



INCLUSION IRELAND

National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability

Submission to the Department of Education and Skills

On the Review of Career Guidance

May 2018

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Ireland plain English guidelines.**



Easy to read summary



This report is about the Department of Education and Skills review of career guidance services in schools.



Career guidance helps a person to plan for their future education, work or training after they leave school.



Not all young people with a disability get a choice of what to do after school. Special schools do not have any career guidance service. Inclusion Ireland thinks this is wrong.



Inclusion Ireland thinks young people who attend special school should get career guidance like everyone else. They should be given choices.



Good career guidance should help people to make a choice they want and develop a personal career plan. They may want a job or more education or more training.



Young people should get information on all of the options available to them about jobs and education after school. The information and advice should be individual to the person and easy to understand.



Thank you to the people with a disability and service provision staff who helped to form this report.

1. About Inclusion Ireland

Established in 1961, Inclusion Ireland is a national, rights based advocacy organisation that works to promote the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

Inclusion Ireland uses a human rights-based approach to its work. This recognises persons with an intellectual disability as rights holders with entitlements, and corresponding duty bearers and their obligations. Inclusion Ireland seeks to strengthen the capacities of persons with an intellectual disability to make their claims and of duty bearers to meet their obligations.

The vision of Inclusion Ireland is that of people with an intellectual disability living and participating in the community with equal rights as citizens, to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential. Inclusion Ireland's work is underpinned by the values of dignity, inclusion, social justice, democracy and autonomy.

2. Introduction

Inclusion Ireland welcomes the opportunity from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to make a submission on the review of career guidance. To inform this submission, Inclusion Ireland consulted with people with an intellectual disability and staff in a HSE funded disability service provider.

People with intellectual disabilities are not a homogenous group. Many are able to, and want to work or access further education and training while others are unable to do this. They must be treated as individuals, especially in the receipt of career guidance for life after school.

There are at present 8114¹ young people in special schools with no access to career guidance, reflecting a historical lack of ambition for people with a disability within the 'system'. It is assumed most people with an intellectual disability will enter the Disability Allowance scheme and access some form of HSE funded day service with little or no change to their circumstances.²

In recent years' people with a disability have indicated they are no longer willing to waste their lives in meaningless day services. This is evident in the 'New Directions' and 'Make Work Pay' reports. People have indicated they wish to work or access mainstream education and training after school where possible. Both of these policy areas are in the implementation phase.

A review of career guidance that supports people with disabilities to realise their post school career ambitions is one element in the change that is required.

"There's no harm in trying and failing. We know our capabilities but don't always get the chance to push our limits"

3. The landscape for school leavers with an intellectual disability

As noted in the survey of Disability Allowance recipients, 43% of people with a disability want to work and are willing to engage in finding work. In addition, 56% of people expressed some form of interest in education.³

¹ Statistical Report 2016-2017, www.education.ie

² Make Work Pay for People with Disabilities, A report for government, 2017.

³ Department of Social Protection Disability Allowance Survey, Judge et al. 2015.

Finding work for people with a disability, especially an intellectual disability is not easy. People with a disability are severely underrepresented in the labour market and the figures are even more stark for people with intellectual disabilities. Of the more than 18,000 adults registered on the National Intellectual Disability Database, only 158 people are in open employment.⁴ A paltry 71 are in third level education.⁵ When all people with an intellectual disability are included, only 17% are currently in employment. Of all people in receipt of Disability Allowance, 30% have never worked.⁶

When young people with a disability do leave school they may come into contact with a Guidance Officer in the HSE. The only options for discussion are HSE funded day services. The topics of further education and training, higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships or employment options are not for discussion.

“In special schools you do not get the education you need. If you want a job its hard as you have no junior or leaving cert and there is nobody to put you on the right path”

Even this limited service is not always available. As recently as Friday 13th April, the HSE reported to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy Stakeholders Group (chaired by Minister Finian McGrath, TD) that:

“The Guidance Service to support adults with disabilities has been completely depleted and therefore the provision of appropriate guidance and the facilitation of transition planning is seriously curtailed. Furthermore, there is no cross-sectoral structure in place

⁴ Annual Report of the National Intellectual Disability Database Committee, 2016, Health Research Board.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Department of Social Protection Disability Allowance Survey, Judge et al. 2015.

to support transition planning between Health and Education”.

