

# MS Ireland and Novartis have launched a set of employment resources for people with MS and their employers

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MS Ireland, supported by Novartis, will launch a set of practical employment resources to support people with MS and their employers. Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, Minister of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, officially launched the resources.

The resources, entitled “Working with MS: An Employment Resource for People with Multiple Sclerosis” and “Working out MS in the Workplace: A Practical Toolkit for Employers”, follow on from the “Societal Cost of Multiple Sclerosis” report which was launched last year.

MS is associated with an annual societal cost of €429 million and the largest component of this relates to productivity losses from leaving work. The report revealed that of people with MS in Ireland<sup>1</sup>, less than half are in paid employment. The resources will provide advice and guidance to people who are living with MS on issues such as whether they will be able to continue to work; discussing their diagnosis with their employer; managing career flexibility and change; and what legal rights they have. The resources also detail various financial supports available to employers to help with adaptations and change. The resources also include case studies from those living and working with MS.

Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Minister of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, who officially launched the resources at the Mansion House, said, "While more people with MS are in employment today than in the 1990s due to better treatments and disease management, further improvements are needed. Demystifying some of the concerns around working with MS and supporting employees with MS will help people make informed decisions about their careers and make employers aware of the supports available to them".

"Creating the right environment for growth means we need to ensure that there is a competitive business environment and that we invest in the health of our workforce. These resources will be extremely useful to help people with MS to continue to participate in the workplace. I congratulate MS Ireland on this initiative, supported by IBEC and Novartis".

Ava Battles, Chief Executive, MS Ireland, said; "Because of the unpredictable nature of MS it can often be difficult to determine if and when you will or should make changes to your employment commitment. This booklet aims to provide some advice and guidance so that people with MS can make informed decisions about their working life".

"Employers can support and enable an employee with MS to continue as a productive member of their workforce, and your employer may be able to provide certain supports to help you continue in your work".

"We call on the community of healthcare professionals, employers, and policy makers to appreciate the value of employment to the individual and to society. Our ambition is that people with MS will be able to 'live the life of their choice to their fullest potential' and we believe the opportunities to work in society, and to remain financially independent, is critical. Over the next few years, we need to help ensure that Ireland's employment rates for people with MS become more in line with Europe."

Dr Kara McGann, Senior Labour Market Policy Executive from Ibec, said, "Ibec welcome the guides that have been developed by MS Ireland which will provide a valuable resource for employees and employers alike. Providing practical advice and insight for employers around the impact of MS on employment and supports available as well as offering answers to some of the questions asked by individuals with MS, these guides will help to raise awareness and overcome concerns."



Loretto Callaghan, Managing Director, Novartis Ireland, said; “Novartis is delighted to support MS Ireland in the most comprehensive review of employment activity for people with MS in Ireland. Some 3% of people currently in employment in Ireland have a chronic disease, and it is very important these people can stay in employment. We hope these guides will be extremely useful to help people with MS continue to participate in the workplace.”

#### References:

1. Societal Cost of MS Report, accessed on 27 April 2016
2. Working out MS in the Workplace: A Practical Toolkit for Employers

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#### List of links present in page

1. <https://www.novartis.com/ie-en/ie-en/stories/ms-ireland-and-novartis-have-launched-set-employment-resources-people-ms-and-their-employers>
2. <https://www.novartis.com/ie-en/ie-en/taxonomy/term/61>