Results of NCBI consultation in relation to Strand 3 of the Government's Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for People with Disabilities, which is to 'Make Work Pay'

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Introduction

NCBI is the national sight loss organisation. We provide practical and emotional support, rehabilitation and customised training designed to help people with sight loss to live independently.

We welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the Strand 3 of the Government's Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for People with Disabilities, which is to 'Make Work Pay' in order to ensure that the needs of people with impaired vision are fully considered.

Financial In-work supports

What are the issues (positive or negative) for people who are blind and vision impaired in relation to the "Financial In-Work Supports" listed below?

- **Disability Allowance Earnings Disregards (up to €120,€120-350)**

- This is fair and should be retained. Loss of this would have a financial impact.
- In my experience, this disregard allows people a return to the workforce working part-time.

- This is an incentive to return to work, because it has the potential to increase a person's income. It helps people when making the decision to return to work.
-I believe the same amount disregarded should be available to those in receipt of Blind Pension.
- In the circumstance of a person taking up employment it is a win-win situation for everyone. People hold onto weekly payment while in part-time employment. They are no worse off and in fact have benefited from being at work.

- **Partial Capacity Scheme (on illness Benefit, Invalidity Pension)**
- This is a key scheme for many people who have been out of work and are returning to work but for some it can be difficult to get.
- I think this is fair and gives incentive to go back to work.

- **Retention of Medical Card for 3 years**
- This is key for most people who have been on a social welfare payment and can often be the most important factor. This is also a barrier to those on WSS as even though they are ready and willing to work, the threat of losing their medical card can be an obstacle.
- This would be an incentive to people because losing the medical card adds a financial strain and potentially negates the value of the person's income return.
- This is a relevant incentive to people with sight loss who have other medical issues.
- I don't think people are aware of this support. Most assume they will lose their medical card if they take up work.
- This I feel it the biggest barrier to people returning to work. They are so frightened of losing their medical card and even if they have it for three years I think that people still worry. I also do not know if people are always clear about the fact that they can keep their medical card for that length of time.
- I think this is fair and should be retained. I think the fear of losing the medical card and the perceived difficulty in applying for one again is a big concern for people returning to work.

- **Secondary Benefits (Rent Supplement, Free Travel, Fuel Allowance)**
- Currently people's vision needs to be below a certain level to apply for a travel pass. A large group of people do not have adequate

driving vision but do not meet the criteria set for entitlement to free travel. This group is losing out. Free travel should also be available to this group.

- Loss of these would be an inhibiting factor.
- Loss of free travel would mean financial burden.
- I need my free travel in order to travel to work as I am totally blind and cannot drive.
- The free travel is vital to people with impaired vision who need to commute to work. The fuel allowance would be relevant to people with disabilities who may need to work from home.
- Free Travel is essential for people with sight loss, particularly if they have to take multiple trips on public transport to work.
- Free travel should remain regardless of income.
- If losing secondary benefits, such as free travel, costs you more when you work, the incentive to work is gone. People should not be any worse off working that when they are not working.

- **Household Benefits package (Electricity/Gas Allowance/Free TV Licence)**

- Loss of these would mean financial burden to people with sight loss.
- It would be a great help financially to retain this package.

- **Family Income Supplement**

- Loss of these mean financial burden
- Nobody should be on the poverty line.

- **Tax Credits and reliefs**

- I would like to retain this package while working.
- This is a very important incentive, as it helps to defray specific costs that a person with impaired vision faces, such as purchasing assistive technology and devices or simply having to take expensive taxi rides.
- Extra tax credits is a significant bonus and should be retained.

- **Blind Pension**

- If I was working part-time, I would like to retain a certain amount of my Blind Pension.

- This payment ought to be retained particularly for people who are retraining or in an unpaid placement. Retention of this payment might also incentivise employers to hire a person who has impaired vision.
- In the case of a couple, if one person goes back to work this may mean the other loses their Blind pension (as their income is means-tested and includes their partner's income as means).
- Retention of Blind Pension gives an incentive to go back to work and should be retained.

- You should only have your Blind Pension cut after 19. 5 hours' work. I am willing to take cuts as long as I am not losing out financially.

Financial Barriers

Please state beside each of the list below the level of importance when considering taking up or returning to work and the impact they would have on decisions to work.

