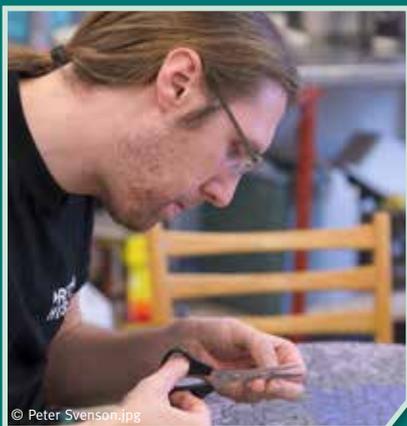


GOTHENBURG
SWEDEN



GOTHENBURG HAS A UNIQUE APPROACH TO INCREASING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PEOPLE FURTHEST FROM THE LABOUR MARKET. THE PROGRAMME AT 'RECYCLING HOUSE' PROVIDES HIGHLY VULNERABLE PEOPLE WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEST THEIR WORK READINESS IN A SAFE SETTING, WHICH IS A NECESSARY FIRST STEP FOR THIS TARGET GROUP TO ENTER AND SUCCEED IN MAINSTREAM EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES.



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A CIRCULAR ECONOMY ENTERPRISE AS THE FIRST STEP INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

CONTEXT

The city district of East Gothenburg is characterised by residential and socioeconomic segregation. Compared to the rest of the city, an increasing number of residents in East Gothenburg have low educational attainment, lower income and poorer health. The unemployment rate in the district stands at 12.7% (compared to 8% in the rest of Gothenburg), 15.3% of households are dependent on social welfare (compared to 6.5% in the rest of Gothenburg) and 8.4% of these households have been jobless for more than 10 months. Of Gothenburg's ten city districts, East Gothenburg accounts for nearly half of the city's social welfare costs, and has the two largest social welfare offices in Sweden.

The priority of the city authorities is to have greater equality in living standards and to create a more socially sustainable city. This includes providing support for people furthest from the labour market and reducing the number of people dependent in the long term on social welfare.

At the same time, one of the main environmental goals of the city of Gothenburg is to promote product reuse. The East Gothenburg district works intensively to improve recycling of all waste.

SOLUTION

The 'Recycling House' offers a rehabilitative employability and training programme for long term income support recipients, who have been out of the labour market for several years or have never worked. The programme aims to facilitate their entry into the labour market. The three to six month programme allows participants to gradually adapt to the workplace environment and strengthen their competence and skills.



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At any one time 35 people are enrolled in the 'Recycling House' programme.

The participants of the programme are involved in the following 'green' activities:

- Manufacturing products from recycled materials that are later sold in the 'Recycling House' shop. This includes repairing or creatively remodelling furniture, fixing up bicycles, household utensils, accessories, bags, plant pots and garden ornaments.
- Preparing organic food and running the 'Recycling House' eco café, which serves lunches and homemade cakes, and provides catering services for the district administration and local businesses.
- Cultivating flowers in the nearby garden, which are also sold in the 'Recycling House' shop.
- Working in a 'green team' clearing up green areas in the city.

The 'Recycling House' is located in the city's only recycling site 'Alelyckan'. Several businesses operate within the site to collect recyclable waste and sell recycled materials to residents. This allows the 'Recycling House' to easily get hold of recycled material for manufacturing. The site is visited frequently bringing customers to the shop and eco café.

CHALLENGES

The majority of the participants have mental or physical health issues, a history of drug or substance abuse, or have experienced trauma or other forms of complex problems. Many have low self esteem and lack basic work place and social skills. The 'Recycling House' provides a safe and calm environment where participants can try out new things and test their skills at their own pace. The participants can choose the area of work they are the most comfortable with or rotate and work in different areas. There is no pressure to sell what they make; the decision is entirely up to each participant except for in the cafe and bicycle repair workshop.



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The variety of the programme activities allows the project staff to gain an in-depth understanding of what has prevented the individuals from working and how these obstacles can be overcome. At the end of the programme, the support staff assesses each participant's progress and recommend the most suitable follow-up activities to advance their employability. These can include work placement, traineeships, education or vocational courses.

The 'Recycling House' is run and funded by the social and welfare services of the East Gothenburg district administration in close collaboration with the local offices of the national public employment service. This ensures a smooth transition after the completion of the programme.

The public employment service makes use of the in-depth understanding of a person's abilities and needs gained through the programme, which allows them to provide the most optimal individual support.

IMPACT

The results from the first half of 2014 show that, of the 31 people who took part in the programme, five people have gone directly into jobs available on the open labour market, 10 have enrolled in a support programme provided by the national public employment service, nine have gone on to another activity, such as an education or a work placement, and the remaining seven dropped out.

The rehabilitative employment programme in the 'Recycling House' significantly enhances a participant's chances of getting a job. Not only do participants have a chance to earn more in the future compared to social benefits; they are also able to integrate better into society. Many participants gain confidence in their ability to work and discover competences and skills they were not aware of.

The 'Recycling House' environmental profile also has a direct impact on the local community. Residents increase their awareness of environmental issues such as recycling and the circular economy through visiting the 'Recycling House' and eco café.



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