

## **Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in Sweden**

### **1) Short abstract**

The Karlstad-Hammarö Upper Secondary School for learners with learning disabilities consists of eight national programmes and one local programme, which are run at four of the municipality's five schools. This form of schooling is voluntary, contribution-free and open to learners with documented learning/intellectual disabilities aged 16-20 and living in Karlstad or in the region after they complete compulsory schooling. The aim is to facilitate the transition from education to employment in the open labour market. The specially designed national and individual programmes all last 4 years (though a 5th year is possible) comprising at least 3600 hours distributed across the core subjects, programme-specific subjects and eligible courses. This process also involves assisting the learner in their transition into their working life; links with the Employment Agency are established from the 3rd year onwards, so that it can provide on-going support post-graduation.

Since 2000, the Bryggan (Bridge) Programme has been run with a view to assisting Karlstad- Hammarö Upper Secondary School learners with learning disabilities to find and maintain a job. During its first year "Bryggan" was run as an EU-funded project and was thereafter made a permanent element of the school's activities, under the supervision of one full-time careers 'Master'. The programme works on the basis that everybody can maintain a job in the open labour market with the right kind of support. In co-operation with careers 'masters', supervising staff with pedagogical qualifications and the Employment Service Agency, "Bryggan" has continuously developed its model and demonstrated that through thorough mapping, documentation, further education and frequent meetings/follow-ups with municipalities and enterprises, good results can be achieved.

### **2) Highlights / Uniqueness**

Teachers and careers 'masters' are the most significant project staff and their roles are well defined. Teachers have University level teaching qualifications and practical experience (at least 5 years) known as a Pedagogy qualification. A careers master has a career counselling background and work experience. He/she assists in job finding and reflecting on work competences, provides low intensity support in the workplace and liaises with employers, family and others who are involved in the life of the young person. Together, the teachers and careers masters create a very motivated team, sharing information and problem solving with Vocational Trainers and Co-ordinators (50%), and arranging transition programme choices with compulsory schools and Upper SEN School.

The programme uses a tailored curriculum with a strong focus on the labour market. The career masters within Karlstad-Hammarö Upper Secondary School work according to a method based on supported employment entitled 'Map and Path', which uses a mix of theory and practice. The teachers carry out their own adaptations to the teaching materials in order to provide for different abilities. Each of the learners is, during their last year at the compulsory school for children with intellectual disabilities, offered several periods of practice within the programmes. Each learner is offered at least 22 weeks APU (education based at a place of work) during four years of school. Each programme distributes their weeks in different ways. Year 1: work placement training 2 weeks, year 2: 4 weeks, year 3: 8 weeks, year 4: 13 weeks. The organisation of the delivery of these practice periods is carried out by a central coordinator.

- First step: Mapping is carried out in order to get an overall picture of the student. Interests, experiences and skills are discussed, as well as how the disability may possibly affect the ability to work. In addition, they look into which particular types of work may be possible, according to the different focuses of the programme.
- Second step: education based at a place of work (APU). The careers master seeks a suitable place of work and visits this place together with the student before the period of practice begins. Support is continually provided to both student and his/her instructor (the staff at the workplace/ the mentor). There are good links between the employer and the careers master and teachers.
- Third step: the process consists of evaluation, follow-up and, if necessary, further adaptations to the next period of APU.
- Fourth step: the cooperation with the Employment Service Agency begins in year 3; they carry out further mapping of the student. The tutor, careers master and the student all participate in this mapping. At the end of year 3, "Bryggan" conducts an interview with the student, following which an evaluation takes place where it is decided whether the student will attend the activities of "Bryggan" the following year.
- Fifth step: This begins when the student enters year 4. "Bryggan" takes responsibility for those students who are ready for the labour market and their work runs in parallel with that of the Employment Service Agency in seeking to find employment for the student. If the student is not ready for the labour market the careers master helps him / her get in contact with, for instance, the Municipal welfare service for the disabled.

Training covers three aspects: labour market, housing and leisure (as part of an overall policy goal). There remains a need to guarantee the balance across the

three aspects, to ensure learners progress in terms of citizenship, the quality of their relationships, home life and independence. Both in work-place learning/training and as employees, the learners are included in the ordinary work environment.

Parents/guardians are involved through parent-teacher meetings, development discussions and an "open house" (the public and parents have the opportunity to come). School staff is in regular contact with them via mail and telephone.

Several municipalities have been inspired by the Bryggan Programme and have started similar projects. Networking is a key factor in the programme; the school works in collaboration with the Swedish Public Employment Service/Rehabilitation Service. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency is also an essential aspect.

In 2007-2009 the municipality of Karlstad was involved in a project with the Swedish National Agency for Education regarding careers management in education for individuals with learning disabilities. The Bryggan Programme was presented as a "learning example" focusing on the transition from school to subsidised employment.

### **3) Availability of evaluation data**

The Bryggan Programme started as an EU-project in 1999-2000, with 22 students and 2 careers masters. This resulted in 41% of the graduates finding a job within the open labour market. 32% found employment in the long term and 27% were not ready for the labour market and needed further support and other alternatives. 38 students were enrolled in 2009-2010, half of whom found a permanent position in the form of subsidised employment. 14 learners will receive on-going employment guidance run by the Swedish Public Employment Service/Rehabilitation Service. 45 students were enrolled in the school year 2010/11.

Bryggan today:

- 196 students divided among 8 programmes (1:4 staff to student ratio)
- 3 ½ careers masters across all four years
- 1 careers master with special responsibility for the last year.