Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment

Country Report for Ireland

This document is the Country Report produced by Ireland in the context of the EDPC activity on Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment. It is one in a series of Country Reports prepared by the countries participating in this activity. Each Report is published under the responsibility of the country that has prepared it and the views expressed in this document remain those of the country author(s) and not necessarily those of the OECD or its member countries.

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Country Report – Ireland

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Irish national policy is centred on developing an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all, with particular emphasis on groups traditionally under-represented in higher education as well as employment. It is recognised that widening access to education and employment is critical to improving Ireland’s economic competitiveness. This is reflected in policy imperatives such as Towards 2016, the National Development Plan, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the National Skills Strategy. Together these efforts aim to increase participation in tertiary education and employment of certain target groups including students with disabilities. The inclusive policies being pursued at a national level will help to foster a more dynamic and equitable society.

Chapter 1: The Education System in Ireland

Education in Ireland is structured into primary, post-primary, further and higher education. The State facilitates all levels while private fee-paying institutions also operate. Education policy including curricula, syllabi, national examinations and future planning is managed by the Department of Education and Science.

Within the primary education sector there are currently over 450,000 children with most beginning from four years of age. Pre-school programmes such as Early Start also exist in order to address socio-economic disadvantage and also special needs. These schemes aim to tackle educational disadvantage and encourage equal cognitive development from the beginning of the school experience.

The post-primary sector consists of secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Second-level education is based on two cycles, the junior cycle and senior cycle. The senior cycle can be completed over two or three years, depending on participation in Transition Year, culminating in the Leaving Certificate examination.

Further education colleges offer additional training or education, on a part-time or full-time basis, to people who may not have completed secondary education and/or who want to advance their skills or opportunities for employment or higher education. The main providers are Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Further education is recognised as an important educational phase for adults returning to education.

The higher education or third level sector in Ireland comprises seven universities, fourteen institutes of technology and colleges of education. These are State-funded but self-governing. There are also a number of independent private third-level colleges in operation. Universities are essentially concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes whereas the institutes of technology provide a wider range of craft/technical/technological education with higher certificate, ordinary and honours degrees as well as postgraduate opportunities. In addition there are five colleges of education which are dedicated to the training of primary school teachers.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) (est. 1971) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, in respect of which it advises the government and the Minister for Education and Science. One of the main functions of the HEA is to promote equality of opportunity in higher education. Under the Universities Act (1997) and the Institutes of Technology Act (2006), it holds the responsibility of allocating funding to individual institutions as well as reviewing
development plans, quality assurance procedures and equal opportunity policy implementation.

Entry into higher education is based upon the points system of the Leaving Certificate. A student receives a points tally for their performance in the exam. This score is then matched with their course choices. The Central Application Office (CAO, est. 1976) processes applications for undergraduate programmes for all third level institutions. With 150,000 full time students in 2007-2008, Ireland is now above the OECD average for participation rates in State-funded higher education.

Accreditation for further and higher education is provided through the National Framework of Qualifications which was established in 2003. This 10-level system includes a wide range of awards from community training centres to universities. The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) operates from level 1 to 6 where level 5 is equivalent to the Leaving Certificate. Levels 6-10, associated with the higher education sector, are awarded by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The seven universities and Dublin Institute of Technology provide their own awards, which are linked to the award levels provided under the National Framework of Qualifications (e.g. level 8 being an honours bachelor degree or higher diploma). The qualifications system is organised in such a way as to promote a ‘ladder’ progression pathway whereby a student can progress to their maximum academic potential.

Chapter 2: Definitions of Disability

Ireland has developed a range of equality legislation in recent years. Three notable pieces of legislation in respect of definitions of disability are the Education Act (1998), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005).

Drawing on the definition used in the Employment Equality Act enacted earlier the same year, the Education Act (1998) defines ‘disability’ as essentially a medical condition, with the Act outlining various conditions which would meet the definition for disability. The aim of this Act and the Equal Status Acts (2000-2004) was to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of life.

The EPSEN Act (2004) focuses more on the ‘rights-based’ perspective of providing reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities in an educational context. Therefore, disability is not just understood exclusively as a ‘medical’ condition but is also related to the impact the condition has on participating in education. The Act envisages that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) co-ordinates support with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and with schools to develop an educational plan for the person. In addition advice on provision for higher, adult and continuing education should also be provided to adults.

The Disability Act (2005) provides a similar, if more restricted definition of disability to that provided in EPSEN. However, this Act is set in a broader context to ensure access to mainstream services, in a professional, occupational and social context, so as to avoid discrimination. In respect of education, the Act, similar to the EPSEN Act, provides for a process of health and education needs assessment by the HSE and NCSE in order to facilitate educational requirements and future study.

It should be noted that while the various definitions of the three Acts may differ slightly, each definition is appropriate to the context of the legislation itself. Transition issues for people with disabilities should not be affected by the variances in definitions.
Chapter 3: Data

The 2006 Census found that 9.3% (393,785) of all people in Ireland reported a disability, up 1% from the 2002 Census. The largest reported disability in 0 to 19-year-olds was ‘difficulty in learning, remembering and concentrating’ which was 24% of the total for this age group (within this, 10- to 14-year-olds were the largest group).

Between 2005-2008 there was a 46% increase in the provision of reasonable accommodations in State examinations (e.g. reading assistance, scribes, word processors) to students with a disability. One of the major contributing factors to this increase is the opportunities being afforded to people with disabilities to access mainstream education. Nevertheless it demonstrates the continuing need for a variety of services for students with disabilities in the Irish education system at present and looking towards the future.

In respect of the wide range of full- and part-time further education programmes available, there was a total of 8,840 people with a disability enrolled in these courses in 2008. In relation to students enrolled in further education colleges who are accessing the Fund for Students with Disabilities, there has been, between the academic years 2003-2004 and 2008-2009, an almost five-fold increase in funding provided, from €638,000 to €3.12m, with a related increase of beneficiaries from 136 to 401. The vast majority of approvals each year were in the category of ‘specific learning difficulty’.

Historically, people with disabilities had lower levels of participation at all stages of education, but particularly higher education. While there has been an improvement in participation from 1.1% to 4.2% over the period 1998-1999 to 2007-2008 for students with disabilities, there is still very low participation in respect of people with physical and sensory disabilities. The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 aims to double the number of this group of students with disabilities by 2013.

Other data highlights the disparities in terms of educational level attained by people with disabilities and the total population. The data shows that of the total with a disability almost 37% had ceased education after primary education level, compared to 15% of their peers. Additionally the data shows that 8.3% of people with a disability had attained a third level degree or higher compared to 16% of their peers. This clearly illustrates the educational disadvantage associated with people with a disability which in turn affects their employment opportunities.

The inclusion of people with disabilities in employment is a policy imperative at present. However, during the recent decade of economic prosperity (beginning from the mid-1990s) when Ireland was effectively at ‘full employment’, there was a fall in the employment levels, from 40% to 37%, of people with disabilities and long-term illnesses (between the years 2002-2004). In 2006 a comprehensive 3-year employment strategy for people with disabilities was developed and implemented. In addition targets have been put in place to directly address the employment levels of people with disabilities. The National Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 has set a target to increase the employment of people with disabilities from 37% to 45%. The Disability Act (2005) directs that at least 3% of new staff recruited in the public sector are people with a disability. From a 2007 report 51.3% of public sector bodies have achieved this target so far. It should be noted that Ireland is currently experiencing a sharp increase in unemployment levels overall, with an expectation that it could to
rise to 16% in 2010.¹ This in turn will influence the jobs market making it even more competitive with a possible consequence that this could make it more difficult for people with disabilities to gain employment, especially for those without education qualifications.

Chapter 4: Policy

In recent years national policy in Ireland has very much focused on social inclusion in order to create a dynamic and integrated society. Participation of people with disabilities in education and employment is central to national plans currently being implemented. These plans include;

Towards 2016 - Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 outlines a vision for Ireland of a participatory society and economy, with a strong commitment to social justice. The framework stresses the strategic importance of investing in further support measures in the areas of further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular: socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, members of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities, mature students, lone parents and students with a disability. These measures will include; needs assessment, technology support, community-based strategies, childcare supports and access routes.²

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) is a major investment by the Irish government, supported by EU funds, which sets out to enhance the quality of life for all citizens through economic and social infrastructure. Education is an important element of the plan with €2 billion provided for the Student Support/Third Level Access Sub-programme. A high-level goal for social inclusion specific to people with disabilities is included in the plan. In light of the current economic situation, however, it is anticipated that the implementation of the NDP in full will be delayed as the government seeks to stabilise the public finances.

The Fifth Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2007) outlines the steps to be taken if Ireland is to maintain its economic competitiveness into the future and embrace its position as a knowledge economy.

The report forecasts that:

- An additional 260,000 members of the workforce will need to move up to levels 4 and 5 of the National Qualification Framework.
- An additional 170,000 workers will need to up-skill into the higher education levels of the framework (levels 6-10).
- The progression rate to tertiary education will have to increase from 55% to 72%.³

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 was developed by the National Access Office of the HEA in close consultation with the Department of Education and Science. The plan identifies five high-level goals and 34 action points that are required to achieve greater equality and wider participation in higher education. New national targets are set by the Plan within the timeframe of the current National Development Plan 2007-2013 mentioned above.

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¹ Economic and Social Research Institute, Quarterly Economic Commentary, Summer 2009.
The Irish government launched a National Disability Strategy in 2004. This brings together the various strands of strategic policy outlined in this Chapter. Work on the National Disability Strategy is being co-ordinated by the National Disability Authority including monitoring the implementation of sectoral plans prepared by six government departments.

The development of educational pathways is imperative in providing equality of access to education and employment. Appropriate planning by support service providers will impact positively on the transition of a person from one education level to the other and from education to employment. Central to this is the co-ordination of support and a number of programmes as well as organisations exist in order to address this.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), set up under the EPSEN Act, has a specific role in allocating resources to schools for children with special education needs in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science. The NCSE has developed ‘general principles’ to govern transitions between the educational levels.

One of the main functions of the Higher Education Authority is to promote equality of opportunity in higher education (HEA Act 1971). The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education was set up in the HEA in 2003 to co-ordinate this work and to develop and implement a national framework of measures to increase participation in higher education by disadvantaged groups including people with various disabilities.

Transitions from education to employment require a number of workplace-based supports for people with disabilities. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) oversees the re-integration of those excluded from the labour market. The DETE (as part of the Disability Act) is currently implementing a Sectoral Plan, the key focus being ‘to facilitate and improve access to vocational training, employment programmes and open labour market employment opportunities for people with disabilities’. This task is complemented by FÁS (the training and employment authority in Ireland). FÁS operates training and employment programmes, provides a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers, advisory service for industry, and supports community-based enterprises with mainstreamed services for disabled people.

Ireland has, in recent years, developed a range of equality legislation. Much of this legislation is related to educational inclusion, employment and the required support services for both.

The Employment Equality Act 1998 was the first Irish legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment or vocational training on any of nine grounds, including disability. The Education Act 1998 deals with education generally, but also emphasises the rights of children with disabilities and special educational needs. The Education (Welfare) Act (2000) focuses on ensuring that children receive a certain minimum education as required by the Irish Constitution. The Equal Status Act (2000-2004) relates mainly to the provision of services including education. The Act also prohibits discrimination on nine grounds including disability and requires the provision of reasonable accommodation to persons with a disability.

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The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 aims to ensure that a person with special educational needs can be educated where possible in an inclusive environment. This Act establishes a framework for the provision of such education, seeking to ensure that children with special educational needs can access their right to education; ensuring that they can avail of their right to education in the same way as other children of the State.

The Disability Act (2005) addresses several issues including: the provision of disability specific services; sectoral plans; public sector employment; and a Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. Since December 2005 the Disability Act requires all public bodies to ensure that access to services by people with disabilities is fully integrated into overall service provision.

While work continues on the implementation of the EPSEN Act and Disability Act, both are not yet implemented in full. The intention was to implement both of these Acts simultaneously but the difficult current economic circumstances have unfortunately resulted in a deferral until further notice. However, the government will keep the matter under review and is committed to the full implementation of both Acts as soon as possible.

Chapter 5: Funding
The State is the primary funder of all levels of education in Ireland. The Department of Education and Science allocates funding directly for primary level, post-primary level and further education while the Higher Education Authority allocates funding on behalf of the Department for the third level sector. In general the funding allocated provides for mainstream classroom supports, additional special class support, assistive technology and individual supports depending on the various needs of students at different levels of the education cycle. In 2008 a total of over €900m was spent on special education at primary and post-primary levels by the Department of Education and Science.

Both primary and post-primary levels take a similar approach when dealing with funding for pupils with low-incidence disabilities (e.g. physical or sensory disabilities). Allocation for high-incidence disabilities (such as specific learning disabilities), however, differ significantly between the two levels.

In primary education a dual allocation model exists to provide resources for pupils with special educational needs. Under a general allocation model the Department of Education and Science provides an allocation to each primary school, based on total enrolment numbers, to facilitate the provision of learning support for pupils with high-incidence disabilities. With regard to low-incidence disabilities individual applications for resources are made to the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

In post-primary education applications are made to the local SENO within the NCSE for supports required for both high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. The NCSE processes applications in respect of specific supports for all students with disabilities in post-primary, including resource teaching support and special needs assistants. Decisions are made on the level of support which is appropriate to the individual school, which allows for the individual aspects of each school to be taken into consideration during the decision-making process. Additional supports such as assistive technology grants and home tuition are also available.

In relation to third-level education in Ireland, recurrent funding for access in universities, institutes of technology and other designated colleges comes under the
remit of the Higher Education Authority (HEA). From 1996-2005 the HEA supported the development of access programmes by higher education institutions through its Targeted Initiative Funding Programme. This initiative allowed for the development of programmes and infrastructure (including Access and/or Disability officer posts in each higher education institution). A new model for funding access to higher education is being developed by the HEA. This model will include an allocation of an additional amount above the per-capita standard resource to institutions for each under-represented registered student. Since 2006 the HEA also assumed responsibility for the funding of the institute of technology sector with a new funding model similar to the university sector currently being developed.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities provides funding to both further and higher education institutions for the provision of services and supports for full-time students with disabilities. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a student with a disability with assistance and equipment to enable them to access, participate and complete their course of study. The Fund is managed by the National Access Office of the HEA on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. The programme is funded by the Irish government, with assistance from the European Social Fund. Latest figures for the Fund indicate that 3,848 students were approved for support in the 2008-2009 academic year.

In 2006 a new Strategic Innovation Fund was introduced to support projects to enhance collaboration in the sector; improve teaching and learning; support institutional reform; promote access and lifelong learning; and support the development of fourth level education. It is envisaged that initiatives supported under the Strategic Innovation Fund will allow the education system to provide a more inclusive environment for all disadvantaged students, including those with a disability, and add significant value to the experience of education for these learners.

Other opportunities in third level education funding for people with disabilities include the Back to Education Allowance for those on certain social welfare payments and the Student Maintenance Grant which is directed at low-income students, but can include students with a disability.

Employment schemes for people with a disability are managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS. These include the Wage Subsidy Scheme which provides financial incentives to employers outside the public sector to employ people with disabilities for more than 20 hours per week. The Employee Retention Grant Scheme is available to employers when an employee develops a disability in or out of work and may need training or accommodation to keep them employed. Also available are the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant, the Job Interview/Induction Interpreter Grant and the Personal Reader Grant.

**Chapter 6: Provision**

In order to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities in education, training and employment, a number of initiatives have been put in place. These relate to transitional periods between the educational levels and between education and employment.

Education supports in the Irish education system include disability and special needs assistance in order to combat educational disadvantage and encourage social inclusion. Supports associated with post-primary level include examination accommodations for the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. The aim of the accommodations is to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the candidate’s performance whilst not creating an unfair advantage over other
candidates. In 2004 a total of 8,394 reasonable accommodations were provided for State examinations. This had increased to 14,708 reasonable accommodations in 2007.\(^5\) This significant increase is due largely to progressive efforts to further the inclusion and integration of those with disabilities into the ‘mainstream’ schooling system. In terms of the transition from post-primary to tertiary education, a supplementary system for entry to higher education has been developed to facilitate the progression of students with a disability to third level. This involves collaboration between the Central Applications Office and participating higher education institutes. The latest data available for the scheme indicates that in 2008 135 students with a disability secured a place on a higher education course via this supplementary system.

Employment supports co-ordinated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS include a range of initiatives. Specialist Training Providers deliver vocational training to people with disabilities who require intensive support. The Supported Employment Programme is an open labour market initiative providing people with disabilities, who are ‘job-ready’, with supports to help them access the open labour market. The Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme assists the integration of disabled people into the workplace and is available to all companies in the private sector who are interested in employing, retaining or relating to people with disabilities. Between the year 2003 and 2008, there has been an increase of over 30% in the number of people completing these programmes. The increase in funding from €14m in 2000 to €74m in 2008 reflects the level of support and commitment to people with disabilities who are seeking to access the labour market.

There are also non-governmental/non-profit organisations which provide education and employment services for people with disabilities. The National Learning Network provides education and employment services around the country. Each year, the organisation provides vocational and rehabilitative training to more than 5,000 people with disabilities, people with mental health difficulties and others who are distant from the labour market. Willing Able Mentoring is an initiative of the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability and is funded through the EU Equal initiative. This project, which aims to accelerate the transition of graduates with disabilities into the labour market, arranges work placements in a number of companies and organisations in the public and private sectors.

**Chapter 7: Support Services**

Support services for students with disabilities provide information about access to tertiary education and the labour market. At post-primary level career support services are available, via Guidance Counsellors, to advise students on their choices for continuing their education. Higher education institutions have developed careers officer posts and career programmes, with links to employers, so that the student can make an informed decision on their career choice following graduation. A number of institutions have also further developed specific careers support services for learners with a disability.

The National Learning Network in collaboration with the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) run a disability support service which offers a wide range of supports to students with disabilities in eight colleges of further education in Dublin. In all higher education institutions in Ireland there are dedicated access and disability services. The Disability Advisors Working Network is the professional organisation for Disability Officers who are primarily responsible for supporting learners with disabilities in higher education in Ireland.


Chapter 8: Training
The Special Education Support Service (SESS) developed by the Department of Education and Science is one of the main sources of training for primary and post-primary teachers working with children with disabilities and special needs. Teachers with an interest in the provision of special education can apply to the SESS for training. In 2008, the service filled over 23,280 teachers training places. Postgraduate courses in specific special education needs are also available throughout Ireland. The recently established Dublin Centre for Academic Development will provide training opportunities for third level staff in the development of improving teaching quality to enhance students learning experience.

Chapter 9: Parental and Community Involvement
The availability of advice, assistance and social support is very important for people with disabilities and their families. Information on accessing State supports for education and employment helps to create a supportive environment. Parent groups fulfil an important role in providing this support. A central feature of the work of parent groups are information evenings and workshops which provide practical support to families. These support networks are a very important feature in raising the expectations of people with disabilities and parents of people with disabilities who are unfamiliar with the support systems available.

In addition there is a large range of organisations working on behalf of people with disabilities, with the aim of increasing their participation in all aspects of Irish society.

Chapter 10: Future Developments
Significant progress has been made in recent decades in Ireland in creating an inclusive society. Opportunities for people with disabilities which provide equitable access to education and employment are being embedded throughout the respective systems. In addition, government strategies are being implemented which set ambitious targets for policy-makers and service providers for the participation of people with disabilities.

As in many OECD countries, it is clear that the immediate economic challenges in Ireland will impact on all sectors of government services, including disability services. In response we must seek creative solutions. It is imperative that the significant resources available provide effective measures to ensure value for money. This will require flexibility in our policy framework, creative thinking by service providers and a commitment by all to ensure the most efficient and effective use of scarce resources in disability-related health, education and employment services. This represents the next challenge for Ireland in maintaining and further developing pathways to tertiary education and employment for disabled students.
Introduction

The National Policy Context

The thrust of Irish national policy on access to tertiary education and employment for disabled students is very much centred on fostering inclusion and further strengthening economic prosperity through labour market and skills growth, driven in turn by enhancing educational attainment for groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. These policy imperatives are reflected in the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement, the current National Development Plan (NDP), the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 and the National Skills Strategy.

Towards 2016 commits the social partners (employers, trades unions, farming interests and the community and voluntary sector) to investment in additional support measures in the areas of further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, whether in the young adult or working age stage of the life cycle.

