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International Best Practice in Post 19 Special Education Needs Provision

1 Introduction

This paper discusses seven international examples of projects that provide support to people over the age of 18 with learning disabilities (LD).

The original request for information from the Committee for Employment and Learning (CEL) asked for examples of Post 19 Special Education Needs Provision (SEN). In order to identify such projects it has been necessary to focus on the wider support provided to those with learning disabilities as a result of the different terms used in an international setting. Please see NIAR 505-2013 for definitions of SEN and learning disability.

The Committee may wish to note that following extensive searches and discussions with various academics and experts, it was not possible to identify projects labelled as “Best Practice”. This may be a result of the wide range of issues that can affect someone with learning disabilities (and the term ‘learning disabilities’ itself being an umbrella term that covers a wide range of learning problems and disorders).

As a result, this paper discusses projects which have proven effective in supporting people with learning disabilities in education, training and employment.

Please note, outside the UK “Learning Disabilities” is referred to as “Intellectual Disabilities”. For the purpose of clarity the term learning disability will be used throughout this paper.

The projects discussed in this paper have been identified from the following sources:

- Discussions with academics, including the Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, University of Ulster and the National Institute for Intellectual Disabilities, TCD;
- European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) Conference 2013; and
- Review of the Inclusion Europe project database and other online databases.

The projects discussed in this paper are listed in Table 1 on the page following.

Support Type	Project Title	Location	Project Description	Reason for Selection
Education/Training	Project TOPSIDE	EU wide, (Romania, the Netherlands, Scotland, Finland, Spain and the Czech Republic)	Project develops the capacity of adults with learning disabilities to provide support and training to their peers. Designed to act as a new component in informal adult education for people with intellectual disabilities.	This is an EU wide project supported by Inclusion Europe and is an innovative approach to skill development in adults with LD.
Education/Training	Certificate in Contemporary Living	Trinity College Dublin, Republic of Ireland	Specially designed programme provided in a tertiary education setting aimed at supporting students as they make transitions towards independence, lifelong learning and employment. Participants take part in 8 mandatory and 5 elective modules covering a variety of topics and upon completion receive a qualification.	Successful project that has been rolled out to five other universities/colleges in the Republic of Ireland.
Education/Training	Up the Hill	Flinders University, Adelaide Australia	Enables people who have a learning disability to access the university environment, develop social skills and to experience a range of educational opportunities and activities.	This project was included as it has been in operation for over ten years, has successfully included people with LD into a university setting and was recommended by academics at the University of Ulster.
Employment Support	Project Search	USA, UK - 150 sites in total	Participants take part in rolling internships with the goal of long term employment at the end of the process. Minimum of 20 hours a week work, with daily classroom based support. 80% success rate in the USA in 2007.	Project Search is an example of a successful and wide ranging programme that helps people with a variety of learning disabilities to find employment.

Support Type	Project Title	Location	Project Description	Reason for Selection
Employment Support	Many Kinds of Performer	Finland	FAIDD linked with companies seeking to meet CSR objectives to provide employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Partnered with K-Chain (a shop chain) to provide employment for 20 people, with a further 15 placements being negotiated in June 2013.	Included as it highlights an innovative approach to supporting people with LD into employment through the use of private companies CSR policies.
Employment Support	evBo/UB	Germany wide	Project targets special education school leavers who would normally be transferred to sheltered workshops. This two strand project takes place across 24 months and provides people with LD with placement opportunities that lead to real jobs.	Selected as whilst it started as a project in Bavaria it has now been rolled out across Germany due to its success. In 2012 there were 100 participants in Bavaria, with 43% gaining employment at the end of the project.
Employment/Training	TV Glad	Denmark, 4 locations	Foundation that provides training and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities in a variety of settings including television, radio, catering and production.	Selected as a unique project that provides both skills development and employment.

2. Education and Training

The Bamford Review found that:¹

There is scope for development of opportunities for men and women with a learning disability within Further Education (FE) in Northern Ireland.

