

## The new Disability Act will have a fundamental impact on how services are delivered to people with disabilities in Ireland and Rehab is working to ensure it is implemented to the best possible effect

In June, the long awaited and much debated Disability Act 2005 was enacted, and we moved onto a new stage in building the future framework of how many of our public services will be delivered to people with disabilities.

Over the coming months, six Government Departments will consult widely as they each develop their 'Sectoral Plan', a plan that will outline how each Department will provide services to people with disabilities, according to specific criteria which is laid down in the Act. These must be presented to the Oireachtas by the end of June 2006. In the interim, discussions and meetings with the disability sector will be held by each Department, to finalise their plan and build on the draft versions that they published last year at the launch of the National Disability Strategy.

To date the entire process of developing this legislative package has been conducted by the Government in close consultation with the disability sector, through a specially formed body, the Disability Legislation Consultation Group or DLCG. This group was established almost three years ago at the request of the Government, to provide a forum for consultation with disability organisations on the content of future disability legislation. It comprises umbrella organisations, which represent hundreds of organisations in the disability sector and many thousands of disabled people. This has been a particularly successful example of collaboration; both between government and the disability sector and within the disability sector, which has had tangible impact on the final legislation.

The process began in earnest in May 2003, when the DLCG position paper *Equal Citizens-Core Elements for Disability Legislation* was presented to Government. Following this, the National Disability Strategy including the Disability Bill was published and the Government continued to consult with the DLCG throughout the passage of the legislation. The DLCG was extremely vocal and its lobbying was responsible both for key amendments to the legislation and the significant commitment by An Taoiseach that a system would be established where all

**An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. The DLCG lobbying was responsible both for several key amendments to the legislation and the significant commitment by An Taoiseach that a system would be established where all future cabinet proposals, policies and legislation would be assessed for their impact on people with disabilities.**

# The Dawning of a New Era

future cabinet proposals, policies and legislation would be assessed for their impact on people with disabilities. The Rehab Group has been represented in this process through our memberships of the Not For Profit Business Association and Disability Federation of Ireland, while RehabCare is also a member of the National Federation

of Voluntary Bodies. Now it has been agreed with each of the six departments that sub-groups of the DLCG will work with each Department in consulting on their sectoral plans. Various Rehab Group staff members are involved in the sub groups. Already, submissions have been made through our umbrella





onal Disability Strategy

ability Strategy

## List of Government Departments requiring sectoral Plans

Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Department of Health and Children

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Department of Transport

bodies to the Departments of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Health and Children and Transport, and work on the others is ongoing.

Many of the plans require cooperation on specific actions by certain Government Departments, and department officials are working towards this goal. At Government level, the work on the National Disability Strategy is being overseen by a working group of senior officials and ultimately by the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, chaired by An Taoiseach.

Meanwhile, provisions of the Act are already making themselves felt. The National Disability Authority has prepared a draft Code of Practice for public bodies in fulfilling their access obligations under the Act to make their services accessible, and this awaits approval from the Minister for Justice Equality and Law Reform. Many public bodies have been participating in workshops on this theme recently.

Another core piece of the Disability Strategy, the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill which deals with the provision of advocacy

services to people with disabilities is expected to be its passage through the Oireachtas shortly also.

At the launch last year of the National Disability Strategy, the Taoiseach stated that “the Government’s overall objective is to put in place the most effective combination of legislation, policies, institutional arrangements and services to support and reinforce equal participation for people with disabilities”.

Rehab is working to ensure that this legislation is implemented to the full and the development of policies and services is achieved, so that the best possible outcome is realised for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

*Comments on any of the six sectoral plans would be most welcome and can be forwarded to the Group’s Public Affairs Department in Roslyn Park.*



Rehab is developing an enviable reputation for Business Excellence thanks to the Group-wide commitment to its Excellence at Work programme

Rehab boasted a staggering six finalists at the National Excellence Awards where RehabCare beat off the challenge of Ireland's biggest and best companies to land the overall national *Committed to Excellence* award.

In addition, National Learning Network, Rehab Lotteries, Rehab Foundation, Research Innovation and Business Excellence and Rehab Group itself all overcame stiff competition to receive nominations in various categories.

The awards, held in Dublin by the Excellence Ireland Quality Association, capped a breakthrough year for Rehab's *Excellence at Work* programme, with virtually all Group companies and divisions now having achieved EFQM *Committed to Excellence* accreditation.

Speaking after the awards, which were attended by some 1,000 guests from Ireland's most successful companies, RehabCare chief executive, Angela Kerins said: "It was a great honour to accept the overall National *Committed to Excellence* Award on behalf of the whole staff team in RehabCare and all those who access our services. Our mission as an organisation is to provide excellent services – the EFQM Award won't do that for us – but it will confirm to us that we are doing our job

**Angela Kerins, chief executive, RehabCare, pictured receiving the overall National Committed to Excellence Award from Paul O'Grady, managing director, Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA). Also pictured is Laura Keane, general manager South and Mid-West, RehabCare.**



## Best of the Best

well and also help us to identify areas for improvement.

