

**3 %**

**3% target must be achieved by 2002**

The Government is committed to implementation of the 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the public service.

The commitment is part of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and must be achieved during the term of the Programme - no later than December, 2002. All public sector organisations are obliged to put arrangements in place to ensure that the target is achieved or surpassed during the currency of the programme.

## WHO CAN HELP and with WHAT?

### **Comhairle**

Advice in relation to workplace  
adaptation and equipment  
Tel: (01) 874 7503

### **Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs**

Information on the Disability Allowance  
Information on the Back to Work Allowance  
Tel: (043) 45211  
Tel: (01) 704 3165

### **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**

Copies of the agreed outline Code of Practice  
Information and support in relation to specific  
recruitment competitions for people with  
disabilities  
Tel: (01) 663 2623

### **Equality Authority**

Your obligations under the  
Employment Equality Act, 1998  
Information and advice under the  
Equal Status Act, 2000  
Tel: (01) 417 3333  
Text phone: (01) 417 3385  
Lo Call: 1890 245 545

### **FÁS**

The Positive to Disability Award  
Payment of Workplace Adaptation and  
Equipment Grants  
Tel: (01) 607 0500

### **Your Line Department**

Your obligations under the 3%  
target for people with disabilities



## Positive Action for People with Disabilities

Assisting public sector bodies to  
achieve the 3% employment target

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# 3%

## Background

The Equality Authority and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform are undertaking a series of initiatives in partnership to assist, encourage and support organisations in the public service to meet the 3% employment target. This brochure is one initiative in the series that also includes a programme of regional seminars, an information booklet and a research project.

## Monitoring Committee

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform chairs a Committee whose task is to monitor and guide progress towards achievement of the 3% target. The Monitoring Committee comprises representatives of Government Departments and the social partners. The initiatives are being undertaken with the support of the Monitoring Committee.

## Employment Equality Act, 1998

The Act outlaws discrimination against people with disabilities, and on eight other grounds, in relation to employment, training, work experience, conditions of employment and promotion. The definition of disability for the purposes of the Act is wide, so discrimination on grounds of any disability, whether a minor or more serious impairment, is not permitted.

The Act came into operation on 18 October, 1999 and, since that date, employers must ensure that their practices and procedures prohibit less favourable treatment for people with disabilities. The Act applies to all employees, and applicants for employment, who are competent, capable and available to do the job on offer. In the case of an employee with a disability, the employer must take all reasonable steps to accommodate the needs of the person concerned. There is a “nominal cost to the employer” test in the legislation applying to reasonable accommodation. This test does not remove from the employer the obligation to provide a reasonable accommodation, where necessary through use of Workplace Adaptation and Equipment Grants administered by FÁS.

## Positive Action

The 3% target for the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector is a Government-led positive action measure to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into employment. Public service employers are expected to take specific initiatives, suited to their circumstances, to recruit and retain employees with disabilities in order to meet the target in the committed timeframe.

A graphic consisting of two adjacent red squares. The left square contains the white number '3' and the right square contains the white percentage symbol '%', together representing the 3% target.

Most public service employers have a strong record of facilitating the retention of existing employees who acquire a disability during their working life. These employees may count towards the 3% target where the disability is such as to come within the definition set out below. The remainder of the target numbers may come from the recruitment of employees with a disability into the employment, either through the general recruitment process or through specific positive action initiatives geared to attract people with disabilities.

### Barriers

In meeting the 3% target, it is particularly important that public sector employers identify and seek to remove or reduce barriers to recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities where it is within their competence to do so.

Among the main barriers that may be identified at recruitment level in the public service are:

- *the specification of a minimum educational requirement* (for example, the Leaving Certificate or equivalent formal qualifications may be less frequently held by people with disabilities). Employers may need to examine whether there are suitable alternative means of assessing future job suitability and performance;
- *the requirement for full time working/attendance during normal office hours*. Job redesign or part-time working may be necessary elements in an initiative to attract people with disabilities into employment and to retain them. The earnings ceilings for retention of Disability Allowance and eligibility for Back to Work Allowance (£250 per week from 4th April, 2000) may be relevant in certain cases.

### Definition of Disability

The definition of a person with a disability for the purposes of the 3% target is a person with a physical, sensory or psychological impairment which may:

- have a tangible impact on their functional capability to do a particular job; or
- have an impact on their ability to function in a particular physical environment; or
- lead to a discrimination in obtaining or keeping employment of a kind for which they would otherwise be suited.

## Some actions to achieve the

### 3% target

#### **Put a Code of Practice in place**

The Monitoring Committee for the 3% target has agreed an outline code of practice for the employment of people with disabilities which provides a useful template for most public service organisations. The Monitoring Committee has asked all public service organisations to develop and adopt a code of practice suitable to their needs. This year, for the first time, public service employers have been asked to report to the Monitoring Committee on whether they have a code of practice in place through the Annual Census of People with Disabilities in the Public Service.

#### **Ensure that your workplace is accessible**

Most workplaces can be made accessible to people with disabilities following some careful planning and financial outlay. Many larger public service organisations operate from more than one location, some offices may already be accessible, or can be made accessible with minimum effort and expense. The Government is committed, again through the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, to making all public services accessible to people with disabilities over the next five years. Work undertaken in the context of the 3% target will also advance action in relation to this commitment.

#### **Obtain the Positive to Disability Award**

The Positive to Disability Award, given to organisations in the Public and Private Sector which operate to a high standard of excellence in their employment policies towards people with disabilities, is administered by FAS. The Monitoring Committee for the 3% target recommends that public service organisations with a good track record in employing and providing facilities and services to people with disabilities should actively work to obtain the Positive to Disability Award.

#### **Have a specific recruitment**

**competition for people with disabilities**  
Some public service organisations will need to put in place specific proactive initiatives to ensure effective implementation of the 3% target within the committed time frame. One useful approach, which has had considerable success in the civil service, has been to hold specific recruitment level competitions targeted towards people with disabilities. Organisations might consider undertaking such a competition(s) in partnership with other organisations in the same sector or geographical area. This would enable additional recruitment and related costs to be shared and a public profile for the initiative, sufficient to attract as broad a field of candidates as possible, to be secured

#### **Train key personnel**

Provide relevant sensitivity and awareness training for senior managers, personnel officers, members of interview boards, equality officers and other key staff as a matter of priority, and in due course for other staff.

### **Set targets and monitor and review progress**

The Government's commitment is to achieve or surpass the 3% target level of employees with a disability in the public sector by December, 2002.

Each public service organisation can play its part by:

- establishing written interim and final target levels for employment of people with disabilities in line with the commitment;
- putting in place an action plan geared to deliver on the commitment;
- monitoring and reviewing progress on a regular basis to ensure that the target is achieved within the Government's committed timeframe;
- providing a specific budget to implement action plans and to monitor and review progress towards achievement of the target.