

TITLE

Support programme for young people leaving school

Ireland: WALK – WALK Peer programme

PROJECT SUMMARY

WALK is an Irish association and a registered charity that provides personalized support for people with disabilities, enabling them to join the open labour market before they leave school at age 18.

FACTS & FIGURES

Since 2013, WALK Peer has engaged with and supported

- 106 students with learning disabilities to explore their job interests
- 46 students to achieve paid employment in the open labour market
- 96 students to work in their field of interest
- 67 students to access vocational training in mainstream options
- 5 schools, 2 universities, and 2 institutes of technology to change the way they support their students with intellectual disabilities

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Low expectations regarding their chances to join the open labour market often forces students with disabilities into separation and isolation in centres for people with disabilities.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The WALK PEER programme is a five-year model in which the first two years are focused on students and pupils while they are still in school, during which time they receive guidance and training on employability and entrepreneurial skills, work sampling, career development, and transition planning. In years three and four, they are supported in ways that are directly relevant to their transition choices. In the final year, they are helped to sustain their career development and to get a good start in their new environment through vocational education and training, with most positions found in local businesses.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Funding for the programme is €278,000 per year. The work of the programme is spread across a variety of government departments (Education and Skills, Social Protection, Jobs, Children and Youth Affairs, Justice and Equality, and Health), so there is some difficulty in getting consistent funding from all parties involved. WALK PEER intends to expand the programme throughout Ireland and has issued a “Guidelines” document, published in October 2016, to support their future steps.

QUOTE

“WALK PEER gives the students opportunities and experiences in what they are interested in, and does so in a way we are not resourced to do.”

— Patricia Ward, Principal, St. Brigid’s Special School

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