

Description of an example of successful national/local VET programmes for learners with SEN in England

1) Short abstract

The ROSE programme is run within a mainstream local college named Havering College of Further and Higher Education. The programme enables young people (aged 16-25) with learning disabilities to secure employment by providing education, training and job-coaching in collaboration with their parents/guardians and staff. The young people (clients) access the programme either by referral by the college or by other agencies in the community. A major strength of the programme is that it has established particularly strong and constructive links and interaction with employers in the local area.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

The project was founded in 2006 when two parents of children with disabilities, and SEN-teachers, visited a job-coaching programme in Liverpool and decided to implement it locally. From its very formation, the ROSE programme has developed into an effective tool that is nationally recognised as a unique and successful model for supporting young people with learning disabilities into paid employment. The individuals involved in this project are characterised as strong team players with clear objectives and great leadership skills. There is no use of volunteers and all staff have clearly defined professional profiles, competences, personal involvement and long-lasting engagement in the field.

The programme uses individual-centred approaches and families are very much involved in the planning and review processes. Curricula development is extremely important and a process is implemented before a suitable job position is chosen. The later sessions with clients involve retraining and career development. These sessions focus particularly on interview skills and the development of an individual-centred profile, which involves examining job descriptions, risk assessment and safety regulations and matching jobs to the client's motivation, skills and abilities. The programme leaders would like to match each student to the job and be honest and realistic with their clients and participating organisations. The "Job Developer" has a key role in this respect; they use the evaluations of the client's potential and competences to ensure they get the *"right staff in each organisation."* He/She conducts an in-depth survey of the available market positions and, when the contract is agreed, maintains contact in order to manage disability awareness training in which expectations and systematic instructions are taught. For the practitioners it has been decidedly valuable to concentrate on the individual's abilities and competences in order to show that the client is able to do the job and will produce fine results.

The “*job coach*” is available to assist clients as long as is necessary. Their job description includes the following: follow the laid out job standards, flexibility, be a people person, experience in the care industry. There is no need for the job coach to have formal qualifications. Job coaches receive training in health and safety, systematic instructions and counselling. The in-service training on disability awareness and systematic instructions is considered an essential part of the programme for staff, to be conducted within the organisations where their clients work.

The programme offers one-to-one tailored counselling in line with the job support employment model, where the job coach and client follow a traffic light system:

- Red: normally a one-month period in which the job coach constantly accompanies the client during his/her daily job activities (employers are supported as well as the client).
- Orange: employer, employee and job coach conduct a review and decide that the job coach will work with the client part time.
- Green: employer, employee and job coach conduct a review and decide when the client will be able to work alone.
- Formally revisited three times per year.

Although the young people follow accredited qualification programmes, the focus is on moving them into employment and offering information regarding further personal and career development. ROSE works closely with the Local Authority and other local public services. Some of the young people are using their personal budgets and other funding streams to contribute towards the cost of their job coach. Furthermore, the project has developed a broad network with businesses in the local community.

3) Availability of evaluation data

Around 40 clients participate in the programme each year. The project is cited in national policies and strategies as an example of best practice. The success rate since 2006 is high; over the last few years 73 people have obtained a job following the programme, with 58 clients having been placed in and remaining in employment after four years. The clients feel more confident after having built up their self-esteem; they feel more independent and appreciated by their fellow colleagues. Among the community organisations, McDonald’s was the first and biggest of the companies to have signed up to the Rose project. The company has a total of 7 clients from this project. One client has obtained an apprenticeship contract and the job has offered the possibility of gaining a hospitality degree online.