The NDP aims to enhance enterprise development, science, technology and innovation, working age training and skills provision to improve economic performance and competitiveness. The NDP also contains as a high-level goal for social inclusion the need to support groups such as those with disabilities into education, training and employment. Quantitative targets for specific groups have been set, to be achieved by 2016.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion aims to tackle poverty and social inclusion in Ireland and is a comprehensive plan of action to improve the living standards of those who are socially excluded. The plan includes high-level goals for people with disabilities.

Ireland’s latest National Skills Strategy research report outlines the steps to be taken if Ireland is to maintain its economic competitiveness into the future. The report details the advances required in relation to the up-skilling of the workforce in Ireland by 2020 and sets out a range of specific targets. The achievement of these targets is very important in the context of improving the educational and skills attainment of people with disabilities.

The targets set by government in relation to increasing participation rates in tertiary education have therefore resulted in a determination to increase the participation rates of those students currently under-represented in higher education, including students with a disability. Policy formulation for education and employment recognises that widening access to higher education is critical to improving Ireland’s economic competitiveness. Therefore the symbiotic relationship between social inclusion and economic prosperity is being acknowledged and pursued across a range of government departments and other public bodies.
Chapter 1

The Education System in Ireland

The Irish education system comprises primary level, post-primary level, the further education sector and higher education. State-funded education is available at all levels, although there are also private fee-paying institutions operating at several levels of the system. Attendance in full-time education is compulsory in Ireland from six to fifteen years of age and is free in the majority of schools and at undergraduate level in higher education. Education is considered a fundamental right under the Irish Constitution.

Responsibility for education lies with the Department of Education and Science. It administers all aspects of education policy including curricula, syllabi and national examinations. The mission of the Department is to provide high-quality education which will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society; and to contribute to Ireland’s social, cultural and economic development. Chief among the Department’s priorities are the promotion of equity and inclusion, quality outcomes and lifelong learning, and planning for education that is relevant to personal, social, cultural and economic needs.

1.1 PRIMARY EDUCATION

There are now over 450,000 children in primary education in Ireland. Although children in Ireland are not obliged to attend school until the age of six, almost all children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday. Thus, a significant percentage of 4-year-olds and almost all 5-year-olds are enrolled in the infant classes in primary schools. In this way, much of what is considered pre-school education in other countries (from age four to six) is provided within the primary system, free of charge, for all children in Ireland.

The Department of Education and Science also provides a number of targeted programmes for 3-year-olds, including programmes for children with special needs, children of Travellers and children experiencing social and economic disadvantage. The most extensive of these - the Early Start pilot pre-school programme – was established in October 1994. This 1-year programme aims to provide children who are most at risk of educational disadvantage with an educational programme that will enhance their development and prevent failure at school. In April 2009, the government announced the introduction from January 2010 of a free pre-school year for all children. The scheme is expected to benefit some 70,000 children, aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months every year. This is a highly significant step in the development of Ireland’s early childhood care and education policy. The provision of a year’s free pre-school to all children will promote equality of opportunity at the most important developmental stage of children’s lives. Regardless of income or ability to pay, all children will be entitled to avail of this pre-school service.

Primary education in Ireland is founded on the belief that high-quality education enables children to realise their potential as individuals and to live their lives to the fullest capacity appropriate to their particular stage of development. The general aims of primary education are:
to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual;

to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society;

to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

The primary curriculum provides for an extensive learning experience and encourages a rich variety of approaches to teaching and learning that cater for the differing needs of individual children.

The revised primary curriculum, launched in 1999, was the first complete revision of the curriculum since 1971. The revised curriculum is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life - spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical. The curriculum reflects the educational, cultural, social and economic aspirations and concerns of Irish society. It also takes account of the changing nature of society and aims to help children to adjust to these changes.

The primary curriculum is divided into the following key areas:

- Language
- Mathematics
- Social, environment and scientific education
- Arts education, including visual arts, music and drama
- Physical education
- Social, personal and health education

The current and capital costs of primary (or 'national') schools, including teachers' salaries, are funded almost entirely by the State, supplemented by local contributions. Schools may receive additional funding according to their circumstances, for example, if they are serving areas of particular disadvantage or children with special needs.

The vast majority of national schools are State-aided parish schools, having been established under religious patronage with the State giving explicit recognition to their denominational character. In recent years, multi-denominational national schools, each under the patronage of a limited company without share capital, have been established in response to local parental demand. A significant number of national schools under religious patronage have also been established in English-speaking areas in which pupils are educated through the medium of the Irish language. There are also a number of Gaelscoileanna (Irish medium schools) under the separate patronage of Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge.6

6 Department of Education and Science website, www.education.ie
1.2 POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The post-primary education sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools are privately owned and managed. The trustees of the majority of these schools are religious communities or Boards of Governors. Vocational schools are administered by Vocational Education Committees while community and comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions.

Building on the foundation of primary education, second-level education aims to provide a comprehensive, high-quality learning environment which enables all students to live full lives, appropriate to their stage of development, and to realise their potential as individuals and as citizens. It aims to prepare students for adult life and to help them proceed to further education or directly to employment.

Second-level education consists of a 3-year junior cycle followed by a 2- or 3-year senior cycle. The Junior Certificate examination is taken at the end of the junior cycle on completion of a Junior Certificate course of three years duration. The junior cycle covers a vital period in young people’s lives when they encounter significant changes in their educational and life experience. The principal objective of the junior cycle is to provide a broad, balanced and coherent programme of study in a variety of curricular areas relevant to their own personal development and to allow them to achieve a level of competence in these courses which will enable them to proceed to senior cycle education.

A three-year senior cycle was introduced in 1984 as an option for second-level schools. The programmes now available at senior cycle include:

- Transition Year
- Established Leaving Certificate
- Leaving Certificate Applied
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

One of the aims of the senior cycle is to encourage students to continue in full-time education after the compulsory school leaving age by providing a range of programmes suited to their abilities, aptitudes and interests.

An important overall objective of the senior cycle is to provide for the holistic development of all students and to foster a sense of self-esteem, self-reliance and innovation to help them to be involved actively in the social and economic future of society.

1.3 TRANSITION YEAR

Transition Year, which has been one of the major innovations in Irish education, is an option provided at the beginning of the 3-year senior cycle that is now firmly embedded in the system. It provides an opportunity for students to experience a wide range of educational inputs and work experience at a remove from the examination focus.

Vocational Education Committees provide a range of education, training and support services for a variety of learners within local communities.
1.4 THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE

The Leaving Certificate examination is held at the end of the senior cycle in post-primary schools. It is the terminal examination of post-primary education. The senior cycle caters for pupils in the 15- to 18-year-old age group. Students normally sit for the examination at the age of seventeen or eighteen, after five or six years of post-primary education.

Pupils following the established Leaving Certificate programme must take at least five subjects, including Irish. The Leaving Certificate is regarded as a ‘high stakes’ examination, as results are aggregated into ‘points’ that determine both entry into higher education (see below) and the courses that may be pursued.

1.4.1 The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) can be described as a Leaving Certificate with a strong vocational dimension. It provides students with the opportunity to realise their potential for self-directed learning, for innovation and for enterprise.

The core of the LCVP includes the following elements which students must take:

- two Leaving Certificate subjects to be chosen from one of the LCVP subject groupings
- a Leaving Certificate Modern European Language or a Vocational Language Module
- mandatory ‘Link’ Modules

LCVP students must take at least five Leaving Certificate subjects – one of which must be Irish.

1.4.2 The Leaving Certificate Applied

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a distinct, self-contained, 2-year Leaving Certificate programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life. The programme puts an emphasis on forms of achievement and excellence which the established Leaving Certificate had not recognised in the past. It is an innovative programme in the way that students learn, in what they learn and in the way their achievements are assessed. It is a person-centred programme involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject-based structure. It has as its primary objective the preparation of participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences which develop the following areas of human endeavour: spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical. The framework of the Leaving Certificate Applied consists of a number of modules grouped under three general headings:

- General Education
- Vocational Education
- Vocational Preparation
The Leaving Certificate Applied is intended to meet the needs of those students who either choose not to opt for other Leaving Certificate programmes or who are not adequately catered for by other Leaving Certificate programmes. The Leaving Certificate Applied does not facilitate direct entry into higher education, but this can be achieved by pursuing a route through further education.

1.5 FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The aims of Further and Adult Education courses are access, transfer and progression. They are, in principle, open to all but the main purpose is to provide a range of supports to people who have left school early or who need further vocational education and training to enhance their employment prospects and to enable them to progress their education up to a standard equivalent to upper secondary level. Further Education courses are provided at Levels 1–6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (see section 1.7 on p.25) where Level 5 is roughly equivalent to an upper second-level qualification and Level 8 would be an honours university degree.

The main providers of these services are the Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

Full-time programmes include:
- Youthreach, which is a programme for early school leavers aged 15–20 years;
- Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for adults who are over 21 years and are unemployed;
- Senior Traveller Training Centres – mostly for members of the Traveller community who are over eighteen years (10% of the cohort are from the settled community); and
- Post-Leaving Certificate courses which offer students accreditation at National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels 5 and 6.

Part-time provision includes:
- Community education, particularly for adults who are hard to reach and are accessing non-formal education as a first return step on the lifelong learning ladder
- Literacy and numeracy for adults with specific needs in this area, including catering for the English language needs of migrants who wish to learn the language or improve their proficiency in English;
- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) enables adults to access part-time education options. This initiative is particularly suitable for adults who are re-entrants on the lifelong learning ladder or have other commitments that do not allow them to partake in full-time education. BTEI is free to students with less than upper, second-level education.
- Self-financed Adult Learning and Education (ALE), usually through evening classes. These classes may be held in public or private colleges and training establishments.

Support services include the Adult Education Guidance Initiative and the provision of childcare support for participants on Youthreach, Traveller Training, VTOS and BTEI.

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8 [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
1.6 HIGHER EDUCATION

The higher education system in Ireland comprises the university sector, the institutes of technology and the colleges of education, all of which are substantially State-funded, autonomous and self-governing. In addition, there is an increasing number of independent private colleges offering professional qualifications and, in some cases, recognised diplomas and degrees.

1.6.1 The Binary System

Developments in higher education, particularly over the past twenty years, have been based on a differentiated system of tertiary education. One part is formed by the universities, which are essentially concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, together with basic and applied research. The second part is formed by the institutes of technology. The institutes of technology provide a comprehensive range of courses from craft/apprentice programmes to higher technical/technological education through 2-year Higher Certificate, 3-year Ordinary Bachelor Degree and 3- to 5-year Honours Bachelor Degrees. The institutes also provide a range of postgraduate programmes at Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and Doctoral level. In addition, the institutes play an important role in providing for recurrent educational needs by way of part-time and evening courses as well as catering for continuing professional education and development of the workforce through innovative partnerships with industry. There is also a growing involvement by the institutes of technology in regionally-oriented applied research. However, within each sector and between the two sectors, a diversity of institutions offer different types and levels of courses.

Universities

There are seven universities in Ireland:

- Trinity College Dublin;
- University College Dublin;
- Dublin City University;
- National University of Ireland, Galway;
- National University of Ireland, Cork;
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth; and
- University of Limerick.

Institutes of Technology

Ireland has fourteen institutes of technology:

- Athlone Institute of Technology;
- Blanchardstown Institute of Technology;
- Carlow Institute of Technology;
- Cork Institute of Technology;
- Dublin Institute of Technology;
- Dundalk Institute of Technology;
- Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology;
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology;
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology;
- Limerick Institute of Technology;
- Sligo Institute of Technology;
- Tallaght Institute of Technology;
- Tralee Institute of Technology; and
- Waterford Institute of Technology.
Colleges of Education
There are five colleges of education in Ireland dedicated to the training of primary-school teachers: St Patrick’s College, The Church of Ireland College, St Mary’s Marino (Coláiste Mhuire) and Froebel College (all in Dublin) as well as Mary Immaculate College (in Limerick). In addition to these, Mater Dei Institute in Dublin specialises in the training of teachers of religion for second-level schools, while St Angela’s College in Sligo (currently the subject of major expansion) focuses on home economics. A specialist college for teachers of physical education and crafts, Thomond College, is located in Limerick and was incorporated into the University of Limerick in 1991. Teachers of art are trained in the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. The universities offer 1-year postgraduate diploma courses for students wishing to train as secondary school teachers.

Other Third-level Institutions
The Tipperary Institute, established in 1998, combines third-level education with rural and business development. Many other colleges, including those of professional bodies and private fee-paying colleges, contribute to the diverse Irish higher education landscape.

1.6.2 The Higher Education Authority
The Higher Education Authority (HEA), established under the Higher Education Authority Act 1971, is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, in respect of which it advises the government and the Minister for Education and Science. The HEA is responsible for the allocation of Exchequer funding to the universities, institutes of technology and to other institutions designated under legislation.

Functions of the HEA
The principal functions of the HEA are set out in the 1971 Act as follows:
- To further the development of higher education;
- To maintain a continuous review of the demand and need for higher education;
- To assist in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and to prepare proposals for such investment;
- To allocate among universities and designated institutions the grants voted by the Oireachtas; and
- To promote the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education and democratisation of higher education.

A number of additional functions were allocated to the HEA under the Universities Act 1997 and the Institutes of Technology Act (2006), the most important of which include the following:
- The review of university strategic development plans;
- The review of university quality assurance procedures;
- The review of university equal opportunity policies and their implementation; and
- The promotion of the attainment and maintenance of excellence in learning, teaching and research in higher education.
1.6.3 Entry to Higher Education

Entry to higher-level education is linked to performance in the Leaving Certificate examination, taken in the final year of second-level education. A student receives a points tally for their performance in the exam. This score is then matched with their course choices. The Central Applications Office (CAO, est. 1976), processes applications for undergraduate courses at universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education and certain other providers of higher education. Participation rates in State-funded higher education increased from 20,000 in 1965 to approximately 150,000 full-time students in 2007-2008, taking Ireland from a relatively low position, by international standards, to above the OECD average. In recent years a supplementary application system for students with disabilities applying to higher education institutions has been developed. Information on this supplementary system is provided in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.6.4 Higher Education Legislation

Under the Universities Act (1997), the universities are autonomous institutions. The Act sets out their statutory objectives and functions. Within these objectives and within their individual budgets, the universities have the freedom to innovate and to develop programme provision in anticipation of, and in response to, the economic, social and cultural needs of the community and student demand. Universities make decisions regarding programme provision on the basis of perception of student demand and national needs, and in the context of their own institutional mission and strengths.

The Institutes of Technology Act (2006) came into effect in February 2007. Its main purpose is to provide for the transfer of the funding and regulatory responsibilities for the institutes from the Department of Education and Science to the HEA, subject to overall ministerial and government policy. The practical implications of this are that the HEA has assumed funding and a range of other roles in respect of the institutes. The Report of the OECD Review team in 2004 recommended this re-designation to facilitate greater autonomy in the institutes of technology and to allow for the development of a unified and coherent framework across the higher education sector.

1.7 THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was established in 2003. The NFQ is a 10-level system that incorporates awards made for a range of learning outcomes whether it is gained in schools, the workplace, the community, training centres, colleges or universities. For each level of the NFQ, standards of knowledge, skill and competence have been set out, defining the outcomes to be achieved by a learner seeking to gain a qualification.

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10 See the website of the National Framework of Qualifications for further information, [www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie)
The diagram below sets out the ten NFQ levels in more detail:

A particular feature of educational provision in the sector is the ‘ladder’ progression pathway. This ‘access-friendly’ system allows students the opportunity to progress to their maximum academic potential – from Higher Certificate through the PhD level - while achieving an award at each stage of their study. Graduates of courses at a particular stage may also apply for transfer to similar courses in other institutes to continue their progression on the ladder system.

1.8 AGENCIES WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION AND DISABILITY
There is a range of public bodies involved in policy development and research in the area of special needs education and disability across the educational spectrum. These include the

- Department of Education and Science
- National Council for Special Education
- National Disability Authority
- Higher Education Authority - National Access Office.

Information on the functions of these organisations and agencies and the valuable role they play in furthering national policies for people with disabilities will be outlined later in this report.
Chapter 2
Definitions of Disability

2.1 THE EDUCATION ACT (1998)

Ireland has developed a range of legislation in relation to people with disabilities over recent years. These legislative developments and their impact will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4 of the report. However, three pieces of legislation in respect of definitions of disability are particularly important. These are the Education Act (1998), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005). The Education Act (1998) was the first comprehensive education statute which established a statutory basis for the provision of education in Ireland. Drawing on the definition used in the Employment Equality Act enacted earlier the same year, the Education Act defines 'disability' as

(a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,
(b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
(c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
(d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
(e) a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.\(^{11}\)

2.2 THE EQUAL STATUS ACT (2000-2004)

The context for the enactment of the Employment Equality Act and Education Act (1998) and the Equal Status Acts (2000-2004) was to promote the inclusion of persons with a disability within a wider social, employment, training and educational context. For the first time, people with a disability acquired the right under Irish law not to be directly or indirectly discriminated against through reasonable efforts not having been made to accommodate them. Section 4 of the Equal Status Acts (2000-2004) states that a 'refusal or failure' to 'do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability' constitutes discrimination. However, this was a qualified right in that a refusal is determined to be not unreasonable if the cost of providing those accommodations is more than a nominal one to the service provider.

\(^{11}\) Education Act (1998).
2.3 THE EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (2004)

Although the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004) does not replace earlier legislation, it has a very specific focus on elaborating how exactly reasonable accommodations should be provided for in an educational context, particularly (but not exclusively) in relation to the education of persons under eighteen years of age. Similarly to the 1998 Education Act it promotes a more ‘rights-based’ approach as contrasted with the initial ‘compliance’ approach. It clearly sets out the entitlement of a person with a disability to a process of needs assessment and educational planning that determine what supports are required and how they should be put in place by an education provider.

The definition of disability in this Act is not just framed in terms of the ‘medical’ condition but how the impact of that condition upon the capacity of a person to participate in education must form part of the consideration of the supports that need to be put in place. The Act envisages that an assessment of need commence with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and that this link with an educational planning process should be co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in conjunction with schools and other education providers.

While the main focus of the EPSEN Act and its implementation to date has been on early education, primary and post-primary education (i.e. persons with a disability under eighteen years of age), the Act clearly envisages that, where appropriate, the process of needs assessment look beyond this and ensure the continuation of the education of a person with a disability beyond formal schooling. More generally, the functions of the NCSE, as legally defined under this Act, include advising on provision and best practice for adults with a disability in higher, adult and continuing education.

2.4 THE DISABILITY ACT (2005)

The Disability Act (2005) has a similar, if more restricted, definition of disability than the EPSEN Act and is set within the broader context of how a disability may act to restrict the capacity of a person in different walks of life (professional, business, occupational, social, cultural and educational).

Since December 2005, Section 26 of the Disability Act requires all public bodies, including publicly-funded education providers, to ensure that access by people with disabilities to their services is a fully integrated element of overall service provision. Although the requirements of other equality legislation remain, it is clear that, similar

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12 ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ is a term used in equality legislation to define the obligation to take appropriate measures to accommodate people with disabilities.

13 The EPSEN Act refers specifically to ‘special educational needs’ which are defined as ‘a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition’.

14 The Health Service Executive is responsible for providing health and personal social services to people in Ireland.

15 The role of the National Council for Special Education is to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities, with particular emphasis on children. The organisation and its functions are discussed in more detail later in the report.

16 The Disability Act states that ‘Disability … in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment’.
to the EPSEN Act, the Disability Act envisages that providers start to move beyond ‘accommodating to avoid discriminating’ to a position of more proactively ensuring access to services as part of mainstream service provision.

Similarly to the EPSEN Act, the Disability Act provides for a process of health and education needs assessment by the HSE and that NCSE assist the HSE in the assessment of the needs of adults with a disability in education, including higher education. The Act also provides that the NCSE will consult with education providers. The extent of implementation to date is addressed further in Chapter 3 of the report.

2.5 DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY AND TRANSITION ISSUES

The differing definitions outlined above are each appropriate to the context and purpose of the Acts themselves. If an Act is exclusively a legislative piece on the provision of education and disability, this will be reflected in the definition as appropriate.

