

These supports could be outlined briefly as follows:

Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS)

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 them 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.
- Implementation, 90% of eligible programme costs can be funded to a maximum of €12,500.

Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant (WEAG)

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.

Job Interview/Induction Interpreter Grant (JIIG)

This is available to cover the costs of an interpreter up to a maximum of €106.68 for a three hour period for interview and induction purposes where an interviewee or new staff member is deaf, hard of hearing or has a speech impediment.

Personal Reader Grant (PRGS)

This 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.

Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme (DATSS)

This 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.

Employability

This is an open labour market initiative providing disabled people 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. The ultimate outcome is that the employee becomes independent of Job Coach support.

Further information may be obtained on the FÁS website: www.fas.ie. Click on Job Seeker Section and then Click on Equality and Inclusion.

JUST A.S.K!

Useful Contacts

If you wish to know more about employing a person with a mental health difficulty, you can contact:

FÁS (Foras Aiseanna Saoithair)

Training and Employment Authority
27-33 Upper Baggot Street
Dublin 4.
Tel: (01) 607 0500
Fax: (01) 607 0600
Website: www.fas.ie

Irish Business and Employers Confederation IBEC

Confederation House
84-86 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 605 1500
Fax: (01) 638 1500
Website: www.ibec.ie

Irish Congress of Trade Unions ICTU

31/32 Parnell Square
Dublin 1.
Tel: (01) 889 7777
Website: www.ictu.ie

A range of support groups are available to assist people who experience mental health difficulties. If you wish to find out more information please contact your HSE Local Health Office who will direct you to the appropriate support agency.

A full listing is available on the Department of Health and Children's website at
Website: www.doh.ie

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EVE Limited or through your local FÁS office.
E.V.E. Limited, 138-140 Thomas Street, Dublin 8.
Tel: (01) 671 9664 Website: www.eve.ie
E-mail: evadmin@eve.ie



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***Employment and
Mental Health
can work for you!***



A.S.K. – “The Business Solution”

One in four people that you know, family, friends and co-workers will at some stage in their life experience a mental health difficulty. In today's workplace employers need a productive and loyal workforce. Employers who recognise our changing society know that work-life balance initiatives will be required if we are to support employees who are under pressure to meet the demands of the workplace and their families. Flexibility is the key: the result is greater productivity and commitment to the job.

People who experience mental health difficulties can obtain and maintain employment if they are given the chance. All they need is for an employer to adopt a flexible, open approach and think “**A.S.K.**”!

a

People with mental health difficulties possess the **attributes, attitudes and abilities** to make a difference in today's workplace.

s

They have **skills**, they often have a proven work history, you may have already invested time and money in their professional skills development.

k

Many have completed third level qualifications and have specific **knowledge** in specialist areas.

We can make a difference in the workplace.

Adopt a business solution and achieve a better value proposition.

JUST A.S.K!
It pays to value people!

Commonly asked questions by employers

Q. Will it cost me more?

Research has shown that people who experience a variety of disabilities including mental health difficulties can work to the same standards of production and quality expected of other staff.

Q. Will it affect my insurance?

According to the Insurance Federation (2009), it seems there is little difficulty in obtaining insurance at normal rates once a safe working environment is provided.

Q. Will it cost me to make work place adjustments?

Most work adjustments have no cost attached, e.g. adjusted hours of work, minor workstation adjustment may only require moving the furniture. For help in devising a retention strategy for an existing staff member FÁS has an Employee Retention Grant Scheme as part of its Reasonable Accommodation Fund. If there are adjustments required that cost money, FÁS can provide assistance for the purchase of equipment via the Work Equipment/Adaptation Grant.

Q. Can I help my staff understand mental health difficulties?

Given that one in four of the general population will experience a mental health difficulty, it is likely that your workforce either personally or through family or friends have some understanding already of this type of experience. FÁS funds Disability Awareness Training Grants to assist staff to understand this topic in the workplace.

Commonly asked questions by employees

Q. Can an employer ask...“Do you have a mental health difficulty?”

No, but it would be advisable to consider the level of support you are going to need in order to be successful in your employment. If you think you are going to need supports and accommodations from day one, then you should decide if you need to discuss them from the start. This could potentially save any misunderstandings later on.

Q. Can I ask for rostering?

It may be possible to agree an attendance pattern with your employer that meets the needs of both you and your employer. Job Share arrangements and family-friendly policies are becoming more popular in the workplace.

Q. Can a job coach be involved?

If you are involved in a Supported Employment Scheme, your Job Coach will play an important role in matching your knowledge, skills and aptitudes to the requirements of the job. The Coach will also be available to help you and your employer deal with challenges that may arise in the workplace.

Q. Could I discuss flexible hours of work?

Talk to your employer. Employers are more likely to consider your request if you discuss your need for flexibility up front. Good communication allows the company to plan ahead and look at the work-life balance for their staff.

Employment Supports

A range of supports is available to employers and jobseekers to help the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace. Not all employers or people with disabilities will require these supports, but it is helpful to know that they are available. The following grants are available to private sector employers.

FÁS Programmes and Schemes for Supporting People with Disabilities in Employment

All FAS services are open to people with disabilities.

Vocational Guidance Service

All People with Disabilities may call into a FÁS Employment Service Office to meet with an Employment Services Officer who will provide them with full information, advice and guidance in relation to training and employment. There are specific supports for disabled people, these are namely:

Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)

This provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ disabled people who work more than 20 hours per week. The Scheme is structured in three strands. The employer can benefit from one or all, simultaneously.

- **Strand I** subsidy 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** subsidy 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** subsidy 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.

Reasonable Accommodation Fund for the Employment of Disabled People

Reasonable Accommodation is a term used in equality legislation to define the framework within which an obligation is placed on employers and training bodies to take appropriate measures to accommodate people with a disability.

FÁS operates a series of private sector employment supports to assist disabled people to access and progress in employment. These are now grouped under the umbrella name of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund