

PRESS RELEASE

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Sodexo Ireland is co-founder of Open Doors Initiative, creating work opportunities for all

153-Sodexo employee Mossie O'Donovan (fifth from left) with An Taoiseach Mr Leo Varadkar TD, at the launch of the Open Doors Initiative, of which Sodexo is a co-founder, on 27 Sept 2018 in Dublin.

146-Sodexo employee Mossie O'Donovan (far left) in front of An Taoiseach Mr Leo Varadkar, TD, at the launch of the Open Doors Initiative, of which Sodexo is a co-founder, on 27 Sept 2018 in Dublin.

Sodexo Ireland is one of the 14 Irish companies who have come together with the Irish government to establish the Open Doors Initiative, which will assist the most vulnerable groups in Irish society in gaining access to employment by providing them with workplace, training and employment experience. An Taoiseach, Mr Leo Varadkar TD, formally launched the Initiative on Thursday 27th September 2018 in Dublin.

Country president Margot Slattery was at the launch along with Maurice (Mossie) O'Donovan, who has worked for the company for over 20 years. He was introduced to Sodexo by Carriglea Cáirde Services in Dungarvan, Waterford, which provides services to adults with intellectual disabilities. Mossie officially joined Sodexo in 1997 as a food services assistant based at GSK in Dungarvan and was honoured with a Long Service Award by the company at a gala reception in London last year.

The 14 co-founding companies are committed to working together to leverage their individual experiences, sharing best practice and collectively pushing back the barriers to work for disadvantaged groups in Irish society that are experiencing socio-economic exclusion and distance from either education or the labour market.

The Open Doors Initiative will promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, with an initial focus on three key disadvantaged groups:

- Refugee, asylum seekers and non-native English speakers
- Young people under 25 with educational barriers
- People with mental ill health, or a physical or intellectual disability

Each company has signed a pledge that commits them to running at least one specific programme of support in each of their organisations. These programmes will implement work experience, training placements and related supports for the key target areas. A goal of supporting 50% of people who complete the programmes into paid employment, apprenticeships or further study has been set.

Margot Slattery, country President, Sodexo Ireland, said: *“As part of Sodexo’s commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we are already supporting and working with several organisations like One Family, EmployAbility, Seetec, the National Learning Network and Carriglea Cairde Services. We’re looking forward to sharing our learnings and experience with our fellow partners in the Open Doors initiative.”*

Set-up costs for the initiative for the first year will be provided by Diageo Ireland, while a secretariat will be provided by Business in the Community Ireland. Positive2work Skillnet and IBEC are supporting partner companies in the initiative. Other supporting partners such as the Disability Federation of Ireland and the Immigrant Council of Ireland will lend their support and expertise to employers and those participating in programmes organised by individual companies.

Sodexo Ireland, part of the global Sodexo Group, the world's largest services company, delivers food and facilities management to clients in business and industry, education, financial and healthcare. It employs approximately 3,700 people in over 230 locations across Ireland and spent over €19 million on Irish food in 2017.

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