

DCU Ability project

Project aim: To promote the employability of 100 young people with disabilities who are now excluded from employment by supporting them to gain the skills, competencies and experience needed to be career-ready. By offering opportunities to engage in a University based project that focusses on person-centred supports they will be able to progress at their individual pace and empower their own career ambitions. To build partnerships that will address more long term the barriers that many young people face in getting employment. By harnessing the whole of DCU facilities and expertise and building a strong partnership with St Michael's House the project will create a sustainable model of best practice.

The overall difference the project aims to make is to support each participant to build the skills and confidence they need to become career ready while also supporting partnerships within and external to Dublin City University (DCU) that will address the barriers that many young people face in getting employment. Overall this project will also build capacity for DCU as a large multi-campus University to create a long term sustainable programme that has the ability to be mainstreamed within the University.

The DCU Ability project in partnership with St Michael's House Services intends to promote the employability of young people with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 29 years. All young women and men with disability are welcome to apply to participate once they are in receipt of disability or invalidity pension, in receipt of illness benefit for more than three months, attend DCU's Disability & Learning Support Service or St Michael's House Services. It is intended to offer this initiative nationally so young people may also be referred to the project by other organisations or services supporting young people with disability.

The Project will be located across all Dublin City University campuses.

The types of actions that will be delivered will be those that can most support young people with disability to discover how they want to live their life, what their ambitions (in particular with regard to career) are and what is needed to make that possible. On a practical level small groups of participants will be supported over the course of the project with approximately three intakes.

Actions will include but are not limited to;

- Individual vocational assessments
- Individualised support plan and strategy tailored to each participant
- Accessibility needs for each participant
- Accessible communication
- Modules in areas such as literacy and personal and professional development
- A flexible approach to accredited learning on National Framework of Qualifications (QQI)
- Inclusion in DCU mainstream modules
- Individual tuition
- Career planning and preparation for work
- Skills building such as in interview techniques
- Individual support for career planning, CV preparation, completing application forms
- Job searching
- Work experience
- Voluntary work

Therefore in partnership with St Michaels House Services, participants will be offered opportunities to take part in a range of activities and interventions that are focused on their own particular needs and how best the project can support them to reach their goals. For some this will focus on education, including modules for example on personal and professional development or literacy skills. For others the focus may be on preparation for work and work placement. Additional supports that may be required for participants such as mentors will be negotiated on an individual basis and volunteers recruited within the DCU student body.

The main objectives of the project focus on promoting employability and creating pathways into education, training and employability for young people with disabilities. In addition the objectives seek to take this opportunity to develop an economic model for the project with the aim to mainstream it into the future within DCU.

Overall the project seeks to build capacity for work experience for young people with disability and a significant amount of the project will involve recruiting employers within DCU to take participants on placements. External placements will also be sought utilising DCU and St Michael's House employer contacts.