

REHAB GROUP DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Research activities

During 2002 a strategic review of the research function of Rehab Group was carried out by an independent academic consultant from the Queensland University of Technology, Dr. Herbert Biggs. Dr. Biggs consulted with the Department's key internal and external customers and stakeholders and produced a report that documented the Department's high profile and reputation with external stakeholders. He also noted a critical requirement to ensure that the research activities of the Department become more clearly embedded in the business objectives of the constituent companies of the Rehab Group. This strategic review has informed the work programme of the research function for the coming year and has resulted in a more targeted approach to meeting the research and innovation needs of Rehab Group's constituent companies.

The main research initiatives in which the Department was involved during 2002 included:

Review of Disability Related Research in Ireland (1996-2001):

The Department was awarded a contract by the National Disability Authority (NDA) to carry out a comprehensive review of all disability related research implemented by research agencies, academic institutions including universities, local groups and disability organisations during the period 1996-2001. The review involved the distribution of over 200 questionnaires, a computerised literature search, the acquisition of peer reviewed papers and published reports and the abstraction of topics and methodologies from Ph.D and Masters theses in each university throughout the State. As part of the review a consultation was carried out with umbrella bodies and representative organisations of people with disabilities to establish their expectations and requirements in relation to disability research. A research framework was developed within which all research could be categorised and significant gaps identified. The report was published by the NDA and the bibliography was installed on the NDA website at the end of 2002.

Return

The Department participated in partnership with University College Dublin in a six-country survey of systems, barriers and challenges to the return to work of ill and injured workers. This project, which was funded by the European Union through the 5th Framework Research and Technological Development programme, was completed in early 2002. A final report was published and a paper was accepted for publication in the Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling.

Health and Social Gain

This project, which was instigated at the initiative of Rehab Council, is being carried out in partnership with all Rehab Group constituent companies. A range of measures of health and social gain are being piloted in different services customised to the needs of different service users and employees with disabilities. The project completed its second year of implementation and pilot results were produced. It is intended that the techniques developed through this project will be used to report on health and social gain outcomes for beneficiaries in the 2003 Group Operational Report.

Stress Impact

The Department was successful in achieving a further 5th Framework RTD funded project in partnership with University College Dublin. This project evolved from the work carried out during RETURN but focuses specifically on the needs of those employees who become ill or disabled as a result of stress. The project will be carried out in five EU Member States and involves an epidemiological survey of the incidence of stress amongst long-term absent employees and an exploration of the current interventions and treatments being utilised by human resource professionals and occupational physicians. The aim of the study is to document stress as a mechanism in disability and long-term absence and to identify appropriate rehabilitation strategies for long-term absent employees.

Definitions of Disability

This project was funded under the European Science Foundation and examined how definitions of disability impact upon assessment and intervention practices of social welfare systems. The Department carried out a review of Irish definitions and issued a national report.

Disability Management in Social Welfare Systems

This project aimed to identify the opportunities for adopting a Disability Management (DM) approach within European social welfare systems. This DM approach was developed in the United States within a context of no fault workers' compensation systems in which early intervention and prevention result in increased profitability for employing organisations. In contrast, social welfare systems tend to carry the burden of cost in relation to disability and absence. The study involved carrying out a series of focus group consultations with key stakeholders as to the potential for DM practice to be implemented in a European context.

Research Support to Rehab Group Companies

During the year the Department provided support to a number of Group companies in carrying out research activities. Research support included the provision of a literature search service, the implementation of service evaluations, support in proposal writing, advice on research design and the analysis of data.

Innovation activities

Access Ability During the year the Department supported Gandon Enterprises in successfully completing Action 1 of an EQUAL project designed to create a culture and policy environment within the open labour market in which people experiencing social exclusion are more likely to be recruited. The project involved a wide range of national partners and Action 1 required the completion of a consortium agreement and the development of a two year work programme.

Culture 2000 The Department supported NTDI and Rehab Foundation in a successful bid to continue to develop the arts and cultural programme originally initiated through Art Link and Sound Link. The programme involves a range of community based arts programmes to be implemented throughout the country and will culminate in a national exhibition during the 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities.

SDV Net Job

The Department participated in an international project aimed at utilising web-based technology to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. The project was led by a Danish organisation and included partners from Greece.

The European Rehabilitation Academy

The Department provided support to the European Platform for Rehabilitation in the development of a process through which professionals within the field of rehabilitation can gain accreditation at a European level. The contribution of the Department included the delivery of training and development activities and the development of an accreditation framework.

European Quality in Rehabilitation Mark (EQRM)

Support was provided to the European Platform for Rehabilitation in the piloting of a Quality Mark in the field of rehabilitation. The Mark was piloted in two locations, Finland and Portugal and the process was validated by a committee of internationally recognised experts and organisations. A business plan for 2003 was developed.

Diploma in Community Rehabilitation

In co-operation with the Eastern Regional Health Authority, University College Dublin and the Irish Association of Rehabilitation Professionals, the Department

developed and gained funding for a pre-graduate programme for those working in the field of community rehabilitation. The Diploma is a two-year course aimed at those without qualifications who are currently working in the field of rehabilitation and is accredited by the National University of Ireland.

Service Improvement and Quality

The Department contributed to a range of initiatives aimed at improving and underpinning the quality of service within Rehab Group. Of key importance was the co-ordination of the planning phase of Rehab Group's Business Excellence initiative. Based on the European Foundation for Quality Management model, the Business Excellence initiative will be implemented in all Group companies over the next three years. It provides a framework within which each company can both develop and evolve a unique approach to service quality, whilst operating within similar parameters to other Group companies.

Excellence Through People (ETP)

The Department retained its ETP accreditation and supported Gandon Enterprises in its application for accreditation in the Mill Enterprises. The Mill was successful in achieving accreditation and the results were validated when The Mill was rated as one of the top companies in Ireland in a Sunday Independent survey. The Department also began the ETP process with REM in Limerick and Rehab Lotteries.

Charters of Rights and Responsibilities

The Department continued to support the annual reviews of Charters currently in operation in Ireland. It also supported the development of a Charter in Rehab Scotland ? this included consulting with service users and redesigning the complaints and compliments policies and procedures.

Service Mapping

The service mapping exercise being carried out by the Not for Profit Business Association (NfPBA) was supported through an implementation phase that involved real time gathering of data and reporting of consolidated figures for the nine members of the Association.

EU Accession States

The Department continued to explore the possibility of being involved in development projects in the applicant Member States for the European Union. In particular a PHARE proposal was developed in co-operation with a Hungarian partner. The project was submitted and should it be successful, Rehab Group will be the partner of choice for the project.

Volunteering

The Department co-ordinated an initiative aimed at generating a Rehab Group wide set of policies and procedures for volunteering. This involved arranging meetings with Rehab companies and producing drafts for consultation. A final set of draft documentation is now completed.

Case Management

The Department was funded by VHI in Ireland to produce guidelines for case managers and a database of potential providers within the State. This document was completed and submitted to VHI. The document is available to Rehab Group for its own use. In addition the Department is supporting an initiative in developing case management within the Group being led by the Group Development function.

Workforce Plus

The Workforce Plus campaign continued to make an impact within Ireland and internationally. In May a workshop on job retention and stress was facilitated at an international conference in Vancouver and a successful one-day international seminar was held in partnership with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, IBEC and ICTU in Dublin. Participants from five countries including Switzerland, Canada, Germany and Australia presented a range of strategies and different models. A particularly important achievement of the Workforce Plus campaign was the establishment by FÁS of a job retention grant for employees at risk of unemployment as a result of illness or injury in the workplace.