

OECD 2010

My name is Jan-Eirik Vestnes and I am in charge of the project Ung I Jobb in Bærum. We are part of Mølla Kompetansesenter AS. At Mølla we have long and varied experience in assisting people to find their way into or back into working life.

Working Youth was started in December 2007, because Mølla saw the need for a project that could help and assist school-dropouts into achieving an active and meaningful life.

Today the project has 4 persons employed. Two work full time, two work part time. Working Youth was in the early days functioning like a temp-agency, like Manpower and Adecco. Young people were hired out to firms, and we would take care of invoices and wages. We still use this system, for a few of our people.

However, after the financial crisis this system did not work very well. We have tried various routes, and have come to the conclusion that for many of our users, work practice / work training is the best option to offer them. Many of the young people we assist have no prior work experience, and that, in combination with little education, makes it very difficult for them to secure a paid, regular job. Especially if they don't have the advantage of a network. And most of our youths have no network.

Presently we assist youths that have dropped out of school, and those still at school who need a part time job. We also assist young people who have finished school and army service, but who need help to get a job while waiting for admittance to universities or other further education.

Method:

Our project has the aim to meet all types of youth. On one side we wish to welcome any youth who wants or needs assistance in finding a job. On the other side we want to pay special attention to youths who are school dropouts and in addition have no other organised activities. The risk for this particular category of young people is to end up being excluded in a society that rewards education and work experience.

Through including all types of young people the project signal "normality" – The project should be an easily accessible, non-bureaucratic arena for young people in need of work. Young people who are still attending school can benefit greatly from the experience of work. It can be a way to map out the choices for future employment, or be a motivating factor in continuing with further education or training.

"Job-tasting" and work training / practice can also contribute to increased motivation for school and prevent dropping out. So far our experience in the project have shown that quite a few of the youths choose to re-enter school after a period of work.

Through experience with ordinary working life while still attending school we contribute to easier transitions between school and working life, and more continuity in education and social network. We think that this will have a positive and preventative effect on youths that are at risk when it comes to dropping out of both education and working life.

An important facet of the projects profile is to accommodate young people who contact us out of their own choice and who may not wish to be part of or contact other instances in the social services. Taking part in this project is on a voluntary basis.

24% of the 300 young people who have so far been in contact with the project came to us on their own volition. They have "dropped in". If the youths need it, employees in the project can give advice about possibilities in the social services. Working youth is a supplement, not an alternative to other social services.

The methodical basis for the project is based on the principles of Supported Employment, which is an internationally renowned methodology for individual counselling of people who need assistance to obtain employment and keep employment.

Individual counselling, immediate job placement and counselling on the job (place, then train) are, according to Supported Employment, central criteria for success. Individual counselling and counselling on the job also includes the employers.

The young persons needs and potential in combination with the employer's / work place's needs is the basis for the level and form of the counselling. This way the young person is secured rapid progress towards work practice, that again might result in ordinary, paid employment.

Meeting the youths / methods:

Young people can "drop in" without having made an appointment beforehand. They immediately get to speak to one of our employees for individual counselling. In the first meeting we discuss expectations and needs and try to clarify what the young person expects from us.

Depending on the individual we can offer training in how to apply for jobs, in how to write your CV, how to establish contact with an employer, or train them for the job-interview situation. An important part of our method is to prepare the youths for working life and counsel them about further education. The method is meant to contribute to the youth setting goals and concrete plans for how to reach these goals. For some youths this process can clarify and motivate for finishing school and further education, while others will make well considered decisions about opting for working life.

Follow-up and counselling is offered both before work placement, during work placement and after. Youths who need extensive follow-up will be counselled by employees with who are qualified for this. The youths will get his kind of follow-up for as long as they need it, and they also have the possibility of leaving and re-entering the project through their own decisions.

Procuring employment / jobs and the follow-up of employers:

We usually initiate contact with employers on the phone. We get in touch with employers with the intention of procuring jobs or work training / practice. The principle of normality means that we emphasize resources and possibilities, and this is what is presented to the employers. There is no stigma connected to being a part of the project. This lack of stigma also seems to affect the employers and contribute to positive attitudes to young people as

employees. Our experience is that employers contacted by us are willing to "take on" one of our youths, with a few exceptions.

When the youth is placed at a work place, we offer the employer counselling in how to communicate with the youth. Apart from that we expect that the employer will assert leadership as is done with other employees. The Project's employees will call or visit the work place and follow up the employment / work placement.

The steps of the project's methodology:

- Individual counselling and mapping: What kind of work does the youth wish to do?
- Clarification – regular employment, work training or a combination of school and work

Who does what? The youth is made responsible for part of the process of Finding the right job.

The project employee and the youth cooperate to find a job / work placement.

Counselling of the youth – ensuring basic demands of working life

Counselling and follow-up of youth and employer:

General and basic demands at a work place
Specific demands and qualifications needed for that particular job
Social and relational skills

Negotiations about contract / working hours / wages

Results so far for the project:

Our results so far give positive signals that we will reach the goals referred to earlier in this talk.

Our statistics at this point show us that:

Appr. 35% of the youth return to school

Appr. 30% are presently in regular, paid employment or training for a profession

Appr. 5 % are in work training / work placement

One of our goals is a rapid work placement. Youths very easily acquire habits that are difficult to combine with working life, i.e. reversing normal sleep patterns.

The youths make their own decisions about where they wish to work.

After the initial "mapping" we give them the task of finding 3 employers / work places that they see as potential places to work. When they have found these, we receive the list through an e-mail from the youth, and we proceed by contacting the employers to check out the

possibility for a job or work training. In most cases an appointment for a meeting /interview is set up, and we often accompany the youth to this meeting. Sometimes the initial agreement is for work training, and if this works out well, we can negotiate wages for the youth while setting up a government-funded refund for part of the wages for the benefit of the employer. After a period of time the youth will become a regular employer.

As I said earlier our experience is that local employers in Asker and Bærum welcome the youths we represent. We seldom get a "no", and we get the impression that their responses are positive when we introduce ourselves as Working Youth. Another factor can be the increased media focus recently on unemployed, young people.

We want to ensure easy transitions from school to working life.
We want to document the effect of individual counselling and follow-up of young people who wish to get established in a job.

Young people are a good investment!! Professor (earlier Government Minister) Victor Normann at Handelshøyskolen in Bergen , has said that money from the Oil Fund would be better invested in young people than in the New York stock market. The dividend of this investment will be larger in the long run.

100 young people who remain unemployed will cost Norway 100 billion kroner.!!