Loss of DSP Payment

- Very important to retain
- Very important
- Major impact
- I think it's important to retain some of the payment when only working part-time.
- High importance.
- I think that having a phased reduction of this payment over time when someone returns to work helps. That way if someone starts a new job and it doesn't work out, their payment can go back up to the full level and they don't need to reapply again.
- It would depend on the amount of hours being worked even if part-time. Loss of this payment would be barrier if you are not getting a payment more than this from employer.
- Depends how much they are earning.

Loss of Secondary Benefits (Rent Supplement, Free Travel, Fuel Alallowance)

- Yes very important
- Very important

- Important consideration
- Very important
- High impact
- I would like to keep my free travel in order to get to work.
- I believe this is of a very high importance
- Loss of free travel would have a large impact on any person with sight loss' decision to return to work.
- It is important from travel point of view as I am unable to drive or cycle. Some people however can't see enough to drive and aren't "blind" enough to get free travel – perhaps this could be looked at.
- People may be afraid to take up work as they know what they have at the moment so the loss of an allowance would be a disincentive.

Loss of Household Benefits Package
(Electricity/Gas Allowance, Free TV Licence)

- Important consideration
- Very important
- High impact
- I would like to retain package if I am only working part-time.
- Losing the household benefits package would not be an issue, if you are earning a lot more money.

Perceived difficulty obtaining DSP payment / benefits again (e.g. If work ceases)

- Highly important
- Extremely important
- Major impact
- The application process is long and the fear of having no income between loss or leaving a job and being awarded a payment can take a long time.
- High importance – work opportunities need to be seen as "long term" for people to feel that it's worth their while.
- Fear of not getting their payment back if things did not work out causes worry and a lot of hassle.

Loss of Medical Card after 3 years

- A very important factor
- Highly important
- Very important
- Major impact

- For a lot of people this is the main factor for them not to take up work but I don't believe people are aware that they can keep it for 3 years.
- This is the biggest fear for people and the biggest barrier to returning to work.
- High importance

Loss of Blind Welfare Allowance payment

- High significance if income from work is not above a certain level

All of the above depend on the type of employment contract. Clearly a person offered a permanent contract for 70k would have no difficulty giving up all the above benefits. However, nowadays, work contracts vary from zero hours contracts to short term contracts with variable pay rates. So, if a person with impaired vision is already receiving a quasi-guaranteed payment from the state, why would they take the risk of letting this go for equivalent pay from a riskier source?

If there are circumstances that are particularly relevant to people who are blind/vision impaired please indicate:

- Travel is one of the key factors, and the retention of free travel. Many people with vision impairment will require public transport and the cost of this can be a prohibitive factor to taking up employment.
- People with impaired vision may have difficulty nnegotiating a safe and manageable route to work. Financial aid should be given if the person's workplace is not within a reasonable walking distance from bus or train stop, so that the person can avail of a taxi for example.
- Public transport, where it exists, is the only means of transport for a person who is blind or vision impaired to get work but there are many locations in which it is not available and where there is a public transport service, it sometimes does not include the route to and from the places that people need to go. In some jurisdictions, a subsidised taxi system is available. This would be of benefit to many people with sight loss who need to use a taxi to get to a bus or train route to get to work.

- The free travel and the Workplace Adaptation Grant are particularly relevant for people with impaired vision. As technology changes so must access to technology.
- The criteria for eligibility to free travel is causing a difficulty for some who cannot see enough to obtain a driver's licence and yet do not fulfil the current criteria for eligibility – they fall between two stools. Eligibility criteria for access to the free travel scheme should be changed to include those with a long-term eye condition that renders their level of vision insufficient to meet criteria for a drivers licence. This is very relevant to taking up work became they would be reliant on public transport even more in order to get to and from work.

- Whether or not you have to pay for assistive technology in employment can be a disincentive to taking up employment for people with impaired vision. Other issues are incurred expenses for returning to work; support from NCBI and employer; joining a Union; accessibility; how am I going to get around?; computer with adaptive technology; having support at work.

In your opinion do people who are blind or vision impaired feel that they would be better off financially by taking up work?

