

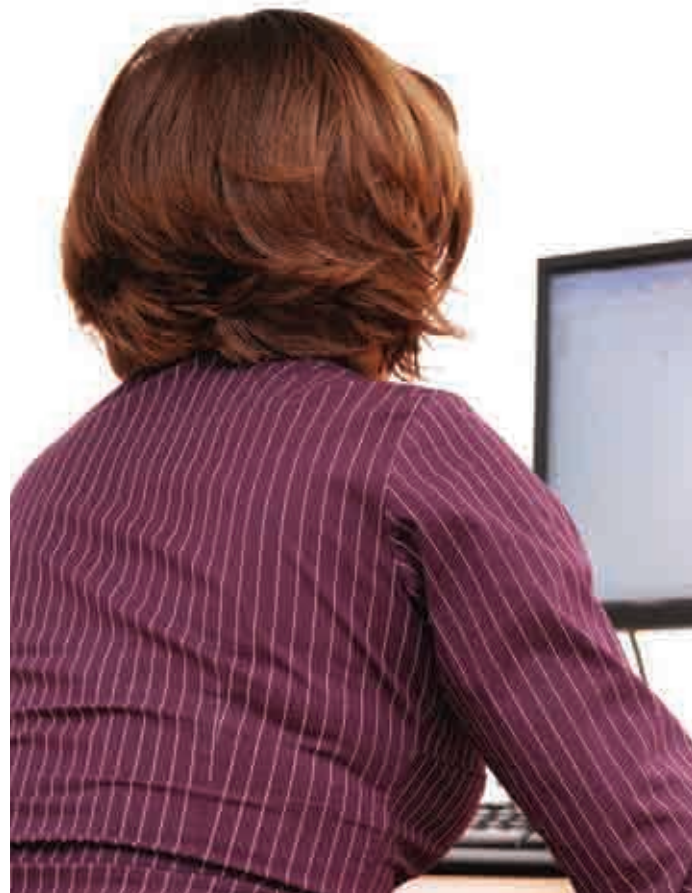
# Rehab Leads the Way in Jobs Mission

In this special feature on the employment of people with disabilities, *Rehab News* highlights the work underway by the Rehab Group to support people to gain and maintain employment.

**“MY OWN JOB”. THAT’S**  
**M** the goal of many of the thousands of people who use the services of Rehab Group every year. Yet, in a more challenging economic environment, there are fewer jobs to go round and this challenge might seem greater than ever. Rehab is determined to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to make this dream a reality. In the UK and Ireland, hundreds of different courses run by Rehab Group companies prepare people for work and help them to find jobs in areas that suit their interests, while hundreds more are employed by Rehab Group companies or retain employment with its support.

*Rehab News* spoke with some key Rehab Group staff across Ireland and the UK to hear their views on the challenges ahead and to some of those who have recently gotten jobs, who are now enjoying working life and their new independence.

In Ireland, in 2006 an ambitious target was unveiled by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment: “7,000 more people with disabilities in employment by 2011”. But Rehab has been



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more than playing its part in achieving this target, through placing, employing and maintaining people in jobs, in all of its divisions.

“At present, there are more people competing for fewer jobs. Anyone seeking a job has to ensure that they have something additional to offer an employer. Completing a training course, and having something extra to offer an employer – a qualification and experience – is more important than ever before,” said Marie Kelly, Director of Training and Employment for the Rehab Group.

“A huge percentage of those who leave National Learning Network courses go straight into jobs. That’s because the courses that we run and the qualifications that our learners receive give them the skills and the confidence to do just that. Often these are jobs that they have applied for through part of their course, with the help of staff, or in the companies in which they have completed employer-based training.”

Between 2006, when the target was announced, and today, over 1,545 people leaving National Learning Network have gone directly from training into a job. “National Learning Network has already, on its own, achieved a full 25 per cent of the target for the whole country, in just half of the time allocated. We are really proud of the achievements of all of our graduates, and pleased to be playing our part so well.