Transition issues for people with disabilities should not be affected by the differing definitions in the legislation outlined above. A child should be afforded support based on their health or educational needs as outlined by the Disability Act or EPSEN Act respectively. For example, a child with a severe disability will most likely come into contact with the health service prior to entering the education system. This child’s needs should be addressed, in the context of provisions and rights afforded under the Disability Act, by the Department of Health and Children or the HSE. When that child enters the school system, supports are then co-ordinated (in respect of the EPSEN Act) between the original service provider and the education system, via the Department of Education and Science or the NCSE. This is to ensure that the child can participate in the education system according to their specific needs and ability.

Prior to a person with a disability leaving the education system, processes are in place to ensure guidance is provided (by health or educational service providers depending on the individual circumstances) to ease the transition phases. A person leaving the education system can, under the terms of the Disability Act, be provided with access to supported employment schemes, rehabilitation training or other relevant activities suitable to their needs and abilities. These schemes are generally provided through the HSE or FÁS, the national training authority in Ireland.

If the person continues in the education system (taking a place in higher education), under the terms of the Disability Act supports will be put in place to ensure reasonable accommodations are provided by the institution to ensure as far as possible that the person can participate equitably.

The co-ordination of supports for people with disabilities can be problematic. In a practical sense individuals may be unsure of who is the appropriate department or agency to seek support from. However, the focus from all service providers is on delivering adequate supports for each individual, regardless of the legislative context. A working group has been established in recent years to liaise on the implementation of the Acts and to manage the co-ordination of supports to people with disabilities. The group includes the Department of Health and Children, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Special Education.

17 Information on the role of FÁS in providing support to people with disabilities is provided later in the report.
It should be noted that not all of the legislation outlined above has been implemented in full. The EPSEN Act and Disability Act are currently partially implemented and this presents a challenge to service providers and those with a disability. This deferral of implementation of these acts is discussed in Section 4.4.7 of the report.
Chapter 3

Data

This Chapter of the report will present data in respect of the education and employment of people with disabilities. Specifically data is provided on the following:

- Census 2006
- Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities for State examinations at second level
- Applications to the Central Applications Office for a place in higher education by those with a disability
- Students with disabilities and the further education sector
- Students with disabilities and the higher education sector
- People with disabilities and employment.

3.1 CENSUS 2006

A Census of Population was conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland in 2006. It found that 9.3% of the population in Ireland, or 393,785 people, reported a disability.\(^\text{18}\)

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<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Persons with disabilities</th>
<th>Persons 2006</th>
<th>% Persons of relevant age group</th>
<th>Persons 2002</th>
<th>% Persons of relevant age group</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74 years</td>
<td>26,999</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>26,141</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79 years</td>
<td>28,829</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>30,288</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84 years</td>
<td>27,471</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>27,847</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>28,145</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>27,903</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>393,785</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>323,707</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^\text{18}\) http://www.cso.ie/Census/

It should be noted that the questions on disability in Census 2002 were amended, following consultation with relevant groups, for the 2006 Census. This included broadening the categories of disability. Information on both the 2002 and 2006 Census is available from www.cso.ie/census
From Table 3.1 we can see that:

- The percentage of people disclosing a disability in the population increased 1% between 2002 and 2006, with the 2006 total representing 9.3% of the overall population.

- The percentage of people with a disability increased in every age group up to the ages 70-85 between 2002 and 2006.

Tables 3.2-3.11 outline data on the number of persons with disabilities by type of disability and age as recorded in Census 2006.

**Table 3.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>1,662</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>1,620</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,907</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 3.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>1,684</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,339</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 3.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>2,059</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>7,394</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>11,139</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>8,474</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,066</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5
Difficulty in dressing, bathing or getting around inside the home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>1,418</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>1,694</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,828</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6
Difficulty in going outside the home alone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>1,214</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>2,733</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>2,512</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>2,357</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,816</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7
Difficulty in working or attending school/college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years Total</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years Total</td>
<td>2,352</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years Total</td>
<td>2,636</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years Total</td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,423</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8
Learning or intellectual disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years Total</td>
<td>2,116</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years Total</td>
<td>7,025</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years Total</td>
<td>10,908</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years Total</td>
<td>8,445</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28,494</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological or emotional condition</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years Total</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years Total</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years Total</td>
<td>1,563</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years Total</td>
<td>1,833</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,289</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty in participating in other activities</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years Total</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years Total</td>
<td>3,287</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years Total</td>
<td>3,267</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years Total</td>
<td>3,104</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,128</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other, including chronic illness</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years Total</td>
<td>2,056</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years Total</td>
<td>3,148</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years Total</td>
<td>3,249</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years Total</td>
<td>3,140</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,593</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>3,917,203</td>
<td>4,239,848</td>
<td>322,645</td>
<td>8.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in the above tables outlines:

- An indication of the number of children of school-going age who classify themselves as having a disability.
- The numbers of those who classify themselves as having difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating (29,066 persons) and those with learning or intellectual ability (28,494) represent 47% of all those with a disability as outlined in the tables.
- Whereas, the numbers of those with sensory (5,907 persons) or physical (6,339 persons) related disabilities represent a combined total of approximately 10% of the total.
- The trends for those of school-going age is replicated somewhat in tertiary education where approximately 65% of those approved under the Fund for Students with Disabilities each year have specific learning difficulties/dyslexia, whereas only 8-10% of those approved have sensory disabilities.

The CSO has conducted a National Disability Survey as a follow-up to the 2006 Census. The main purpose of the survey was to establish the severity and impact of disability on those who had indicated a disability in Census 2006. The results will be used to both inform and plan services for people with a disability. The survey questionnaires were ‘based on the social model of disability which defines disability as the outcome of the interaction between a person with an impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers s/he may face’.

The first results of the survey were published in 2008. The results expand on the general information on disability in Ireland which was provided in Census 2006. However, additional specific reports on the educational, work and social participation of people with disabilities will be produced by the CSO in late-2009. These specific data will provide additional and valuable information in relation to the current educational and employment status of people with disabilities in Ireland.

### 3.2 REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN STATE EXAMINATIONS

| Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations 2005-2008 |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| **Type of Accommodation**       | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** |
| Tape Recorder                   | 1,043 | 898  | 1,054 | 732   |
| Reading Assistance              | 3,357 | 3,877| 4,812 | 4,970 |
| Scribe                          | 428   | 550  | 733   | 886   |
| Word Processor                  | 175   | 241  | 330   | 358   |
| Visually Modified Papers        | 171   | 133  | 115   | 103   |
| Component/Subject Exemption     | 687   | 997  | 1,445 | 1,777 |
| Spelling/Grammar Waiver         | 4,763 | 5,450| 6,219 | 6,696 |
| **TOTAL**                       | **10,624** | **12,279** | **14,708** | **15,522** |
| Special Centres                 | 4,710 | 5,589| 6,752 | 7,129 |

Source: State Exams Commission, Exams 2009 Information Booklet, page 15

20 The Fund for Students with Disabilities is a funding programme which provides supports to students with disabilities in further and higher education. The fund will be discussed in more detail later in the report.

The data in table 3.13 outline the significant growth in the number of students requiring reasonable accommodations in their State examinations. One of the main factors for this growth is the fact that Ireland started from a reasonably low base in relation to participation of students with disabilities in mainstream education. As access to education has grown, the number of those seeking support has also grown. Reasonable accommodations at second level are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 of the report.

An analysis by category of disability for those in receipt of reasonable accommodations is currently not available.

3.3 APPLICATIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

Application to higher education in Ireland is made through the Central Applications Office (CAO). The process is designed so that a student can indicate if they have a disability. The decision to indicate a disability is optional, not compulsory, therefore the decision to indicate their disability is left to the student. The data outlined below shows the numbers who applied to college using the supplementary system for those with a disability. Details on this supplementary application process for students with disabilities are outlined in Chapter 6 of the report.

Table 3.14:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAO Applications for Supplementary Admissions Route 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total indicating a disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total submitting application through supplementary scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total who provided sufficient evidence of disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total assessed as eligible for the scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total entering a higher education institution on merit and with concession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total entering a higher education institution with a concession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see in Table 3.14, 2,381 students indicated a disability when applying for a place in higher education in 2008. This represents 3.7% of all applications to the CAO for that year (63,868). Following the assessment process 135 students gained a place in a higher education institution on the basis of reduced points. In addition it should be noted that of the 616 students assessed as eligible, 117 gained a place in higher education entirely on merit in the ten participating institutions.

3.4 FURTHER EDUCATION DATA

There has been a major expansion of opportunities in adult and further education in recent years. Expenditure increased by 60% from €256m in 2002 to €414m in 2008. The overall budget provision for 2009 is approximately €420m, up from an outturn of €414m in 2008. Table 3.15 shows the number of places and participation rates in further education in 2008. Many people with disabilities actively participate in Further Education Programmes. The Department’s policy is to seek to encourage people with disabilities to participate in Further Education Programmes through the provision of adequate supports. Table 3.16 demonstrates the number of people with disabilities or specific learning needs currently accessing Further Education Programmes in 2008.

---

22 Entry into higher education is based on performance in the Leaving Certificate at the end of second-level schooling. Students receive a number of points for performance in each examination. Securing a place on a specific higher education course requires the student to meet the designated points tally.
Table 3.15 Number of people accessing further education programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>30,188 (an additional 1,500 places are being made available from 1 September 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTOS</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>3,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STTCs</td>
<td>1,084 (984 from September 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEI</td>
<td>27,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Education</td>
<td>56,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy</td>
<td>49,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-funded part-time adult education</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Further Education Support Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>2,273 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,707 parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEGI</td>
<td>35,580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.16 Number of people with disabilities or SLNs accessing FE Programmes in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total Number of People with Physical, Sensory or Intellectual Disabilities, or Specific Learning Needs (2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthreach</td>
<td>1,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Traveller Training Centres</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTOS</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>2,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back To Education Initiative</td>
<td>3,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCs(^{23})</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^{23}\) Refers to the number of people on PLC courses accessing the Fund for Students with Disabilities.
3.5 FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENTS SUPPORTED BY THE FUND FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Tables 3.17 and 3.18 show the numbers of students from the further education sector who benefited from the Fund for Students with Disabilities along with the total amount allocated to the further education sector for students with disabilities under the Fund for Students with Disabilities from the period 2003/2004 to 2008/2009.

As seen in the tables, there have been significant increases in the number of students being approved in the further education sector and also a significant rise in the total allocation being made available to the sector. Approvals between 2003 and 2008 have increased 194%, while the allocation to the sector has increased almost five-fold in the same period.

**Table 3.17**

| Fund for Students with Disabilities 2003-2008. Number of Beneficiaries in Further Education |
|------------------|------------------|
| Further Education | 136       | 175       | 226       | 279       | 331       | 401       |

**Table 3.18**

| Fund for Students with Disabilities 2003-2008. Funding Allocated to Further Education Students |
|------------------|------------------|
| Further Education | € 638,661  | €1,048,450 | €1,547,887 | €1,745,709 | €2,888,909 | €3,121,961 |

Tables 3.19, 3.20 and 3.21 outline the approvals by category of disability in the further education sector.

**Table 3.19**

| Fund for Students with Disabilities 2005-2006. Further Education Sector |
|------------------|------------------|
| Disability        | Approved students | Gross allocation (€) |
| Blind/Visual Impairment | 13       | 156,697.66 |
| Deaf/Hard of Hearing   | 16       | 299,794.75 |
| Mental Health         | 1        | 8,085.00  |
| Multi-disability      | 21       | 168,162.00 |
| Other                | 22       | 142,543.89 |
| Physical Disability/Mobility Impairment | 33       | 472,561.56 |
| Significant Ongoing Illness | 3        | 19,963.50  |
| Specific Learning Difficulties | 118    | 280,079.59 |
| Total                | 227      | 1,547,887.95 |
Table 3.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Approved students</th>
<th>Gross allocation (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind/Visual Impairment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>167,335.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>276,201.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8,519.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disability</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>159,205.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>184,106.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability/Mobility Impairment</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>532,705.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Ongoing Illness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30,796.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Difficulties</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>386,840.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>279</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,745,709.35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Approved students</th>
<th>Gross allocation (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADD/ADHD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,020.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autistic Spectrum Disorder</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>63,145.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind/Visual Impairment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>238,666.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>412,848.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,477.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disability</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>399,987.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>198,538.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability/Mobility Impairment</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>888,013.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Ongoing Illness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38,410.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Difficulties</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>639,800.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>331</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,888,909.06</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each of the three years the data highlights:

- The vast majority of approvals in each year are in the category ‘specific learning difficulty’;
- The overall allocation to the further education sector has grown from €1.5m to €2.8m within the three academic years;
- The overall numbers approved in the sector have grown from 227 to 331 within the three academic years.

3.6 HIGHER EDUCATION DATA

In 2007-2008 there were over 170,000 students enrolled in higher education in Ireland, including full-time and part-time study at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Tables 3.22 and 3.23 provide information on the enrolment trends between 2003/2004 and 2007/2008. We can see in Table 3.22 that overall enrolment in the university sector increased by 10.4% between 2003/2004 and 2007/2008, while in the institutes of technology sector, as outlined in table 3.23, there has been an overall decrease in enrolments of -4.90% for the same period.
Table 3.22 Enrolment Trends 2003/2004-2007/2008 for the University Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>64,531</td>
<td>65,300</td>
<td>66,034</td>
<td>68,039</td>
<td>70,464</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>7,104</td>
<td>9,727</td>
<td>8,742</td>
<td>8,906</td>
<td>8,016</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Undergraduate Enrolment</td>
<td>71,735</td>
<td>75,027</td>
<td>75,576</td>
<td>76,545</td>
<td>78,480</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postgraduate

| Full-time     | 15,350    | 15,339    | 15,688    | 16,224    | 16,569    | 7.9%                   |
| Part-time     | 6,689     | 6,977     | 7,573     | 7,950     | 8,502     | 27.1%                  |
| Total Postgraduate Enrolment | 22,039 | 22,316 | 23,261 | 24,174 | 25,071 | 13.7% |

Overall Enrolment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67,886</td>
<td>64,512</td>
<td>64,745</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62,045</td>
<td>-8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.23 Enrolment Trends 2003/04-2007/08 for the Institute of Technology Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>51,798</td>
<td>50,424</td>
<td>51,517</td>
<td>51,322</td>
<td>49,048</td>
<td>-5.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>16,088</td>
<td>14,088</td>
<td>13,228</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,997</td>
<td>-19.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Undergraduate Enrolment</td>
<td>67,886</td>
<td>64,512</td>
<td>64,745</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62,045</td>
<td>-8.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postgraduate

| Full-time     | 1,194     | 1,235     | 1,325     | 1,565     | 2,238     | 87.40%                 |
| Part-time     | 1,125     | 982       | 1,316     | -         | 2,471     | 119.60%                |
| Total Postgraduate Enrolment | 2,319 | 2,217 | 2,641 | - | 4,709 | 103.10% |

Overall Enrolment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70,205</td>
<td>66,729</td>
<td>67,386</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66,754</td>
<td>-4.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*No Part-time enrolments figures were collected for the Institute of Technology Sector for 2006/2007 due to the transfer of responsibility from the Department of Education & Science to the Higher Education Authority.

A recent initiative in respect of data collection in the higher education sector is the Equal Access Data Initiative, undertaken by the Higher Education Authority. A key element of the work of the Higher Education Authority is monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2008-2013 and the achievement of set targets and outcomes for widening participation of the target groups. This work is underpinned by the collection of data by each higher education institution on the social, cultural and economic background of new entrants to higher education, including information on disability.

In 2007, higher education institutions began gathering additional information as part of the registration process on students’ social, economic and cultural background. This information will provide a more consistent evidence base for national policy, in particular by supporting an assessment of progress to date, as well as the setting of new national and institutional targets for admission. It will also advise the allocation of the financial resources required to attract more students from target groups into higher education. Some initial analysis of this data is incorporated in the data below.
Historically, people with disabilities had lower levels of participation at all stages of education, but particularly higher education. It is clear that progress has been made in the last decade or so as the participation rate of students with disabilities in higher education has almost trebled from 1.1% in 1998/1999 to 3.2% in 2005/2006.

While progress has been made in increasing the number of students with disabilities in higher education, as mentioned above, the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013* highlighted that people with physical and sensory disabilities continue to have very low participation rates. The Plan aims to double the number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education by 2013 as outlined in Table 3.24. This remains a challenging target that requires co-operation across the education sectors at both a national and local level.

---

Table 3.24

Disability Targets - Number of Students Enrolled in Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of disability</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability/Mobility impairment</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Hard of hearing</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind/Visual impairment</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple disabilities</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.25

New Entrants in 2007/2008 Indicating a Disability

| Total Number of Students with Disabilities       | 1,389   | 32,223  |
| All Participating Institutions                   |         |         |

Profile of Reported Disabilities*

- Blindness, deafness, severe vision or hearing impairment: 11.7% (0.5%)
- Physical condition: 13.4% (0.6%)
- Specific learning difficulty: 49.8% (2.1%)
- Psychological or emotional condition: 13.1% (0.6%)
- Other, including any chronic illness: 22.2% (0.9%)

| % of new entrants with a disability who indicated a requirement for additional supports | 44.2%   |
| % new entrants with a disability indicating a need for additional supports as a proportion of all new entrants | 1.9% |
| % of all entrants                                                              | 4.2%   |


*As respondents could tick more than one disability the total number of disabilities recorded could exceed the total number of students with a disability.

**In 24 institutions.

Following the collection of equal access data in 2007/2008 of full-time, undergraduate, new entrants to higher education, it can be seen that there were 1,389 students with disabilities entering the 24 institutions examined. This represents 4.2% of the total new entrant population to the 24 institutions in 2007/2008. The data demonstrates the continued increases in participation for students with disabilities. However, once the profile of students with disabilities is examined, certain disabilities continue to have lower education participation rates. Data has been collected for the 2008-2009 academic year also. However, the findings from this data are not yet available.
### 3.7 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

#### Table 3.26 Level at which education ceased by persons with disabilities

| The level of training and qualifications of young people with disabilities or learning difficulties |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education | Total Persons aged 15-29 | 1,005,810 | 30% | 58% | 2% | 9% | 22% | 7% | 15% | 2% |
| | Total Population aged 15 and over | 3,375,399 | 100% | 84% | 15% | 17% | 24% | 9% | 16% | 4% |
| | Total with a disability | 360,529 | 10.7% | 91.3% | 36.6% | 17.9% | 16.8% | 5.7% | 8.3% | 6.0% | 8.7% | 4.7% | 4.0% |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Third level: Non-degree</th>
<th>Third level: Degree or higher</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
<th>Total whose full-time education not ceased</th>
<th>Total at school, university, etc.</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Persons aged 15-29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population aged 15 and over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total with a disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.26 compares total persons 15-29, total people with disabilities and total population aged 15 and over and their level of qualifications. A significantly higher number (36%) of people with disabilities ceased education at primary level compared to 15% for total population aged 15 and over.

In addition the data shows that almost half (8.3%) the number of people with disabilities has a third-level degree or higher compared to the total population aged 15 and over (16%). This results in lower educational attainment for people with disabilities and may impact on their ability to gain employment.

**Chart 3.2 The level of training and qualifications of people with disabilities or learning difficulties**

Chart 3.2 shows the level of qualifications of people with disabilities by category of disability. No breakdown by age is available for this data. However, a recent report published by the National Disability Authority (NDA) in 2007 states ‘just over half (50.8%) of people with disabilities aged 15-64 years have no formal second-level qualification – the corresponding figure among people without a disability is 18.8%’. 25

The NDA report also noted that ‘27% of young people (with disabilities) aged 15-19 years have left full-time education compared to 19% of non-disabled young people on the same age range’. 26

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3.8 EMPLOYMENT DATA

Ireland experienced a period of extended economic growth between the mid-1990s and the mid-point of the current decade. Effectively this was a period of 'full employment'. Nonetheless between 2002-2004 the employment rate of people with disabilities and long-term illnesses fell from 40% to 37%.\(^{27}\) Since then targets have been put in place to improve the employment rate of people with disabilities. The National Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 set a target to increase the employment of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% (as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey).

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment are currently implementing an employment strategy for people with disabilities. The objective of the plan is to place 7,000 people with disabilities in employment. Further information on this strategy is provided in Section 4.3.1 of the report.

Part 5 of the Disability Act provides for a statutory minimum target, currently set at 3%, for the recruitment and employment of people with disabilities in the public sector. Public bodies are required to submit reports on their compliance with the target, by 31 March each year, to the monitoring committees established in their respective parent departments. The monitoring committees are, in turn, required to submit their reports to the NDA and relevant Ministers by 30 June annually. The NDA has submitted two reports, based on 2006 and 2007 data, to the relevant Minister.