- People just like to be working. Their main focus might not be on being better off financially.
- This depends on what type of work and level of remuneration for the person, their qualifications (therefore the expected level of income) and the person's history or experience of work.
- This depends on the kind of work that they would be doing. In general where someone is on the minimum wage or in lower paid employment, the loss of benefits outweighs any positive impact of gaining employment.
- In some cases people are financially better off than being on benefits. For those who are not financially better off, working gives them a sense of self-worth and achievement, being able to contribute to society, demonstrating that they have talents and experiences (not defined purely by disability) and being able to have a social life through work.
- Yes if it was full-time work.

- Generally people with impaired vision do not advance in their workplace to well-paid positions. There are some exceptions to this in the professional fields of say physiotherapy or information technology. Most people with impaired vision that I know who are working, are working in jobs with basic or below average pay.
- This depends on the job, the level of income and the permanency of the job. Most people with impaired that I know of who are of working age would like to be able to work but worry that after the loss of their medical card and other benefits that they may be worse off.

- Due to the added costs of work such as childcare and clothing for example, income needs to be at a higher level than a DSP payment + Blind Welfare Allowance + secondary allowances to avoid the welfare trap. The social benefits of working (non-financial) are also important for people with impaired vision.

Entering & Re-entering the Workforce

What suggestions would you have to overcome barriers for people who are blind or vision impaired entering or re-entering the workforce?

- Peer support and career path guidance, promoting early start work skills at home, opportunities for volunteering roles, more awareness for employers to relay their fears.
- Retention of most or all benefits listed above.
- There is a grey area for some people in terms of accessing work experience through voluntary organisations where the organisation is in receipt of public funding i.e. there have been instances where people cannot access the Reasonable Accommodation Fund from the DSP as they are considered not to be working in the private sector but have no access to funding for provision of reasonable accommodations as would be the case in a large public service body such as the civil service. As well as entering or re-entering the workforce, I think DSP need to think more about retaining people in the workforce. Putting measures in place to support employers to retain people.

- The Workplace Adaptation Grant, is only available to those who work in the private sector. It is not available to people with sight loss who work in the public sector or voluntary sector. The Government must commit to empowering people with sight loss to participate in the mainstream workforce. This should include access to the "Work Equipment / Adaptation Grant" for those who work in the public service and not for profit organisations.

- In some circumstances it is not enough to provide equipment, there also needs to be recognition that the employee needs time to learn the skills to use the equipment e.g. funding towards provision of cover while employee receives training in assistive technologies. This allows the person to develop their skills while reducing the financial impact on the employer for this transitional period.

- Flexibility is needed. Some accommodations are long-term, others will be short-term while an employee makes the transition to learning the required skills. While the Wage Subsidy Scheme is available to encourage employers to employ people with a disability, it appears to be geared towards people who are "interested in entering or returning to employment". Does it include someone who is in a job but experiences deterioration in their vision so that their productivity is reduced (or maybe they need sighted assistance with particular tasks and this is an additional financial cost to the employer?).
- Awareness training for staff; the availability of the Workplace Adaptation Grant; Mentoring and transitional service for those returning to work or those taking up employment for the first time; definitive indicators that certain allowances and benefits would not be lost depending on the nature of the job.
- Education of work colleagues as to amount of help required; learning of assistive technologies that can be put in place to enable worker carry out the work effectively; awareness of employer of available assistive technologies and appropriate working environment.
- Awareness / education for employers and potential employers; confidence building, skills updating, work placements, training programmes for people with sight loss.
- To get orientation mobility training from NCBI if needed.
- Need to emphasise the benefits of participating in the workforce with people with sight loss by increasing their awareness around

the value they offer. Attitudes of employers - employers tend to consider sight loss to be a weakness. Most employers are risk adverse when it comes to making recruitment decisions, and this is a huge disincentive.

- Working with employers to consider their hiring practices and the language used when recruiting. Educating employers around the huge advances in assistive technology, and how this opens the potential to hire persons with impaired vision into roles not previously considered.
- There should be more support for the person and their new employer, so that all adaptations are made and the transition is as easy as possible.
- More information is needed around what benefits the person will lose or keep when starting work.
- In relation to DSP payments, I think that if someone was on a payment and then takes up work and ends up leaving after a certain amount of time that the process to reapply for their payment should be faster than original application. Perhaps it can be on some kind of 'hold' system, that way there would not be a gap of time where they have no income. Making it known that people can keep their medical card for 3 years after taking up work would be helpful.
- Under the Workplace Adaptation Grant, equipment needs to be paid for by employer or employee and then claimed back, which is not always possible; employment support for employees and for employers from Employability should be put in place; NCBI should be contacted for general disability awareness and specific training; mobility training, if needed, should be organised through NCBI as part of a person's induction to their workplace.
- Do employers know there is a grant? Once an employer finds out that somebody has a vison impairment their chances of employment are lower. Do you let a potential employer know before or during you interview that you have a vision impairment? Employers are not educated enough about adaptations that can be made and supports that can be put into place.

