

CLANRYE TRAINING

***SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE FOR
EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING***

IN RESPECT OF

***COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO POST SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEED PROVISION IN
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND
TRAINING FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING
DISABILITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND***

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SUMMARY

The government's universal guarantee of training which is enshrined in Northern Ireland legislation applies to all young people including those with learning disabilities/difficulties. It is government's responsibility to enable as many young people as possible to fulfil their training potential through the provision of adequate specialist training opportunities.

The experience of Clanrye Training is and has been that parents/guardians/carers want their young people to receive training within small groups in a safe and supportive environment. Training should meet the needs of the young people and offer variety which will help them be able to take their place in society as well as prepare for the world of work.

Recommendations for the future include:-

- i. Joined up approach across government departments to avoid unnecessary replication of administration work and bureaucracy. This would ultimately save money and allow relevant expertise in different government departments to be pooled for the benefit of young people with learning disabilities/difficulties e.g. centralise work with employers to encourage work placement opportunities and employment prospects.
- ii. Establish a small number of specialist training centres across Northern Ireland which could be accessed by those in this specific cohort.
- iii. Allow flexible travel arrangements to these centres. Sharing of transport would minimise travel expenses.
- iv. Ensure adequate funding, so these young people have a genuine opportunity to be fulfilled. A knock on effect is the maintenance of good mental health and well being for the young people and their immediate carers/family.
- v. Encourage the growth of more social enterprise schemes which afford more employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities/difficulties.

The Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities commissioned by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People September 2012 stated: "Successful transition planning is contingent on a number of factors. Core to this process are the 'five Cs', that is: communication, coordination, comprehensiveness, continuity and choice" (Heslop et al 2002). The following information and recommendations seek to combine these key factors while addressing the training needs of young people with learning disabilities/difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Clanrye Training based at Slieve Gullion Courtyard 5 miles outside Newry provides training exclusively for young people with a learning disability/difficulty and other conditions e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Clanrye has a long history of working with young people who require additional help and support. Originally the organisation was known as Clanrye Community Workshop when it was established in 1982 with the ethos of providing training for disadvantaged young people who had left school with little or no qualifications. Over time it became apparent that young people with an identified learning need required more specialised training. In 1986 Clanrye became the first training organisation in Northern Ireland to create a dedicated training facility for these young people alongside mainstream vocational training. The organisation expanded and moved to larger premises in the centre of Newry in the late 1980s and became known as Clanrye Employment and Training Services.

The organisation evolved into Clanrye Group in 2008 and has 3 distinct divisions – Clanrye Training, Clanrye IT and Clanrye Retail Social Enterprise. Clanrye Training now based in Slieve Gullion Courtyard works exclusively with young people who have an identified learning need and/or other associated difficulties/conditions. Clanrye IT, Newry provides IT training for people with a physical disability and Clanrye Retail Social Enterprise, Newry offers employment and training services to individuals who have a physical difficulty/health condition and want to progress towards work in the retail or customer service sector.

1. The current range of choice and opportunities available for those with learning disabilities/difficulties may include training under a government funded programme, further education, day care/day time opportunities, employment or for some unable to access these options remaining at home. It is unlikely the majority will be able to avail of mainstream training under a government funded programme, further education or employment because of their complex needs. However, it would be detrimental to their well being to be immediately referred to day time provision or remain at home without allowing them the opportunity to receive specialist training. The government's universal guarantee of training which is enshrined in Northern Ireland legislation applies to all young people and it is government's responsibility to enable these young people to attempt to reach their full potential. However it is recognised for a certain cohort training will not be an option due to their disability.
2. Since 1986 when Clanrye's special needs training department was established parents' and carers' views were sought to ascertain if the service offered was meeting the requirements of their young person. It quickly became apparent parents/guardians/carers were happy with the specialist service on offer and this led to Clanrye Training's decision to work exclusively with this cohort. Parents' aspirations have not changed over the years and they still want their young person to train in a safe and supportive environment. The overriding feeling expressed by parents/guardians is one of fear for the future i.e. what lies ahead for their young person with learning disabilities/difficulties. Parents have verbalised to Clanrye staff they do not want their young person forced into a "one size fits all" model of training in a larger establishment. On the contrary they want the individual needs of their young person to be met by following a structured and varied timetable, delivered by caring staff. This timetable should include a mix of practical training e.g. horticulture, craft joinery, catering alongside "desk and chair" based activities. Parents wish their young person, regardless of difficulty to be able to become an active member of society and contribute where possible to the local economy. This requires training to include the opportunity to avail of work placement which may lead to full-time, part-time or supported employment. Training therefore needs to be flexible to meet the challenges faced by young people with learning disabilities/difficulties.