Figures from the most recent report (2007) show:

- That over half (51.3%) of public sector bodies have achieved or exceeded the statutory minimum 3% target for employing staff with a disability.
- The best performing parts of the public sector were the government Departments of which 87.5% have achieved or exceeded the 3% target and local government organisations which reported that 76.9% achieved or exceeded the 3% target.
- The NDA found that organisations that had carried out an access audit on some or all of their properties were more likely to have met or exceeded the 3% employment target and that those that had a specific policy on employing people with disabilities were more than twice as likely to have met or exceeded it.

Where a public body is in breach of its legal obligations for two years in a row, the NDA can recommend appropriate action to be taken. Should any public bodies, without adequate reason, fail to have met their obligations in 2007 and 2008, the NDA will proceed to make statutory recommendations on what they can do.

Ireland, like many OECD countries, is currently experiencing a sharp downturn in economic growth. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) of Ireland predict that the unemployment level in Ireland will reach 12.6% of the labour force by the end of 2009.\(^{28}\) The expectation is that this figure will continue on an upward trajectory in the coming months, with the ESRI estimating that figure will rise to 16.1% in 2010.\(^{29}\) As the economic downturn is occurring at a rapid rate, it is difficult, at this moment in time, to ascertain the impact on the employment levels of people with disabilities. It can be assumed that as more people with work experience and qualifications become unemployed it will result in a more competitive jobs market. It is possible that this could hinder the employment opportunities for some people with disabilities, particularly those without qualifications.\(^{30}\)

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\(^{27}\) Data provided by the National Disability Authority.

\(^{28}\) Economic and Social Research Institute, Quarterly Economic Commentary, Summer 2009.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) The National Disability Authority, in a recent newspaper report, indicated that a serious recession could further exacerbate the risk of people with disabilities being unemployed. Sunday Tribune. 12 July 2009.
Employment data in relation to people with disabilities is provided below.

Table 3.27 Educational Attainment and Employment for People with Disability by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.28 Educational Attainment and Employment for People without Disability by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper secondary</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above tables illustrate that,

- Higher numbers (58%) of people with less than upper secondary education are unemployed compared to people without a disability (49%).
- 36% of employed people without a disability have a higher education qualification compared to 27% for persons with a disability in the same category.

Table 3.29 Unemployment Rate 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total unemployed in 2006</th>
<th>Total persons 2006</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
<th>Persons AGED 18-64 *</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Total not in the labour force</th>
<th>% not in labour force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>14,343</td>
<td>360,529</td>
<td>3.98%</td>
<td>172,600</td>
<td>8.30%</td>
<td>266,688</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Persons</td>
<td>150,084</td>
<td>3,375,399</td>
<td>4.45%</td>
<td>2,617,216**</td>
<td>5.73%</td>
<td>1,265,901</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Census 2006 in table 3.29 shows 74% of people with disabilities are not in the labour force compared to 37.5% of total persons. According to the National Disability Authority, by 2004 there were 4:1 people in receipt of a sickness/-disability-related welfare.

The National Disability Authority is the lead State agency on disability issues, providing independent advice to government on policy and practice in the area of disability.
payment for every long-term unemployed recipient. A correlation between disability benefit and long-term unemployment is a challenge for participation of people with disabilities in the labour market.

As some of the above data is not grouped by age, it is important to note that those who most frequently report disability are in the older age groups. According to preliminary data from the National Disability Survey, 117,500 of the 325,800 persons who reported a disability in the 2006 National Census are aged 65 and over representing 36% of that total. This age group would generally have little impact on the unemployment rate.

### Table 3.30 Employment Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Force</th>
<th>20-34</th>
<th>35-49</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment (% of population)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-disabled</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment (% of labour force)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-disabled</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A recently published OCED report found that in Ireland 75% of non-disabled people were employed compared to 41% of people with disabilities. Table 3.30 shows that 10% of those aged 20-34 are unemployed compared to 5% of persons without a disability.

A report by the National Disability Authority found that ‘in the 20-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 overall employment growth of 5.6% over the period.’ This shows that the economic growth experienced by Ireland has not necessarily translated into higher employment for people with disabilities.

Table 3.31 examines persons with a disability and persons without a disability and the occupations they are employed in. The largest field of occupations for people with disabilities is religious occupations at 10%. Central and local government workers and social workers also employ higher numbers of persons with a disability at 5.2% and 6% respectively.

---


Table 3.31 Types of Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Total Persons</th>
<th>Total with a disability</th>
<th>Persons with a disability as % of total persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing and forestry workers</td>
<td>85,345</td>
<td>3,702</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical trades workers</td>
<td>36,886</td>
<td>1,031</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and allied trades workers</td>
<td>75,390</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile, clothing and leather workers</td>
<td>5,887</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, drink and tobacco production workers</td>
<td>23,455</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical, paper, wood, rubber, plastics and printing workers</td>
<td>18,019</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other manufacturing workers</td>
<td>69,416</td>
<td>2,560</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and construction workers</td>
<td>170,523</td>
<td>5,347</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and executives</td>
<td>122,792</td>
<td>4,324</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication, warehouse and transport workers</td>
<td>109,379</td>
<td>4,174</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and office workers</td>
<td>175,880</td>
<td>7,201</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales occupations</td>
<td>194,106</td>
<td>7,374</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and commerce occupations</td>
<td>77,895</td>
<td>2,470</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer software occupations</td>
<td>44,197</td>
<td>1,675</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific and technical occupations</td>
<td>57,733</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and related workers</td>
<td>91,883</td>
<td>3,480</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers and related occupations</td>
<td>17,208</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious occupations</td>
<td>3,849</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional workers</td>
<td>40,273</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal service and childcare workers</td>
<td>193,916</td>
<td>8,516</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>79,710</td>
<td>2,779</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and local government workers</td>
<td>57,321</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garda Síochána</td>
<td>12,287</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army occupations</td>
<td>7,167</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other gainful occupations (incl. not stated)</td>
<td>159,525</td>
<td>9,714</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All occupations</td>
<td>1,930,042</td>
<td>77,800</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.32 (next page) shows type of disability by socio-economic group. It illustrates that the percentage of people with disabilities who are considered higher professionals is only 3.4% while 14.5% are considered non-manual and 7.9% semi-skilled.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Socio-economic Group</th>
<th>Total with a disability</th>
<th>Blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment</th>
<th>A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities</th>
<th>Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating</th>
<th>Difficulty in dressing, bathing or getting around inside the home</th>
<th>Difficulty in going outside the home alone</th>
<th>Difficulty in working or attending school/college</th>
<th>Learning or intellectual disability</th>
<th>Psychological or emotional condition</th>
<th>Difficulty in participating in other activities</th>
<th>Other, including chronic illness</th>
<th>Total disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Employers and managers</td>
<td>35,676</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Higher professional</td>
<td>13,406</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Lower professional</td>
<td>29,624</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Non-manual</td>
<td>56,955</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E. Manual skilled</td>
<td>32,491</td>
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<td>9.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. Semi-skilled</td>
<td>30,954</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>G. Unskilled</td>
<td>18,430</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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<td>H. Own account workers</td>
<td>13,148</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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<td>I. Farmers</td>
<td>17,419</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
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<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
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<td>2.5%</td>
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<td>J. Agricultural workers</td>
<td>3,259</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Z. All others gainfully occupied &amp; unknown</td>
<td>142,423</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>393,785</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Central Statistics Office, Census 2006
Chapter 4

Policy

4.1 NATIONAL POLICY IN IRELAND

Ensuring equality of participation for students with disabilities in education and employment presents challenges to policy-makers and service providers. In response, Ireland’s policy agenda has, in recent years, placed particular emphasis on social inclusion. The national plans currently being implemented are helping to create a dynamic and inclusive society in Ireland, predicated upon creating pathways for and increasing participation of people with disabilities in our education and employment systems. The focus of this robust policy framework is to ensure that effective systematic processes are in place, combined with significant multi-annual investment, to reach national targets on participation.

This Chapter of the report will provide an overview of the policy and legislative framework of Ireland in respect of people with disabilities. It will also outline how this framework assists the pathways of people with disabilities in relation to education and employment. Additionally, information is provided on the agencies which play a key role in policy development and delivery in the area of disability supports.

NATIONAL PLANS

4.1.1 Towards 2016 – Ten-year Framework on Social Partnership

One of the key social policy documents for Ireland is *Towards 2016 – Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. The framework outlines a vision of Ireland for the future, namely a ‘dynamic, internationalised, and participatory society and economy, with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic development is environmentally sustainable, and internationally competitive’.34

Specific attention in *Towards 2016* is afforded to people with disabilities and the challenges of integration and the creation of an inclusive society. Key issues which are highlighted include health and education services, income, measures to promote employment opportunities, accessible housing and public transport services, and information and advocacy services. The framework stresses the strategic importance of ‘investing in further support measures in the areas of further and higher education to enhance participation by those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular: socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers, members of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities, mature students, lone parents and students with a disability. These measures will include: needs assessment, technology support, community-based strategies, childcare supports and access routes’.35

The following are the long-term goals of *Towards 2016* for people with disabilities:

- Every person with a disability will have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living.

Every person with a disability would, in conformity with their needs and abilities, have access to appropriate care, health, education, employment and training, and social services.

Every person with a disability would have access to public spaces, buildings, transport, information, advocacy and other public services and appropriate housing.

Every person with a disability would be supported to enable them, as far as possible, to lead full and independent lives, to participate in work and in society and to maximise their potential; and

Carers would be acknowledged and supported in their caring role.

4.1.2 National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) is a multi-billion euro investment by the Irish government, supported by EU funding, which sets out the economic and social investment priorities required to develop a society which enhances the quality of life for all citizens. In light of the current economic situation, however, it is anticipated that the implementation of the NDP in full will be delayed as the government seeks to stabilise the public finances.

Nonetheless, the plan outlines a number of high-level objectives across the economic and social agendas. In accordance with the Lisbon Agenda, lifelong learning is the guiding principle for education and training policy. The plan acknowledges the primary purpose of education in supporting people to realise their full potential, but also emphasises the critical role that education plays in helping to develop economic prosperity and an equitable and more cohesive society. Nearly €4.9 billion is outlined for training and development programmes for a range of groups including people with disabilities.

It is worth highlighting the high-level objective of the Student Support/Third Level Access Sub-programme. €2 billion will be provided under this Sub-programme. It states that, by 2013,

… students with a disability, mature students and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including members of the Travelling Community and refugees, should have adequate opportunities to progress to higher education.36

Some of the key measures which reflect the emphasis placed in the plan on the education and employment of those with additional needs include the following:

- To provide the teachers and accommodations needed for improvements in special education provision.
- To widen access to education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups.
- To encourage a greater flexibility of course offerings to meet diverse student population needs in a lifelong learning context.
- To improve student retention numbers.

To expand the workforce through the activation of groups such as the unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, Travellers, ex-offenders, women and older people as well as the implementation of an appropriate skills-based migration policy.

A high-level goal for social inclusion specific to people with disabilities is included in the plan. The goal is to

… (i)ncrease the employment of people with disabilities who do not have a difficulty in retaining a job. The immediate objective is to have an additional 7,000 of that cohort in employment by 2010. The longer term target is to raise the employment rate of people with disabilities from 37% to 45% by 2016 as measured by the Quarterly National Household Survey. The overall participation rates in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016. These targets will be reviewed in the light of experience and the availability of better data.37

4.1.3 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

The Fifth Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2007) outlines the steps to be taken if Ireland is to maintain its economic competitiveness into the future.

The report forecasts that

- An additional 260,000 members of the workforce will need to move up to levels 4 and 5 of the National Qualification Framework.
- An additional 170,000 workers will need to up-skill into the higher education levels of the framework (levels 6-10).
- The progression rate to tertiary education will have to increase from 55% to 72%.38

The Expert Group also forecasts there will be a change in the needs for particular skills as Ireland’s economy moves from the agricultural and manufacturing sectors to future growth areas. Higher levels of skills will be required in disciplines such as information communication technology, pharmaceuticals, and high-value engineering as Ireland aims to position itself for the development of the knowledge economy. In addition Ireland will need to continue producing graduates in disciplines such as finance, business and marketing.

The data below outlines the projected trends of growth or decline in various sectors from 2005-2020. Here we can see the decline in the agricultural and manufacturing services, while industries like pharmaceuticals continue to grow into the future. Table 4.1 provides figures in respect of the trends in Chart 4.1.

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37 Ibid, Page 234.
Chart 4.1

Total Employment by Sector 2000-2020 (000’s)


Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>132.8</td>
<td>113.7</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>-40.4</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>116.5</td>
<td>119.9</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>-16.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Industry</td>
<td>192.4</td>
<td>177.7</td>
<td>178.8</td>
<td>141.6</td>
<td>-36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>166.1</td>
<td>242.4</td>
<td>260.5</td>
<td>286.7</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>235.1</td>
<td>266.9</td>
<td>303.2</td>
<td>324.8</td>
<td>57.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport &amp; Communications</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>118.2</td>
<td>123.2</td>
<td>141.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance &amp; Business Services</td>
<td>208.4</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>328.3</td>
<td>424.2</td>
<td>170.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Market Services</td>
<td>197.8</td>
<td>220.8</td>
<td>251.4</td>
<td>301.1</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Admin., Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>319.8</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>493.4</td>
<td>543.8</td>
<td>124.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1670.7</td>
<td>1929.2</td>
<td>2155.6</td>
<td>2336.8</td>
<td>407.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4 National Access Plan 2008-2013

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 was launched by the Minister for Education and Science in July 2008. The plan was developed by the National Access Office of the HEA in close consultation with the Department of Education and Science and stakeholders in the higher education sector and identifies five high-level goals and 34 action points that are required to achieve greater equality and wider participation in higher education. The following are the stated objectives of the plan:

- The priority accorded to promoting equality in higher education will be reflected in the strategic planning and development of the Higher Education Authority and of higher-education institutions.
- The lifelong learning agenda will be progressed through the development of a broader range of entry routes, a significant expansion of part-time/flexible courses and measures to address the student support implications of lifelong learning.
- The priority accorded to promoting equality in higher education will be reflected in the allocation of public funds to higher-education institutions.
- Students will be assisted to access supports and those supports will better address the barriers to access and successful participation in higher education.
- The higher-education participation rates of people with disabilities will be increased through greater opportunities and supports.

New national targets are set by the plan within the timeframe of the current National Development Plan which extends to 2013. Associated targets for the mid-point of the plan in 2010 are also identified. Separate targets are set for different groups. The following national targets relevant to students with disabilities are set:

- The evidence base and relevant data collection systems will be enhanced.
- Institutions will develop and implement access plans and processes for evaluation.
- A national participation rate of 72% of the relevant age cohort will be achieved by 2020 (55% in 2004).
- Flexible/part-time provision will increase to 17% by 2013 (7% in 2006).
- Non-standard entry routes to higher education will be developed so that they account for 30% of all entrants by 2013 (estimated at 24% in 2006).
- Ireland will reach EU average levels for lifelong learning by 2010 and will move towards the top quartile of EU countries by 2013.
• The number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013.

4.1.5 National Disability Strategy
The Irish Government launched a National Disability Strategy in 2004. This brings together the various strands of strategic policy outlined in this Section. Work on the National Disability Strategy is being co-ordinated by the National Disability Authority (NDA). The NDA is an independent statutory agency established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform by the National Disability Authority Act (1999).

The role of the NDA is to:
• Act as a national body to assist in the co-ordination and development of disability policy;
• Undertake research and develop statistical information for the planning, delivery and monitoring of programmes and services for people with disabilities;
• Advise the Minister on standards for programmes and services and prepare codes of practice;
• Monitor the implementation of standards and codes of practice;
• Take the lead in both encouraging and recognising the promotion of equality of people with disabilities.

Authority members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and include people with disabilities, parents and carers of people with disabilities and people working in the disability field.

The National Disability Strategy builds on existing policy and legislation, including the policy of mainstreaming public services for people with disabilities. It has been endorsed in the social partnership agreement Towards 2016.

The key elements of the strategy are:
• Implementation of the Disability Act (2005);
• The Citizens Information Act (2007) which equips the Citizens Information Board (formerly Comhairle) to provide a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities;
• Implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004);
• Implementation of sectoral plans prepared by six government departments;
• A multi-annual investment programme worth €900m targeted at high-priority disability support services to run until 2009.
Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 requires six government departments to prepare plans (known as sectoral plans) that set out how they will deliver specific services for people with disabilities. Those departments are:

- Health and Children
- Social and Family Affairs
- Transport
- Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
- Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

People with disabilities, their families, carers, advocates and service providers were consulted on the plans before they were finalised for submission to the Oireachtas (Parliament). Each plan includes arrangements for complaints, monitoring and review procedures. The Oireachtas approved the six sectoral plans in October 2006, and the plans were published in December 2006. The sectoral plans are due to be reviewed by the end of 2009.

A Centre for Excellence in Universal Design was established as part of the implementation of the Disability Act (2005). Its role is to promote a more inclusive environment that can be readily used, accessed and understood, without the need for further adaptation, by people of any age, size, ability or disability. The centre promotes Universal Design through the development of new standards, collaboration with educational establishments on including it in the curricula and working with key stakeholders on the benefits of a universal design approach.\(^{39}\)

Progress on the implementation of the National Disability Strategy is monitored by the Senior Officials Group on Disability, which reports to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. This group comprises officials representing the six government departments responsible for implementing the sectoral plans as well as the Department of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Finance and the Department of Education and Science.

Towards 2016 commits to maintaining a constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the National Disability Strategy. Under the agreement, a National Disability Strategy Stakeholder Monitoring Group has been established to monitor progress on the overall implementation of the strategy, building on the monitoring and review procedures already in place. The group is made up of:

- the Senior Officials Group on Disability
- a number of stakeholder groups
- the National Disability Authority
- the Irish Congress of Trades Unions and the Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation

In addition, an Office for Disability and Mental Health was established in January 2008 to support the Minister of State for Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health at the Department of Health and Children. This office has cross-departmental responsibilities for disability support.

\(^{39}\) Further information and a range of Universal Design resources is available at www.universaldesign.ie
4.2 EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS

The overarching aim of disability policy in Ireland is to enhance quality of life for people with disabilities. This means providing equality of access to education and employment, and providing services which assist those with a disability as they fulfil their personal aspirations. This work must begin early, in many cases before the child has entered the education system. As outlined earlier in the report, a child may engage with the health system before beginning their school life. This requires liaising with local health services to ensure sufficient supports are put in place. It is the role of the Health Service Executive (HSE) to arrange for an assessment of a child with special needs. The HSE can then put in place the supports that are required as a result of the assessment.

Once a child with disabilities is enrolled in a primary school the supports being provided become focused on ensuring equitable participation of the child in education. This requires co-ordination of the supports by the health services and education providers, including the input of the parents of the child.

4.2.1 National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which was set up under the EPSEN Act, has a specific role in allocating resources to schools for children with special education needs in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science. The specific functions of the NCSE are as follows:

- Planning and co-ordinating provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs.
- Disseminating information on best practice concerning the education of children with special educational needs.
- Providing information to parents in relation to the entitlements of children with special educational needs.
- Assessing and reviewing resources required by children with special educational needs.
- Ensuring that progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and reviewed.
- Reviewing education provision for adults with disabilities.
- Advising educational institutions on best practice.
- Consulting with voluntary bodies.
- Advising the Minister for Education and Science on matters relating to special education.
- Conducting research and publishing findings.

The NCSE and the Department of Education and Science co-ordinate the allocation of supports for students with disabilities at primary and post-primary levels. The ESPEN Act (2004), which is described below, includes sections specifically relating to planning for transition in the education system. Section 9 of the Act is partly concerned with ensuring the child makes a successful transition from pre-school to primary education and from primary to post-primary education. Section 15 is concerned with the planning of future needs for the child as they become an adult. The NCSE has outlined ‘general principles’ which govern transitions. These are:

- Long-term planning is essential and should be conducted well in advance of the point of transition.

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40 Details on the division of work between the Department of Education and Science and the NCSE in respect of the provision of supports to children with disabilities is provided in the Chapter on funding allocations.

• Parents and young people should be provided with the information to make an informed choice about future educational/lifelong learning settings. All options should be explored, including the continuum of special education provision.