Do you feel there are different barriers for those who are already working when they acquire their vision loss and those who have never worked?

- Some people with acquired vision loss may have a lack of awareness as to what might help them retain their job. Losing vision can

significantly affect a person's self-esteem and they may not yet see themselves as being able to do the same job and might not consider asking their employer about alternative roles or seek supports such as the workplace adaptation grant etc.
- For those who have never worked, the barriers are more likely to be around having the necessary skills to source and maintain employment, the confidence in their ability to do the job and the motivation to be employed.

For those who are already working, barriers may be the person's own attitude to disability and their perception of what they can do as a person who is blind or vision impaired, what they perceive others think of them as well as issues around disclosure of their vision impairment. Attitudes of employer and work colleagues and their understanding of disability can also affect a person retention of their job.

- Someone with acquired vision impairment has to deal with psychological issues of perhaps traumatic onset and the ideal would be to assist them in re-training to what they have previously been employed in. In some cases, they will not be able to return and need to be assisted back into employment in a different capacity as soon as they are able so as not to lose work skills.
- Those who have acquired vision loss will have to learn how to do their job differently or a different job. However, they should be more adapted to the working environment and so in a measured way, would probably be more confident than those that have never worked.
- This depends on the person, their circumstances, their resources and education. People who have never worked do not have a reference point or a bank of work experiences to draw from. If the person's vision is absolutely necessary for the job what then?
- This really depends on the work environment, the employer's needs and the specific issues of the person dealing with sight loss.
- For those who have acquired their vision loss, there may be a lower view of a person's ability by employee and employer. Allowing time for a person to come to terms with their sight loss and to engage in rehabilitation training prior to returning to work is important to encourage them not to give up work. The person may experience a loss of confidence and identity.
- There are the benefits to being familiar with the work environment, work methods and work colleagues.

- For people with impaired vision, more work is required at the beginning to ensure the person can get to work and move around the office (a cane or guide dog user needs to learn a route to and from work and must become familiar with the layout of the building). People with vision impairments and their employer's are not always able to see the alternative ways of doing things early on. I think this requires more problem solving and training time.

Do you feel there are different barriers for people who are blind and those with low vision?

- Different levels of vision have different levels of impact on the individual. Also the nature of the sight loss, is it sudden, traumatic, gradual, or from birth? For someone who is totally blind, there may be greater implications in terms of equipment required, training needed and access to different aspects of a job e.g. can't read handwriting and may have problems with paper filing system. People with low vision may be more likely to hide their difficulty if they can (fear of disclosure). A person's vision may also change, so that the person's needs may vary. This can make it difficult for people (and sometimes for the person themselves) to understand their vision impairment and therefore their needs.

- I have experience of working with a person who is blind who uses a wheelchair. This person has to negotiate transport to/from work, the work environment including taking a lift to the canteen but carries out his office job well with the help of assistive technology. Another person who is blind has to take two buses to/from work using her long cane and she is the main earner in the home with children.

My experience of working with those with low vision is twofold. Those who don't want their colleagues to know and those who don't mind. Often their colleagues are not aware of their vision impairment. One person told me that they would never mention the fact as they were worried they would be passed over for promotion.

Barriers for both people who are blind and people with low vision are inadequate access to mobility training, lack of technical training with assis-

tive software and the lack of awareness by sighted employers / colleagues.

- This depends on the job and on the tasks and responsibilities, and employer awareness, colleagues attitudes and whether supports have been put in place.
- I think there is a difference from acceptance point of view. Some people with low vision feel they are neither in one camp (blind) or other (sighted). It may also take blind people a bit longer to get familiar with their surroundings and they may need more orientation and mobility training.
- The application process could be a barrier, as someone with low vision may be able to complete it independently but a person who is blind may need to contact the workplace to request an accessible version which they feel may be a barrier to them.
- People with low vision may be able to complete forms for DSP payments with the help of magnification but people who are totally blind may not be able to fill out forms without help of a sighted person.
- The range and availability of job opportunities is lower for people who are blind as some employers may have lower expectations. There may be a fear that there is a greater health and safety risk in employing someone who is blind.

