

VISION FOR CHANGE – REPORT OBJECTIVES & RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT

PERIOD ENDING: DECEMBER 2009

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

VISION – Working in Partnership with Service Users, facilitating recovery & community reintegration

**Objective:
Belonging & Participating: Social Inclusion**

4.1 *All citizens should be treated equally. Access to employment, housing and education for individuals with mental health problems should be on the same basis as every other citizen.*

Progress to date:

Depts of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Environment Heritage and Local Government and Education and Science

FÁS has mainstreamed its services for people with disabilities. Access to employment for people with disabilities, including those with mental health problems are dealt with in the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment's Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005. This Plan outlines the Department's key initiatives in promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labour market, as further elaborated in an outline for the implementation of a Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities. A key focus of the Strategy is on ensuring that systems, programmes and supports are integrated and complementary across the range of Government services with a view to providing a continuum of supports that address the full spectrum of needs of people with disabilities who wish to avail of training and employment opportunities.

Progress on the labour market measures contained in the Sectoral Plan is monitored by the Department in conjunction with the Consultative Forum on an Employment Strategy, and the National Disability Stakeholders Group, as established under Towards 2016 to monitor overall progress under the National Disability Strategy.

Disabled peoples' rights of equal access to employment are protected by the Disability Act, 2005 and the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004. The latter prohibits discrimination on a number of grounds including disability.

List any problems encountered with implementation of recommendation:

None

Corrective Action:

Not applicable

4.6 *Evidence-based approaches to training and employment for people with mental health problems should be adopted and such programmes should be put in place by the agencies with responsibility in this area.*

Progress to date:

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Systems are in place.

FETAC Certification is a requirement for all FÁS Training Programmes. Cessation of social welfare payments is evidence of movement to the open labour market. FÁS Research and Planning carries out periodic surveys on its clients, including those with disabilities.

List any problems encountered with implementation of recommendation: None

Corrective Action: Not applicable

Objective:

Maximising Rehabilitation & Recovery

12.7 The development of formal coordination structures between health services and employment agencies should be a priority if the delivery of seamless services is to be facilitated.

Progress to date:

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between FÁS and the Department of Social & Family Affairs. The overall objective is to augment co-operation and collaboration between FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs in the interests of their joint customers. The Memorandum of Understanding was updated in 2009 with a view to reflecting the changing labour market environment and commitments under Towards 2016 relating to activation measures, and representing best operational practice between the two organisations.

The Memorandum of Understanding will be further updated and revised in 2010 on a work in progress basis in order to reflect continuing changes in the external labour market, government activation measures and policies, and a commitment to further strengthening co-operation and collaboration between FÁS and Department of Social and Family Affairs in the provision of services to their joint clients.

A Protocol relating to mutual referrals of applicants with disabilities between FÁS and the HSE is in place under the aegis of the Cross Sectoral Group which has replaced the National Co ordination Committee (NCC). In mid 2009 all the functions of the NCC were transferred to the Cross Sectoral Group comprising the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs, FÁS and the HSE. This group provides a mechanism for a cross-sectoral approach between Departments and agencies with responsibility for the delivery of the mainstreaming agenda in respect of the employment of people with disabilities.

List any problems encountered with implementation of recommendation: None

Corrective Action:
Not applicable

12.8 To facilitate the service user in re-establishing meaningful employment, development of accessible mainstream training support services and coordination between the rehabilitation services and training and vocational agencies is required.

Progress to date:

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

The FÁS Strategy for Vocational Training provision for people with disabilities addresses these issues and makes relevant recommendations along with timelines for intervention. The Strategy forms an integral part of the Sectoral Plan of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The report entitled ‘ A Framework for the Training and Employment of People with Disabilities’ compiled by an Ad Hoc Mental Health Forum in 2007 provides a comprehensive overview of existing services for this

target group, with recommendations to FÁS for improvement. Many of these recommendations regarding FÁS training are currently in the process of being implemented under the FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People.

All FÁS Services are open to people with disabilities and the organisation welcomes applications from those who wish to progress and enter the open labour market. Both FÁS and the HSE recognise that the transition for people with disabilities from HSE rehabilitative training to FÁS Vocational training can be difficult and this has been evidenced by high drop out levels in the past.

In order to address this need, both the HSE and FÁS are scheduling 3 Test Bridging Programmes between HSE Rehabilitative Training and FÁS Vocational Training in 2010. These tests will be evaluated on completion and will inform policy and practice going forward.

A specific recommendation for developing a Protocol for FÁS mainline vocational training provision for people with mental health difficulties, which is contained in the Mental Health Forum's report, has been developed and disseminated for use by FÁS staff. The protocol recommends a framework within which FÁS staff can support learners with mental health difficulties in delivering training and providing employment, and community services to this group of FÁS customers.

FÁS in November, 2008 commenced a joint bridging initiative with St. Joseph's Foundation in Charleville, County Cork, to test if people with disabilities can make the transition from rehabilitative training to vocational training with a view to entering the open labour market.

List any problems encountered with implementation of recommendation:

None

Corrective Action:

Not applicable