Issues such as a lack of accreditation for study, limited links to job training and work experience, and a limited availability of courses were highlighted within the report, although it was acknowledged that there were a range of initiatives in place to ensure people with disabilities had access to the FE sector.

This section of the paper will discuss three projects which open up access to training and higher and further education:

- TOPSIDE, various locations across Europe
- Certificate in Contemporary Living, Trinity College, Dublin; and
- Up the Hill, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.

2.1 Training Opportunities for Peer Supporters with Intellectual Disabilities in Europe (Project TOPSIDE).

TOPSIDE was developed in order to provide those with LD with the appropriate training needed to take their own decisions and take control of their lives.

As stated by Inclusion Europe:²

The objective of the TOPSIDE project is to develop peer support and peer training, i.e. to develop the capacity of adults with intellectual disabilities to provide support and training to their peers, as a new component in informal adult education for people with intellectual disabilities.

TOPSIDE project activities are to:³

- Develop an inventory of skills necessary for providing adequate Peer Support, including e.g. decision-making processes, skills for dealing with difficult behaviour etc. which will serve as a basis for the training programme;
- Collect experiences and practices of training on basic skills from the project partners;
- Develop a draft training curriculum for adult Peer Supporters, together with Methodological Guidelines for Trainer and Material for Peer Supporters;

¹ Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability – Equal Lives: Review of policy and service for people with a learning disability in Northern Ireland, September 2005.

² Inclusion Europe, Project Topside <http://inclusion-europe.org/sy/projects/topside>

³ Inclusion Europe, Topside, <http://www.inclusion-europe.com/topside/>

- Test the developed curriculum, methods and the training material with a team of future peer supporters through a half-year course;
- Finalise the Curriculum and the Training in each project country;
- Develop European transfer material to promote this innovative training method;
- Acquire recognition of the Curriculum by the leading disability organisations in as least 15 EU and EFTA countries;
- Research possibilities for applying the training in other EU countries and for an official certification; and
- Present the Curriculum and the training programme at local, national and European level in order to promote the qualifications as Peer Supporter.

TOPSIDE provides two main benefits: New training opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities; and the potential for new employment or volunteering opportunities for people with LD, thereby allowing them to use their new skills.

It is intended that Peer Supporters will be able to use their skills in a variety of settings, including:⁴

- Self-advocacy organisations by providing support to members;
- Counselling services accessible to people with LD;
- In organisations of guardians or supporters to complement the support provided from a peer perspective.

To test, improve and validate the programme, adult education courses for future peer supporters and training are provided in the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Romania, Scotland and Spain.

The organisations (and project partners) providing this training are:

- Inclusion Europe;
- Pentru Voi, Timisoara, Romania;
- Perspectief, the Netherlands;
- Enabler Scotland, Lanarkshire, Scotland;
- Kehitysvammaisten Tukiliitto ry, Finland;
- Associacio Sant Tomas, Spain; and
- SPMP CR, Czech Republic;

The project is funded for twenty-four months and is due to end on the 31 October 2013. This project was selected for this paper as it is backed by Inclusion Europe, an EU wide association of people with intellectual disabilities and their families which is supported by the EU Commission. The project itself is an innovative approach to the continuing lifelong learning needs of people with learning disabilities with the intention of being rolled out across Europe.

⁴ Ibid

2.2 Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL), Trinity College, Dublin

Run by the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (based at Trinity College, Dublin), the CCL is a two year, full time Trinity College Certificate programme. This Certificate was the first full time course for adults with intellectual disabilities in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). It is a specially designed programme, provided in a tertiary setting, aimed at supporting students as they make transitions towards independence, lifelong learning and employment.⁵

The core values of the programme are:

- A belief in the capacity of individuals with intellectual disabilities;
- A respect for the contributions of individuals with intellectual disabilities; and
- A belief in equality of opportunity for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

In terms of objectives, the programme was designed to:⁶

- Promote lifelong learning for individuals with intellectual disability;
- Promote inclusion in the third level environment for individuals with intellectual disability;
- Develop skills for modern society for individuals with intellectual disability;
- Develop social skills of individuals with intellectual disability through peer interaction;
- Fulfil personal educational interests for individuals with intellectual disability;
- Broaden the horizons for individuals with intellectual disability; and
- Enhance individual employability.