Communication

Please state which of the following sources of information people who are blind and vison impaired use in relation to the financial aspects of taking up or returning to work? Feel free to comment on any issues in relation to accessibility or service itself under each heading.

Department of Social Protection website

- Not used often.
- Yes.
- Seldom unless already trained in use of adaptive technology.
- I had no difficulty getting around the website.
- Provides clear information in relation to payments and work – accessible to adaptive technology; People may be happier to obtain information anonymously.
- Never used this website

Intreo office/Local DSP office

- Sometimes
- Yes. I would query the extent of training given to staff in relation dealing with people with disability.
- Yes
- When I visited my local office the staff had not got enough training to assist blind people. I was given a piece of paper with number that I couldn't see to read and I could not see to find the desk either. No staff member assisted me. Even the keypad being used for applications is back to front – numbers are on the opposite side to a telephone key pad which most people are used to.

Citizens Information Office

- Yes
- Yes
- This office was very helpful when I got my redundancy.
- Wrong information given out both verbally and email.
- Don't always have the right information.

Citizens Information Website

- Yes
- Yes
- Very accessible to screen-reading software.
- Never used the website.
- I believe most would start with the citizen's information office or website.

NCBI Website

- Often
- Yes
- Perhaps
- Yes

NCBI office/staff

- Often the first point of information
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- NCBI is always very helpful if I have any queries.
- My personal experience is that the technology helpdesk is very valuable.
- People come to NCBI for help, if they cannot access information or forms.

Friends and family

- Sometimes

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- My family are very supportive. I have very good friends many of them I made through work.
- More family than friends.

Other (please specify)

- Other websites
- Disability officers in colleges are very important.
- Employability Services.

Do you think people worry about asking for information from the Department of Social Protection when considering returning to work e.g. applying for Partial Capacity Benefit, or the Disability Allowance Earnings Disregard? If yes, why?

- Yes, they will be concerned that they will start a review of their entitlements and lose some of them. The perception that it is very difficult to reclaim benefits if lost. Therefore people are most likely to talk to the Citizen information first who they feel are impartial.
- Yes and people may feel that the person they talk to may not know or have the relevant information.
- It can be very hard to get to speak to a person in the DSP who is aware of all aspects of their case, or who really know what benefits there are for a person with vision loss and not just general Social welfare payments. People can get different answers every time they talk to a different person.
- I think that people with sight loss feel that the majority of staff in the DSP do not understand about sight loss and how to offer a service to someone with sight loss.

5. Experience of people who are blind and vision impaired who ARE working. Approximately 21% of people with disabilities are in the workforce; in your view what are the financial and other factors which have supported these people to transition successfully from education/training to employment:

- Level of vision, family values, education, financial supports, good compensatory life skills.

- Retention of secondary benefits, Workplace Adaption Grant, training and mentoring/job coaching, employer awareness, employer schemes such as WSS, relevant and recognised training programmes and work sampling.
- Grants, free travel, family/organisation support, work skills.
- Access to education and gaining appropriate qualifications are important.
- Free Travel pass and Workplace Adaptation Grant. The Work Adaptations Grant allows me to work equally with everyone else.
- I think that it begins with education and a person accessing and receiving support from school right the way up whether it be to having appropriate equipment, meeting other people with sight loss in employment and creating interests and goals. Being made aware early on of the supports that are available such as the Workplace Adaptation Grant.
- Retaining all / part of DSP payments; retaining secondary benefits especially medical card; Free travel pass; good disability awareness for employers; high levels of personal confidence and self-esteem for the person with impaired vision; high expectations of their own ability and good IT and mobility skills.

- Getting the right assistive technology has enabled people to work. Help from NCBI has helped in relation to getting employment. Learning, independence and coping skills are essential. Doing voluntary work has helped people gain employment but can be difficult to get. Having a career they are interested in.

What have the main barriers been?