“We offer two types of vocational training courses, both funded by FÁS, the national training agency. ‘Specific skills’ courses focus on the skills a learner will need to work in a particular industry – like computer applications or catering and hospitality; the second type of course called ‘introductory skills’ is more general, and gives people a feel for what more focused training they might like to pursue. Because specific skills training courses are tailored to particular industries, more people go straight into jobs in those industries, and students from both types of courses can go on to further training – either with us or another trainer like FÁS or a further education college or university. Overall, 90 per cent of people who complete vocational training with National Learning Network go on to further education or employment.”

Impressive results indeed, so what’s the secret? “The success of our learners is based on the approach we take, working with each individual at a pace that suits them and dealing with any issues that they have on a one-to-one basis. If people need more support





*Pictured above:* Mary Duggan who is studying for her European Computer Driving Licence with National Learning Network in Bray, Co. Wicklow. As part of her course, Mary undertook a part-time work experience placement with Ballywaltrim Community Centre.

in a particular area, we can provide that, from assistance with literacy and numeracy to access to a psychologist. It's a very supportive learning environment and many students tell us that they couldn't have completed their course and achieved their qualification without the specific support they received.

"It's great to see the figures adding up – but it's more important to know that behind every number there is a real person who has had a positive experience in National Learning Network and who our staff know they have helped along the way. Everyone completing training with us puts real effort into it, and they have every right to be proud of their achievement and qualification, and to make real progress in their careers as a result of it."

Feedback from employers is also very positive, both when they act as host employer for a training course or work experience, and for the graduates of National Learning Network whom they employ.



*Pictured above:* Rosemary Sheelan, a service user with RehabCare in Coes Road, Dundalk, works at her local hair salon, Mizu, every Wednesday and loves it.

"Working with employers is essential. If a training course is too theoretical, and the person has no experience of the workplace, it's of less value to an employer. We work closely with over 200 employers in Ireland, placing hundreds of people in employer-based training and work experience annually. Many employers hire the learner as a full-time employee when they complete their training, which reflects well on the learners and on the courses. We are delighted to hear from employers who can offer a placement to a learner; many employers come back to us time and time again."

#### **THE EMPLOYER – Michael O'Hehir urges other employers to take on learners**

Michael O'Hehir is the owner of a bakery, coffee shop and hotel business in Sligo, Ireland. "Initially I was approached by the instructor in National Learning Network, Elayne O'Hara, who asked me to take on one learner, but the programme seemed like a good idea so we decided to take on three people on the 'Employer-based Training' scheme.

All of the placements have worked out well, the individuals involved work hard and are well trained when they come in. Some of them had experience of another placement and all were well prepared for the work environment. I think they were matched well to the placements and are all able to do what is expected of them, with appropriate supervision. We are very pleased.

I would say it is a positive experience both for us and for them. I would recommend employer-based training to an employer who is able to accommodate a learner on placement; it is definitely worthwhile."

#### **THE CASE STUDY – Alan Rooney's kitchen experience in Sligo**

Alan Rooney is coming to the end of his placement in the Glass House Hotel in Sligo, where he has been working as a kitchen porter as part of his employer-based training in National Learning Network.



*Pictured above:* Glass House Hotel in Sligo.



*Pictured left: Alan Rooney hard at work in the kitchen of the Glass House Hotel, Sligo. Alan has been working as a kitchen porter at the hotel as part of his 'Employer-based Training'.*

"I really enjoy the placement. I have cleaning duties every day in the kitchen, including cleaning the countertops for food preparation. Then I take deliveries, mostly for food – meat, fruit and vegetables. I have to put those away safely and properly in the storeroom or the fridge.

I do watch Gordon Ramsay's kitchen on television, but our kitchen isn't like that at all, thankfully! There is a lot less shouting! Everyone is very friendly, and there are people of all different nationalities working in the kitchen. It is great experience. I hope to get a job in a kitchen at the end of my training.