The course has eight mandatory modules and five elective, covering topics such as written and oral communication, career development and art and design.

To access the course there are no standard educational requirements, but evidence of a particular interest in education and strong motivation is essential.

It should be noted that there is a fee of €3,000 per year and there is no government funding. However, the CCL has been supported by philanthropic gifts from private donors and service agencies. Some funding may also be provided via the Strategic Innovation Fund.

Research undertaken on the CCL found that:⁷

For CCL students, learning in tertiary environment is a complex undertaking and warns against educators assuming that they know how people with intellectual disabilities learn; indeed gaining knowledge and understanding of such learning should be researched inclusively. It is finally argued that

⁵ National Institute for Intellectual Disability, Certificate in Contemporary Living, <http://www.tcd.ie/niid/lifelong/certificate/>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ TCD, Intellectually disabled students' experiences of learning in tertiary education: an inclusive phenomenography, Kubiak et al <http://www.tcd.ie/niid/pdf/IRN%20revised%20folder/PDFs/Piece%20for%20NIID%20website%2004.07.13.pdf>

educators can be proactive in creating a classroom atmosphere that is safe, supportive and helpful if they are armed with the tools of facilitative teaching practices and emotional competencies.

This project was selected for this paper as it is an example of a successful project that encourages people with learning disabilities into higher education, with a valid qualification at the end of the programme.

2.3 Up the Hill, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

The Up the Hill Project provides an inclusive and supportive opportunity at Flinders University which enables people, who have a learning disability, to access the University environment, develop social skills and social networks and to experience a range of educational opportunities and activities.⁸

The Up the Hill Project was developed in 1999 to address the need for post-educational opportunities for adults with a learning disability.

The project is open to those with mild to moderate learning disabilities and who are eligible to receive the Disability Support Pension.

Project aims include:⁹

- To provide opportunities to increase their range of interests and knowledge;
- To provide opportunities to develop their social networks;
- To provide opportunities for both academic staff and students to benefit from interaction with them;
- To facilitate their development, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- To enable them to exercise their rights to continue ongoing education;
- To explore their interests and exercise their choices for continued learning and development;
- To facilitate their educational development, choice and functioning in a positive, inclusive and supportive environment;
- To enhance the vocational opportunities of the participants; and
- To support their transition process into the broader community.

The participants audit and attend University classes of their choice with the intention of developing skills and improving the potential for future employment. With connections in the community participants will open new doors for their future.

The programme is supported by close links with parents, coordination of efforts by specifically employed personnel and the work of voluntary mentors.¹⁰

⁸ Flinders University, Up the Hill Project, <http://www.flinders.edu.au/medicine/sites/disability-studies/associated-programs/up-the-hill-project---flinders-university.cfm>

⁹ Ibid

A review of the project and similar studies found that these types of programme have two benefits – education and social inclusion. The study quotes a participant in the Up the Hill programme, who stated that:¹¹

At uni, I keep meeting people I know from my high school. They are so surprised to see me at uni as a uni student. I have one more year to do at uni; it has been a joyful experience.

Please note, this project is broadly similar to the CCL programme at TCD discussed earlier. However, rather than pursue a qualification, participants audit classes (this is a diverse range of classes including politics, archaeology, IT and the Holocaust).

This project was included as it has been in operation for over ten years, has successfully included people with LD into a university setting and was recommended by academics at the University of Ulster.

