a multi-pronged approach that includes, for example: enhanced vocational training; further development of supports to open market employment; and increasing the rates of participation of people with disabilities on CE. The Plan also commits to collaboration with other key government departments and agencies with a view to removing disincentives to work and the delivery of a more flexible response to the employment-related needs of people with disabilities.

One immediate objective of the Plan is to ensure that a further 7,000 people with disabilities will be in employment. Over the medium term the objective is to raise the employment among people with disabilities who have no "difficulty in holding a job towards the employment rate of their peers who do not have disabilities" (p.11).

Specifically in relation to equality, the Plan notes that "equality of choice requires equal access to training courses" (p.16) and this requires the need for programme adaptation, new programmes and supports. It is also noted that "much training for disabled people is not mainstreamed" (p.16), a reference to STP provision. Referencing the FÁS Training Strategy the Plan states that, from 2007, FÁS will "closely monitor referral patterns, participation rates and successful completion of training courses by disabled people on a six-monthly basis" with a view to developing better referral strategies (p.16).

In order to increase the participation of people with disabilities in mainstream training, FÁS will work with other stakeholders through Community Development Programmes, Family Resource Centres, media, the business community and government departments.

In relation to STP provision, the Plan states that it "is mainly targeted at those who require more intensive supports than are available through FÁS" (p. 18). Pilot bridging programmes will be developed between STPs and mainstream FÁS training programmes. The development of regional networks will also enhance the range of choice available to people with disabilities. The Employment Service division of FÁS will also "place special focus on the needs of people with disabilities in supporting their participation in the labour market" (p. 21).

It is worth noting that these aspects of the Sectoral Plan are already contained in the FÁS training strategies earlier referenced in this study.

#### ***Disability Allowance Project (Midlands Pilot)***

This pilot was initiated in January 2005 as a multi agency (i.e., DSFA, FÁS and the Health Service Executive) response to the increasing number of recipients of Disability Allowance, in particular the high number of persons between the ages of 16 and 25 years in receipt of Disability Allowance. The overall increase in the number of recipients of Disability Allowance between 1997 and 2004 was 69%, with the number of recipients in the latter year being 72,976. Of the latter number, 10,269 (i.e., 14.1%) are aged under 25 years. The pilot, which is currently being



evaluated, identified a range of issues that need to be addressed if the DSFA is to be able to pursue a policy of activation with people with disabilities. These issues include having access to accurate and up to date information on clients, the validity of awarding a “permanent disability entitlement” to young people without regard to an occupational assessment of their capacity for work or employment aspirations and the need to address gaps in training and employment provision.

### ***Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness - Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities***

In the Revised Programme Complement for Measure 16 it is noted that FÁS, through an Action Plan, will address the cost effectiveness of training of people with disabilities and will increase the take-up of employment, through various employment supports, for persons with disabilities. That review was undertaken during the second half of 2006.

The review was prompted by the Indecon Report commissioned by the D/ETE and the Department of Health and Children. FÁS and the Health Services Executive sat on the Steering Committee that oversaw the Indecon report. The value-for-money type issues addressed in the report are also referenced in the FÁS Vocational Training Strategy.

### **3.5 Equality Matters in Data Collection Procedures**

FÁS has regularly been complemented for the quality of the data it produces for the Monitoring Committee meetings of the EHRDOP, including equality related data. Supporting the capacity of FÁS to provide such data is its client registration form and the Annual Follow-Up Surveys of programme participants.

The FÁS registration form asks individuals to state their gender, age, whether or not they are a Traveller, and whether or not they have a disability. Registrants are also asked if they have refugee status, leave to remain in Ireland, and whether or not they are a citizen of the European Economic Area, and, if relevant, to confirm that they have documentation regarding their right to work and undertake vocational training.

A data monitoring plan for the Social Inclusion Unit has been developed and reports on “specific client groups” will be prepared on a regular basis.

The 2004 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants (FÁS /ESRI, 2005) presents the findings of a survey of participants who left mainstream FÁS sponsored training between June and September 2003 as well as the results of a separate survey of those who left Specialist Training Programmes (STPs) between March and September 2003.

Some of the headline findings of the follow-up survey in relation to STPs include the following:

- 29% of people with disabilities in training at the time of the interview were employed, representing a five percentage point drop on the previous survey (one year earlier) and the lowest progression to employment in 10 years;
- 25% remained in training (up from 19% on previous survey), 21% were at home, 6% were studying/training elsewhere (down from 15%) and 16% were unemployed (up from 13%);

- more than half of the leavers employed at the time of interview were in unsubsidised employment – of those in subsidised employment, 29% were on Disability Allowance + disregard, 8% were on Employment Support Schemes and 4% were on some other scheme;
- despite the relatively poor outcomes achieved, more than 80% were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the content of their training course, the instructor, the availability of equipment and access to and the condition of the buildings in which the training took place.

The follow-up survey also shows that 37% of participants had not obtained a Leaving Certificate. It also shows that 40% of participants were ‘at home’ one month prior to training and a further 24% were unemployed.

Tentative comparisons are drawn between outcomes for people with disabilities in STPs as against people with disabilities on employment programmes and/or in mainstream training (not taking into account factors such as level of education or the nature of disability etc.). Recognising research related limitation, people with disabilities in specialist training achieved better employment outcomes than their counterparts in receipt of disability payment on employment programmes but worse than those in mainline training programmes (see Table I below). Interestingly, people with disabilities on mainline FÁS training were the most satisfied of the three groups (mentioned above) with regard to the availability of equipment and facilities while those in employment programmes were most satisfied with regard to the content/substance of their work.

**Table I: Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities Leaving STPs, Mainline Training and Employment Programmes March/April to September 2005 %**

	Employed	CE/JI	FÁS / Education &	Unemployed	Home / Other
<b>Specialist Training Programmes</b>	29	24	6	16	26
<b>Mainline Training Programmes</b>	34	6	15	22	23
<b>Employment Programmes</b>	18	9	5	25	23

### 3.6 Disability Customer Survey 2002

FÁS commissioned a Disability Customer Survey that was undertaken by Ralaheen Ltd in 2002 and published in 2003.

The Survey showed that customers with disabilities who had used FÁS services were generally satisfied with the services offered (80%) and would recommend using FÁS to others (83%). Some users commented on inaccessible buildings. Some said they were uncertain about what they could or should aim for or aspire to and some stated an interest in more intensive follow-up of their training and/or placement. In that regard the survey found that the options available to people from region to region were different. A minority of former service users surveyed were in paid employment at the time of interview. Some of the specific findings of interest in the context of this Measure Study include the following:

- Despite the fact that 86% were satisfied with the registration process, in many cases customers didn't realise they had been registered with FÁS because they were not present throughout the registration process (pp.18-19);
- 21% of those referred for a job, 25% of those referred for a course and 13% of those referred to a programme (e.g. CE) did not attend for interview;
- 50 people who responded in relation to referral were offered 89 referrals to jobs, schemes or courses which the researchers interpret as an evidence of choice being offered to clients.

The researchers conclude that FÁS is engaged with customers with disabilities and is developing and referring customers to services albeit that “the principle of mainstreaming of services for customers with disabilities is not articulating itself as intended in certain respects” (p.32) and there is a tendency for both service providers and users “to veer towards an expectation of separate and segregated services for customers with disabilities” (p.32). This is attributed to a failure to extensively consider or explore open labour market job experience, employment and vocational training on the part of customers or Employment Service Officers.

A range of recommendations is made in the report including, for example, a need for:

- more pro-active communication on the part of FÁS with the customer base;
- expertise and case conferencing regarding hard to place individuals;
- review of follow-up procedures;
- further exploration of FÁS responsibility to customers who need guidance on adaptation and assistive devices or other adjustments to participate in workforce and vocational training.

### 3.7 Overall Equality Context Within FÁS

It is clear from the previous sections that FÁS is currently committed to implementing a wide range of specific actions to accommodate diversity and promote equality. The successful rolling out of these actions will result in considerable change in the organisational context of all FÁS services and programmes.

### 3.8 Specialist Training Providers (STPs)

There are 20 STPs delivering vocational training and related services to people with disabilities on behalf of FÁS. As demonstrated in Section 4 below, the National Learning Network (NLN) is by far the largest provider taking up about 64% of the available places in various sites throughout the country. It is beyond the scope or intent of this report to describe all of these organisations and/or their equality policies; however, for illustrative purposes we introduce and detail some of the basic organisational traits and equality policies of the NLN and three of the smaller providers using information gleaned from the respective websites i.e. Festina Lente based on Bray, Co. Wicklow; Ability Enterprises, based in Mayo; and the Irish Wheelchair Association, based in Dublin.