3. Clanrye Training is an example of best practice in post school provision for those with learning disabilities/difficulties through its structured and person centred approach to training. This includes a carefully designed timetable which provides variety and stimulation while adhering to government stipulations regarding qualifications. The training offered is delivered in small groups which allow each individual to become more self aware and staff to understand their respective needs. Pastoral care is paramount within the organisation and a consistent approach is adopted by all staff. Young people are able to seek support on demand during their training day when exhibiting challenging behaviours. Staff deal with such issues in a sympathetic manner while assisting the young person to understand the importance of self control and self discipline. Clanrye's location in an area of outstanding natural beauty in a forest park is a perfect setting to promote calmness and tranquillity. This safe and secure location allows young people to grow and develop enhancing their life skills.

4. Clanrye wants to continue with this model of training in the future plus the enhancements once offered e.g. art and recreation but due to no additional funding over the past 7 years (which represents a 15% decrease) this is in jeopardy. Clanrye has been facing financial difficulty because of this situation. The organisation believes every young person with an identified learning need should have the opportunity to avail of training at Slieve Gullion if he/she chooses. However this will not be possible due to restrictions in funding affecting travel expenses for young people outside the immediate location. The post school training provision offered at Slieve Gullion Courtyard is unique and parents feel it is beneficial to the overall well being of their young person.
Recommendations to address barriers to participation in a high quality provision include:
 - Small number of specialised centres
 - Flexible travel arrangements to these centres
 - Increase in funding

5. There would appear to be no synchronisation across departments in local government with each department operating as a separate entity i.e. DENI, DEL, DSD. Departments are "fighting their own corner" where funding allocation is concerned which can result in individuals with complex needs losing out. A young person with a learning disability may spend up to fourteen years in education and presently there does not appear to be a seamless transition into training. All relevant information pertaining to the young person has already been gathered e.g. specific need, vulnerability, transport requirements but when entering training this information has to be sought again and forwarded to a different government department resulting in additional unnecessary time and expense. It is felt the burden for providing training for these young people should not fall exclusively to the Department for Employment and Learning but a "joined up" approach

may be more effective and efficient. A shared approach could tap into the expertise as well as additional funding from different government departments thereby affording the young people a better service, resulting in more positive outcomes.

It is more difficult for young people with learning disabilities/difficulties to secure employment when they have completed their funded programme. Supported employment schemes are available but are liable to change due to funding constraints. It is recommended employers receive an incentive to offer longer term work placement opportunities and eventually employment. It is inefficient to have several government departments carrying out the same role i.e. securing placements and seeking employment opportunities. Employers would “buy into” a centralised service which would command more authority because it represents several departments. This service would eliminate confusion for employers who sometimes have several different agencies bombarding them for placement and employment opportunities.

Social Enterprises can afford young people an excellent opportunity to avail of real work while still recognising their needs. The establishment of a unit within the centralised employment service could focus on the setting up of social enterprises across Northern Ireland. These would be beneficial to the local economy, enable young people with learning disabilities/difficulties to work and contribute to society in a meaningful way.