17% of Disability Allowance recipients have noted that their highest level of education is from a special school.⁷ This equates to approximately 20,000 people.

A lack of access to further education and training and employment has a direct consequence on people’s lives, as 22.4% of people with a disability are living in consistent poverty. This is much greater than the 8.7% of the general population who are living in consistent poverty.⁸

4. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁹

Ireland has recently ratified the CRPD. Article 24 obliges state parties to have a fully inclusive education system at every level. Being fully inclusive means career guidance that is available to young people without a disability would also be available to pupils with a disability.

Article 27 focuses on state parties’ obligations in relation to work and employment. Article 27.1 e) obliges states to “promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment”. Career guidance would be one element of this.

5. National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS)

The NDIS commits to supporting people with a disability to make smooth transitions from one stage in life to the next.¹⁰ This includes:

- Supports from education.

⁷ Department of Social Protection Disability Allowance Survey, Judge et al. 2015.

⁸ Survey of Income and Living Conditions, 2015.

⁹ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

¹⁰ National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017-2021, Department of Justice and Equality.

- Making people with disabilities aware of employment, training and further reduction opportunities as real options.
- Assist persons with disabilities, by providing proper guidance concerning further education, training and career options.
- Create opportunities for persons with disabilities to experience training, work experience and employment sampling during their school years.

A significant contribution could be made towards achieving these goals through a quality career guidance service in schools (including special schools) to young people with a disability.

6. The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES)

The CES also makes quite a number of recommendations that should be delivered through a quality career guidance service in school for young people with a disability.¹¹

- Promotion of expectation of employability.
- Plan for the young person's transition from school. In the US, special school pupils develop Individual Transition Plans in their final three years.
- Plan early; in the UK evidence has shown that planning for life after school for people with a disability should start as early as 13 years of age. This equates to 4013 pupils in special schools in Ireland.¹²
- Work experience while in school (preferably paid).

7. Career guidance and special schools

At present there is no career guidance in special schools. In a demonstration of its lack of ambition for young people with a disability the

¹¹ Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, 2015-2024, Government of Ireland.

¹² Calculated from the Statistical Report 2016-2017, www.education.ie

DES did not even include special schools in the terms of reference of this review.¹³ Inclusion Ireland has previously made the DES aware of this issue in a budget submission for Budget 2018, when calling for the introduction of career guidance in special schools.¹⁴

Not including special schools in the terms of reference of this review demonstrates how various Departments can work in silos. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection through 'Make Work Pay' are supporting people with disabilities to access work, training and employment. Many HSE funded day services are also supporting people in this regard through implementing 'New Directions'. Meanwhile, the DES are not even including special schools in a review of career guidance; one of the supports for people to plan their access to employment, training or further education after school. This would also seem to be at odds with recommendations in the NDIS and CES.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that young people with disabilities would transfer to the HSE for services at 18 years of age. One result of this thinking is the lack of any career guidance in special schools.

Some HSE funded service providers are now beginning to offer career guidance for young people with a disability while in a special school to fill the void left by the DES. There are small scale examples of how young people with a disability can be engaged at an early age. WALK Peer has received funding from the Department of Social Protection previously to engage young people (age 16 – 24) with intellectual disabilities in further education and employment.¹⁵ The model has been shown to be effective

¹³ Terms of reference for career guidance review, available at: www.education.ie

¹⁴ Pre Budget Submission to the Department of Education and Skills, Inclusion Ireland, August 2017.

¹⁵ www.walk.ie

in its pilot stage in supporting people in work and education and also in terms of its cost effectiveness. The model involves working with young people with a disability while still in school to look at options for employment and further education and training. The aim is to divert young people away from a life of disability services and welfare dependency where possible.

International experience shows that once people with a disability become long-term jobless, only a tiny minority ever take up employment. Therefore, early intervention is critical to support initial employment or early return to work before joblessness becomes established. Critical points are when young people with disabilities leave education, or when an adult experiences onset of a disability in the course of working life.¹⁶

8. The consequences of having no access to career guidance

Some people are losing out on years of progressing in life by not having access to career guidance in their school. For this submission, one man described how he left school in 1979.

“I never spoke to anyone about my future in school and then one day, years later I started in St Michaels House. For a long time, I did very little and was bored. In the 90’s St Michaels House changed and I was given a key worker who pushed me into getting a job. I have been working in a factory, two days a week for more than 10 years. The extra money is great and I love the company in work.”