### ***The National Learning Network (NLN)***

The NLN (formerly NTDI) is part of the Rehab Group, an independent not-for-profit organisation working for social and economic inclusion among people with disabilities and others who are marginalised. The Group employs over 2,800 people across Ireland and the UK, some 20 per cent of whom are people with a disability. The REHAB Group provides services to c.15,000 people per annum.

The Group's philosophy is that regardless of a person's disability or social circumstances, it is ability that should determine success in life and all of the Group's services are designed to enable its clients to make the most of their skills and talents in the workplace. The Group is "also deeply involved in the development of a more businesslike, rather than merely philanthropic, approach to the provision of disability services through the Not for Profit Business Association" ([www.rehab.ie](http://www.rehab.ie)).

In 2004 the Group had an operating surplus of €2.1m (2003: €1.9m) and turnover grew by 7.7% to €159m (2003: €148m).

The NLN is Ireland's largest non-Governmental training organisation with more than 50 purpose-built training and employment facilities catering for around 4,500 individuals each year. It offers over 40 different vocational programmes, which carry what is referred to through its website as "nationally and internationally recognised certification" and the programmes are "designed to lead directly to jobs or progression to further education."

Its objective is to assist people at a disadvantage in the labour market to learn the skills they need to build lasting careers in jobs that reflect their interests and abilities. The NLN's web-page ([www.rehab/nln.ie](http://www.rehab/nln.ie)) claims that it has enabled more than 20,000 people to join the workforce in careers as diverse as agriculture and architecture and it has achieved this through "a brand of training, education, employment access and enterprise development."

The majority of NLN's student body is made up of people with disabilities, although the organisation states that other groups and individuals facing obstacles in the search for work are increasingly using its services. Students are not charged a direct fee and there are no formal entry requirements, although students must be aged over 16 years.

The NLN's web-page suggests that what sets it apart from other training providers is its capacity to address all of the factors that will affect a student's prospects of obtaining and retaining a job in their chosen field.

Training is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team of some 575 teachers, trainers, curriculum development officers, psychologists, counselors and employment support staff. All programmes are designed to meet individual needs so that each student can achieve his/her vocational goals at his/her own pace and within a lifelong learning framework. A comprehensive range of additional supports is also available such as career planning and individual counseling programmes, personal and social skills, literacy and numeracy.

Students can opt for introductory courses to explore their career goals right through to third level education and programmes leading to employment at professional levels. In addition to programmes at National Learning Network's countrywide network of centres, students can avail of employer-based training with host companies and distance learning which enables people, particularly those with mobility difficulties, to study from home.

### ***Festina Lente***

Festina Lente Foundation was set up in 1988 and is located just outside of Bray, Co. Wicklow. It offers a wide range of training and employment opportunities for people wishing to follow a career in either the equestrian or horticultural areas. Festina Lente's Mission Statement is as follows;

- “Festina Lente Foundation provides a range of integrated training, occupational, learning and employment opportunities to people whose needs have not been met by mainstream services. These services are provided through equestrianism, horticulture and community based activities with an emphasis on choice, personal development and progression.”

The organisation receives funding from the HSE (formerly East Coast Area Health Board) and FÁS towards the provision of training and employment programmes. The following training and employment opportunities are provided:

- Festina Lente Transition Training Programme;
- Festina Lente Equestrian Training Programme;
- Festina Lente Riding School;
- Festina Lente Gardens.

### ***Ability Enterprises***

Ability Enterprises (founded 1980) is a subsidiary of the Disabled Drivers' Association of Ireland (D.D.A.I.), which was founded in 1970. DDAI is an organisation of disabled people working for disabled people, promoting independence and equal opportunity through mobility. The association provides extensive information, advice and support services to members. DDAI is a company limited by guarantee and with charitable status. It has a national membership of approximately 5,500 with offices in Mayo, Cork and Dublin. Only people with disabilities can become full members. Services of the Association are provided to all persons with disabilities. All eight of its board members (directors) are people with disabilities.

Ability Enterprises is located in Ballindine, Co. Mayo, where there are extensive office and training facilities including fully equipped modern computer technology facilities. Residential accommodation is available on-site and two specially adapted cars are provided for driver training. The driving assessment centre also includes Ireland's only Static Assessment Unit.

People with disabilities who wish to learn to drive may do so at the Ballindine Centre. DDAI offers a residential three-week intensive training course for any person with a physical disability. The person learns to drive a suitably adapted car and may go on to apply for the driving test. This service, including accommodation and meals are provided free of charge to the learner driver.

Ability Enterprises provides a range of training programmes, including work experience, in the areas of computer and office skills. All courses provide City & Guilds of London certification, or equivalent, on successful completion. Some of the courses are designed to enable people obtain employment as teleworkers. One of the courses run by Ability Enterprises is a distance learning programme, funded through FÁS. It lasts for one year and is accredited by FÁS and City & Guilds of London Certification is awarded on successful completion.

### ***Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)***

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is the national organisation of people with limited mobility. Its goal is to achieve community inclusion and 'equality of life' for its members.

The IWA was established in 1960 and, according to its website, has developed into the principal service provider for people with limited mobility. Services (ranging from education and training to provision of holiday opportunities) have been driven by the needs of members. In order to achieve its overall goal, IWA has seven key goals. These are to:

- Develop and be innovative in the provision of quality services;
- Develop advocacy services;
- Deliver best practice in all services;
- Ensure effective and cohesive communications;
- Develop a strong management team and Board to ensure a cohesive organisational structure;
- Strengthen voluntary staffing areas to ensure a skilled workforce; and
- Ensure organisational viability and development.

As a community-based organisation, IWA aims to:

- Identify the needs of people with limited mobility;
- Empower people with the skills and backup to help them address their identified needs and to participate in society;
- Create awareness of the rights and needs of our members amongst policy makers, service providers, the public;
- Advocate with and on behalf of people with limited mobility for improved services and benefits;
- Provide and promote appropriate services.

IWA's Training Department has two main categories of training, i.e. Internal Training and External Training. Internal training is offered to staff and external training is for other organisations and groups (e.g. Disability Awareness, Manual Handling).

## 4. Measure 16: Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

Measure 16 is one of 22 measures comprising the Employability Pillar of the EHRDOP. The overall priority of all Employability measures is with helping and actively encouraging people to be, or to become, employable (EHRDOP, p. 66). Together with four other Employability measures, Measure 16 speaks to a specific sub-priority, namely “promoting social inclusion”, which as stated in the EHRDOP is aimed at assisting a range of already disadvantaged or excluded groups to access the labour market (EHRDOP, p. 67).

Measure 16 is also one of 10 measures prioritised for greater integration of the WEOP. As a result, the measure managers are now required to identify and report on the actions taken to address the concerns of the WEOP. The WEOP is of automatic relevance to the operation of the measure given the fact that it is targeted in its entirety on one of the groups covered under the WEOP (namely People with Disabilities). Because it is targeted at all people with disabilities, it will clearly be directly relevant to men and women as well as older and younger people and data is available to examine the intersection between this targeted measure with these grounds. The measure is also relevant from the perspective of ethnic background and the Traveller ground although the capacity of existing data sets to demonstrate the interaction of the measure with these grounds is limited.

That said, the principal purpose of this measure study is to identify the strategies, systems, practices and supports that are in place to support the access, participation and outcomes achieved by people with disabilities across the programmes and activities funded under the measure with a view to extracting lessons that may be of benefit in the context of mainstream, non-segregated settings. In that regard the study places a particular emphasis on the strategies, systems, practices and supports provided by Specialist Training Providers to support the access, participation and progression of their clients.

### 4.1 Aim of Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

The overall aim for the Measure as set out in the Programme Complement is:

“To provide training and employment programmes and services to assist persons with disabilities to seek and obtain employment”

### 4.2 Description of Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

### **General Description**

The Programme Complement describes Measure 16 as follows:

“Training courses run by Specialist Training Providers, employment supports and programmes and employment services (advice and referral) for people with disabilities which will support them to seek and obtain employment.”

