

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

1) Short abstract

Vision 21 (Cyfle Cymru) is a company limited by guarantee and a charity that provides services in vocational training and work experience for persons with learning needs, leading to recognised qualifications. Vision 21's headquarters is located in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales. The majority of its projects are within easy reach of Cardiff, however some projects can also be found in nearby smaller towns. The individuals it serves are persons with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities and recurring mental health issues. Attendees are aged 14 and above, with the majority of clients being between 18-35 years old.

V21 operates through a network of 16 social enterprises that work with around 250 people in any given week. The enterprises comprise two woodwork workshops, a garden nursery, a community garden, a horticulture project, a farm park, two cafés, two catering outlets, a pottery, a gift shop, an ICT workshop and a Community Enterprise Centre called SBECTRWM, which is run and serviced by V21, offering a community hall and 18 enterprise units for other companies and services. Further enterprises and a range of community paid jobs are also under development.

2) Highlights / Uniqueness

Vision 21 is unique in Wales as it offers dynamic and responsive vocational training that provides work and learning opportunities within community settings. Each workshop has its own trainer from the industry field whose profile is based on the skills needed for the project activities and complemented by in-service training in the area of disabilities. V21 offers a range of vocational qualifications for those they work with, and has accredited assessors among staff for these qualifications. The charity has a group of 40 volunteers and over 66 working staff. Some of the clients have the opportunity of becoming mentors. They offer a summer scheme for young people coming up to year 11 who carry out work experience for one day a week.

Vision 21's student induction programme offers a training and mentoring project (TAM) to all students prior to commencing any project placement. They also offer a wide range of accredited courses in work related and life skills. Students normally arrive without any information on their own abilities, but develop individual training plans working towards nationally recognised OCN qualifications and build portfolios of work experience and personal development achievements (personal coaching, travel training and building confidence). All catering students hold food hygiene certificates. The project also provides

support in job searching, drafting job applications, creating CVs and interview preparation, as well as work experience support and links to job centres.

Vision 21 offers each student a welcoming, supportive and structured induction to their chosen project. Their progress is monitored over the initial weeks in order to make sure the placement is suitable for their needs. The aim of the induction is to assess each student's skill level, discuss their aspirations and inform their individual learning plan.

V21 has come to the conclusion that valuing and respecting achievements is key to achieving the best possible outcomes. They offer people with learning disabilities sufficient time and support to discover new skills, attitudes and confidence, with the aim of helping them to lead fulfilling their adult lives. V21 businesses produce high quality products because they follow a set of procedures developed over 20 years of *trial and error*. Working culture is underpinned by a "*student pledge*" (beliefs and promises to their students) that ensures student needs are put first in the enterprise.

V21 has also developed some unique partnerships with other businesses and providers, using their expertise and business skills to complement its own in order to develop new opportunities for students. This includes developing food outlets within new elderly persons' integrated housing developments staffed by students in training. They add value to the whole scheme by offering flexibility in hours in providing catering 7 days a week to 60 residents. The community development-focus of V21 is a unique element and their SBECTRWM development was a true community response to the lack of facilities in a rundown area. V21 facilitated the proposals from community organisations, lead by a residents Association, and the centre now serves 40,000 people per year, 76% being ordinary community members and 24% people with learning needs. The design of the project has social inclusion at its heart.

3) Availability of evaluation data

A number of evaluations and data have been collected on the work of Vision 21. An independent report has been completed on the work of the SBECTRWM Project assessing the design model and the degree to which the centre meets the needs of the various groups using it. Usage data is collected regularly. V21 operates a number of performance indicators and collects data to monitor their achievement, including income generation (adherence to a true business ethic). A comprehensive management documentation system describes strategic direction and achievement, major incident planning, qualification procedures, daily logs of student progress as the basis for progress monitoring alongside qualifications assessment, personal development criteria and assessment and soft skills assessment procedures. They are working on develop a support employment model and creating more employment opportunities.