I have been attending National Learning Network for nearly two years, first on the 'Transition' programme and then on 'Employer-based Training'. Some days in the centre are hard, but you get through it. I have received certification already on interpersonal skills and preparation for work on my 'Transition' programme, and in 'Employer-based Training'. I recently received manual handling certification, which would be very important for the kind of work I want to do.

I have learned a lot and have really enjoyed myself. I would recommend it to anyone who asks me about employer-based training."

In the last issue of *Rehab News*, we spoke with Michael Horgan, Director of Enterprises for Rehab Group. Rehab Enterprises currently employs 454 people, of whom 237 have disabilities. Here he gives us a brief update on the further efforts of Enterprises since that interview.

"One great piece of news is that the Wage Subsidy Scheme of the Department of Enterprise, Trade

## Employment Supports in Ireland – a Quick Guide to Some of the Options Available

**Open Labour Market** – the employee is employed by the employer to do a job part-time or full-time. FÁS can advise on grants available, for items like a sign language interpreter at interviews, assistive technology to help the employee do their job or changes to the built environment to make the workplace more adaptable.

**Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)** – under this scheme run by FÁS, employers can access a subsidy to fund some of an employee's wages. A grant is also available to provide additional supervision or services. The scheme was made permanent on 1 October 2008 and new employees who enter under the 'Back to Work Allowance' scheme will keep their entitlements such as medical card and travel benefits for three years. Employees willing and able to work 21 or more hours per week may be eligible.

**Supported Employment** – this scheme supports people with disabilities to find and retain employment in the open labour market. A job coach supports the person to decide what kind of job they would like to do and contacts possible employers. When a suitable job is found, the job coach works with the employee to help them get used to their new job and also supports the employer in the early stages. The job coach continues to be available for advice until the person has fully settled in.

**Part-time Employment** – where a person decides that they would like to get a part-time job, often the service they attend, for example, RehabCare, helps them to find a job in the local area. Almost 200 people who attend RehabCare's resource centres are also supported by staff to find and keep their part-time jobs, with RehabCare also providing advice and information to the employer.



*Pictured above:* James Graham at Rehab Recycle's WEEE recycling facility in Tallaght, Co. Dublin.

and Employment has been placed on a permanent footing. This scheme is essential to Rehab Enterprises, and now we can continue to grow our offerings to customers and build up the business further. Our recycling business provides employment to over 194 people annually and we will install over 1,000 recycled and refurbished computers in Irish schools this year, under our arrangement with WEEE Ireland, and recycle over 70,000 tonnes of glass.



*Pictured above:* Former National Learning Network learner and current Rehab Enterprises employee, Ben Cooper, with Margaret Duff, a learner with National Learning Network. In April, Margaret spent a day shadowing Ben in the Rehab Retail shop in Trinity College Accommodation Services, Dublin, as part of the Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) Job Shadow Initiative, a national programme designed to provide job seekers with disabilities with the opportunity to shadow a workplace mentor as he or she goes through a normal working day.

"We will be continuing to develop Rehab Retail in 2009 – we have opened one new shop already this year, which has meant three new jobs, and we hope to continue to expand in this area with a further two shops coming on stream in the coming months.

"We also work with employers who are interested in outsourcing jobs to people, through our Workability programme – like the Complementary Workforce Model in Scotland. We are developing great expertise in the area of job retention and will be piloting this with a number of employers this year. It is going to be busier than ever, but we are always keen to hear of more employers who can use our services or who want to know more about employing people with disabilities."

Ian Welsh, Director of UK Services, gave us a whistle-stop tour of how the Rehab Group companies are working to support people with disabilities and those who are excluded to gain skills and jobs across the UK.

"In England, Rehab Group company, TBG Learning, supports over 3,000 people with disabilities in its training courses every year. TBG Learning has a track record of more than twenty years' achievement in helping people transform their lives through learning and is an established leader in its field, with over 25,000 young people and adults per year achieving a qualification."

TBG Learning supports adults of all ages to upskill and to gain employment, with a wide array of courses ranging from basic skills, such as help with literacy, numeracy or the English language (ESOL) to more advanced courses. TBG Learning also provides services to employers looking for training solutions and has developed strong and successful relationships with over 800 employers, with the focus on delivering flexible learning to employees in the workplace.