Operationally, Measure 16 covers all direct interaction between FÁS and people with disabilities outside of the participation of people with disabilities in mainstream training (i.e. provision that is not specifically designed for people with disabilities such as Specific Skills Training, Apprenticeship, Community Employment and so on). The Measure is comprised of a number of distinct components as follows:

**Table 2: Components of Measure 16**

<b>Programme Name</b>	<b>Programme Description</b>
<b>Specialist Training Programmes (STPs)</b>	<b>STPs provide the focal point for this Measure. Twenty (20) Specialist Training Providers (STPs) provide training, e-learning and work experience interventions for people with various types of disability at 55 locations throughout the country. Training interventions are provided on a segregated basis, i.e. the interventions are provided by organisations working almost exclusively in favour of people with disabilities and to people with disabilities in segregated settings.</b>
<b>Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)</b>	<b>The Wage Subsidy Scheme was newly introduced in 2005 and is subsuming the former Employment Support Scheme and the Pilot Employment Programme. The scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ disabled people who work more than 20 hours per week.</b>
<b>Supported Employment Programme (SEP)</b>	<b>The Supported Employment Programme was introduced in 2001 as part of the mainstreaming of services for people with disabilities. The programme is an open labour market initiative that provides supports to people with disabilities, who traditionally have had difficulty getting into paid employment. The programme is carried out by sponsor organisations on behalf of FÁS. The sponsor organisations employ Job Coaches who provide a range of supports tailored to the individual needs of the jobseeker with a disability with a view to the employee with a disability ultimately becoming independent of the Job \ Coach support.</b>
<b>Disability Support / Awareness</b>	<b>This component of the measure is comprised of a number of subcomponent as follows:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Innovative Projects;</b></li><li>• <b>Central Fund / Direct Expenses;</b></li><li>• <b>Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant;</b></li><li>• <b>Job Interview / personal Reader;</b></li><li>• <b>Employee Retention Grant;</b></li><li>• <b>Disability Awareness Training Grant.</b></li></ul>



### **The Budgetary Allocations to the Components of the Measure**

Table 3 (page 26) outlines the budgetary distribution across the various components of the measure 2000-2005. It should be noted that the expenditure in question under Measure 16 is not inclusive of expenditure incurred that is associated with the participation of people with disabilities in mainstream programmes such as CE, Apprenticeship or programmes run in FÁS training centres.

Specialist training provision accounts for the majority of FÁS expenditure in favour of people with disabilities under Measure 16. It represented 85.67% (€14.579m.) of total/actual expenditure (€17.017m.) in 2000 and 78.93% (€44.783) of a much larger total spend (€56.737) in 2005. As previously noted, this aspect of the Measure provides the focus for this study.

The Employment Support Scheme (ESS) and the Pilot Employment Programme (PEP) have been subsumed into the newly introduced Wage Subsidy Scheme. The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) accounted for 8.6% of actual expenditure in 2005, which is somewhat below the combined percentage total achieved by the ESS and PEP in previous years (e.g. 9.19% in 2004). With the exception of its first year (2001) the Supported Employment Programme (SEP) has accounted for just under 12% of expenditure under the Measure in all other years.

Expenditure on Disability Supports and Awareness rose progressively since 2000 (0.53%) as a proportion of overall Measure level expenditure to 2.23% (€1.232m) in 2004 before falling in 2005 to 0.87% (€0.494m) of total expenditure. Within Disability Supports and Awareness there is a number of headings including:

- Workpath
- Innovative Projects;
- Central Fund / Direct Expenses;
- Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant;
- Job Interview / Personal Reader;
- Employee Retention Grant;
- Disability Awareness Training Grant;
- Other activities such as sponsorship of visibility and information related events and products such as the O2 Ability Awards, Workway 2, Get Ahead etc.

Expenditure on Innovative Projects accounted for 46% and 55% of Disability Supports and Awareness expenditure in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Expenditure across Central Fund / Direct Expenses and Workplace Adaptation Grant accounted for 59% of expenditure in 2005.

### **4.3 Overview of FÁS Interaction with Specialist Training Provision (STP)**

#### **Operational Guidelines**

The Introduction to the FÁS detailed Operating Guidelines for Specialist Training Providers notes that the organisation “has two diverse, and sometimes competing objectives. It has an economic objective; to operate programmes to maximize economic growth and, a social objective; to operate training and employment programmes to meet the employment needs of people most distant from the labour market” (p.5). The provision of training for people with disabilities through STPs clearly falls under the latter objective from a FÁS perspective.

**Table 3: Budget Allocations and Take-Up: FÁS Programmes for Persons with a Disability – 2000 to 2005 Inclusive**

	2005		2004		2003		2002		2001		2000	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M	€M
Specialist training programmes	44.155	44.783	41.887	42.406	40.000	39.792	40.420	39.211	30.298	28.910	15.554	14.579
Employment Support Scheme	Incorporated into WSS		3.000	3.139	2.900	2.904	2.900	2.640	2.793	2.442	1.175	1.378
Pilot Employment Programme	Incorporated into WSS		2.200	1.931	2.080	1.951	2.230	1.950	2.148	2.087	1.016	0.969
Wage Subsidy Scheme	8.194	4.882	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Supported Employment Programme	7.968	6.578	7.000	6.477	6.650	6.122	6.350	5.856	4.800	3.953	0.000	0.000
Disability Support/Awareness	2.000	0.494	2.000	1.232	2.100	0.953	2.420	0.416	2.000	0.222	0.349	0.091
<b>Total FÁS Programmes For Persons with a Disability</b>	<b>62.317</b>	<b>56.737</b>	<b>56.087</b>	<b>55.185</b>	<b>53.730</b>	<b>51.722</b>	<b>54.320</b>	<b>50.073</b>	<b>42.039</b>	<b>37.614</b>	<b>18.094</b>	<b>17.017</b>

Notes

1. Budget figures per FÁS Board Reports, Actuals per published FÁS Annual Report
2. Disability Support/Awareness budget figures 2000-2003 are indicative as FÁS had at that stage only assumed responsibility from former NRB.

FÁS interacts with STPs using a partnership and collaborative approach. Key requirements in that interaction are that all FÁS -funded programmes will be:

- delivered in accordance with NQAI requirements;
- approved against QA 58/01 standard and FÁS monitoring requirements;

In addition;

- All participants will be recruited through the FÁS Employment Services Gateway giving them access to the full range of options;
- Provision and allocation of resources will reflect changing labour market and client needs;
- Providers will achieve specified targets and will adhere to FÁS reporting requirements;
- STPs will be accredited against QA 001 Standard.

FÁS uses specialist trainers because some people with disabilities “may have needs that would not be met through non-specialist vocational training provision” (p.6). The additional features offered by specialist providers can include:

- Additional training duration;
- Adapted equipment;
- Enhanced programme content;
- Lower trainer / learner ratio;
- Specially qualified staff;
- Additional opportunities for assessment; and an
- Individualised approach.

### ***Contracting with STPs***

Agreements between FÁS and STPs are renewed annually following review based on agreed targets and indicators and having regard to level of demand, available funding and general compliance with terms and conditions. FÁS will only contract with an existing and validly incorporated STP company under the Companies Act(s). The contract consists of:

- Body of the agreement which details overall terms and conditions;
- Annual schedule for the agreed programme(s);
- Operating Guidelines for STPs.

The per capita annual contract fee provided by FÁS to STPs for the provision of training to people with disabilities is €13,633. This fee applies regardless of the type (centre-based, distance learning, employer based) or level (IST or SST) of training the individual engages in. The same per capita fee is also provided regardless of outcomes achieved.

### ***Requirement for Equal Opportunities***

The Guidelines state that STP management must comply with all legislative provision in relation to Employment Equality law. The Guidelines note that it is “the policy of FÁS, and by extension the policy of all FÁS STPs, to actively promote equal opportunities for all employees and learners” and, as such, STPs are required to develop and implement an equal opportunities plan” (p.27). Furthermore, all programmes must have an equal opportunities module.

In order to demonstrate compliance with equality legislation, FÁS and its agents will:

- Circulate its equality policy to all those who deliver training for or on behalf of FÁS;
- Display its equality policy in relevant places;
- Provide staff training and development in relation to equality issues to increase equality awareness, promote equality and counter discrimination;
- Develop an equality action plan;
- Implement the equality action plan;
- Review the equality action plan.

**Particular Characteristics of Specialist Training Providers and Specialist Training Provision**

The Guidelines suggest there are three broad types of needs (described in Table 4) that are addressed and met through STPs:

- Needs relating to access;
- Needs relating to training content and duration;
- Non-occupational training-related needs.

