



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **O2 Ability Awards to First Government Department**

#### Social and Family Affairs Promotes Disability Agenda

Awards in three categories were presented to the Department of Social and Family Affairs at the O2 Ability Awards ceremony in Dublin Castle last night. The O2 Ability Awards created and designed by The Aisling Foundation, are the first Irish business awards for best practice in the employment of people with disabilities.

John Hynes, Secretary-General of the Department, accepted awards in three categories:

- Leadership
- Learning, Development and Progression
- Retention and Well Being

“It is particularly appropriate that this Department should be to the fore in promoting the disability agenda as it provides supports to many thousands of people with disabilities and their carers, Mr Hynes said. “The Department is currently preparing its Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act, 2005. This Plan will include actions in relation to the employment of people with disabilities within the Department and its agencies.”

Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan TD, added: “I was particularly struck by the fact that this Department is the only Government Department to receive one of these awards this year. The Government is anxious that the public service leads by example in addressing the challenges facing people with disabilities. By doing so, this will encourage other organisations to adopt progressive attitudes and examples of best practice.”

The O2 Ability Awards examines all aspects of employment and recognises progressive attitudes and examples of best practice in organisations in relation to employment of people with disabilities. This year, 50 organisations drawn from both the public and private sectors, have received awards.



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“The awards process provided an opportunity for the Department to receive an external and expert assessment on its policies in relation to the employment of people with disabilities, Mr Hynes said.

“Considerable progress has been made, particularly in the area of assistive technology. However, the Department recognises that there are specific issues of concern for staff with disabilities that have yet to be fully addressed. These issues were highlighted in the course of preparation of a report on this subject by a group set up under the Department's workplace partnership process. The implementation of the report's recommendations is now being progressed.

“The Department is committed to continued improvement in this area in the best interests of its staff with disabilities, and of the organisation as a whole.”

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Further information on the O2 Ability Awards is available on [www.theabilityawards.com](http://www.theabilityawards.com)