Delivering high-quality training provision on behalf of, and in partnership with, LearnDirect, Learning & Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus, Colleges of Further Education and employers, TBG Learning is establishing itself as the first of a whole new type of social economy, learning organisation.

Ian Welsh continues, "In Scotland, Momentum supports people into employment via a range of training programmes and social enterprises. Some programmes are designed to help people

to achieve work for the first time, others to help people keep their existing jobs following disability or injury."

Momentum works in partnership with Jobcentre Plus delivering a range of employment programmes including 'Work Prep', 'Work Step' and 'Access to Work'. The innovative support worker service helps people to carry out work-related tasks which are made difficult by their disability by matching them with a suitable support worker, helping them overcome potential obstacles, for example, acting as a scribe for those with a hearing impairment or dyslexia. Individual support workers also liaise with clients' employers. Momentum is assisting around 60 people through the support worker contract.

"As the sole deliverer of this service across Scotland, Momentum is helping to develop the practice of jobs being adapted to people, rather than people being excluded because they can't achieve small elements of a job. There is no reason why someone who, for example, can't hear, which might impact on their ability to take notes in meetings, should be excluded from a position when they can fulfil every other part of the job comfortably."



Momentum's Haven Products recently won the Star Social Firm Award from Social Firms UK and provides services for

blue-chip clients such as Standard Life, Lifescan Scotland and The Edrington Group, as well as several public sector organisations.

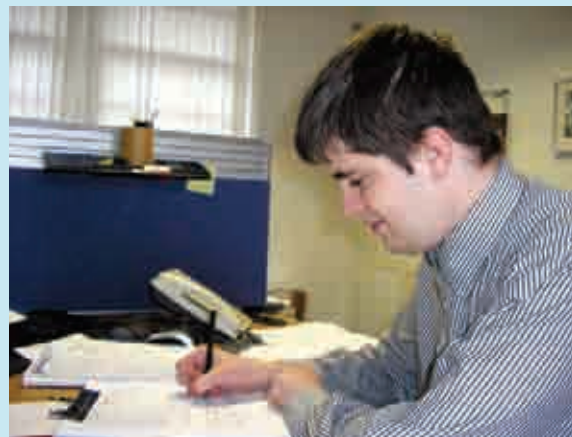
"Haven Products is an efficient, commercially-viable business operating three plants across Scotland," Ian Welsh concludes, "and 80 per cent of its highly-skilled workforce is disabled. All surplus income is reinvested to provide meaningful jobs for people who may never before have been given the chance to earn a wage."

"The innovative Complementary Workforce model outsources skilled and trained staff to work on-site with some of the country's largest businesses, helping companies to fulfil their staffing needs, either temporarily or long-term."

### THE CASE STUDY – *Thomas McKechnie takes on the world!*

Haven employee, Thomas McKechnie, 23, has been working with a local employer since July 2008 through the Complementary Workforce. At Haven in Scotland, he was trained in a wide range of skills on the factory floor and was subsequently chosen to work for Paisley South Housing Association, with which Haven has a close working relationship.

"I was put in touch with Haven through my disability employment adviser at Jobcentre Plus. When I joined Haven in 2004, I wasn't very confident as it was my very first job since school. They really helped me to bring my confidence up so that I was ready to take on the outside world."



*Pictured above:* Thomas McKechnie at work with Paisley South Housing Association in Scotland.

"Then Tom Henderson from Haven Products told me about the job with Paisley South Housing Association and I decided to go for it. I got the job and I love it! I'm doing various admin tasks such as filing, photocopying and doing a bit of estate management. I'm hoping to make a career in the housing association now."

Throughout the Rehab Group, real developments are being made in the area of employment of people with disabilities, through education, training, employment and supports, with the assistance of various State and other agencies. But there's still much more to be done. You can see what progress is made in future editions of *Rehab News*.