**Table 4: Description of Needs Addressed through STPs**

Type of Need	Characteristics
Needs relating to access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer duration in training;</li> <li>• Numeracy and/or literacy training for learners with an intellectual disability;</li> <li>• Low vision training, mobility and Braille training for learners who are partially sighted or blind;</li> <li>• Sign language for learners who have a hearing impairment or who are deaf</li> </ul>
Needs relating to training content and duration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional assistance during training for people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties;</li> <li>• Trainers who are trained to meet the needs of people with disabilities;</li> <li>• Need for longer period of training;</li> <li>• Individualised approach to training curricula;</li> <li>• Additional support modules e.g. personal effectiveness, managing disability, self-advocacy;</li> <li>• Work preparation, including extra or different training in job-search skills, personal presentation.</li> </ul>
Non-occupational training related needs.	For example, additional help for a person with mental health difficulties in managing his/her mediations or learning to manage personal finance for a person with an intellectual disability, travel training and/or learning to reside in rented accommodation.

In order to deliver on these needs, STPs provide three different types of training as follow:

**Table 5: STPs - Programme Delivery Type**

Type of Programme	Characteristics
<b>Centre-based Training (CBT)</b>	This type of training intervention generally requires trainees to be trained in a dedicated environment for at least 85% of programme duration. The training is supplemented by a period(s) of work experience external to the training centre.
<b>Employer-based Training (EBT)</b>	This type of training is certified training through which trainees are trained for employment by the employer in a company-based setting. Training is provided in specific work skills, both practical and personal, in an on-the-job setting using both workplace and directed training, with provision for off-the-job inputs where required. The ratio between on and off-the-job elements will reflect individual learner and company needs. The off-the-job element will reflect the skills certified and not be less than 20% of the total programme duration (c. 10 weeks of the year).
<b>Distance Learning (DL)</b>	This type of training is training through which trainees are trained in a place of their own choosing, generally their own homes, for up to 80% of programme duration. Communication with the training provider is generally via the telephone and on-line digital connections. This is supplemented by home-tuition by the trainer and occasional group seminars.

Programmes can be further categorised into three levels as follows;

**1. Suitability Assessment Module:**

Lasting up to three months, this is conducted at the commencement of training and will inform the initial part of the next level of training, Introductory Skills Training.

**2. Introductory Skills Training (IST)**

IST is primarily developmental in intent and facilitates an individual trainee to sample a number of skills. Subject to approval by FÁS Community Services Unit, IST will have a maximum duration of 18 months.

**3. Specific Skills Training (SST)**

SST focuses on the development of special skills in one vocational area and is normally certified by FETAC. SST will normally have an approved duration of 24 months.

**Total training duration for IST and SST combined will not normally exceed 42 months.** In exceptional circumstances where an extension is required, a detailed submission with an individualised training plan must be submitted by the STP to FÁS for approval.

**Progression Targets**

The targets for progression, job placement and certification are detailed in the Schedule to the Agreement between FÁS and the provider. Outcomes are measured on the basis of learners leaving the programme in a given year (given that contracts are annualised). FÁS' national targets as applied to STPs in that regard are as follows (Operational Guidelines, p. 16)

**Table 6: Targets Applied to STPs by Level of Training**

Measure	Targets %	
	IST %	SST %
Placement to employment (defined as f/t open market employment of >20 hours, p/t open market employment of <20 hours, Casual Employment, Temporary Employment, Supported Employment, Sheltered Employment)	10	50
Progression to training, education programmes or CE	75	40
Other (HSE Services and Programme, Supported Work, Sheltered Work, Voluntary Work, Illness etc.)	20	10
Achievement of Certification		80

### Recruitment to Specialist Training Provision (STP)

Appendix 10.5 of FÁS's extensive and detailed Operating Guidelines for Specialist Training Providers details how participants are to be recruited to Specialist Training Providers. The standard process is as follows:

#### **Box 4.1: Recruitment of Participants to Specialist Training Providers (STPs)**

Client with a disability registers with FÁS Employment Services or LES confirming that they are in receipt of a disability welfare payment. If not in receipt of such a payment, a medical report is required. All applicants to STPs should be on a FÁS /LES tracking system.

Recommendations as to the suitability of the client for specialist training may be made, for example, by an advocate, disability support agency or special school and these representations may assist the Employment Service Officer (ESO or LES Mediator in the occupational guidance process although the ultimate referral must be made by the ESO / LES Mediator.

The ESO / LES Mediator provides occupational guidance, including assistance in identifying strengths and needs and the provision of information on available options in both mainstream and specialist areas.

The ESO / LES Mediator reaches a conclusion on the best route for the client taking into account information available on the client through the FÁS Client Data Base (CDB), which should “encourage training progression, as opposed to lateral movement.”

If possible the client should be encouraged to visit the centre or centres to which they may be referred. Having done this, the client should report back to the ESO / LES Mediator confirming or disconfirming his/her interest. If the client considers the option unsuitable, further occupational guidance will be required.

If an exemption is required from D/SFA, the applicant should be advised that s/he needs to apply for this and receive written confirmation before training can commence. Where necessary, childcare procedures are addressed and applications made.

The ESO / LES Mediator refer the client to the STP using a printout from the CDB and include details of disability and supports that may be required. The ESO / Mediator then updates the trainees tracking record.

The STP informs the client of the starting date for the course and when the trainee commences training, the STP electronically informs the relevant Community Services Officer (CSO) and ESO of the commencement.

If the trainee leaves training before completion, the ESO / LES Mediator should be informed and the Learner Exit Form should be completed by the STP and returned to FÁS.

The Operational Guidelines provide the following list of procedures in place for managing delivery of STPs as follows:

- Monthly Claim Form and Monthly Claim Summary Form;
- Learner Start, Transfer and Exit Forms;
- Training Proposal Form;
- Training Specifications QA58/01 and QA39/01;
- Training Specification Checklist / Evaluation
- Training Specification Approval Form;
- Training Proposal Evaluation Checklist;
- Agreement and Agreement Schedule;
- Learner Start Form;
- Contract Recommendation;
- Revision to Expected Finish Date;
- STP Payments Checklist and Approval Forms;
- STP Visit Report Form;
- STP Monitoring Preparation Form and Monitoring Report Forms;
- National QA Procedures;
- File Checklist.

### **FÁS Community Services Unit**

FÁS Community Services Units are the main point of contact with STPs in respect of Vocational Training Pathways provision. Their role within the programme is to liaise with the STPs on behalf of FÁS in respect of contracting and monitoring.

### **Employment Services**

Employment Service Officers (ESOs) act as the gateway to all FÁS services and programmes. They are the front line personnel with responsibilities for assisting clients make the best use of FÁS funded services and programmes. ESOs are also involved in interviewing and providing guidance to people referred to FÁS under the Employment Action Plan. All would-be STP participants must register with FÁS through an ESO before they can engage in FÁS sponsored training, whether in a mainstream or segregated setting.

### **Allocation of Places**

Table 7 (page 33) details the allocation of places for 2005 by provider, region and type of training:



**Table 7: Allocation and Actual Take-up of STP Places for 2005 by Provider, Region and Type of Training**

Region	STP	Allocation 2005	In Centre Actual 2005		Employer Based 2005		Distance Training 2005		Distance Training 2005
			IST	IST	IST	IST	IST	IST	
South West	NLN	269	91	75	0	66	0	42	274
	Abode	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>273</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>278</b>
North West	North West HSE	27	8	4	0	20	0	0	32
	Sligo IT	14	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
	Donegal VEC	10	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
	NLN Sligo/Lifford	101	12	6	0	30	0	52	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>152</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>153</b>
Midlands	APT Tullamore	6	0	0	0	6			6
	St Christopher's	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
	NLN	235	86	43	32	43	0	31	235
<b>Total</b>		<b>249</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>249</b>
North East	Order of Malta	18	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
	NLN	142	47	12	10	51.42	0	26	146.42
<b>Total</b>		<b>160</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>51.42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>154.42</b>
West	Ability Enterprises	18	0	5	0	0	0	10	15
	NLN	167	44	30	0	33	0	59	166
<b>Total</b>		<b>185</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>181</b>
South East	Festina Lente	16	0	16	0	0	0	0	16
	CWCW Enniscorthy	9	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
	Cluain Training	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	12
	NLN	184	113	0	35	0	36	0	184
<b>Total</b>		<b>221</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>221</b>
Dublin Region	CRC	7	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
	Thomas Court	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Plant Market	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
	Fingal TC	22	22	0	0	0	0	0	22
	GHS	44	0	44	0	0	0	0	44
	St John of Gods	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	20
	Glen College	32	0	32	0	0	0	0	32
	Threshold	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	15
	NLN	456	269	163	0	8	0	12	452
<b>Total</b>		<b>621</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>617</b>
Mid West Region	Irish Wheelchair Association	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	NLN	106	12	42	0	33.5	0	27	114.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>126</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1,14.5</b>
<b>Total Places</b>		<b>1,987</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>290.92</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>1,967.92</b>

In 2005, the National Learning Network was allocated 1,270 of the available STP places (c. 64% of all available places). The second largest allocation of places was to Glen College<sup>2</sup> (32 places / 1.6% of total places allocated).

