

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

1) Short abstract

The Entitlement Framework (EF) is a joint initiative across two government Departments, the Department of Education and The Department for Employment and Learning. The EF aims to widen access to, and participation in, vocational education and training for all young people. As a result Special Schools and Mainstream schools are working in collaboration with each other and with Training Organisations and Colleges of Further Education to provide opportunities for vocational training and learning for learners with a wide range of special education needs. As a result, from the age of 14 years, young people can engage in a broader curriculum which includes academic subjects and practical subjects.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

The Entitlement Framework is recognised by the two government departments as a positive policy for the inclusion of all young people with SEN in vocational education and training. Both departments advocate for highly qualified skills and flexibility that will involved economic success and social inclusion. Its main aim is that 'all young people can fulfil their potential'. The preparatory phases started in 2006 and in 2013 the programme will be fully implemented. Following this, it will be continuously evaluated and monitored in order to provide all learners with a broad curricula and with an academic work base. This legislative framework promotes the strengths and rights of the students. For example, they are offered a dispute service, a statutory appeal body and a disability tribunal. These bodies put duties for school itself and put provisions. The principle of this policy is based on supporting learners by giving them individual attention, broad and well adapted curricula and ensuring collaboration between mainstream and SEN schools and colleges. The programme gives young people the opportunity to engage in, and sample, a range of vocational areas and contributes effectively to these young people remaining in education and training longer by making more informed choices. The flexibility derives from the fact that the vet qualifications are made up of credit-based units which can be awarded separately, and it is this unit base of qualifications that provides greater flexibility and increases access to qualifications. Furthermore, the transition planning in school for individual young people with SEN at the age of 14 years, effectively involves all key stakeholders including the individual young person, their parents or carers, and objective careers officers. The Department for Employment and Learning, working with employers, District Councils, and other

interested parties, has established local **Workforce Development Forums (WDFs)**, in each of the six FE college areas. DE is developing a series of curricular models (incorporating ETI advice on good practice) to assist schools to identify the kinds of pathways that applied courses can open up for young people from across the spectrum of ability. Overall the Entitlement framework widens opportunities for young people with SEN for participation and social and economic inclusion. An advisory system outside the school and under the curricula advisory service and the learning skill development exists to build the capacity of the staff. And each education and library board have an officer to look at the transition process with emphasis on life skill training for leaving their lives independently.

3) Availability of evaluation data

In this academic year, among all Vocational education levels combined, there are 1200 students. There are groups of students with SEN (special classes) at the moment with 70 students with SEN in special groups within the VET schools. Included in these groups are students with different disabilities, ranging from severe handicaps to learning difficulties. Students have free access to education until they are 19 or 20 years old and some of them until they are 21. The Department of Education is currently collating performance data on retention, success and progression for learners with SEN engaged in the Entitlement Framework programme from both Special Schools and Special Units within mainstream schools. Out of the total group of students (with or without SEN) 29 or 30% will move on to VET. Following this, 25% will go on to further education. There is great emphasis on encouraging school leavers to take a practical job.