"As we go forward on our mission of excellence, this award allows us to reflect on and be proud of what we have achieved. Most importantly, it further motivates us to continue to strive for excellence and we are just about to undergo assessment for further EFQM accreditation under the *Levels of Excellence* scheme and, ultimately, the European *Recognised for Excellence* award. The concept of continuous improvement is now firmly ingrained in everything we do."

Joe O'Brien, acting chief executive, National Learning Network also articulated a similar point of view: "The importance of the EFQM Excellence Model to National Learning Network cannot be understated. It is the driving force behind the vision to be a leader in promoting equality in

employment access, thus enabling National Learning Network to deliver high quality, flexible and responsive training, employment and education access programmes that promote equal participation in society for people who experience exclusion. National Learning Network continues to strive for Best Practice in everything it does by establishing continuous improvement systems and processes throughout the entire organisation.

"Achieving EFQM Excellence accreditation is a significant achievement for the organisation. It gives formal public recognition to the high quality services being delivered in each of the centres around the country. It reflects most positively on the quality of service being delivered to service-users nationwide and is a source of great pride. This is the second step (of four) towards the achievement of EFQM



*Recognised for Excellence* status. National Learning Network is confident that it will achieve this, with the rest of the Rehab Group and looks forward to the continuing delivery of services recognised for their excellence.”

The Rehab Group progress towards *Recognised For Excellence* status to date reads thus:

**European and national accreditation for Excellence 2004/5**

Rehab Lotteries, RehabCare, Rehab Foundation, National Learning Network, The Chaseley Trust and Department of Research Innovation & Business Excellence and Rehab Group Services

**Excellence Through People/Investors in People progressed to date**

RehabCare, National Network Learning, Gandon Enterprises, Rehab Lotteries, Momentum, Rehab UK and Research

**continued next page**



**Pictured at the presentation last September of the Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA) Index of Excellence Award to National Learning Network was (left to right) Philip Byrne, director, Accreditation, Standards and Supports, National Learning Network; Paul O’Grady, managing director, EIQA; Joe O’Brien, acting chief executive, National Learning Network; Frank Flannery, chief executive, Rehab Group; Michael Crowley, Accreditation and Health and Safety manager, National Learning Network.**



Innovation & Business Excellence

### European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark

RehabCare, National Learning Network, Research Innovation & Business Excellence

### ISO 9000/2001 international standard

Gandon Enterprises, TBG Learning

### ISO 1385/2003

Gandon Enterprises

### European and national accreditation for Excellence 2006

Gandon Enterprises, Momentum Scotland, TBG Learning and Rehab UK

Said Group chief executive, Frank Flannery: "There is no doubt that we have made substantial progress and that our levels of knowledge and understanding of the Business Excellence Model, as a tool for continuous improvement, has grown considerably. Also the substructures which we put in place across the Group – such as the Groupwide Business Excellence Strategic Team (BEST), Excellence Development Team (EDT), local Business Excellence Teams (BETs) and our Business Excellence Support Services – have become increasingly effective."

Like any other organisation operating in a competitive environment, the perpetual



**Brendan Coyle, Rehab Group EFQM excellence manager.**

challenge facing Rehab is to maintain a framework which ensures that the changing demands of its service users and customers are continually met.

It is this necessity that prompted the organisation to adopt the European Foundation Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model, which is now well advanced in all Group companies and divisions under the banner of *Excellence at Work*.

The model is essentially a management tool to help organisations achieve sustained service or product improvement and growth. "It assists organisations to develop business management systems that provide

a practical structure for measuring where they are on the path to excellence, identify the gaps and develop effective solutions," said Mr Flannery.

"Already, the Excellence Model has achieved astounding results in helping a wide variety of organisations internationally to achieve sustained improvement and growth to their products and services and because the Model is non-prescriptive, Rehab can put a greater emphasis on "people" results than would be the case for an organisation whose overriding aim is financial profit."

Case studies show that it has resulted in significant improvements in staff morale resulting in greater levels of job satisfaction, productivity and lower staff turnover. This obviously impacts greatly on the results achieved by service users.

Added Mr Flannery: "We must aspire to be the best in the world at what we do and the Excellence Model provides us with the framework to make that happen."

### And Next...

The next phase of the implementation plan, which commences in 2006 will focus on managers beginning to use the Excellence Model routinely as a management and continuous improvement tool. This will involve:

- Self Assessments completed and integrated into 2007 Business Plans
- All managers and staff having improvement goals in their business objectives
- Key Performance Indicators and targets identified, agreed and implemented – also matched to RG Strategic Plan
- Targets, Trending and Benchmarking measures initiated
- Further development of Rehab Group expertise
- Award Submission Simulation Pilot commencement – one company