3 Employment

In the UK there is extensive equality legislation in place to ensure people with disabilities are able to access employment. The UK has a mixed model of employment that includes factories, individualised employment support and employment support.¹²

In a number of EU countries, such as Germany and Spain, the focus on supporting people with LD in employment remains in providing sheltered workshops, although as some of the projects below show, there is a growing movement away from these to a similar approach to that of the UK via supported employment.

The examples below comprise supported employment and social firms which are being increasingly used across Europe as an alternative to sheltered workshops.

3.1 Project Search, USA

Project Search is a programme which first started in Cincinnati in 1996. It began in Cincinnati Children Hospital which had developed a project to develop jobs for people with learning disabilities. At the same time the hospital had a resourcing issue in retaining staff to restock hospital supplies.

Working with local disability and development agencies, the hospital provided employment to people with learning disabilities to fulfil this role.

¹⁰ Journal of Social Inclusion, 2011, Inclusion at University: can we do more to open the door?, O'Rourke, J
<http://www104.griffith.edu.au/index.php/inclusion/article/download/167/145>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² 11th EUSE Conference, June 2013, Beyer, S, The progress towards integrated employment in the UK,
<http://www.eusedublin2013.com/index.php/presentations>

The programme was successful and subsequently expanded. It has now become an international project in operation in four different countries and across 150 different sites.

Project Search operates under the following philosophy:¹³

People with disabilities have the right to choose a path toward education and employment. However, while freedom of choice is given, the right to work is earned. Earning the right to work is dependent upon the student's preparation.

The project runs over one school year, with 10-12 students in each class.

Participants must be aged 18 to be considered for the programme with most students aged between 18 and 22. In addition, they must be in their last year of school eligibility.¹⁴

Those on the project are offered rolling internships. These generally involve three 10 week placements during which participants are subject to continual assessment. The placements provide year round work with a minimum of 20 hours a week of work at minimum wage or higher.

It is a business led programme, with participants on site for each day for at least six hours a day learning marketable skills.

These placements are supported via classroom based learning (which can be on-site) where they discuss how their day has gone and learn useful work skills such as communication, problem solving and jobs skills. This teaching is provided by qualified tutors.

It is funded in the USA via a variety of sources, including the state and the placement company.

The end goal is to achieve employment at the end of the year. In the USA the project has been very successful with 80% of those who completed Project Search in 2007 in full time employment.

The Project is in operation in the UK with seventeen programmes. Eight new programmes are expected to begin in 2014. In 2011, there were nine job sites, five of which reported a 60% job success, one 89% and another 100%.¹⁵

A DWP study into the effectiveness of the project found that it had the following benefits for employers:¹⁶

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Project Search, Our Program, <http://www.projectsearch.us/OurPROGRAM.aspx>

¹⁵ PLUSS, Project Search, <http://www.pluss.org.uk/project-search-0>

¹⁶ DWP, Office for Disability Issues, Project Search, <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/odi-projects/jobs-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/project-search.php>

- NORSE (a facilities management group) reports that delivering the model has saved it £5,500 per year in recruitment costs and £16,000 per year in overtime payments;
- NORSE has won a national Business in the Community “big tick” award for their work on Project Search and employing other disadvantaged groups;
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital are saving £6,000 per year in recruitment costs; and
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital won the Community Impact award in the Eastern Daily Press Business Awards 2010. The judges described Project Search as a ground-breaking and innovative programme.

The Evaluation found that:¹⁷

Project SEARCH interns reported a positive experience of the programme. Their parents, Project SEARCH partners and the interns themselves said that their confidence, motivation, decision-making, self-esteem and health had all improved while on the programme.

Project Search is an example of a successful and wide ranging programme that helps people with a variety of learning disabilities to find employment.

3.2 Many Kinds of Performer, Finland

Traditionally, Finland has used sheltered workshops to provide employment for people with LD. There are 45,000 people in Finland with LD, with 14,000 of these employed in the three hundred workshops across the country.¹⁸

Importantly, only 350-400 people with LD are in paid jobs with normal contracts.