Table 8 below summarises the actual take-up of places for 2005 across type and level of intervention and it shows that:

- 66% of all places taken up were in-centre training, predominantly at IST level i.e. 60% of all in-centre places;
- 56% of all places across the three delivery types were taken up at SST level with 50% of those in-centre, c.27% employer-based and 23% delivered on a distance learning basis.

**Table 8: Summary of Allocation of STP Places by Type and Level**

Level	Type of Places			Total %
	In-centre %	Employer-Based %	Distance Learning %	
<b>IST</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>SST</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.4 Target Groups and Eligibility Criteria of Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

As indicated in the Operational Guidelines, the target group for STPs comprises unemployed people with disabilities aged over 16 years who are deemed by FÁS Employment Services (ES and LES) to require the additional supports that STPs provide over and above that which is available through FÁS mainline training. Appendix 10.4 of the Guidelines further refines this, noting that persons with disabilities on FÁS training programmes can include people with disabilities who are not in receipt of Social Welfare benefits or allowances and people with disabilities in receipt of:

- Disability Allowance and/or Blind Person's Pension;
- Invalidity Pension or Disability Benefit;
- Unemployment Assistance or Unemployment Benefit;
- Lone Parents Allowance;

Put simply, both mainline and STP training is open to all people with disabilities over the age of 16 years.

Table 9 (page 35) shows the numbers of individuals with a disability registering with FÁS as determined by welfare status / payments and based on a self-declaration basis. Interestingly, the number of people registering who are identified as people with disabilities on a self-declaration basis has dropped over 2005 and 2006 such that those identified on a self-declared basis is now less than the number identified on the basis of welfare status.

<sup>2</sup> Established in 1991 on the campus of Holy Angels, the primary commitment of Glen College is to offer training opportunities to young adults with learning difficulties who are not always able to avail of mainstream education.

**Table 9: People with Disabilities Registering with FÁS 2003-2006**

Year	PwD registering with FÁS as determined by welfare status	% of all registrants with FÁS %	PwD registering with FÁS based on selfdeclaration	% of all registrants with FÁS %
2003	2,431	2.5	3,991	4.1%
2004	2,502	2.8	3,014	3.4%
2005	2,279	2.8	1,625	1.2%
2006 (to 23/05/06)	681	2.1	547	1.7%

The number of persons with a disability who commenced training across all FÁS supported programmes (CE, mainline training, Job Clubs, STPs etc.) has remained fairly constant over the last number of years. A total of 2,495 persons with a disability started training supported by FÁS up to 23rd May 2006 (using D/SFA disability incomes to identify disabled starters) and this represents 8.8% of all starters. In previous years the relevant percentage was 9.6% (2005), 9.1% (2004) and 9.3% (2003).

The percentage of FÁS mainline trainees who were in receipt of a D/SFA disability income was 1.5% in 2005 (380 trainees) and was 2.5% in 2004 (412 trainees). The majority of people with disabilities starting FÁS supported training are located in STPs as follows:

- 1,777 people with disabilities commenced STP training in 2005; and
- 1,930 people with disabilities commenced STP training in 2004.

#### **4.5 Observations on Structures and Personnel Involved in Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities**

All persons seeking to access FÁS funded training must first register with FÁS through FÁS Employment Services. This applies to individuals pursuing special training outside of mainstream FÁS provision. However, and as discussed further in Section 5 below, the first point of contact for the majority of people who take up special training options would appear to be the training provider and subsequently, on referral, FÁS Employment Services. Once registered, the individual will typically have little further direct contact with FÁS.

The special training providers themselves interact with FÁS Community Service Managers at local/regional level. These members of FÁS staff are responsible for drawing up contracts and agreements between FÁS and the provider, for ensuring standards, setting targets and monitoring outcomes.

Typically the providers are allocated a number of training places at a fixed price of €3,633 per place per annum, regardless of the level or type of intervention provided (IST/SST or Incentre/ Employer-based). Contracts are reviewed and renewed annually. However, based on our discussions with FÁS personnel and providers, it would appear that contracts are typically renewed regardless of whether agreed placement targets are achieved. In fact, the FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People (2006) notes that nearly 50% of STP participants do not acquire nationally recognised certification despite the 80% target set in the operating guidelines for Specialist Training Providers.

The special training providers employ and/or contract a range of personnel to deliver services e.g. trainers, literacy tutors, psychologists, placement officers, rehabilitation officers and others. The range of support personnel made available to trainees involved in special training is quoted by providers as one of the principal reasons that their services are of particular benefit to trainees with disabilities.

The providers we consulted also said that training is certified through, for example, FETAC, City and Guilds or other routes depending on the discipline i.e. alternate certification routes may be necessary for particular activities such as equestrian and driving instruction.

#### **4.6 Promoting Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities**

All mainstream FÁS services are advertised through a variety of means including brochures, flyers, public advertisements and events. The availability of special training provision itself is not heavily marketed by FÁS because STP is, in theory, a fall-back position that kicks in where mainstream provision cannot meet particular needs.

The special training providers tend to have significant visibility amongst the disabled population, particularly at a local level. Some, like the National Learning Network, the Irish Wheelchair Association and the Central Remedial Clinic have national level profile amongst the population in general. In discussion with providers over the course of this study they claim to actively promote and market services amongst the client group but also note that they have long-established local roots and significant contact with disabled people generally and, as such, tend to naturally attract people for whom their services are designed.

## 5. Issues Identified as Influencing Participation by People with Disabilities in Vocational Training Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities

### 5.1 The Labour Market Context for People with Disabilities

The ability to compete in a highly competitive and open labour market such as pertains in the Irish context is critical to any individual's employment prospects, including those of people with disabilities. Market relevant skills as well as qualifications and credentials that are valued by employers are critical to the capacity of individuals to compete. In that regard, and taken at face value, people with disabilities engage in training with a view to enhancing their labour market prospects.

However, recent statistics suggest that people with disabilities are finding it increasingly difficult to compete on the labour market. Table 10 (NDA, 2006) demonstrates the employment rate gap that is evident between people with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts regardless of differences in methodologies and definitions applied. The various data sources show that the employment rate of people with disabilities, however defined, is about half that of their non-disabled peers and the trend would appear to be worsening during a period of rapid employment growth.

**Table 10: Employment Rates<sup>a</sup> of People with Disabilities and People without a Disability**

	LIS 2000	Census 2002	QNHS 2002	QNHS 2004
<b>People with Disabilities</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>37.1</b>
<b>People without a Disability</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>63.3</b>	<b>68.5</b>	<b>67.0</b>
<b>Employment Rate Gap</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>29.9</b>

<sup>a</sup> The differences in employment rates presented above also reflect different definitions of employment in the data sources. The Census data are based on the Principal Economic Status definition while the QNHS data are based on the ILO definition. The LIS adopts a different approach than both of the foregoing but approximates the ILO definition, hence the proximity of the estimates from this source with those of the QNHS.

Some of the key education, training and employment-related statistics and trends reinforcing that observation include the following:

- just over half (50.8%) of people with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years have no formal second level qualifications – the corresponding figure among people without a disability is 18.8%;
- 27% of young people aged 15 to 19 years with a disability had completed their education (i.e. left school) compared to 19% of non-disabled young people in the same age range;

- in the twenty month period between the two special surveys on disability conducted by the CSO in 2002 and 2004 the employment rate for people with a disability fell from 40.1% to 37.1% despite employment growth of 5.6% over the period.