• Collaboration between the transition settings is crucial to ensure that all relevant information is shared and the necessary resources are put in place to facilitate a successful transition.

• Support for transition can be provided by the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) in collaboration with the relevant agencies/personnel.

The transition for school leavers is a crucial stage in assessing and implementing the support needs required for the next stage of that person’s life. This could include progression to further or higher education, employment, or rehabilitative training. Before making the transition from post-primary schooling, planning for the transition will take place. This could involve interaction between the SENO, health and education support services, the student and their parents. In addition the disability or access officer of a higher education institution, if informed of the student’s decision to attend that institution, can provide advice and information to the student/parents in respect of the available supports in higher education for people with disabilities. The transition from school to further education or employment is of strategic importance to the person with a disability and planning accordingly will impact positively on the continuation or development of supports as required.

Before the person sits the Leaving Certificate examination an application for examination accommodations will be made where appropriate. The reasonable accommodations will ease the difficulties around completion of the Leaving Certificate. In addition, guidance and advice is provided to the student in relation to an application to a tertiary education institution. The application can be made via the normal central applications process or via the supplementary admissions scheme for people with disabilities. See Section 6.1.2 for detail.

If a person with a disability secures a place in a higher education institution, supports are put in place at an early stage to facilitate the integration of the individual into college life. The student can register with the access or disability service and avail of the institutional supports on offer. In addition, further individual supports can be provided via an application to the Fund for Students with Disabilities. As the funding system for disability support in higher education is managed by a different agency, students must apply for supports when they enter further or higher education. The supports provided at post-primary do not automatically transfer with the student.

Detailed information on the application process for gaining a place in higher education and on the supports available are provided later in the report.

4.2.2 Higher Education Authority
Promoting equality of opportunity in higher education is one of the principal functions of the Higher Education Authority (HEA Act, 1971). In 2003, the Department of Education and Science established a designated National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education within the HEA to co-ordinate this work and to develop and implement a national framework of measures to increase participation in higher education by disadvantaged groups.

A 3-year action plan ‘Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education’ was published by the office in December 2004. An Annual Report on progress was published early in 2006 and a second annual report was published in January 2007. The implementation of the plan was organised under six goals, as follows:
Communicate the Rationale for Equity of Access to Higher Education
A national framework of policies and initiatives to achieve equity of access
Creating routes of access and progression to higher education
Supporting a broader range of teaching and learning practices in higher education
Ensuring necessary financial support and resources are available
Learning from what works.

4.2.3 Evaluation of Access Programmes – A National Framework for Successful Access Programmes

In 2006 the National Access Office conducted an Evaluation of Access Programmes in 27 higher education institutions. A collaborative approach to the evaluation was adopted and there was active contribution from programme participants, practitioners and policy-makers to identify what is working well in access programmes and to share good practice. A self-evaluation approach was also included so that higher education institutions would recognise where there are gaps in their practice. They were also advised to seek the views of all other relevant stakeholders such as past, present and prospective students and their families, graduates, employers, community education workers, and teachers/principals of local schools and further education colleges.

The outcome of the evaluation was Towards the Best Education for All: An Evaluation of Access Programmes in Higher Education in Ireland. The evaluation has proposed a framework of policies and initiatives for successful higher education access programmes. The framework will assist higher education institutions in their work to attract and support students from under-represented groups. Eight steps for future action are recommended; these include development of an access plan in each institution, development of stronger links between higher education institutions and the rest of the education system and improved systems of funding to support progress and achievement.

The development and implementation of institutional access strategies across the higher education sector will add value to the policies currently being implemented at local and national level to further benefit students with disabilities. Institutional access plans will help ensure, in line with disability legislation, that equality of access for all students is at the centre of higher education planning and practice.

4.2.4 Transition Year Unit – Access to Further and Higher Education

The National Access Office is currently liaising with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to develop a transition year unit on access to higher education.

Many post-primary schools now offer transition year as part of the ‘senior cycle’. Transition year is a 1-year programme which acts as a bridging year between the national examinations, the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. The aim is for transition year to provide students with the opportunity to develop socially and academically without the added pressure of an examination. The year also allows students to weigh their options in relation to their education and reflect on their future. Students who participate can engage in a range of subjects, with practical-based learning a feature of the teaching methods used.

The unit being developed on a pilot basis by the National Access Office and the NCCA for inclusion on the Transition Year syllabus will relate to access to further and higher education. It will allow students to reflect on their future academic and career choices, and also find out about supports and services which will be available to them in higher education in relation to their particular needs (e.g. supports for a student from a lower socio-economic background or a student with a disability).
If the pilot is successful, the intention will be to provide the access to higher education unit to a large number of post-primary schools. This will involve selective teacher training in relation to the requirements for delivering this particular transition unit. The work on the pilot is being guided by a working group of teachers, Guidance Counsellors, access personnel and disability personnel.

4.2.5 Open and Distance Learning
The objective of developing open and distance learning in Ireland is to allow those who have not previously engaged with higher education to be provided with meaningful opportunities to participate. Open and distance learning provides more flexible learning opportunities for students who are in employment or who are unable to commit to the traditional mode of attendance at higher education institutions.

There are, however, various challenges that must be overcome so that open and distance learning can become a viable and attractive option for students participating in lifelong learning. These challenges include funding issues, the creation of new innovative accreditation systems, recognition of prior learning and employer buy-in.

The HEA recently appointed an expert group to examine these issues and a report has been submitted to the HEA Authority for consideration.

4.3 TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT
The transition from education into employment will bring into focus employment-based supports for people with disabilities.

4.3.1 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) has responsibility for developing quality employment and national competitiveness in Ireland. A unit of the DETE, the Employment Services Policy Unit, oversees, through strategic measures, the reintegration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. This includes promoting the social and economic inclusion of people currently excluded from the labour market.

As part of its aegis the DETE also oversees the National Training Fund which aims to raise the skills of those in employment, provide training to those who wish to acquire skills for the purposes of taking up employment, and provide information in relation to existing, or likely future, skills requirements in the economy. The Fund is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7% of reckonable earning in respect of employees in certain classes of employments. These classes represent approximately 75% of all insured employees.

As outlined in Section 4.1.5 the DETE, under the provisions of the Disability Act (2005), is also required to publish a Sectoral Plan that addresses the matters raised in the legislation. This plan was published in July 2006. The key focus of the plan is ‘to facilitate and improve access to vocational training, employment programmes and open labour market employment opportunities for people with disabilities’.

The central tenets of the plan are;

- The development of a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities.

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Further embedding the mainstreaming concept across the range of services provided by the Department and its agencies.

Compliance with Part 3 of the Disability Act (2005) regarding the provision of accessible services to people with disabilities.

Enhancing collaboration with key stakeholders, including the establishment of a consultative forum on the employment strategy.

Monitoring and reviewing progress on the implementation of the labour market measures contained in the plan.

Collaborating with other key government departments and agencies in improving access to the labour market for people with disabilities.

The development of a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities, as determined by DETE, will require:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of employment programmes and vocational training, including implementation of a Vocational Training Strategy by FÁS.
- Further developing supports to the open market employment of people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors.
- Increasing the participation rates of people with disabilities on ‘Community Employment’ (CE) over the period of the plan and raising the CE participation limits for people with disabilities in order to provide additional training to assist progression to employment.

The objective over the three years (2006-2009) of the plan was to place 7,000 people with disabilities in employment. Provisional data available from FÁS indicates that in the three years up to 2008 a total of 5,210 people with disabilities had been placed in employment.

4.3.2 FÁS

FÁS, which comes under the aegis of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, is the training and employment authority in Ireland. Its role is to enhance the skills and competencies of individuals and enterprises in order to further develop Ireland as a competitive, inclusive, knowledge-based economy. This includes responsibility for assisting people with disabilities in preparing for employment, via training or an employment programme.

FÁS operates training and employment programmes, provides a recruitment service to jobseekers and employers, an advisory service for industry, and supports community-based enterprises. The country is divided into eight regions and services for disabled people are mainstreamed within this context.

A person with a disability may call into a FÁS Employment Service Office or Local Employment Service Office to meet with an Employment Services Officer or Mediator who will provide them with full information, advice and guidance in relation to training and employment. Those who meet the entry criteria are able to participate in the full range of FÁS programmes and services, including general training provision, Community Employment, etc.

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Community Employment is a FÁS programme which provides work experience and training for disadvantaged persons. The programme assists people, by enhancing their technical and personal skills, to re-enter the workforce. In 2005 22% (4,635) of participants on CE programme had joined the programme having been previously in receipt of a disability-related welfare payment.


Data provided by DETE and is provisional only.
Specific information on employment-based schemes managed by FÁS for people with disabilities is provided in Chapter 6 of the report.

### 4.4 LEGISLATION

The right to education is enshrined in Article 42 of Bunreacht na hÉireann (the Irish Constitution).

In addition there are a number of statutory provisions relevant to equality in the higher education sector. Section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act (1971) sets out that among the functions of the HEA are ‘furthering the development of higher education’ and ‘promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education’.

Section 36 of the Universities Act (1997) sets out that a governing authority shall ‘prepare a statement of the policies of the university … in respect of access to the university and to university education by … people who have a disability and that a … university shall implement the policies set out in the statement as approved under subsection (2).’

Section 49 of the same act provides that the HEA ‘in furtherance of its general functions under Section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act (1971)’ may review the policies set out in the statement under Section 36 and their implementation in consultation with the universities publish the outcome of that review. There are similar provisions in the Institutes of Technology Act (2006).

In 1993 the Special Education Review Committee examined the provision of special education for people with disabilities in Ireland. This allowed for the development of a legislative framework which now underpins the policy and practice in relation to educational opportunity for people with disabilities.

The National Council for Special Education, in a recent report, has detailed the legislative framework which has been developed in Ireland for people with disabilities since the 1990s. This report also provides an outline of each of the key legislative acts. Extracts from that report are used below to provide information on current legislation in Ireland for people with disabilities.

#### 4.4.1 Employment Equality Act (1998)

The Employment Equality Act (1998) was the first Irish legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment or vocational training on any of nine grounds, including disability. Section 12 of the Act prohibits any education or training body offering courses of vocational training to discriminate in relation to the terms or manner of how that course (or any related facility) is offered or by refusing or omitting to provide for access to that course. This would include higher education institutions providing courses for employment in specific vocational sectors, for example legal, medical or teacher training.

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4.4.2 Education Act (1998)

This Act is the core education statute and it establishes a statutory basis for the provision of education in Ireland. The remit of the Act extends to all schools, third level institutions and centres of education and applies to students of all ages. The Education Act deals with education generally, but does place emphasis on the rights of children with disabilities and special educational needs. Education for all should take place in as inclusive an environment as possible, and children with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers.

The Act establishes that every person concerned with the implementation of the legislation must have regard to a number of principles, including: giving practical effect to the constitutional rights of children as they relate to education; and the provisions as far as is practicable to a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of the people of the country.

The Education Act gives the Minister for Education and Science certain functions in respect of funding, including the funding of support services for students with disabilities. It requires schools to use their available resources to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with disabilities, are identified and provided for. The Act also defines support services as including: assessments of students, guidance and counselling services, technical aids and equipment, speech therapy services among others.

The Education Act provided for the establishment of bodies corporate including the NCSE. The Council was established in December 2003 as an independent statutory body and its functions included the co-ordination of the provision of education and related support services, with health boards (now the Health Service Executive), schools and other relevant bodies. The NCSE took over certain functions from the Department of Education and Science in January 2005.


The focus of this Act is on ensuring that children receive a certain minimum education as required by the Constitution. The Act is focused on tackling truancy, and what are known as ‘educate at home’ children. The aim is to ensure that children outside of the recognised schools are receiving a certain minimum education. This Act may be of benefit to students with disabilities, particularly those who are not attending school because no schools are available, but this does require a particularly broad interpretation of this Act. Quinlivan noted, however, that the Supreme Court in the decision of Hardiman J. in the Sinnott case is not opposed to this notion.

The Education (Welfare) Act (2000) is essentially focused on promoting school attendance. The Act replaces the School Attendance Act (1926) and other related provisions. The Education (Welfare) Act is the Act that seeks to address the constitutional requirement that children receive a certain minimum education. The Education (Welfare) Act does not define a ‘certain minimum education,’ but the Minister may set out a ‘prescribed minimum education.’ That minimum standard may differ for children of different ages and capacities. While the focus of this Act is on combating absenteeism from, and non-attendance at school, this has relevance in the context of children with disabilities who may be experiencing difficulties in accessing schools. Hardiman J. in the Supreme Court decision of Sinnott v. Minister for Education stated that taking Sections 7, 8, 32, 38 and 41 of the

Section 2 of the Act defines a centre of education as ‘a place, other than a school or a place providing university or other third level education, where adult or continuing education or vocational education or training, is provided and which is designated for that purpose’.

Section 2 of the Act defines a student as ‘in relation to a school, means a person enrolled at the school and in relation to a centre for education, means a person registered as a student in that centre’.
Education Act ‘together with those of the Equal Status Act (2000) and the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) impose duties on public authorities which may be relevant to a person in the position of the Plaintiff, or to a child afflicted with the disabilities which have afflicted the Plaintiff in one degree or another.’ While not stating what the duty is, it is clear that the Supreme Court recognises the potential of the education legislation in the context of children and adults with disabilities. The Education (Welfare) Act focuses on the issue of participation in school, specifically in terms of matters such as suspensions, expulsions or non-enrolment.

The Act also creates a system of registration for children who are educated at home; providing that children educated outside of recognised schools are to be identified and assessed in order to ensure that the education they are receiving meets the minimum standards. The National Education Welfare Board is charged with maintenance of the register.

The Equal Status Act (2000-2004) outlaws discrimination in the non-employment sphere. It relates mainly to the provision of services including education services. Education services are broadly defined and include private and public schools from pre-school through to higher education. The Act prohibits discrimination on nine grounds including disability and requires the provision of reasonable accommodations. When it comes to education this relates to: admission or the terms and conditions of admission to school; access of a student to a course or facility or benefit; terms or conditions of participation; expulsion or other sanction.

In respect of the provision of education, the legislation makes clear that the responsibility for accommodating students with a disability lies in the first instance with each education provider. Section 4 of the Act states that a ‘refusal or failure’ by an education service provider to ‘do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability’ constitutes discrimination. It also states that such a refusal is not unreasonable if the cost of providing accommodations is more than a nominal one. By implication it is unreasonable to refuse if the cost is less than a nominal one.

The Act states that certain activities will not amount to discrimination on the grounds of a person’s disability. Different arrangements may be made in respect of sporting events on the basis of age, gender and disability where necessary. Schools do not discriminate against a student with a disability if compliance with the Equal Status Act would have a seriously detrimental effect on or make impossible the provision of services to other students. This should be interpreted in conjunction with EPSEN Act (2004) which envisages a more systematic, rights-based process of needs assessment and educational planning for students with a disability, particularly those in schools.

4.4.5 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) aims to ensure that a person with special educational needs can be educated where possible in an inclusive environment. This Act establishes a framework for the provision of such education, seeking to ensure that children with special educational needs can access their right to education; ensuring that they can avail of their right to education in the same way as other children of the State. The preamble of the Act states that

…the education of people with [such] needs shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs, to provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to and avail of and benefit from appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs, to assist
Some of the key provisions of the Act include

- the promotion of an inclusive approach for children with disabilities
- the right to an assessment
- the right to an individual education plan
- the right to an independent appeals process
- the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which was originally provided for under the Education Act (1998) in December 2003, was established under the EPSEN Act on 1 October 2005 and a Special Education Appeals Board, which has responsibility for appeals in relation to a number of the provisions in the Act, was established in April 2006.

Some of the key provisions of this Act which have been implemented include the setting up of the NCSE and the promotion of an inclusive approach for children with disabilities.

4.4.6 Disability Act (2005)
The Disability Act addresses several issues including: the provision of disability specific services; sectoral plans; public sector employment; and a Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. The Act defines the term ‘education services’ as:

A service provided by a recognised school or centre for education (within the meaning in each case of the Education Act, 1998) or by a person or body specified by the Minister for Education and Science who provides a programme of education, training or instruction and ‘education service provider’ shall be construed accordingly.

Under the Disability Act (Section 26), since 31 December 2005, all public bodies, including publicly-funded education providers, are required to ensure that the service they provide is accessible to persons with disabilities, including the head of a public body ensuring one person is nominated as an ‘access officer’ to provide assistance to people with disabilities in accessing the service being provided.

The Act, as stated above, provides legal status to the goal of ensuring that 3% of staff in all public bodies will be people with a disability.

The Act also establishes the provision of an assessment of needs and, where appropriate, this will address the education needs of a person with disabilities. An assessment report forms the basis of a service statement, which should establish what services will actually be provided to a person.

4.4.7 Implementation of the EPSEN Act and Disability Act
While the introduction of such comprehensive legislation is to be welcomed, it should be noted that not all of the legislation has been implemented in full. Two of the most significant pieces of legislation concerning people with disabilities are the EPSEN Act and the Disability Act, yet full implementation of both Acts has been deferred. The intention was to implement both of these Acts simultaneously but the difficult current economic circumstances have unfortunately resulted in a deferral until further notice. However, the government will keep the matter under review and is committed to the full implementation of both the EPSEN and Disability Acts at the earliest possible date.
In respect of the EPSEN Act the deferral of implementation directly affects the introduction of statutory Individual Education Plans (IEPs). As we have seen these plans will act as a strategic planning tool which will allow service providers to create a holistic assessment of a student’s needs and implement a tailored plan to respond to these needs. An IEP can then be used as a reference document, updated as necessary, as the student passes through the levels of the education system.

Significant resources continue to be invested in health and educational services to build up capacity to assist all people with special needs. Resources are provided for a range of services including psychological services, special needs assistants, transport and so on. Chapter 5 will outline the funding being provided for disability-related supports. The wide-ranging issues addressed in the Disability Act are strategically important to building on services created to date for people with disabilities and the deferral of key sections impacts on service provision. The legislation is of fundamental importance to the goal to create a socially inclusive society and disability advocacy groups have called for its implementation in full at the earliest possible juncture.
Chapter 5
Funding

5.1 OVERVIEW

Achieving a more equitable education system has been a long-standing priority for the Irish government. The commitment in policy and legislation to tackling social inclusion through education is supported with considerable investment of resources in supports for those with disabilities across the education system.

The State is the primary funder of all levels of education in Ireland. The Department of Education and Science allocates funding directly for primary level, post-primary level and further education while the Higher Education Authority allocates funding on behalf of the Department for the third level sector. This Section of the report will provide information on the funding available, including the methods of allocation, for students with special education needs. Information is also provided on the types of supports available to people with disabilities across the educational levels.

In general the funding allocated provides for mainstream classroom supports, additional special class support, assistive technology and individual supports depending on the needs of students at different levels of the education cycle. The allocation of funding at the different levels of the education cycle can vary. This is due mainly to the need to best accommodate the varying disabilities at each level and also because of the particular requirements of each level.

In 2006 a total of €706m was spent on special education at primary and post-primary levels by the Department of Education and Science. This figure increased to a total of €838m in 2007. The Department spent over €900m in 2008.

In respect of the 2008 allocation, this funding provided support for some of the following:

- Over 5,650 primary teachers and 2,550 post-primary teachers dedicated to meeting the needs of students with special educational needs.
- In excess of 8,400 Special Needs Assistants allocated to primary and post-primary schools.
- €17.9m provided to National Educational Psychological Service.
- Over €50m provided for special transport arrangements.
- Almost €11m provided to the NCSE.

In addition the following facts and figures provide information on the range of services that are currently being provided through the allocation for special education in Irish schools:

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49 Educational institutions can raise funding themselves to add to the funding provided by the State.
50 All figures outlined for the primary and post-primary sectors in this section have been provided by the Department of Education and Science - Special Education Section.
- Over 19,000 adults in schools are now working solely with children with special needs.
- More than 10,000 Special Needs Assistants in schools (this compares with just 300 in 1997).
- Over 8,200 resource and learning support teachers (this compares with approximately 2,000 in 1998).
- A 300% increase in the number of teachers in mainstream schools supporting children with special educational needs.
- 1,100 other teachers in special schools supporting children, while hundreds more work in special classes.
- Primary schools are staffed up-front with additional teachers to cater for the most prevalent special educational needs, which helps remove the need for assessments and delays in recruitment.
- The National Council for Special Education was established in 2005. The 87 Special Educational Needs Organisers of the NCSE are a vital local resource for parents and schools.
- The establishment, in 2003, of the SESS (Special Education Support Service) to provide expert support, professional development and training opportunities in special education for school staff has been very significant. In 2008, the service filled over 23,280 teachers training places. €5.8m has been allocated in 2009 to provide this support and professional training.
- Over €50m spent on special school transport arrangements in 2008.
- €3m spent on assistive technology and specialist equipment/resource grants.
- Enhanced capitation is available for children in special classes. Funding levels for children in this cohort increased by 30% in 2007 for most special schools and special classes.

