

GOTHENBURG



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THE PUZZLE

EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The current economic downturn has made it difficult for vulnerable groups to enter the labour market. The local labour market in Gothenburg is characterised by high unemployment rates among foreign born people and people with disabilities. Among people with physical disabilities the unemployment rate is even higher.

In the last 10 years in Gothenburg, the registered unemployment rate for people with disabilities has increased by about 10%.

After finishing school, an increasing number of the target group receive financial support through the Swedish Social Insurance Agency instead of entering the labour market or starting studies.

In order to improve this situation, the city of Gothenburg together with Bräcke diakoni (a NGO specialised in the inclusion of people with disabilities), the Public Employment Service and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency started a joint project called 'The Puzzle'.

THE PUZZLE PROGRAMME

The main target group is people with physical disabilities between 18-35 years old. Most of them have never been employed.

Key features of the programme:

- The Puzzle is lead by Bräcke diakoni, in cooperation with the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Gothenburg City Council.
- Bräcke diakoni has many years of experience in recruiting and promoting access to the labour market or further education for people with physical disabilities. Their success is based on professional skills development, in cooperation with the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and other local NGOs.
- The Puzzle arranges flexible employment for the participants and provides financial support to the employer from the Public Employment Service. Long term support from occupational therapists from Bräcke diakoni is also provided to both employers and the participants during the whole project.
- The project has a clear and highly individualised approach; with participants having time to create their own objectives and build up their capacity.
- The project positively assumes that every participant is able to work.
- Bräcke diakoni provides on-the-spot support both for the employer and the participant.
- The Puzzle puts a great effort into matching the future employer with the employee.
- The Puzzle challenges the preconceptions about young people with disabilities among employers and also among the young people themselves.
- The project encourages authorities such as the Public Employment service and the Swedish Social Insurance to engage in new challenges and explore new possibilities in regards to the inclusion of young people with disabilities.
- The project has concentrated the city council's efforts towards the ambitious objective of employing people with disabilities.



COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CITY COUNCIL AND A WIDE RANGE OF ACTORS UNDER **THE UMBRELLA OF A SPECIALISED NGO**



TAILORED AND INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED INTERNSHIPS

SUCCESS FACTORS AND RESULTS

- The effective cooperation between the city council and a wide range of actors under the umbrella of a specialised NGO.
- Tailored and individually designed internships together with professional support.
- In the beginning the objective was primarily to mobilise participants' general interest towards the labour market or further education, now the project shows an increased chance of moving the participants into employment after they conclude their internships.

INNOVATION

The project has identified that many employers are afraid to employ a person with disabilities.

One of the key innovative elements of the project is the close follow up done by an occupational therapist that ensures both the employers and the participant have constant support during the project.

The therapist also provides specific advice on how to make the work environment fully accessible to the participants. This support addresses the issues of mutual adaptation between the employers and participants that arise from the internship and contributes in the long run to building confidence and identifying common tools for facing obstacles and difficulties.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of factors impact negatively on the access of people with disabilities to the labour market, including:

- the overall economic crisis and the increasing level of unemployment
- the preconceptions and prejudices about the target group and their employability
- the low self-esteem among the target group
- the distribution of responsibilities and related services to several different authorities

The Puzzle as a project must pay particular attention to the following challenges:

- financial sustainability and future funding
- the efforts needed in order to promote tailored and individualised measures.