- Transport, societal/employer attitudes, confidence, lack of expectation to succeed, training, poor compensatory life skills, lack of work experience opportunities, poor choice areas of study often determined by sighted people (teacher, family).
- Lack of awareness training for employers
- Limited technology supports
- Low personal confidence
- Societal attitudes, personal attitudes, work skills, personal skills, motivation, cconfidence and ability.
- Lack of access to technology to apply for jobs. Lack of training. Worried about travelling to/from work using public transport such as getting the right bus, gaps on train station platforms, bad pavements etc. Financial: loss of benefits and cost of working may not allow a couple to both to take up employment. Lack of home type

employment e.g. working on a computer from home should be good options for those with computer skills but unable to travel for work.
- The funding of adaptive equipment if needed is an important issue. Who funds it and how long might it take to get it? Access to public transport. Lack of relevant, appropriate placements/apprenticeships. Sometimes - it's just not worth the stress and strain involved.
- Not sure how to access information on job opportunities and training.
- Lack of real and meaningful opportunities; lack of support with applying for and taking up positions such as personal assistant support, employment support / supported employment; poor disability awareness of employers and poor self-management skills.
- Working for nothing and thinking I was never going to get a paid job. Lack of self-belief.

Intreo Centres

How do you see the role of the Intreo centre evolving to meet the needs of people who are blind and vision impaired? The Department of Social Protection is expanding the role of the Intreo centres as an employment and recruitment service for people with disabilities who wish to take up work.

Positive career guidance opportunities; training on job seeking skills / personal development; providing meaningful options for work and training – person centred approach based on individual skills and wishes; positive disability awareness training with employers; disability awareness training for Intreo staff; networking with disability and supported employment organisations.

What do you think people who are blind and vision impaired need from their Intreo centre in terms of assisting them to search for work?

- More involvement with people with impaired vision actively in the workplace to talk about their path to employment and the supports they have.

- Intreo staff should have a greater understanding of sight loss. This is an awareness training issue.
- Accessible information and access to centres. Potential employers need to be supported too.
- DSP need to integrate people with disabilities into this service and enable them to attend mainstream training courses.
- Experienced employment advisors, career councillors, psychologists, training and direction advice, companies and organisations with work placements and mentors.
- People with sight loss may need financial aid to avail of transport (if their workplace is not on a public transport route) and to purchase technology.
- Intreo staff need to know the reality of physical access, transport, and technological/communication barriers.
- Good advice re job spec; advice about location and access; training to and from venue; loss of or retention of payments; supports while in employment and grant applications.
- I find the Intreo centre to be very helpful. We are in the process of finding a job now.
- Blind people cannot use the computerised signature.
- I think all of Social Welfare should have all their leaflets and handouts in accessible formats – Braille, audio and online.
- Knowledgable, informed and incentivised staff. Employers who are motivated to hire from Intreo.
- Access to information on ALL benefits and entitlements not just benefits and entitlements handled by the DSP. Work with an advocate or job coach. Possibly have the opportunity to have a work experience placement. Be shown how to put a CV together and have interview skills classes.

How do you think the Intreo centre can best engage with people who are blind and vision impaired e.g.

  - Communication – social media, email/letters from intreo, telephone?
  - Promotion of services via disability representative bodies/media?
  - Named case worker

- Named case worker.

- All of the above.
- A named case worker would be of great benefit as this will help build a relationship between jobseeker and Intreo worker. It may make sense to have workers who specialise in this particular area as they will develop relevant skills and knowledge on how best to work with people with impaired vision.
- Named case worker
- All of the above.
- All of the above.
- Named case worker in each area would be very beneficial so that I would know who to advise people with sight loss to contact and who would also develop the necessary skills over time.
- Information should be accessible. Has social welfare a Facebook page or social media? Is there somewhere to upload a CV? A nominated cased worker would be good.

Accompaniment of family/friend/advocate at Intreo:
Is this important to people who are blind and vision impaired?

- For a significant number of people with impaired vision, this would be an advantage.
- It depends on the person. For some, a family member, friend or advocate might just assist the person in getting to and from the centre. If a family/friend or advocate is required for attendance at Intreo then it might indicate that some capacity building is required for that person to become ready for employment.
- If Intreo centres staff are aware of the needs of people with impaired vision, a family member or friend or advocate may not need to be there.
- Some people will be confident and well-seasoned in interviews and independent travel and others may not. How an individual uses or is perceived to use someone who accompanies them is important. Does it enhance or lessen the person's independence or not?
- In some cases that would be helpful.
- Yes if a person feels they require this support.

More Information

NCBI would be more than happy to advise the Department in more detail on each of these issues, upon request.

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