Comprehensive allocation models for disability support are in place in both primary and post-primary levels of education. Both levels take a similar approach when dealing with pupils with low-incidence disabilities (including visual impairments, moderate general learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD). However, the models used to allocate resources in respect of pupils with high incidence disabilities (including specific learning difficulties and mild general learning difficulties) differ significantly between the two levels. The allocation systems are outlined below.

5.2 PRIMARY EDUCATION

A dual allocation model exists at primary level to provide resources for pupils with special educational needs. Under a general allocation model the Department of Education and Science provides an allocation to each primary school, based on total enrolment numbers, to facilitate the provision of learning support for pupils with high-incidence disabilities. With regard to low-incidence disabilities individual applications for resources are made to the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).
5.2.1 High-incidence Disabilities

The general allocation model was introduced in September 2005. Under this model permanent teachers are provided on the basis of enrolment numbers in the school to cater for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs consistent with high-incidence disabilities. This method of allocation is designed to ensure ‘that all schools have enough resource teaching hours to meet the immediate needs of pupils with high-incidence special educational needs and those who require learning support. It reflects the fact that most schools would have children with these needs.’

Learning support for students within this category can be provided in three different ways:

- Co-operative teaching: support is provided in the classroom.
- Withdrawal teaching: support is provided on a one-to-one basis or in small groups away from the classroom.
- Curriculum differentiation: the curriculum is modified to meet the needs of a particular pupil or group of pupils.

Under the general allocation model, resources can be made readily available for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs without having to go through individual application processes for each pupil. This ensures that the necessary resources can be put in place as needed, while reducing delays in the provision of such resources. The model facilitates more effective services by offering schools the flexibility to organise resources according to the individual needs of pupils whilst also underpinning the principle of inclusion within primary education through the provision of supports for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education.

Allocations made to schools under the general allocation model are based on pupil-teacher ratios. However, to ensure that schools with lower enrolment numbers are not adversely affected, the Department of Education and Science has introduced the application of different rates to take such circumstances into consideration. The details of this are outlined below.

**Larger schools:**
Differing pupil teacher ratios apply to boys’, mixed and girls’ schools.

- Boys’ schools with 135 pupils or more get their first post at 135; second post at 295; third post at 475, fourth post at 655, and so on.
- Mixed schools with 145 pupils or more get their first post at 145; second post at 315; third post at 495, fourth post at 675, and so on.

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51 High-incidence disabilities are defined in Department of Education and Science circular 02/05, ‘Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who Need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools’, as borderline mild general learning disabilities, mild general learning disabilities and specific learning disabilities that are at or below the second percentile on standardised tests. Priority for learning support for pupils with learning difficulties is given to pupils whose achievement is at or below the tenth percentile on standardised tests of reading or mathematics.

52 Ibid.
- Girls’ schools with 195 pupils or more get their first post at 195; second post at 395; third post at 595; fourth post at 795, and so on.

- All designated disadvantaged schools get their first post at 80; second post at 160; third post at 240; fourth post at 320, and so on.

It should be noted that schools qualify for a pro rata part of a post for pupil numbers below the enrolment point for the first post and between the first and second post, the second and third post, and so on. For a designated disadvantaged school with 60 eligible pupils the general allocation is 0.8 of a post; for a boys’ school with 215 pupils the general allocation is 1.5 posts; for a mixed school with 700 pupils the general allocation is 4.1 (rounded to one decimal place).

Smaller schools:
To ensure that small schools are not disadvantaged by the introduction of the general allocation model, the point at which smaller schools can appoint their first post is significantly reduced. For the purposes of the general allocation model, a boys’ school is considered to be small if it has an enrolment of fewer than 135 pupils, a mixed school is considered to be small if it has an enrolment of fewer than 145 pupils, and a girls’ school is considered to be small if it has an enrolment of fewer than 195 pupils.

Boys’ small schools will qualify for their first post at 100 pupils; mixed small schools will qualify for their first post at 105 pupils; and girls’ small schools will qualify for their first post at 150 pupils. However, no additional general allocation will be made to boys’ small schools on the basis of an enrolment between 100 and 135, to mixed small schools on the basis of an enrolment between 105 and 145, or to girls’ small schools for an enrolment between 150 and 195.

5.2.2 Low-incidence Disabilities
Primary schools with pupils with low-incidence disabilities apply for additional resource teaching support – above that which is provided through the general allocation model – in line with the assessed disability of the pupil. An individual application for each pupil is made by the school to the assigned Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Table 5.1 sets out the various categories of low incidence disabilities and the level of resource teaching support available to schools in respect of each category.

5.2.3 July Education Programme
The July Education Programme is a funding arrangement for schools to provide further special needs education in the month of July. Special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism may choose to extend their education services through the month of July. There is also a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. The funding covers transport and escort services for the children. If schools are not participating in the July Education Programme, home tuition is offered as an alternative for the pupils who would normally attend such schools.
In the 2008-2009 school year, 751 students were approved for home tuition. In addition there are 103 students availing of Irish sign language tuition, which is also available under this scheme. The programme was piloted in four post-primary schools also in 2008.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-incidence Disabilities</th>
<th>Hours of resource teaching support available to school per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate General Learning Disability</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe/Profound General Learning Disability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Speech and Language Disorder</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed syndrome in conjunction with one of the above low-incidence disabilities</td>
<td>3 to 5, taking into account the pupil's special educational needs including level of general learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2008 there were 6,893 applications for resource teaching support for children with low-incidence disabilities. Chart 5.1 provides provisional data on the breakdown, by category of disability, of applications for resource teaching hours at primary level in 2008.\(^{53}\) The abbreviations in Charts 5.1–5.4 are based on the categories of disability as outlined in Table 5.1.

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\(^{53}\) Provisional data provided by the National Council for Special Education.
Chart 5.1 Resource Hours Applications by Disability – Primary (Mainstream)
Includes those in a special class in a mainstream setting - 2008

*Includes those in a special class in a mainstream setting - 2008

Source: NCSE. The category ‘Other’ includes Assessed Syndrome, Visual and Hearing Impairments, Severe and Profound General Learning Disability. Mild general learning difficulties is not recorded here as this category is resourced through the general allocation model.

Applications can also be made for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) who provide non-teaching support as appropriate to the nature of the individual disability. Evidence must be provided by a professional who has assessed the child describing the special care needs, giving the reasons why the support of a Special Needs Assistant is necessary and the benefits the child would receive from such care in the school setting. The SENO decides if the pupil is eligible to receive support and, if so, whether the school has sufficient SNA resources to meet the needs of the child. Where the child is eligible for support and the school has insufficient SNA support to address the needs of the student, additional SNA staffing is sanctioned by the SENO. In 2008 there were 2,799 applications for SNA support for children with low-incidence disabilities. Chart 5.2 provides provisional data on the breakdown, by category of disability, of applications for SNA support in 2008.54

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54 Provisional data provided by the National Council for Special Education.
5.3 POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The allocation model for the provision of supports for pupils with special educational needs at post-primary level differs to the model implemented at primary level. Applications are made to the local SENO within the NCSE for supports required for both high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. Each need is assessed individually, which differs from the system implemented within primary level which provides a general allocation model based on the level of enrolment. The NCSE processes applications in respect of resource teaching support and special needs assistants. Decisions are made on the level of support which is appropriate to the individual school, which allows for the individual aspects of each school to be taken into consideration during the decision-making process. The level of support provided to the school in relation to each pupil also depends on the assessed needs of the individual pupil.

5.3.1 Low-incidence Disabilities
Pupils with assessed low-incidence disabilities are supported on the same basis as at primary level (see table above on low-incidence resource hours).

5.3.2 High-incidence Disabilities
In relation to those with high-incidence disabilities (i.e. mild general learning disability, borderline mild general learning disability or specific learning difficulty) at post-primary level, schools are provided with an additional 1.5 teaching hours per
week for each pupil. This additional teaching resource is designed to facilitate the provision of a minimum of 2.5 hours group teaching per week to these pupils. In this approach the allocation model at post-primary level mirrors the model at primary level, underlining the emphasis on grouping together students with similar needs for additional support.

In addition, learning support is available in post-primary schools for those students who have not been diagnosed as eligible for support under any of the disability categories but who have low achievement in reading or mathematics. In order to support these students 0.5 of a teacher post is allocated to schools with less than 600 pupils while a full post is allocated to schools with over 600 students. Variations in enrolment figures are taken into consideration so as not to disadvantage smaller schools, as operated by the general allocation model at primary level.

In 2008 there were 5,934 applications for resource teaching for children with disabilities in post-primary education. In addition there were 1,220 applications for access to SNA support. Charts 5.3 and 5.4 provide provisional data on the breakdown, by category of disability, of these applications.56

**Chart 5.3 Applications for Additional Teaching Support by Disability – Post Primary**

![Chart showing applications by disability](chart5.3.png)

*Source: NCSE. The category ‘Other’ includes Assessed Syndrome, Visual and Hearing Impairment, Severe and Profound General Learning Disability.*

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56 Provisional data provided by the National Council for Special Education.
5.4 Primary and Post-Primary Education

A number of additional supports are available to both primary and post-primary schools. These are outlined below.

5.4.1 Assistive Technology

Primary school funding supports for the use of assistive technology is generally dealt with under the Computer Applications for Individual Pupils with Special Needs at Primary Level. An application for this funding scheme must be supported by the school principal, teacher and other personnel who might be dealing with the student, e.g. speech and language therapist, and submitted to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) with responsibility for the school.

Funding of assistive technology and related resources for post-primary students is dealt with primarily through the provision of grants towards the purchase of equipment for pupils with a disability. The scheme applies to a student in secondary-level education with a physical disability or a student who has a communications disability that makes ordinary communication through speech and writing impossible. The purpose of the scheme is to provide the pupils in question with equipment of

Source: NCSE.
direct educational benefit to them. Examples of such equipment include computers, tape-recorders, word processors, induction loops, Braille equipment and software.

The equipment, as a rule, remains the property of the school and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities. Equipment purchased should normally be kept in the school. However, a certain level of flexibility exists within this scheme. With the consent of the management authority, the pupil may use the equipment at home. Where the school has no further requirement for the equipment, the Department of Education and Science may allocate it to another school in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.

The amount of grant available in respect of any pupil is the cost of the equipment subject (in general) to a maximum grant of €3,800. In certain circumstances, where the nature of the equipment warrants it, a higher grant may be considered.

All applications for special equipment must be submitted by school management authorities to the SENO with assigned responsibility for the school. Supporting documentation must also be submitted to the SENO when making the application. This should include a recent comprehensive and professional assessment of the nature and extent of disability, and details of the equipment most appropriate for the needs of the pupil. In addition the application must emphasise the necessity of assistive technology for the effective education of the student.

In addition to the supports outlined above there are a range of supplemental funding schemes which both primary and post-primary schools can avail of. These schemes include the following.

5.4.2 Home Tuition
Home tuition is intended to provide a compensatory educational service to children who may be unable to attend school, or who may be absent for a significant portion of the school year. This can include children with a significant medical condition which is likely to cause major disruption to their attendance at school on a continuing basis. Home tuition can also be deployed as an interim measure for children with special educational needs awaiting an appropriate educational placement.

Educational intervention can also be provided under the Home Tuition scheme for children who have been diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and who are awaiting an appropriate educational placement. The provision of therapeutic services such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and psychological services come under the remit of the HSE. Home Tuition funding cannot be used for therapeutic supports. Therefore the health and education sectors need to liaise on the provision of supports to the student. However, it should be noted that the Home Tuition scheme has recognised the need to develop the capacity of the State to provide educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their circumstances.

Provisional data for 2008-2009 indicates that 717 students have been approved for home tuition. In addition there are 76 students availing of Irish sign language tuition, which is also available under this scheme.

5.4.3 School Transport
The Department of Education and Science provides a school transport service through Bus Éireann for students with special educational needs in both primary and post-primary schools. Applications for special transport are made through the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who has been allocated responsibility for the school. If a special transport system is not available, a grant may be applied to help with the cost of private transport. Approximately €50m was spent on school transport for students with special educational needs in 2007.

5.4.4 Visiting Teacher Service
The visiting teachers provide advice and assistance in relation to the education of children with a visual or hearing impairment at the pre-school, primary and post-primary school levels. Support is provided to the children themselves, their parents, and the schools. Assistance is made available also in the context of the transition of a child from primary to post-primary school. The visiting teachers provide advice to schools on the inclusion of these children in learning programmes and in other school activities.

Specific advice can be provided in relation to increasing the child's access to education through the use of assistive technology. Visiting teachers can also assist with the making of applications to the Department of Education and Science for grants for assistive technology.

There are 84 visiting teacher posts in total. There are 41 teachers assigned for the needs of Travellers, while there are 29 teachers and 14 teachers for those with hearing and visual impairments respectively. The cost for the service is approximately €6m per annum.

In summary, significant financial resources are being provided at primary and post-primary level to meet the needs of those with special educational needs. This has most certainly impacted to a large extent on the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream education. While there are differences in how the funding is allocated at primary and post-primary it should be noted that the models of allocation in place are deemed appropriate based on the particular circumstances at the respective levels.

The allocation model for low incidence at primary level for example allows for applications based on the student's individual needs. The categories of disability considered low-incidence are such that there are significant variations in the level of disability and educational need, thus making individual applications both necessary and appropriate. The allocation model to provide supports for pupils with special educational needs in primary education is therefore specifically designed to meet all levels of needs, and to provide a level of flexibility to schools in the deployment of such supports. The allocation model also emphasises the importance of integration and inclusiveness in primary education ensuring that wherever possible and appropriate students with special educational needs are integrated with their peers in the mainstream learning environment.

In relation to those with high-incidence disabilities, the model of allocation is adapted and implemented to suit the needs of the students in those categories of disability. These students are often provided with support in a small group format allowing for
supports to be provided either in the mainstream setting or outside of the main classroom. This provides the school with flexibility in how they utilise the resource that is available to them. From a funding point of view, the use of group support also helps to maximise the strategic use of the supports available ensuring that the school can use the resources most effectively.

It should be noted that when the general allocation model commenced, a commitment was given to carry out a review after three years of operation. This review is currently ongoing and is expected to be completed by the end of 2009. The Department of Education and Science has sought the views of relevant stakeholders within the educational sector concerning the model's operation.

When a student with disabilities makes the transition to tertiary education, funding will be available to meet their needs. The funding model for higher education institutions combines strategic recurrent funding to institutions in respect of disadvantaged groups of students (including those with a disability) with a specific funding programme which provides supports on an individual or group basis. The model of funding for higher education institutions is outlined below.

5.5 THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION

5.5.1 Recurrent Funding for Access
The Higher Education Authority (HEA) manages and disburses annual recurrent funding to the universities, institutes of technology and other designated colleges. The core grant is allocated to cover core teaching and research activities within institutions. The internal allocation of funds as between teaching and research is a matter for each institution. These recurrent funds include grants in respect of the ‘Free Fees’ Scheme, supplementary funding requirements, and other miscellaneous initiatives that may require funding. In accordance with legislation, institutions submit and agree a budget for the year with the HEA on an annual basis. Institutions are obliged to record and present expenditure for the year before agreeing the budget for the following year, although recently it has been agreed that quarterly reports outlining expenditure on pay and non-pay will be submitted to the HEA.

From 1996 to 2005 the HEA supported the development of access programmes by higher education institutions through its targeted initiative funding programme. Since 1996, HEA-funded institutions have drawn on this funding to develop the necessary infrastructure and programmes of action which support wider access for people with a disability, mature students, young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and members of the Traveller and refugee communities.

In 2006 this funding was mainstreamed through the core, annual recurrent grant to higher education institutions. A new funding model has been introduced for the university sector. Under the model, core funding for access initiatives will be linked to the number of students from under-represented groups enrolled in each institution. The new funding model prioritises access through an ‘access weighting’ which, when fully implemented, will include the allocation of an additional amount above and beyond the per-capita standard resource to institutions for each under-represented student registered. The collection of Equal Access Data by the HEA, as outlined in Section 3.4 in Chapter 3, will advise the allocation of the financial resources required
to attract more students from target groups into higher education. Currently the funding provided for access represents approximately 1% of the total funding provided for higher education.

Traditionally, funding for the institute of technology sector was managed by the Department of Education and Science. In 2006 this responsibility was transferred to the HEA. A general allocation is made to the institutes of technology which includes provision for the Access Office.\(^57\) The HEA is currently developing a new funding model for this sector, which will operate along the lines of the funding model now in place in the university sector.

5.5.2 Fund for Students with Disabilities

This fund provides funding to both further and higher education institutions for the provision of services and supports for full-time students with disabilities. Most full-time Post-Leaving Certificate, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in Ireland are covered under the fund. In addition, eligible students pursuing many full-time undergraduate or some postgraduate courses in Northern Ireland can be supported under the fund. Lastly, eligible Irish students pursuing full-time undergraduate courses in publicly-funded institutions in the United Kingdom and other EU countries can also be considered.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide a student with a disability with assistance and equipment to enable them to access, to participate and to complete their course of study. The fund is aimed at students with disabilities who have specific support needs. The Fund for Students with Disabilities is managed by the National Access Office on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. The programme is funded by the government, with assistance from the European Social Fund.

The types of supports and assistance for which funding can be sought fall into three broad categories:

- **Assistive technology equipment and software**
  Examples:
  o Laptop
  o Printer/Scanner
  o Dictaphone
  o Specialist software

- **Personal and academic support**
  Examples:
  o Personal Assistant
  o Note-taker
  o Subject-specific Tuition
  o Learning Support

- **Transport costs**

\(^{57}\) Access Officers in Institutes of Technology are responsible for co-ordinating the work of widening participation for under-represented groups, including students with a disability, in their institution.
Application for the first time can be made during any year of study on an approved course at further or higher education level. The application process has similarities to the model used at post-primary level. An application to the Fund for Students with Disabilities is made by the college on the student’s behalf. The Disability/Access Officer in the college completes the application with the student and then submits the application to the National Access Office for assessment. The application must include a completed application form, a needs assessment and supporting documentation which outlines a diagnosis of the student’s disability.

The National Access Office assesses applications and then informs colleges of the allocations to be made. The value of each individual allocation is calculated by using standard rates applicable at the time. For example, an hourly allocation of €42.50 is provided for learning support/additional tuition. In recent years allocations have been made on a per-capita basis for certain categories of disabilities (e.g. specific learning difficulty/dyslexia). This has assisted in easing the administrative burden of the funding process and has been complemented by greater flexibility in the strategic use of the resources for approved students by each participating institution.

Generally the application process for first-time applications for the higher education sector begins in October. The assessment process for the applications can take up to two months due to the current volume of applications to this fund. Therefore, institutions are informed in December of the outcome of the applications.

A renewal application process for previously-approved students takes place earlier in the year. In September institutions submit a list of names of previously-approved students and funding is allocated to the colleges very speedily. The allocation of renewal funding at an early stage of the academic year ensures that institutions have an allocation under the Fund on hand to assist students with disabilities.

Where an application has not been approved clear reasons are provided, with reference to the funding guidelines where appropriate. Any application can be re-submitted with further documentation, or if the institution feels the original application was sufficient, an Appeal Application can be submitted on the student's behalf. On average approximately 5% of applications are not approved each year. The main reason for this is that the supporting documentation did not meet the criteria as outlined in the funding guidelines.

Funding is allocated to the college, not the student. The college remains responsible for the management of the funding throughout the duration of each year. Successful applicants are generally not required to organise the services/supports or source the equipment themselves, this is done by the college in consultation with the applicants.