¹⁶ Make Work Pay for People with Disabilities, A Report to Government, 2017.

In December 2016, Inclusion Ireland held a conference on education opportunities for people over 18 years of age. One young man Jason presented and described his experience.

Jason attended a special school and left with no formal qualifications and had no access to career guidance in school. Jason was linked in with a service called WALK Peer, Louth who encouraged him to pursue his dream of further education. He had a great love of computers and wanted to enrol in Drogheda Institute of Further Education on a QQI level 5 post leaving cert course. He could not enrol as he did not have the minimum requirement of a Leaving Cert Applied. Not deterred, Jason took a year to complete a Leaving Cert Applied supported by WALK Peer and then enrolled. He graduated from the level 5 course and has now completed a QQI level 6 in IT. Jason told us how he was hoping to enrol in a degree course in IT in Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Both of the examples above are success stories of people engaging in work and further education. However, both men were lucky to engage with a progressive service provider who believed in working with the person to develop a career pathway in life. As noted, this is missing in special schools. It should not be down to luck of living in an area with a progressive disability service provider on how a person's career progresses.

9. What guidance can offer people with disabilities

As noted earlier, people with disabilities are not a homogenous group and must be planned with on a highly individual basis. Career guidance

counselling should work with the person on an individual basis to plan for life after school. It could include the following elements:

- What type of work, training or education will suit the person?
- Give details of any disability access routes.
- Detail any possible supports that will be available e.g. Employability or Fund for Students with Disabilities.
- How to access any available grants
- Find out if there are any specialist reports required to access supports.
- Arrange for the person to meet with any past pupils who have followed a similar route.
- Plan for a backup option if the chosen option does not work out.¹⁷

Any of the information above should be presented in easy read or plain English formats if the young person requires this.

Quality career guidance should provide details on the following career options (among others):

- Employment options and supports such as Intreo and Employability.
- Further Education options through the Education and Training Boards with focus on entry level courses at QQI level 3 if required.
- Adult Education Guidance services.
- Higher education and the various entry and support options.
- HSE funded rehabilitative training and day services.

“The transition plan is missing; people have never been asked what they want in life until they get to us”

“Adults in their 30’s and 40’s come to us never having had a CV”

¹⁷ Planning for life after school, Guidelines for students with special education needs and their parents/guardians, NCSE, 2016.

“Each person is so individual, so the response from us as a provider must be highly individualised”

“People with a disability are not valued. Their real status and value are indicative in government actions and communications”

“We do a discovery phase with the person. It is very individual: what do you want to do, is it work, training or education?”

Disability Service Provider.

10. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Government departments are required to have regard to the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in all of their activities as provided for by Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014. This includes their activities as an employer, provider of services and policy maker.

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty places a positive obligation on the DES to be proactive in promoting equality, ensuring human rights are realised and eliminating discrimination. Many of these positive obligations are noted in the CES and NDIS sections above. Not providing a career guidance service to young people with a disability who attend special schools would seem to be at odds with the obligations of the DES under the Duty.

11. Conclusion

Many people with a disability want to pursue education, training and employment options on leaving school. If they attend a special school,

they will rarely, if ever get the opportunity to discuss this with a career guidance teacher in school. In many cases, this leads to people spending years on welfare payments when they have real ambition to further their education and training and get a job.

All of the data indicates people with a disability are one of the most at risk groups in Ireland of experiencing poverty. Education and employment are avenues out of poverty. Early engagement with people with a disability will assist them in realising their employment, education and training ambitions. A quality career guidance service is one element of this.

The DES spends €1.8 billion per year on special education supports. To get the best value from this significant spend young people should be supported around their work, and further education and training options.

12. Recommendations

- All young people with a disability including those who attend special schools should have access to a quality career guidance service with appropriately trained staff.
- The DES may be breaching its obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty as a provider of career guidance services. Inclusion Ireland would encourage the Department to conduct a full review of all services it provides to ensure they are not discriminatory, and are proactive in promoting equality and protecting the human rights of children and adults with a disability

- The career guidance available to young people with a disability should be individualised and assist the young person to develop a career pathway in life.
- Career guidance should offer the full range of progression options and must not assume that a person with a disability will automatically transfer into a HSE funded day service.

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