

BOOST! A Vocational Guidance Tool

VICKY McMANUS, Enable Ireland, Cork, describes the background to a new CD-ROM aimed at assisting users in building a realistic picture of their vocational opportunities and potential within their community.

Enable Ireland, Cork, has recently launched the BOOST! programme which is intended to help users to build up a realistic picture of vocational opportunities and possibilities within their local community. Though Enable Ireland provides services for children and adults with physical disabilities nation-wide, the BOOST! vocational guidance tool is designed for self-assessment by people from all backgrounds and ability levels. It is available on CD-ROM or in printed format. It should be used in collaboration with an assigned/chosen trainer/key-worker/vocational guide. There are five sections within the CD: Relationships, Employment, Education and Training, Accommodation and Recreation.

Partly funded through the E.U. Leonardo Da Vinci Initiative, and in partnership with organisations from Italy, Denmark and Finland, and the University of Illinois in the U.S.A, the development of the product has been led by Enable Ireland, Cork, and Enable Ireland Dublin (Adult Services) who have worked locally with FAS and Marks & Spencer Ireland (Cork Branch).

For the past year, trainers from all over Europe have trained “on line” working on training modules. Modules include: Person Centered Planning (a system designed to plan for a person’s future, evaluating the present situation and highlighting areas for development both socially and vocationally, thus helping one work on the choices for development); Application and Practices in working with people with disability; Vocational Evaluation; and, Job Development. The training is accredited from the University of Illinois, U.S.A., and is based on the American Person Centered Planning concept. This vocational training action programme, introduced in 1994, is now in its second phase and will finish in 2006. International centres working on this vocational tool include: Anthropos, Italy – providing services to people with mental disability; Odense Kommune, Denmark – providing services to people with disabilities in the area of accommodation, personal matters, employment and recreation; and Jarvenpaa Training centre in Finland – offering total rehabilitation services, including vocational training to people with disabilities.

Within the Irish context there have been many significant developments, most notably the establishment of the National Disability Authority. This and other important developments are rooted firmly in the *Report of the commission on the status of people with disabilities: A strategy for equality* (1996). Coupled with this is the production within each EU member state of a national action plan on employment (NAP) which came as a direct result of a directive from Europe. The Irish NAP was produced in March/April 1998 and covered the important facets of employment creation and tackling unemployment in a united way across Europe. The situation in respect of people with disabilities was clearly addressed within the NAP and strong innovative measures were called for to meet the needs of this group. The BOOST! project is firmly in keeping with those measures and directives outlined in the NAP and is therefore in keeping with both national and, more importantly, EU philosophy. Likewise the authors of BOOST! have referred to the American Disability Act as part of their research for this project.

For more information on BOOST! contact Vicki McManus, Enable Ireland, The Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork. Phone no: 021 4294803 ex 254.