

## TITLE

Hospital internships as a strong bridge to the open labour market

Ireland: KARE – Project SEARCH

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Project SEARCH is run by the KARE organization, which services and supports children and adults in the Kildare and West Wicklow areas of the Republic of Ireland. Part of this programme is the operation of Project SEARCH at Naas General Hospital, offering young people with intellectual disabilities an internship programme in the hospital. Over a nine-month period, the interns take part in three different real job experiences and then seek employment.

## FACTS & FIGURES

- Following the first academic year (2013–2014), all 10 of the interns who completed the programme found employment in the open labour market
- In 2014–2015, 7 of the 9 interns found employment

## PROBLEMS TARGETED

People with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from internship programmes, thus lacking the opportunity to get real work experience to prepare them for the open labour market.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The internship sponsored by KARE and Naas General Hospital allows the participants to rotate through various departments, such as radiology, medical records, cardiology, nurse practice development, clinical engineering, and laboratory attendant. In this way, they learn about administration, patient care, customer interaction, catering, housekeeping, and general communication skills. Two Project SEARCH staff members are based permanently in the hospital to sustain the interns through one-on-one job coaching. After this initial period, most departments nominate a staff person who will liaise with the Project SEARCH staff to continue training and supporting the interns. Additionally, the interns take part in group learning activities where they provide support for one another.

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The project is supported by the Irish Health Service and KARE's base funding, and its operating license was purchased through a Genio grant for €25,000. The programme was also a finalist for the 2015 Irish Healthcare Awards. The Minister for Disabilities has acknowledged the project, as have representatives from Ireland's National Disability Authority. KARE plans to develop a similar programme for people with intellectual disabilities from an older age group.

## QUOTE

"The hospital was massive and it took me a while to learn how to get around. But the staff helped me to settle in, and I was able to work in three different departments."

— Aoife Cully, Project SEARCH intern

## CONTACT

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