Applications to the Fund will be considered up to February each year. The facility to submit an application up to the February deadline is implemented mainly to cater for students who acquire a disability during the year due to illness or an accident or following first-time diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty.
Snapshot of Funding Allocations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund for Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total allocation</td>
<td>€8.126m</td>
<td>€9.987m</td>
<td>€13.53m</td>
<td>€11.74m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications approved</td>
<td>2,032</td>
<td>2,444</td>
<td>3,099</td>
<td>3,848</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provision for the Fund for Students with Disabilities has increased from €101,579 in 1994 to €11.58m in the 2008-2009 academic year. As can be seen from the snapshot above, a total of 3,848 applications were approved under the Fund in 2008-2009.58 This represents an increase of 26% on 2007-2008 when 3,099 applicants were approved for supports.

Table 5.2 Fund for Students with Disabilities: Numbers of Approvals by Category of Disability 2005-200759

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>as % of total</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>as % of total</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>as % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind/Visual Impairment</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disability</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability/Mobility Impairment</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Ongoing Illness</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Difficulty</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>2,079</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,032</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2,444</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3,099</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 outlines a breakdown of approvals by category of disability from the Fund for Students with Disabilities. As the data shows the majority of applicants are those with a specific learning difficulty. The percentage of approvals for the sensory disabilities, physical disability/mobility impairment and multi-disability categories have actually fallen over the three years. This unwelcome trend was highlighted in the recent National Plan for Equity of Access, with a target set to double the numbers of these students in receipt of support from this Fund by 2013.

It should be noted that not all students with disabilities in further and higher education apply to the Fund for Students with Disabilities. This could be due to a variety of reasons, including a student’s unwillingness to disclose his/her disability, or the provision of sufficient support by institutions from other resources such as core funding for disability. However, the Fund is widely considered to be the key resource for students with disabilities which allows them to access further or higher education. The funding provided allows institutions to provide assistive technology, personal and academic supports and transport where appropriate.

58 Data for Fund for Students with Disabilities 2008-2009 is provisional.
59 Figures provided include all approvals for this fund, both further and higher education.
There is a finite amount of funding available each year for this Fund, therefore it requires careful and prudent management to ensure that each approved student is provided with support. The rate of growth of the numbers applying has created financial pressure on the Fund, resulting in the overall average allocation per student dropping in 2008-2009 compared to 2007-2008. An independent review of disability funding in higher education will take place in the second half of 2009. This review will analyse both recurrent funding and funding provided through the Fund for Students with Disabilities with a view to ensuring the most strategic use of the resources to support the participation and retention of students with disabilities in higher education.

5.5.3 Strategic Innovation Fund

In 2006 a new Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) was introduced to support projects to enhance collaboration in the sector; improve teaching and learning; support institutional reform; promote access and lifelong learning; and support the development of fourth level education.

In October 2006 the Minister for Education and Science announced details of the allocation of over €42m to third level institutions across the country under the first cycle of the Fund. Over €10m was allocated for projects aimed at improving access and retention in areas with traditionally low participation rates and projects that provide innovative methods of delivering education to part-time or distance learning students.

A further call for proposals was issued in 2007 under the second cycle of the Fund, which allocated over €11m to access initiatives. In addition to the investments in access projects, the SIF investments in teaching and learning, and lifelong learning will also contribute towards the promotion of greater quality and equality in Irish higher education. Detail on some of relevant projects funded through SIF is provided later in the report.

Examples of projects currently being funded, in respect of training and innovation for people with disabilities and institutional faculty members, are the following;

Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (Athlone Institute of Technology and partner institutions)

The objective of this project is to develop a regionally-based service so that all students entering further and higher education have timely access to needs assessment services. It will establish a leading assessment centre in the region to enable access and progression of students with disabilities – including those with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Research outcomes from the centre will be disseminated both nationally and internationally.

The identification of students and improvement of assessment methods will support the following aims of the Assessment Centre:

- Increase participation of students with Specific Learning Difficulty in third level
- Increased retention rates by Students with Disabilities
• Invest in professional development and assessment tools to ensure correct interventions are put in place.

Certificate in Contemporary Living *(Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with University College Cork)*

The National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID) in Trinity College has pioneered the Certificate in Contemporary Living course for students with intellectual disabilities. It comprises ten modules that cover the areas of liberal arts, expressive arts, career development and vocational skills. SIF funding will support the CCL and its students to create greater capacity in its research and policy development activities including study of access to quality tertiary education for people with intellectual disability throughout Ireland, and the development, implementation and dissemination across Ireland of best practice in lifelong learning for people with intellectual disability.

Collaborative Network for Teaching Innovation and Inclusive Education *(Institute of Technology Tallaght in collaboration with Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Institute of Technology Carlow and the Institute of Art, Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire)*

This proposal aims to enhance the capacity of the collaborating institutions in respect of teaching and learning. Each institute will take responsibility for managing one (and in two cases, two) separate strand.

The strands are

- Learner and Staff supports Tallaght
- Learning styles Blanchardstown
- Problem-based learning Blanchardstown and Carlow
- Emotional Intelligence Carlow
- Assistive Technologies Dun Laoghaire

Projects and initiatives such as those described above will help to further develop the education sector in Ireland in respect of innovative and creative approaches to the training of staff, and indeed in the development of teaching and learning practices. It is envisaged that initiatives supported under the Strategic Innovation Fund will allow the education system to provide a more inclusive environment for all disadvantaged students, including those with a disability, and add significant value to the experience of education for these learners.

5.5.4 Other Payments

*Back to Education Allowance*

In addition people with disabilities are also supported financially in making the transition back into education. As seen in the Chapter on policy initiatives, a key goal of the State is to raise the skills profile of all people. Returning to education is one of the key strategies in this regard. For people with disabilities who are seeking to re-enter the education system, support is available through the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).
This scheme is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The BTEA allows people in receipt of certain social welfare payments (e.g. Disability Allowance) to retain those payments whilst participating in approved full-time courses in further and higher education. The BTEA allows qualifying persons to return to full-time education in approved courses while continuing to get income support. Participants receive a standard rate of payment that is not means-tested.

To be eligible a student with a disability must attend a third-level course of education at any university, third-level college or institution, provided that the course is a full-time day course of study and is approved by the Department of Education and Science for the State maintenance grant scheme or has recognition from the Irish Higher Education and Training Awards Council.60

Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Level Option</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>as % of total</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live Register</td>
<td>3,154</td>
<td>3,347</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Family Payment</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Family Payment 2</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Allowance</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidity Pension</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Benefit</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer's Allowance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity Supplement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,731</td>
<td>4,641</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Level Option</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>as % of total</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live Register</td>
<td>2,532</td>
<td>2,501</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Family Payment</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Family Payment 2</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Allowance</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalidity Pension</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness Benefit</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer's Allowance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacity Supplement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,359</td>
<td>4,242</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60 Full details on the Back to Education and employment allowances are available from http://www.welfare.ie
Table 5.4 shows the number of persons with a disability in second level\textsuperscript{61} education in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance. Of the 4,242 in receipt of the payment in 2007-2008, 358 of these were previously in receipt of a disability-related social welfare payment.

Table 5.5 shows the number of persons with a disability in total in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance. Of the 8,883 in receipt of the payment in 2007-2008, 1,076 (17.6\%) of these were previously in receipt of a disability-related social welfare payment.

**Student Maintenance Grant**

The main source of government funding for low-income students in higher education is the Student Maintenance Grant. Students apply to their local awarding authority for the financial aid. Varying levels of awards, ranging from €345 to €6,690, are made based on the financial circumstances of the candidate. In 2007-2008 a total of €264m was provided to 54,666 students. As the scheme is administered largely on the basis of socio-economic circumstances, no specific data is collected on the disability status of the students. However, a number of disability supports are excluded from the calculation of reckonable income when determining eligibility for the grant, including Disability Allowance and Blind Pension, where these are payable to the student. This means that students in receipt of these payments are more likely to qualify for a grant.

### 5.6 EMPLOYMENT

There is a range of funding schemes available to people with disabilities to facilitate their participation in employment. These schemes are managed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and FÁS. Information on these schemes is provided below. Additional information, including data, on employment supports is provided in Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{61} In relation to eligibility for the second-level option a student can attend a second-level course of education at any community, comprehensive, secondary or vocational school. Courses include the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC), City and Guilds Certificate or a National Diploma (BTEC).
5.6.1 Wage Subsidy Scheme
This scheme provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ people with disabilities who work more than 20 hours per week. The Scheme is structured in three strands. The employer can benefit from one or all, simultaneously.

Unlike other Schemes, the potential exists for both employee and employer to receive an incentive. Consequently, not only does the employer receive a wage subsidy, but those who meet qualifying criteria are able to avail of the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) available through Department of Social and Family Affairs.62

- **Strand I** - this is a general subsidy for any perceived productivity shortfall in excess of 20% for a disabled person, in comparison to a non-disabled peer. An employee must work a minimum of 21 hours per week up to a maximum of 39 hours per week. The rate of subsidy is €5.30 per hour and is based on the number of hours worked, giving a total annual subsidy available of €10,748 per annum based on 39-hour week.

- **Strand II** – this is based on the total number of disabled employees in a company. An employer can apply for a grant to cover additional costs ranging from an additional 10% for 3-6 employees to a maximum of 50% of the wage subsidy for 23+ disabled employees.

- **Strand III** – this is where 30 or more disabled people are employed. Employers can avail of a grant of €30,000 per annum to assist with the cost of employing an Employment Assistance Officer.

Rehab Enterprises, the commercial division of Rehab Group, is one of the largest employers under the Scheme. Rehab employ over 400 people, more than 220 of whom are people with disabilities.

In addition FÁS also manages a Reasonable Accommodation Fund for the Employment of Disabled People.63 The fund provides employment supports to the private sector which assist people with disabilities. The supports are as follows.

5.6.2 Employee Retention Grant Scheme
This is available to private sector employers when an employee develops a disability whether occupational or not. It provides funding to identify accommodation or training to enable the employee to remain in their current position or to re-train to take up another position within the organisation. There are two stages to the Scheme;

- **Assessment**, 90% of the costs of developing a retention strategy can be funded to a maximum of €2,500.

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62 It should be noted that the BTWA is currently under review for WSS by Department of Social and Family Affairs and a statement on same is expected shortly.

63 Reasonable Accommodation is a term used in equality legislation to define the obligation to take appropriate measures to accommodate people with disabilities.
- Implementation, 90% of eligible programme costs can be funded to a maximum of €12,500.

5.6.3 Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant
This is available to employers in the private sector who need to adapt equipment or the workplace to accommodate a disabled employee. The maximum grant provided is €6,350 and covers minor building modifications such as ramps or accessible toilets; assistive technology; amplifiers for telephones, etc.

5.6.4 Job Interview/Induction Interpreter Grant
The Job Interview/Induction Interpreter Grant is available to cover the costs of an interpreter up to a maximum of €106.68 for a 3-hour period for interview and induction purposes where an interviewee or new staff member is deaf, hard of hearing or has a speech impediment.

5.6.5 Personal Reader Grant
The Personal Reader Grant is available to blind or visually-impaired persons who are in employment and who need a Personal Reader to assist them with job-related reading. Such reading is part of the employee’s duties but due to the nature of their visual impairment they cannot perform reading duties themselves. The grant to be paid will be based on a fee per hour, in line with minimum wage. Where there is a requirement for technically-qualified readers, the fee to be paid will be looked at on an individual basis and may be higher.
Chapter 6

Provision

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, published in 2007, set a high level goal to promote ‘equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labour market supported by enhanced vocational training, employment programmes and further development of supports’. The plan set a target in which the overall participation rate in education, training and employment will be increased to 50% by 2016.

To achieve this, and other high level goals, a number of initiatives have been put in place in the areas of education and employment which encourage and support people with disabilities in further developing their professional and social lives. These initiatives relate to the transitional periods between the stages of education (particularly post-primary to tertiary education) and the transition between education and employment.

6.1 EDUCATION SUPPORTS

As detailed in Chapter 3 on policy and Chapter 4 on funding, educational supports are put in place for students entering the school system (primary level) according to their need. These needs are assessed, following which identified support measures are implemented to allow the student to participate in class on a level equivalent to their peers.

At post-primary the supports which were provided at primary level can be maintained. However, there are additional needs which are supported in relation to national examinations. At the end of three years in post-primary students are required to sit the Junior Certificate examination. At the end of the final year of post-primary students sit the Leaving Certificate examination. The latter of these exams is used mainly to determine a points score in respect of a place in higher education. More detail on the application process to higher education is outlined below.

6.1.1 Examination Accommodations

In relation to examinations accommodations, students with disabilities can apply to the State Examinations Commission for supports. The role of the State Examinations Commission is to work ‘in partnership with school authorities and education providers in order to deliver a high quality examination and assessment system that is efficient, fair and accessible and to ensure that the system is operated in an environment of openness, transparency and accountability’.

---

65 See http://www.examinations.ie/ for full information on the role and functions of the State Examinations Commission.
The accommodations themselves are available to students with permanent or long-term conditions which may significantly impair their academic performance in the exams. The aim of the accommodations is to

- remove, as far as possible, the impact of the disability on the candidate's performance and thus enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of attainment, and
- ensure that, whilst giving candidates every opportunity to demonstrate their level of attainment, the special arrangements will not give the candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates in the same examination.

Included in the reasonable accommodations is the option that a student is exempt from taking part of a module. An example would be a student with a hearing impairment being exempt from aural examination in languages. The student is then assessed on the remainder of their work in the module.

The number of reasonable accommodations being provided in recent years has increased significantly. In 2004 a total of 8,394 reasonable accommodations were provided for State examinations. This had increased to 14,708 reasonable accommodations in 2007.66 There are various reasons for the large increases in the provision of reasonable accommodations, and for the wider representation of students with disabilities in the education systems at all levels. The key factor behind the strong growth now being experienced is the fact that Ireland is progressing from what has been a low base in terms of participation by people with disabilities in the education system. It is believed that this low base prevailed for many years due to the following factors:

- Failure to diagnose disabilities, particularly ‘hidden’ disabilities such as dyslexia or mental health difficulties
- Social stigma attached to disability
- Inadequate supports for people with disabilities in primary, second-level and higher education
- Low expectations of students with disabilities on the part of educators, students themselves and others
- Lack of integration of people with disabilities into the ‘mainstream’ schooling system
- Lack of role models

Learners with disabilities are now increasingly integrated and successful in the primary and second-level system, thus providing such students with the necessary academic resources to aspire to and compete for opportunities in further and higher education. The tables below provide an indication of the increasing numbers of students with disabilities retained within the system and completing second-level education. No profile of the students is available by category of disability.

Table 6.1 outlines the number of students in total who have taken the Leaving Certificate examinations in recent years.\(^{67}\) Data on the ‘pass’ or ‘failure’ rates of these students is unavailable.

Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaving Certificate Examination: Numbers of Participants 2001-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
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Table 6.2 Reasonable Accommodations Statistics Leaving Certificate 2001-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Learning)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>194</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Physical)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assistance</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Processor</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>Enlarged Question Papers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Braille Question Papers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from Aural Tests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from Oral Tests</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exemption from Practical Tests</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modified Papers (Visual)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling/Grammar Waiver</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>1396</td>
<td>1458</td>
<td>1,841</td>
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\(^{67}\) All statistics on the State examinations from the State Examinations Commission.
Table 6.3 Junior Certificate 2001-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Learning)</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Physical)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assistance</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>1084</td>
<td>1431</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>2356</td>
<td>2769</td>
<td>3,101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>447</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>177</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assistance</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braille Question Papers</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from Aural Tests</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from Oral Tests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from Practical Tests</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Papers (Visual)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling/Grammar Waiver</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>2077</td>
<td>2630</td>
<td>3367</td>
<td>3992</td>
<td>4,378</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 6.4 Leaving Certificate Applied 2001-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Accommodation</th>
<th>LCA 2003 Yr1 and Yr2</th>
<th>LCA 2004 Yr1 and Yr2</th>
<th>LCA 2005 Yr1 and Yr2</th>
<th>LCA 2006 Yr1 and Yr2</th>
<th>LCA 2007 Yr1 and Yr2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Learning)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape Recorder (Physical)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assistance</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Processor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlarged Question Papers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Papers (Visual)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Exemption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aural Exemption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Subject Exemption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>1,394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5 Number of Special Examination Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Centres</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>3088</td>
<td>3852</td>
<td>4710</td>
<td>5589</td>
<td>6572</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned above, places in higher education courses are effectively decided on a points-based system. A student achieves a number of points from their performance in examinations in the Leaving Certificate and this is matched with their third-level course choices as outlined in their application to the higher education institutions.

6.1.2 Supplementary System for Entry to Higher Education

This application process is managed by the Central Applications Office (CAO). The CAO is an organisation which was founded in 1976 by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. The HEIs have delegated to CAO the task of processing applications centrally for admission to their first year undergraduate courses. The purpose of the CAO is to process applications centrally and...
some higher education institutions have resulted in the development of a Supplementary System for entry to higher education courses for students with disabilities. The system briefly works as follows:

If a student has a disability or specific learning difficulty they are encouraged to indicate this on the appropriate section of the CAO Application Form. The CAO then supplies the applicant with the Supplementary Information Form so that the applicant can supply further details.

These details are then presented to the higher education institutions to which the applicant has applied. Applicants with a specific learning difficulty will be required to have a consultant complete an Evidence of Disability section of the Supplementary Information Form. The institutions involved will also take account of the impact of the student's disability or specific learning difficulty on their educational performance, through the provision of supplementary admission procedures. The latest data available for this scheme, for 2008, as highlighted in Section 3.2 in Chapter 3, shows that 135 students with disabilities secured a place on a higher education course on a reduced points basis via this mechanism.

Once a student has secured a place in higher education they will be able to register with the Access or Disability Service available within the institution. This provides access to the range of supports available in higher education. These supports can be provided at local level, such as exam supports or liaising with lecturers around deadlines for students with specific needs. More detail on these services is provided in Chapter 7 of this report.

6.2 Employment Supports

As outlined in Chapter 4, employment-based supports for people with disabilities are co-ordinated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). FÁS also provides a range of measures to assist entry into employment for people with disabilities. These include:

6.2.1 Specialist Training Providers

FÁS contracts with 20 Specialist Training Providers (STPs), such as the National Learning Network, in 55 centres to deliver vocational training to disabled people who require more intensive support than would be available in the general options. This training is provided exclusively to people with disabilities within a segregated setting. It is envisaged that the Specialist Training Providers will deliver on more than half of the target laid out by the DETE’s strategy to employ more than 7,000 people with disabilities by 2010.
6.2.2 Supported Employment Programme
This is an open labour market initiative providing people with disabilities, who are ‘job-ready’, with supports to help them access the open labour market. It is implemented by sponsor organisations on behalf of FÁS who employ Job Coaches to provide a range of supports tailored to the individual needs of a jobseeker. Individuals who participate on this programme must achieve a minimum 8 hours work per week, by 6 months into the Programme. Supports are provided for a maximum of 18 months.

6.2.3 Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme
Other supports available which are not part of Reasonable Accommodation Fund include the Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme, which assists the integration of disabled people into the workplace and helps to eliminate mistaken perceptions about them. It is available to all companies in the private sector who are interested in employing, retaining or relating to people with disabilities. Funding of up to 90% of training costs is available in the first year and up to 80% of costs in subsequent years with an annual limit of €20,000 payable to an organisation. To avail of this funding, however, training must be carried out by a FÁS approved training organisation.

6.2.4 Data on Employment Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Centre (Dublin)</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>1,043</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dublin/Dun</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laoghaire-Rathdown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>1,106</td>
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<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid West</td>
<td>1,003</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6 outlines the numbers of completions on FÁS courses or schemes per year and region for people in receipt of a social welfare disability payment. Between 2003 and 2008 there has been an increase of almost 30% in the number completing these schemes.

71 All employment related data provided by FÁS.
6.2.5 Expenditure on Disability Employment Supports

A total of €74m was allocated by FÁS for employment-based supports for people with disabilities in 2008.\textsuperscript{72} Table 6.7 outlines the expenditure, over a period of eight years, on FÁS programmes for people with disabilities. The expenditure has increased significantly in the intervening period, from €17m in 2000 to €74m in 2008 reflecting the level of support being provided to people with disabilities who are seeking to access the labour market.

Table 6.7 Expenditure on Disability-related FÁS Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Training Providers</td>
<td>55.19</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>44.88</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>39.79</td>
<td>39.21</td>
<td>28.91</td>
<td>14.57</td>
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<td>Employment Support Schemes</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot Employment Programme</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage subsidy scheme (WSS)</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported Employment Programme</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Support Awareness</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74.03</td>
<td>68.32</td>
<td>64.81</td>
<td>56.82</td>
<td>55.16</td>
<td>51.71</td>
<td>50.06</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>16.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 NATIONAL LEARNING NETWORK

National Learning Network,\textsuperscript{73} the training and employment division of Rehab Group, is Ireland’s leading non-government provider of inclusive training, education and employment access services, offering innovative training options in over 50 locations around the country. Every year, the organisation provides vocational and rehabilitative training to more than 5,000 people with disabilities, people with mental health difficulties and others who are distant from the labour market.

Funded by FÁS and also by the Health Service Executive (HSE), National Learning Network’s courses are flexible and responsive to accommodate the different ability levels and other circumstances of learners. All courses are provided in the community and students are encouraged to take part in as wide a range of community activities as possible. Courses are offered to people aged 16 and upwards and each learner progresses through a course at a pace suited to their own skills and abilities. Courses are nationally accredited by the Further Education and Training Accreditation Council (FETAC) and the organisation is now one of the largest awarders of FETAC awards in the country.

The organisation offers a wide range of training, education and employment supports as follows:

\textsuperscript{72} Figure does not include expenditure on Mainstreaming Training or the Community Employment Schemes as these schemes are available to both disabled and non-disabled people.

\textsuperscript{73} Full details of the range of training, education and employer services provided by National Learning Network can be found at \url{www.nationallearningnetwork.ie}
6.3.1 Vocational Training
Funded by FÁS, this training aims to equip students with skills for the workforce such as computer skills, business and administration, catering. Training is provided in a variety of innovative ways: centre-based learning where students attend a training centre on a daily basis; employer-based training where students learn employable skills while based with a local company; and distance learning where students pursue their studies from their own home with regular support from instructors.

6.3.2 Rehabilitative Training
This HSE-funded training aims to develop foundation skills to equip people to progress to further education or employment. Often students engaged in Rehabilitative Training will have experienced mental health difficulty or acquired a disability or will be early school-leavers and will require additional supports to enable them to progress towards employment or further training and education.

6.3.3 Assessment Service
Located in the Institute of Technology in Blanchardstown, the service provides assessment and support for children (aged 5 and upwards), adolescents and adults with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia (also known as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder or DCD). It also provides functional strategies and support for other associated specific processing/learning difficulties, such as Asperger Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

6.4 WILLING ABLE MENTORING
Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is an initiative of the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) and is funded through the EU Equal initiative. This project arranges work placements for graduates with disabilities which allow the graduates access to the mainstream labour market. The project has the long-term aim of facilitating and accelerating the transition of graduates with disabilities to careers appropriate to their skills and abilities.

Major companies throughout Ireland were involved in the project. These include IBM, Bank of Ireland, Savills Hamilton Osborne King, the Civil Service, FÁS, and Irish Life and Permanent. A total of 47 graduates with a disability were placed in the companies involved.

Placements last up to six months and allowed the graduates structured integration into full-time paid employment. The inclusion of graduates with disabilities in the companies has the dual benefit of a positive experience for the employer and employee and also allows for the furthering of the national aim of social inclusion for people with disabilities in the economic and social aspect of the nation.

74 AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in third level education for students with disabilities in Ireland.
6.5 STEPPING FORWARD PROGRAMME

Dun Laoghaire VEC offers a programme entitled ‘stepping forward’ leading to Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates in General Learning. This programme aims to build confidence and social skills, independent living skills and improve ability through a broad approach to literacy and numeracy, for young people who have significant autism spectrum disorders and concurrent learning disabilities. It supports wider participation in the community and effective transitions to adult life.

6.6 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Other government financial support schemes are also available to people with disabilities looking to re-enter the workforce. Eligible people can apply for the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) or the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA), the latter being for the self-employed. These schemes are administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and allow people to enter the workforce while retaining a percentage of their original welfare payment (e.g. disability allowance) which is not subject to taxation or social insurance. Employees would also be allowed to retain their ‘secondary benefits’ (e.g. fuel allowance, medical card) for a specified amount of time.\(^\text{76}\)

These schemes enable those who are welfare dependent to make the step back into employment. The various schemes also represent an approach to counteract the notions of a ‘welfare trap’, whereby individuals are reluctant to engage in training or employment schemes for fear of losing a regular source of income, as provided by their welfare payment. It is anticipated that the combination of education and employment strategies outlined above will encourage a move away from the notions of a welfare trap for people with disabilities whilst also contributing to the fulfilment of the social and economic goals of increasing participation levels in society for those with a disability.

\(^\text{76}\) There are various conditions for these schemes depending on one’s personal circumstances.
Chapter 7
Support Services

Support services for students with disabilities have been put in place in both the post-primary and the tertiary education sectors. This allows access to information in respect of the transition to tertiary education and also to the labour market. This Chapter will outline the support services available, including specific websites which have been set up for information purposes. This Chapter will also address some initiatives in respect of the development of information for institutional staff.

7.1 CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES
At post-primary level many schools have a Guidance Counsellor in place to advise all students on their choices in respect of furthering their education. This advice could range from information on course requirements (number of points for entry onto a specific course) or indeed on the career opportunities available via the qualifications provided by a particular course or institution.

Higher education institutions have developed careers officer posts and career programmes, with links to employers. A number of institutions have also further developed specific careers support for learners with a disability so that the student can make an informed decision on their career choice following graduation. Specifically, Dublin City University, University College Cork, NUI Galway and University of Limerick offer programmes of personalised careers services. The service involves information support specifically for students with disabilities and includes individual consultations, workshops, seminars, conferences, employer liaison and work placement.

The work of careers advisers in many educational institutions is co-ordinated by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. This is the professional body in Ireland for over 1,200 Guidance Counsellors in different levels of the educational system. The development of these services has included specific educational courses being designed to further develop the level and professionalism of the service.

7.2 NATIONAL LEARNING NETWORK
As we have seen in the previous Chapter of this report, the National Learning Network works to assist people with disabilities in relation to the labour market and employment. This is provided through specific training courses and information provided on accessing the labour market for those who are disadvantaged and require further training and advice.

7.3 DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICE
The Disability Support Service (DSS) is a partnership between the National Learning Network and the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) which offers
a wide range of supports to students with disabilities in eight colleges of further education in Dublin.

The emphasis of all National Learning Network training courses and supports is on progression and it has been highly successful in supporting individuals with disabilities to progress to employment and further education. It does this by building very strong links with local employers and by supporting students to engage in work experience which often leads to long-term employment.

7.4 ACCESS AND DISABILITY SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Each higher education institution in Ireland has a dedicated access service. This includes the provision of the services of a dedicated Access Officer. In addition, the seven universities and Dublin Institute of Technology also provide specific services for students with a disability. This includes a range of services such as dedicated Disability Officers and in some cases dedicated learning support tutors and/or assistive technology officers.

Once a student enrols in a higher education institution they can, if they wish, register with the access or disability service. This allows them to utilise the range of services which are available. As mentioned earlier in this report these supports can be those provided through the institution itself or, more commonly, an institution will make an application on the student’s behalf to the Fund for Students with Disabilities for additional disability-related supports.

Institutional supports are varied, according to the needs of the student. Practical assistance is provided in accommodations required for exams, such as extra time. Other examples of services available to students include mentoring or counselling through the institutions’ main student services facility. Higher education institutions strive to ensure that once a student has registered with the access or disability service, the student is then supplied with the supports required, in relation to their disability, which allows them to participate in higher education to their fullest potential.

Higher education institutions receive recurrent funding each year through the Higher Education Authority to provide these services. Detail on this funding has been provided in Chapter 5 of this report.

7.5 DISABILITY ADVISORS WORKING NETWORK

The Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) is the professional organisation for Disability Officers who are primarily responsible for supporting learners with disabilities in higher education in Ireland. The primary focus of DAWN is to work collaboratively to secure improved supports for students with disabilities across the higher education sector. The disability offices in Irish higher-education institutions have developed links with schools and co-ordinated the development of alternative entry routes, such as the Supplementary Admissions Scheme which has facilitated increased access and participation in higher education for students with disabilities.
7.6 INFORMATION SEMINARS

Various organisations conduct annual conferences in relation to accessing the educational system or finding employment. FÁS holds large annual events focusing on further training and employment for all people, including those with disabilities.

The annual ‘Better Options’ event is specifically tailored to the needs of students with disabilities who are seeking additional information on the transition to higher education. The event includes seminars on the Supplementary Admission Procedure in respect of gaining a place on a higher education course. It also includes providing information on specific college procedures and allows students to find out about financial supports which may be available through the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

7.7 WEBSITES

There are a number of websites of use to students seeking information on the transition to tertiary education and employment. These include the following:

**www.cao.ie**

The Central Applications Office has been hugely successful in developing a transparent and effective system for the allocation of places in tertiary education. This website provides students with the opportunity to apply for direct entry to higher education. It also allows for any changes in course choices throughout the year, prior to the offers of places by institutions.

**www.qualifax.ie**

Qualifax is a very thorough and effective database which allows students to search for a whole range of educational information. In particular Qualifax is the best directory for educational courses in tertiary education in Ireland. It also lists all upcoming career events for students and parents to attend.

**www.studentfinance.ie**

An initiative of the Higher Education Authority, this website is a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to the range of financial support schemes available in further and higher education. The website is a useful resource for students and prospective students, but also for parents and those who provide education guidance in schools and the wider community. The website contains dedicated sections on all relevant government financial support schemes such as the Maintenance Grant, the Back to Education Allowance and the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

**www.fas.ie**

As the national training and employment authority in Ireland, this website provides a range of information on training and employment opportunities for those seeking to further their skills or re-enter the workforce. The website also includes information on training grants which are available, including information specific to people with disabilities.
www.workway.ie
This is a joint initiative between the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). The initiative has been developed to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. Detailed information guidelines are provided to employees and employers in relation to a range of issues related to disability and the workplace.
Chapter 8

Training

8.1 SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the Department of Education and Science has developed a Special Education Support Service (SESS) for teachers. This service provides training to school staff in respect of providing expert support, professional development and training opportunities in special education. The service fulfils a significant role in enhancing the quality of teachers who work with those with disabilities whilst also enhancing the learning experience of the student. In 2008, the service filled over 23,280 teachers training places.

The service operates under the remit of the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science. An allocation of €5.8m was allocated to the service in 2009. Teachers with an interest in the provision of special education can apply to the SESS for training. However, the service has a flexible approach to proving services and supports come under four main headings:

- In-school support: whereby a school may seek advice on a particular issue in respect of special education
- Individual professional development: a teacher may apply for funding to enrol on a professional development course
- Group professional development initiatives: A group of teachers from a school, or an organisation, could seek professional development
- Telephone helpline and email support: the provision of a helpline and email address to assist those with queries regarding special education services

The SESS also develops and delivers a range of courses relevant to both primary and post-primary level. The courses include:

- Challenging behaviour and students with special educational needs
- Curriculum differentiation for pupils with special educational needs
- Dyslexia in school: Planning and implementing appropriate teaching interventions
- The inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream post-primary schools: A whole-school approach.

In addition academic courses, at post-graduate level, are available in higher education institutions throughout Ireland for professional development of teachers at primary and post-primary level. These include:

- Masters in Special Education Needs
- Graduate Diploma in Special Education Needs
There are also some courses available specific to teaching in tertiary education, with Dublin Institute of Technology and University Limerick amongst those providing courses such as:

- MA in Third Level Learning and Teaching
- MA in Academic Practice

8.2 DUBLIN CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

In addition a Dublin Centre for Academic Development (DCAD) has been recently set up as part of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance which includes Dublin City University, Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Institute of Art, Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire, Institute of Technology Tallaght, National University Ireland Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin. The DCAD will provide training opportunities for academic staff for the development of improved teaching quality with a view to enhancing the students’ learning experience. It is anticipated that courses and modules will begin in the 2009-2010 academic year.

The availability of training and academic courses specific to the delivery of special needs education is vital. As the participation of students with disabilities increases throughout the education system, further special needs teaching resources will be required, whether in a mainstream setting or in special classes. To meet this growing need it is important that those teachers seeking to develop their professional skills are provided with the opportunity to do so. The impact on students with disabilities will be positive. The combination of personal supports provided to the student, be it assistive technologies or transport, added to the development of staff dedicated to the provision of special needs education significantly enhances the learning experience of children with disabilities.

8.3 LITERACY TUITION GRANT

A grant has been provided to the Irish Deaf Society to train tutors to give literacy tuition and a grant is awarded annually to the Dyslexia Association of Ireland as a contribution towards the provision of assessments, tuition and information.
Chapter 9

Parental and Community Involvement

There are a number of active disability-related voluntary parental organisations and charities in Ireland. This Chapter will highlight some of those groups and outline the areas of work being progressed for people with disabilities and the transition for these students into tertiary education and employment.

One of the main roles of the groups is to provide advice and assistance to people with disabilities and their families. This advice can be vital for that person or family in respect of creating a supportive environment in which to discuss the issues relevant to a particular disability. This includes the provision of information on supports available from the State in respect of accessing education and also in respect of pathways into the labour market.

A central feature of the work of parent groups are information evenings and workshops which provide practical support to families where the child has a disability. These support networks are a very important feature in raising the expectations of people with disabilities and parents of people with disabilities who are unfamiliar with the support systems put in place by the State.

These groups also carry out a lobbying function, in respect of influencing government and public representatives in the area of supports required for specific disabilities.

9.1 DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS

Information is provided below on some of the groups and organisations working in respect of the provision of supports and services for people with disabilities with the aim of increasing their participation in the social, economic and cultural aspects of society. These groups include:

Association for Higher Education Access and Disability: AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in tertiary education for students with disabilities in Ireland. Among the organisation’s current projects is WAM (Willing Able Mentoring) which is discussed in Chapter 6 of this report. The overall objective of this organisation is to ensure full access to and full participation of people with disabilities in the area of higher education and employment.

AHEAD has produced a number of publications including, *Equal Opportunity in Recruitment and Selection for Graduates with Disabilities – An Employers Guide* and *Accessing Third Level Education in Ireland - A Guide for Students with Disabilities*

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77 Information on the full range of voluntary and community services, including those which are disability related, is available from [http://www.cidb.ie/comhairlevcs.nsf/HTMLPages/DirOrganisations?Opendocument](http://www.cidb.ie/comhairlevcs.nsf/HTMLPages/DirOrganisations?Opendocument)
and Learning Difficulties, and Charting Your Course – A Handbook for Guidance Counsellors.

**Disability Federation of Ireland:**
The Disability Federation of Ireland is the national support organisation and advocate for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities. The central goal of the federation is to work ‘to ensure that Irish society is fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise fully their civil, social and human rights’. The Federation represents over 150 voluntary disability organisations through the social partnership process in Ireland.

**Enable Ireland:**
Enable Ireland provides services for people with disabilities and for the families of people with disabilities. The supports provided are for children and adults and include a holistic approach to the educational, social and personal needs of people with disabilities in Ireland. Enable Ireland has set up commercial outlets in Ireland in a bid to raise proceeds to fund their support services.

**Feach:**
Feach is a parent support group for blind and visually-impaired children. As part of their supportive role, Feach is involved in the work of securing resources and services for people who are blind or have a visual impairment.

**Dyslexia Association of Ireland:**
The Dyslexia Association of Ireland works to promote awareness of Specific Learning Disability (SLD/Dyslexia) and to provide supports for people with this difficulty. The association also provides a free information service to members of the public. Other services provided include psycho-educational assessments, specialised tuition, summer schools and the provision of information for parents.

**Dyspraxia Association of Ireland:**
The Dyspraxia Association of Ireland aims to raise awareness of dyspraxia in Ireland. The goals are to attain adequate resources to support the needs of children with dyspraxia. The association also provides an information service for parents.

**Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland:**
The Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland seeks to increase knowledge and awareness of CF, while also providing advice and information to people with cystic fibrosis and their families.

**Special Olympics Ireland:**
Special Olympics Ireland aims to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sport for children and adults with a learning disability.

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People with Disabilities in Ireland:
PwDI is the umbrella organisation which brings people together locally and nationally to work on common issues that affect all people with disabilities.

The National Parents and Siblings Alliance:
This alliance campaigns for the rights of people with intellectual disability and autism.

Inclusion Ireland:
Inclusion Ireland (formerly known as NAMHI – National Association for Mentally Handicapped in Ireland) is a national voluntary organisation working to promote the rights of people with intellectual disability in Ireland to ensure their equal participation in society.

Irish Society for Autism:
This society aims to promote the interests of people with autism, raise practical awareness, lobby for improved services for children and adults with autism, and provide support and guidance to people with autism and their families.

Down Syndrome Ireland:
The goal of this organisation is to help people with Down syndrome make their own futures as bright and independent as possible by providing them with education, support and friendship.

Irish Wheelchair Association:
The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is the national organisation of people with limited mobility with over 20,000 members and service users.

Aspire:
The Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland was set up by a group of parents in 1995 to provide support for people with Asperger Syndrome (AS) and their carers, and to encourage research into the condition.

National Council for the Blind Ireland:
The National Council for the Blind Ireland (NCBI) is an organisation providing practical support and services to people who are living with sight loss in Ireland. They also provide a range of services to public and private organisations to make sure that their services are accessible to people who are blind and vision impaired.

DeafHear.ie
DeafHear.ie promotes the welfare of deaf people and their families in all aspects of life. It has a national network of resource centres providing a range of accessible services to deaf and hard of hearing people and their families and is also actively involved in advocating and lobbying for improved services and new developments including UNHS (Universal Newborn Hearing Screening), aural rehabilitation and education.
Chapter 10

Future Developments

Significant progress has been made in recent decades in Ireland in creating an inclusive society. Pathways for people with disabilities which provide equitable access to education and employment are being embedded throughout the respective systems. In addition, government strategies are being implemented which set ambitious targets for policy-makers and service providers for the participation of people with disabilities. These progressive policies, including legislation, are backed by substantial multi-annual investment. The outcome of the investment has been extremely positive. This includes:

- The building of capacity at all levels of the education system to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities.
- The creation of work-based supports for employers and employees to expand the employment opportunities for those with disabilities.
- The development of a more equal society, one in which the barriers for people with disabilities are being dismantled through the implementation of progressive and action-based policies.

The positive developments outlined above have been aided by the substantial economic growth witnessed in Ireland in the 1990s and in the current decade. But Ireland, like many other OECD countries, is now facing a turbulent economic period due to the downturn in the global economy. This presents significant challenges to all those committed to supporting people with disabilities. It is imperative that these challenges be addressed. This will require flexibility in our policy framework, creative thinking by service providers, and a commitment by all to ensure the most efficient and effective use of scarce resources in disability-related health, education and employment services.

Great encouragement can be taken from progress to date on the delivery of disability services to those who require them. Capacity is being built in the areas of health, education, welfare and employment through the provision of significant financial resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities. To continue this work in the current economic circumstances will involve even greater co-ordination between government departments and agencies to ensure the maximum impact from the resources available. The implementation of the National Disability Strategy will allow for the co-ordination of the individual sectoral plans of government departments. This will provide an opportunity to ensure the strategic use of the resources available improving the effectiveness of these resources.

As in many OECD countries, it is clear that the immediate economic challenges will impact on all sectors of government services, including disability services. In response, creative solutions are required. The resources which will continue to be invested in disability services are higher than at any other point previously. These
resources must be utilised to ensure the maximum impact. As always, people with disabilities should remain at the centre of these strategies.

Implementation of the various government initiatives, such as the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education or the Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, continues apace. These substantial and wide-ranging plans will help to foster educational and employment systems that are conducive to the potential of people with disabilities. The implementation of these and other strategies will strengthen the support framework which has been developed in Ireland and which allows services for people with disabilities to begin at an early stage and continue during the transition into higher education and employment.

The National Disability Survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office will provide a comprehensive follow up to Census 2006. The survey will be used to both inform and plan services for people with a disability, while the Equal Access Data initiative of the Higher Education Authority will allow for the monitoring of national and institutional targets for admission to and participation in higher education. It will also advise the allocation of the financial resources required for future funding supports for those groups under-represented in higher education as part of the implementation of a revised funding model for higher education.

The Irish government has set demanding targets for the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of our society. This will involve maintaining, and building upon, the pathways developed to date in our education and employment systems. In the current budgetary crisis, resources will be less readily available and those that are made available will need to provide effective measures that ensure value for money. However, the best use of these already considerable resources can ensure the continuation of the progress that has been made to date. This represents the next challenge for Ireland in maintaining and further developing pathways to tertiary education and employment for disabled students.
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