There are a range of possible explanations for the low labour market participation rate amongst people with disabilities including, for example, low levels of initial education, possible employer prejudice and lack of adequate accessible transport options. The issue is not simple; however, accepting that reality, the function of further education and training is to counteract skill and possible certification deficits with a view to better equipping participants to compete in an open labour market. At the time of drafting, comprehensive statistics were not available regarding the outcomes being achieved for people with disabilities through STPs although the Efficiency and Effectiveness review previously mentioned should provide that information. What is evident from the 2004 FÁS /ESRI follow-up survey referred to above is that the rate of placement to employment is diminishing and this is occurring despite significant employment growth. That raises a number of questions regarding the efficacy of the training and skills provision from an open labour market perspective, the motivation of people with disabilities in pursuing specialised rather than mainstream training but also the capacity and willingness of mainstream providers to accommodate people with disabilities. It also raises the question, given what we know about the education and training profile of people with disabilities in Ireland and what we know about the nature of the Irish labour market, as to whether employment placement is an appropriate and relevant measure of success in respect of the interventions provided by the STPs and/or whether it might not be better, more realistic and potentially achievable to prioritise or further emphasise progression from and interaction between specialist and mainstream provision rather than measure direct employment outcomes.

While it is the case that FÁS takes a broad definition of progression in respect of STPs, the ongoing failure by special training providers to meet employment placement targets suggests, for example, that the targets are set too high, that such targets are inappropriate to the client group and/or that the providers are simply not performing.

As it stands, the poor labour market performance of people with disabilities, including the poor outcomes derived from FÁS-funded training through the STPs, somewhat undermines the central objective of this study, i.e. the identification and transfer of good practice in relation to the accommodation of people with disabilities in vocational education with a view to labour market reintegration. So, while it is possible and probably legitimate to say that the provision of person centred, own-paced training with a range of supports (literacy, psychological, guidance etc.) enhances the training experience of participants, it is difficult to elaborate by suggesting, *ceteris paribus*, that the transfer of same into a mainstream setting would result in better progression and labour market outcomes for the participants in question as available data suggests that, despite these supports, the labour market performance of people with disabilities is worsening.

That is not to glibly suggest that there is no value in the training provided by the STPs, simply to observe that the outcomes are less than those expected or targeted and that the general employment trajectory of people with disabilities in a thriving labour market, is downward sloping. We return to this issue below in our conclusions and recommendations.

## 5.2 The Rationale for Special Training Provision

There are three broad types of need that are intended to be addressed and met through STPs:

- Needs relating to access (e.g. duration, literacy, Braille, signing);
- Needs relating to training content and duration (e.g. specialised trainers, individualised approach to the curricula, additional support modules etc.) ;
- Non-occupational training-related needs (managing medications, personal finance etc.).

Some people with disabilities may require assistance or significant assistance in one or more of these areas. Others may require limited assistance and some no assistance whatsoever, such is the heterogeneity amongst the population of people with disabilities.

In any event, the special training providers we consulted for the purposes of this study said they provided a wide range of supports including: psychological and counselling support; literacy/numeracy supports; and rehabilitation supports. The ratio of trainers to participants is, typically, 1:10 for IST and 1:12 for SST level provision. In addition, the duration of training is longer than would apply in a mainstream setting.

The rationale for special training provision is that, in the judgement of FÁS Employment Services through which the Gateway System is operated, certain individuals require particular supports that cannot be made available to them in a mainstream setting. The referral of any individual to special training should therefore be based on a judgement call following engagement between an Employment Service Officer and the client. However, as discussed below, it appears that in the majority of cases, people with disabilities present to Employment Services having independently secured an offer of a place on a programme with a special training provider and, following the formality of registration with FÁS through Employment Services, are referred back to that course/programme.

## 5.3 Initial Contact between Prospective Trainees and Special Training Providers

Based on our discussions with FÁS staff and with representatives of STPs (see Annex 3, page 48 for list of interviewees) it appears that the majority of would-be clients contact the provider in advance of contacting FÁS Employment Services. This pattern seems to have developed for a number of reasons, including tradition and word of mouth but also, according to the providers, as a result of active engagement with people with disabilities and marketing of services available to them.

The fact that the majority of people with disabilities contact a special training provider before contacting FÁS is not, in and of itself, an issue. The services provided appear, on the face of it, to be person centred and the providers have long established presence in their communities. In any event, all clients must ultimately contact FÁS. Based on our discussions and the available literature it would appear that individuals can be assisted by the provider in contacting and registering with FÁS although often the individual will register with FÁS independently.

Although it was outside the scope of this study to comprehensively establish the practices of providers on meeting a would-be client, it would appear that the level of initial interaction between the provider and the individual differs from place to place. In certain instances the individual will be asked to register with FÁS prior to receiving assessment and/or induction whereas in other instances the individuals will undergo an initial orientation and assessment before referral to FÁS.

Typically the individual is referred on to FÁS to register and is instructed to inform FÁS that he/she has been offered a place on a particular programme.

#### 5.4 Contact with FÁS

The individual who contacts and registers with FÁS in relation to special training, and states that he/she has been accepted onto a given course, is typically referred back onto that course by Employment Services. This might go some way to explaining how 75% of the 1,555 people with disabilities in FÁS supported training are accommodated through specialist provision in a segregated setting.

The circularity of this type of arrangement is problematic in that it suggests that people with disabilities may not be engaged with by Employment Services in the same manner as other clients and may not, consequently, be considered for mainstream courses that may be more appropriate for them. However, FÁS' Strategy for the Vocational Integration of People with Disabilities seems to recognise the need for a more pro-active engagement with people with disabilities and the need "to more actively and openly [take] into account, at the planning and development stage, exactly how labour market services and programmes impact on disabled people" (p. 5) in line with a recommendation made in the Bearing Point Report (2003). That report noted there was room to increase the number of disabled people on mainline training, with the correct supports, and to improve operational provision within and between the various forms of provision.

#### 5.5 Summary

People with disabilities appear to be attracted to special training providers because of their visibility amongst the disabled community, through word of mouth or other introduction such as responding to pro-active marketing / advertising on the part of the providers themselves.

The providers offer a person-centred training experience that includes on-site support in guidance/counselling, literacy/numeracy provision, psychological and other areas of need. In addition, the ratio of trainer to trainees is low by comparison with mainstream provision and the duration of programmes is longer. Each trainee attracts a per annum fee of almost €14,000 to allow for the provision of training and related supports.

However, given that 75% of all persons with a disability engaged in FÁS sponsored training are placed in special training it would appear that such training is almost the default rather than the exceptional position and this appears to somewhat undermine FÁS's mainstreaming remit. The process of recruitment/registration as described above further emphasises the manner in which people with disabilities tend to be automatically routed into a segregated setting.

If it were the case that the special training providers achieved significant progression and employment related outcomes for participants then the argument would simply be about the desirability or otherwise of segregated training. However, because the certification and employment outcomes achieved through special training are significantly below target when taken as a whole, the issue is far more significant and raises fundamental questions about the efficacy of the sub-contracted system currently in place in terms of outcomes and/or the facilitation of the labour market insertion of people with disabilities.



## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

The principal purpose of this measure study is to identify the strategies, systems, practices and supports that are in place to support the access, participation and outcomes achieved by people with disabilities across the programmes and activities funded under the measure with a view to extracting lessons that may be of benefit in the context of mainstream, non-segregated settings. In that regard the study places a particular emphasis on the strategies, systems, practices and supports provided by Specialist Training Providers to support the access, participation and progression of their clients.

We can conclude that the STPs have, broadly speaking, been successful in attracting people with disabilities into training and in retaining them in training. This is achieved through active engagement with and development of profile amongst the population of people with disabilities. The providers are typically approached by the individuals seeking a training place – those individuals are presenting themselves on the basis of word of mouth, on foot of exposure to advertisement of services and the general visibility of relevant organisations within communities.

Once initial contact has been made it would appear that providers tend to favour some initial assessment of the client and some induction time, prior to referring the client to FÁS, with a view to ensuring that the client is happy with what is on offer and that what is on offer is of use to the client. In that regard the providers would appear to be fulfilling part of the role of the national employment services, so much so that clients almost always end up on the programme or course agreed for them following their formal registration with FÁS.

Once engaged in training, the trainees are supported as necessary (psychological, guidance, literacy / numeracy, personal effectiveness etc.) with a view to successful completion of the training programme. Significant allowances are also made to cover periods of illness without the trainee suffering economic loss due to persistent absence from training.

The process and the models in operation appear to reflect what is considered to be good practice in person-centred, flexible provision; however, the outcomes achieved as a result of training interventions provided by the STPs are poor. Not alone are employment outcomes poor, so too are certification outcomes. Without certification there is practically no chance of employment, other than menial employment, in the current market and competition for such employment is particularly acute given recent immigration patterns.

