



**Irish
Guide
Dogs**
for the blind

Employment Project

Information and Resources for Employers



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



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Department of Social
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European Union.*



About Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind is Ireland's national charity dedicated to enabling people who are vision impaired and families of children with autism to achieve improved mobility and independence. For over 40 years we have worked with our community of breeders, puppy raisers, home socialisers, temporary boarders, trainers, staff, volunteers and supporters to change as many lives as possible.

Employment Project

IrishGuide Dogs for the Blind's Employment Project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland, through the Department of Social Protection and the European Union, with two aims:

1. To support people who are blind and vision impaired to access meaningful employment.
2. To support potential employers to provide employment for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Over the last two years, we have been able to secure internships for candidates with sight loss who are qualified and ready for work and for whom an opportunity to gain experience could make all the difference in securing long-term employment.

The project has provided services to the participants from a range of professions with expertise specific to people who are blind or vision impaired. Supports on offer encompass in-depth career guidance, mentoring and interview coaching, motivational and wellbeing sessions, assistive technology training and peer support.

As a result, a number of participants have been successful in interview and have progressed to employment.

We have created this summary of resources to help employers to access the information, services and support that may help you in the recruitment, employment or retention of someone with sight loss.

What is sight loss?

Sight loss sounds like a very broad term and that's because the spectrum of sight loss extends from low vision right through to complete blindness. A person who is vision impaired will usually require additional magnification to read standard print, even when wearing their prescription glasses.

Orientation and Mobility

Mobility is the ability to move safely and effectively through your environment. Orientation is knowing where you are and where you need to go in your environment.

Not all vision impaired people need to use a mobility aid such as a long cane or a Guide Dog. A potential employee will take responsibility for their mobility, but it can be helpful for a professional Orientation & Mobility Instructor to do orientation training in a new workplace. Very often the Orientation & Mobility Instructor can advise on the best route to take when moving around a space and can easily identify any potential hazards. In general, a safe environment has good universal health and safety policies and procedures in place which apply to all employees.

The Employment Project offers Orientation & Mobility Instruction and route training in the workplace if required. Information is provided in relation to accommodating a guide dog.



Disclosure of Disability

The majority of disabilities are hidden and there is no legal obligation on an employee or interview candidate to disclose their disability. It can leave people feeling vulnerable, as they are unsure of the consequences should they choose to make a disclosure. However, by creating an inclusive environment where disability is visible and welcome, candidates and employees may feel encouraged and comfortable to speak about their own disability and any accommodations they may require.

Clare Kennelly has some helpful advice for finding out how you can help an employee with a disability, which is to ask the question, “What can we do to make sure that your time with us is successful?”.



Disability Awareness Training

Clare also provides disability awareness training for organisations, which can help to build confidence in your organisation around the subject of disability. As well as talking about the legislation and obligations, disability awareness training will cover appropriate language, types of accommodations and above all, help employers and staff to feel comfortable in asking questions.

Remember that disability is unique to each individual and the individual themselves is the expert in their disability.

Disability awareness training can help to develop a supportive, inclusive workplace that will help you recruit and retain diverse talent.

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology refers to any piece of software or hardware that enables a person with a disability to access the same information, programmes and services as their sighted peers.

From software that magnifies everything on a computer screen, to screen reading software, digital Braille notetakers and displays and AI-powered smart glasses - the range and capability of assistive technology helps to level the playing field for employees with sight loss.

As the leading provider of hardware and software to people who are blind or vision impaired, Sight and Sound Technology Ireland works with both employees and employers from initial assessment through to lifetime support.



Department of Social Protection Work and Access Grants

Work and Access supports are available to jobseekers, people who have acquired a disability and want to stay in work, people with disabilities who are employed or self-employed. They are also available to those on work experience or internships of 6 months or more and those on apprenticeships. The supports are available to people in all sectors apart from the public sector. Supports are available to remote workers in up to two locations.

For more information please visit www.gov.ie/workandaccess

Work and Access offers seven key supports:

- 1. Workplace Needs Assessment Grants** of up to €2,500 are available to enable people with a disability or health condition to identify the supports they need in their workplace to do their job.
- 2. Workplace Adaptations Grants** of up to €25,000 are available to support employers with funding to adapt their business premises for an employee or future employee with a disability.
- 3. Work Equipment Grants** of up to €12,000 are available towards personalised assistive equipment or technology for people with disabilities working in the business premises or working remotely.
- 4. Personal Reader** funding is available to assist people who are blind or visually impaired with work-related reading.

5. Communication Support which funds Irish Sign Language or other communication support with job interviews, job inductions, in-work meetings or performance reviews.

6. In-work Support funding is available towards a work coach or specialist support to help a person with a disability to do their job or re-train if they move to another position.

7. Disability Equality and Inclusion Training funding is available for employers with a paid workforce to train all their staff on disability and inclusion.

Learn more at www.gov.ie/workandaccess



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Useful contacts

employmentproject@guidedogs.ie

Services: Advice, information.

Clare Kennelly
Inclusive World
Managing Director and Principal Trainer

www.inclusiveworld.ie
clare@inclusiveworld.ie
087 6771289

Services provided: Disability Awareness Training, onsite and online.

Mark Kehoe
Interview with Clarity

interviewwithclarity@gmail.com
086 8816034

Services provided: Coaching candidates to interview success in public and private sector.

Dermot Crosby Intreo Employer
Relations Officer (Cork)
dermot.crosby@welfare.ie 086
7951844 021 4805438

Stuart Lawler
Sight and Sound Technology Ireland
www.sightandsoundtechnology.ie
Stuart.lawler@sightandsoundtechnology.ie
01 665 0429

Services provided: Assistive technology for people who are blind or have low vision. Sales, advice, consultancy and ongoing training for employers and employees.

Useful links

- National Disability Authority: www.nda.ie
- Centre of Excellence in Universal Design: www.universaldesign.ie
- European Blind Union: www.euroblind.org
- National Transport Authority: www.nationaltransport.ie
- European Disability Forum: www.edf-feph.org
- Ahead
 - Ahead has a useful publication for employees on how to disclose a disability. While this is written for employees, it is a useful publication for employers to read. www.ahead.ie/disclosure
 - Ahead awards a UDL (Universal Design for Learning) badge for accessibility information standards: www.ahead.ie/udl-digitalbadge
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission: www.ihrec.ie
- Workplace Relations Commission: www.workplacerelations.ie
- Web Consortium on Accessibility Governance; WCAG 3 standards www.w3.org/WAI