This system is starting to break down for a variety of reasons, including people with LD having better qualifications and wanting real jobs. The system is also expensive to run and there are limited places available each year in the workshops themselves.

The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that promotes good life, equality and participation for people with learning disabilities. It identified these issues and undertook an innovative project to target these growing needs.

In 2012, FAIDD started a project intended to provide an alternative to workshops via targeting companies with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies.¹⁹

FAIDD approached large companies in Sweden, suggesting a link between the organisation and private sector companies which could be used to meet employers

¹⁷ DWP, Office for Disability Issues, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, February 2012, Project Search Evaluation: Final Report

¹⁸ 11th EUSE Conference, June 2013, Seppala, H FAIDD, Enhancing the Employment of People with ID, ., <http://www.eusedublin2013.com/wp-content/uploads/B2.2-Enhancing-the-Employment-of-People-with-Intellectual-Disabilities-Heikki-Seppala.pptx>

¹⁹ FAIDD, <http://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/in-english/homepage/>

CSR objectives. FAIDD, as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is able to give companies opportunities to join social programmes which promote the citizenship and participation of people with special needs.

FAIDD approached a number of large companies asking them to take part in the programme. One of the companies which responded was K-Chain, a major shop chain in Sweden.

K-chain agreed to link with FAIDD to deliver the project. It met the companies CSR objectives as it wanted to promote the employment of people with LD in its stores as part of its 100th Anniversary.

FAIDD facilitated this with K-chain providing funds (€80,000) which were used to hire job coaches to support the participants. FAIDD contacted 1,200 K-shop-keepers' regarding the project, detailing what was involved and what the needs of the shopkeepers themselves were.

FAIDD defined the limits of the project including these could only be paid jobs with standard work contracts.

Seventy-one shopkeepers expressed an interest in the project with additional job coaches brought into the project and were used to support both the employer and the employee and to act as a facilitator of the placement. In addition, the coaching support continues for as long as necessary and are provided free of charge to the employer and the employee.

FAIDD placed 20 people with LD at K-chain stores from May 2012- April 2013. A further 15 posts were being negotiated in June 2013.

Of the 20 initial placements all of these were fixed term job contracts, with many of them having been subsequently changed into permanent contracts.

The project cost €80,000 for the year (paid for by K-chain) with 30 people with LD employed and eighty job coaches gaining experience.²⁰ In addition, K-Chain intends to build a permanent operating model for employing intellectually disabled people at its stores.²¹

The project was included in this paper as it is an innovative approach to supported employment for people with learning disabilities.

²⁰ 11th EUSE Conference, June 2013, Seppala, H FAIDD, Enhancing the Employment of People with ID, ., <http://www.eusedublin2013.com/wp-content/uploads/B2.2-Enhancing-the-Employment-of-People-with-Intellectual-Disabilities-Heikki-Seppala.pptx>

²¹ Kesko Corporate Responsibility Report, 2012, http://www.kesko.fi/Documents/19366-Kesko_Corporate_Responsibility_Report_2012.pdf

3.3 evBo/UB, Integrationsfachdienst, Germany

In Germany the main focus for employment for people with Learning Disabilities is around sheltered employment. In 2012 there were 297,000 people currently employed in sheltered workshops and only 3,000 in supported employment.

Integrationsfachdienst (IFD) is a Germany wide organisation that advises and assists jobseekers and employed disabled and severely disabled people and their employers.²²

It focuses on supporting students with disabilities into the labour market via a number of services such as:²³

- Supported employment;
- Job development/placement;
- Employer consultations; and
- School to work programmes.

One of these programmes is evBo/UB or Professional Orientation/Supported Employment.

This programme began as a IFD project in 2007 in Bavaria and subsequently became a fully funded programme in 2009, with the Federal Employment Office providing support.

The project targets special education school leavers who have learning disabilities who would normally be transferred to a sheltered workshop.

The programme consists of two strands which begin at 11th and 12th Grade (equivalent to ages 16 and 17).²⁴

In 11th Grade pupils can take part in evBo which involves an orientation work placement. This is subsequently reviewed and if successful the pupil will then go for a job assessment.

Following completion of this an evaluation is carried out with all stakeholders (such as the young person, the employer and the school). Pupils are then placed on the available slots on the UB (Supported Employment) programme.

UB takes place over twenty four months, with support provided by the IFD. This support includes:

- Orientation internships;
- Targeted job searches;
- Qualifications in occupational long term placements;

²² Integrationsfachdienst , <http://www.ifd-bw.de/>

²³ Ibid

²⁴ 11th EUSE Conference, June 2013, IFD Powerpoint Presentation., <http://www.eusedublin2013.com/index.php/presentations>

- Job coaching;
- Advice and support to potential employers;
- School visits during free time on internships;
- Intensive exchanges between the IFD and schools.

The placement continues beyond the end of school and after the end of the 24 month placement period participants may receive a work contract or can make an informed choice about going to work in a sheltered workshop.

In Bavaria, there are 100 participants on the programme each year, with 43% of the participants in 2012 gaining employment.

This project was selected as a result of its success in helping people with learning disabilities develop new skills and find employment. A note of its success is that the programme has been rolled out across Germany and is now in operation in a number of German Länder.

3.4 The Glad Foundation, Denmark

The Glad Foundation, began as Glad TV. This was a social enterprise established in 1999 and the first TV station for and by people with learning disabilities.²⁵

Since it began in 1999 it has grown significantly, and now includes companies that specialise in education, media, catering, design and theatre, many of them operating as vocational schools.²⁶ The enterprise has offices in Copenhagen, Ringsted, Esbjerg and Aabenraa.

The Glad Foundation currently has around 300 employees, with people with learning disabilities are trained to do interesting jobs such as in the arts, media design and gourmet kitchens.

In an interview with the Copenhagen Post, Dorte Justesen, a project manager at TV Glad stated:²⁷

Everyone, including people with disabilities, wants to have a meaningful job and to live a meaningful life so instead of focusing on care, we focus on developing skills that build self-confidence and create opportunities.

Currently the Glad Foundation operates a large number of social enterprise companies, including:²⁸

- **TV Glad:** TV-Glad broadcasts programs on various local TV channels in Denmark. TV-Glad produce and broadcast 1/2 hour of TV each day. The programs can be viewed by approx. 1/3 of the population

²⁵ Glad Foundation, <http://www.gladfonden.dk/>

²⁶ Decent Work, Idstrom et al, ASPA publications,

²⁷ Copenhagen Post, Glad to Serve, Mad about food <http://cphpost.dk/culture/glad-serve-mad-about-food>

²⁸ 11th EUSE Conference, June 2013, IFD Powerpoint Presentation., <http://www.eusedublin2013.com/index.php/presentations>

- **Glad Theatre:** Glad theatre acts as a theatre school, providing professional training for those who want to pursue a career in acting. Also produces its own shows;
- **Radio Glad:** The radio currently has 7 employees. It prepares interviews, ranging from interviews with rock musicians as Chief 1, visit the Viking Ship Museum and conversations with author Peter Thule about his book on the architect Gottlieb Bindesbøll;
- **Glad Production:** Has been in operation for over ten years, producing everything from company profiles to music videos and documentaries; and
- **Glad Food:** includes lunch arrangements and meal deliveries for conferences and meetings, the operation of a café and new welfare solutions in cooperation with local authorities.

All TV-Glad fund companies operate on the social economic principle of "not-for-profit" and combines commercial operation of the market economy with social responsibility. All economic profits are reinvested to develop further support for its employees.

This project was selected as it is an innovative idea that has proved successful. It provides employment and skills development for people with learning disabilities through its various platforms and its vocational school.