Although any conclusive judgement is beyond the scope of this study, the failure to achieve agreed outcomes can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways. For example, it may be that: the targets set are unrealistic; some of the training content is not market relevant and is currently mis-categorised (i.e. while it falls under the FÁS remit, it might better sit under a rehabilitation heading within the ambit of the HSE); that some of the trainees have extreme

disabilities that make employment-placement difficult; and/or that at least some of the trainees are not committed to working in an open labour market context and did not intend to progress beyond training. The Efficiency and Effectiveness review previously referenced should throw some light on the subject.

Based on the work undertaken to complete this study, the STPs appear to be successful in recruiting participants and in retaining them in training through the delivery of a person-centred, flexible model of vocational training. They have been less effective in achieving satisfactory outcomes for clients based on agreed targets and this aspect needs to be closely monitored and addressed by FÁS.

In fact, the monitoring of the entire relationship between FÁS and the STPs may need to be reviewed, with particular emphasis on the interaction of Employment Services with people with disabilities and with an emphasis on the inter-relationship between STP provision and mainstream FÁS provision. As it stands, the function of Employment Services would often appear to be carried out by the provider other than for the formality of registration and, in that regard, it would appear that people with disabilities are often automatically routed to STP centres without adequate consideration being given to possible alternatives. It is also the case that STP centres and related provision tend to be treated as completely separate from direct FÁS -led provision and this results in an 'either/or' rather than an 'as well as' type choice for people with disabilities.

These latter points are confounded, in turn, by the fact that special training providers are recompensed on a per capita basis. The pressure to fill available places with a view to supporting the existing infrastructure and associated resources may result in systematic issues in both directing into and retaining people in certain types of provision.

In our view there is scope for better integration between the systems with a view to ensuring the most suitable placements and outcomes for people with disabilities. This could take the form of ensuring the more pro-active engagement of the Local Employment Service (LES) with special training providers and people with disabilities in recognition of the fact that people with disabilities tend to present to the STPs (for reasons earlier outlined) in a manner that they choose not to with FÁS. This may ensure that people with disabilities are exposed to all possible options rather than to local special training provider-specific options only. Greater levels of interaction between the LES, the National Employment Service, FÁS training centres and STP centres might also encourage greater fluidity in the available provision and may contribute to increased progression outcomes (which, given the probable low base from which many customers start, may be a better measure of success than direct employment outcomes) and may also act as measured and progressive means through which mainstream centres can become increasingly sensitised to the needs of people with disabilities.

## **6.2 Conclusions and Recommendations Regarding Data and Reporting on Pathways to Employment for People with Disabilities**

FÁS gathers a significant amount of data about trainees it supports, regardless of where the actual training takes place or who delivers it. It also carries out regular follow-up surveys and has included follow-up on STPs in that exercise. As noted above, FÁS has also commissioned a Customer Satisfaction Survey concerning the experiences of people with disabilities who have engaged with FÁS, including those who have engaged via STPs and the organisation is committed to ongoing customer satisfaction surveys in the future.

In that regard the system is strong in its capacity to gather, analyse and provide data. However, the system for monitoring the relationship between FÁS and the STPs, with a particular emphasis on the achievement of targets, progression to mainstream training and related matters is weak and merits attention with a view to ensuring that STPs are performing and delivering labour-market and otherwise relevant training. This need is recognised in both the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment's Sectoral Plan and in FÁS's own Training Strategy.

In order to better ascertain the relative efficacy of the training provided we would recommend that, in addition to the data typically gathered to describe FÁS participants, some effort is made to systematically gather data regarding the type and severity of the disability of customers as these factors may be seen to have a significant effect on qualifications attained and other outcomes. This type of dis-aggregation of the population of people with disabilities in training may also help relevant organisations to focus on required and differentiated accommodation strategies and to further tailor provision based on more precisely identified need. It is worth noting, however, that FÁS has discussed the dis-aggregation issue with its National Advisory Committee on Disability and it was decided not to take this approach as services were offered and provided on the basis of individual necessity rather than disability type.

### **6.3 The Effectiveness of Measure 16 in Addressing the Labour Market Inequality Experienced by People with Disabilities**

Until the Efficiency and Effectiveness review as previously referenced is complete, it will not be possible to ascertain exactly what aspects of special training are successful in terms of progression and employment outcomes. However, taken as a whole, the available data suggest that the provision is relatively ineffective in employment and progression terms. The 2004 Follow-Up Survey of FÁS Participants (FÁS /ESRI, 2005) found that 29% of people with disabilities in training at the time of the interview were employed representing a five percentage point drop on the previous survey (one year earlier) and the lowest progression to employment in 10 years.

This coincides with a downturn in the general participation of people with disabilities in the labour market as evidenced through national statistics quoted in Section 5 above. As such, it is recognised that there are many factors at play that influence the labour market potential of people with disabilities including, for example, previous educational experience (the followup survey also shows that 37% of participants had not obtained a Leaving Certificate), possible employer prejudice and competition in an open labour market for low-skilled and other jobs.

However, employment outcomes are low as is the achievement of nationally recognised certification. Based on our discussions for the purposes of this study, the fact that agreed targets between FÁS and the STPs have not been achieved does not appear to have been taken into account in the renewal of contracts or allocation of places. The monitoring system appears to be lacking in that regard although the need to tighten it up is noted in FÁS's own strategic documents as well as the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment.

#### 6.4 Lessons Relevant to Improving the Capacity of Measures that are Not Targeted to Accommodate People with Disabilities

The NLN takes up 64% of all STP places and, as such, it is useful at this stage to revisit its own description of its services via its web-site where it suggests that what sets it apart from other training providers is its capacity to address all of the factors that will affect a student's prospects of obtaining and retaining a job in their chosen field.

*This emphasis on addressing all of the factors that affect people with disabilities in the context of vocational education and training is common amongst STP providers. They recognise that it is not adequate to provide standard skills training in the absence of other supports that may be necessary ranging from career planning, the provision of personal and social skills, literacy and numeracy and other inputs as required.*

It is worth noting that the FÁS Training Strategy commits FÁS to providing a dedicated budget for training supports to training centre managers with a view to paying for assistive technology, training support assistants, transport, interpreters and other supports as necessary. In the past, training services have managed to respond to need as it arose; however, the real challenge in the context of dedicated training support budgets will be to use such budgets to further develop and improve services to attract people with disabilities and other marginalised groups into training, thereby sending out an "open for business" message to people with disabilities and other communities rather than reacting to individuals as they present.

All of the STPs either employ or deploy specialists in order to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. It is not clear to us why this type of enhanced support cannot be provided in a mainstreamed setting as a matter of course although the mainstreaming definition that underpins the current system is supported by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and FÁS.

The emphasis on communicating with people with disabilities is also pronounced in the sector. Through close contact with the disabled population, the STPs develop visibility and build relationships and trust. A number of reports, including the Disability Customer Survey 2002 (Ralaheen Ltd, 2003) and the Measure Study of Specific Skills Training (ESU, 2004) completed as part of this series have recommended that FÁS could improve its communication and engagement with people with disabilities with a view to attracting more people with disabilities into mainstream provision. Interestingly, Goal 8 of the FÁS Statement of Strategy 2006 to 2009 commits the organisation to improving communications and relationships with all stakeholders and to communicate proactively with customers to enable them to make informed choices. In fact, one of the core values of the organisation as articulated in the Strategy is Proactive Customer Service – anticipating customers' needs and responding to them through mutual identification of needs and working with them to achieve agreed outcomes in an ethos of quality and service excellence.

Therefore FÁS is both aware of this deficiency and the need to address it from an equality and/or social inclusion perspective. The same can be said of practically all of the observations in this study. In the context of the sectoral planning exercise and FÁS's own strategic statements, aims and objectives, it is clear that FÁS is committed to progressing the agenda. In the case of people with disabilities, there is a pronounced need to design and deliver systems and to establish sets of relationships that better service the interests of people with disability in terms of vocational training and employment opportunities given the demonstrably poor outcomes being achieved within the current context.

## 6.5 Concluding Comments and Observations

In conclusion, it would appear that the STPs are and have been successful in attracting people with disabilities to their services. In that regard it would appear that there are lessons that mainstream providers can learn from them regarding local visibility, trust within the community of people with disabilities, declared presence and history of tailored supports and so on.

On the other hand it would appear that the STPs are less successful in achieving progression outcomes for their customers. As noted above, this may be related to a range of factors (educational history of customers, nature and type of disability, employer prejudice, nonalignment of certification etc.); however, whatever the combination of reasons, it means that the labour market integration of people with disabilities is limited. The mainstream providers are successful in their progression and employment placement outcomes (for a more generally profiled trainee population) and may have lessons to transmit to the STPs in this regard.

From our perspective, one of the key issues in relation to the maximisation of outcomes for people with disabilities from vocational training is to define realistic and achievable outcomes along a spectrum of provision. Once this is agreed then the system necessary to deliver on those outcomes will be more apparent. That system will, in our view, need to be a far more integrated and fluid one that presents the customer with choices within and between systems rather than what appears to be a de facto either/or option within the situation now pertaining. The work of FETAC and the NQAI should assist in this process and in the development of automatic links and equivalences between provision, removing ambiguity and creating clearer pathways for the user that should, in turn, make it easier to create more meaningful dialogue between providers outside of a strict monitoring relationship.

Whereas much of the current emphasis is on process and whereas current monitoring of outcomes results in little or no action (e.g. failure to achieve targets does not result in subsequent penalty) because there appears to be tacit agreement that the targets are perhaps unrealistic, we contend that a more integrated system taking the best aspects of practice regarding recruitment, assessment, access, retention and achievement of outcome and that is designed with a view to concentrating on realistic progression oriented targets, would be more likely to result in enhanced outcomes for people with disabilities. It would, in turn, help to gradually build the disability competence and confidence of the mainstream system.

# Annex 1

## The 10 Measures of EHRDOP to which the WEOP Specifically Applies

Measure	Implementing Department	Implementing Agency
<b>M3 Active Measure for the LTU and Socially Excluded</b>	<b>DETE</b>	<b>FÁS (with elements contracted to local bodies (e.g., in relation to implementing CE))</b>
<b>M4 Early Education</b>	<b>DES</b>	<b>St. Patrick's and DIT (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education)</b>
<b>M9 Third Level Access</b>	<b>DES</b>	<b>HEA, Institutes of Technology, VEC's</b>
<b>M11B Early School Leavers – Youthreach and Travellers</b>	<b>DES</b>	<b>VEC's (in respect of out of school centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres)</b>
<b>M12B Sectoral Entry Training – Tourism</b>	<b>DAST</b>	<b>Fáilte Ireland</b>
<b>M13 Skills Training for the Unemployed and Redundant</b>	<b>DETE</b>	<b>FÁS</b>
<b>M15 Employment Support Services</b>	<b>DSFA</b>	<b>DSFA (Employment Support Service Unit with the DSFA)</b>
<b>M21 Lifelong Learning – Back to Education Initiative</b>	<b>DES</b>	<b>VECs, Non-VEC Schools, Community Groups</b>
<b>28B Training of Trainers</b>	<b>DETE</b>	<b>FÁS</b>
<b>32B Training of Trainers Infrastructure</b>	<b>DETE</b>	<b>FÁS</b>

## Annex 2

### List of STP Providers

- National Learning Network (at 29 locations throughout the country)
- Abode (Cork)
- HSE (formerly North-Western Health Board)
- Sligo Institute of Technology
- Donegal VEC
- APT in Tullamore, Co. Offaly
- St. Christopher's in Longford
- Order of Malta
- Ability Enterprises in Mayo
- Festina Lente in Bray Co. Wicklow
- CWCW in Enniscorthy Co. Wexford
- Cluain Training
- Central Remedial Clinic in Clontarf, Dublin
- Thomas Court
- Plant Market
- Prosper Fingal Training Centre
- GHIS
- Glen College
- St John of God
- Threshold
- Irish Wheelchair Association

## Annex 3

### List of Interviewees

**Shira Melhman:**

Director Equality and Social Inclusion, FÁS

**Alan Chapman:**

Manager, Disability Policy, FÁS

**Frank Kavanagh:**

Manager, Community Services, FÁS Head Office

**Chris Kane:**

Manager, Community Services, Finglas

**Sean Roche:**

Manager, Community Services, Dundalk

**Mary Leech:**

Manager, Community Services, Portlaoise

**Jill Carey:**

Festina Lente Foundation, Bray, Co. Wicklow

**John Rooney:**

National Learning Network, Cavan

**Frank Cameron:**

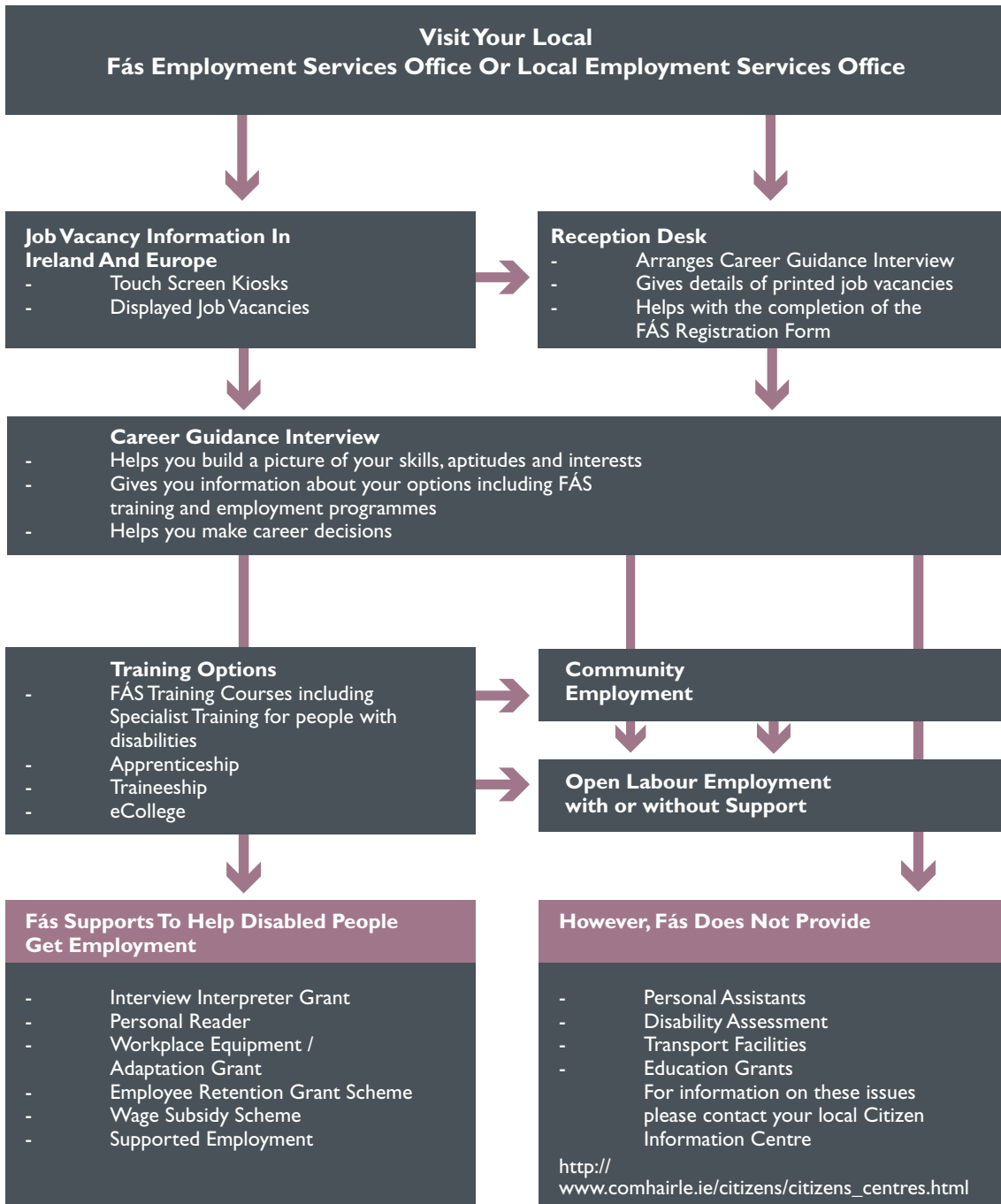
Eve Holdings, Thomas Street, Dublin



# Annex 4

## Steps to Employment for Disabled People

FÁS provides a range of services to help people find paid employment. If you are interested, here's what to do.



Brochure developed in conjunction with the Forum of People with Disabilities

## Equality Studies Unit

Measure 33A of the Employment and Human Resources Development  
Operational Programme

Funded by the Irish Government and part-financed by the European  
Union under the National Development Plan, 2000-2006  
*Your Plan – Your Future*



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS