

EQUABENCH—Benchmarking European Excellence

Customer Focus Innovative Practice Guide



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1 Background to the EQUABENCH Project

In October 2008, the EQUABENCH project brought together eight vocational, education and training (VET) organisations with a proven track record in innovation and continuous improvement. Partner organisations from Italy, Slovenia, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands will follow a two year work programme to share expertise and best business practice at workshops, benchmarking activities and dissemination events.

By establishing a network of European VET organisations EQUABENCH will facilitate the import and export of best business practice in order to improve the quality of training for people who have a disability or other form of disadvantage. Each network member will import and apply at least one innovative aspect of best practice within their own organisation.

EQUABENCH will identify and adapt the innovative quality practice of network members and this will be used to produce six Innovative Practice Guides structured around the EFQM Fundamental Concepts of Excellence. The Guides will be freely available to all VET organisations across Europe. This is the fourth Guide to be produced by EQUABENCH, focusing on Customer Focus. Other Guides in the series include:

- Leadership and Constancy of Purpose
- Management by Processes and Facts
- People Management and Involvement
- Results Orientation
- Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement

The work undertaken by EQUABENCH will pave the way for any European VET organisation to address quality assurance issues in a business focused, results orientated manner and will provide a vital resource for any organisation seeking to pursue an internationally recognised quality standard.

EQUABENCH is supported by the European Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation programme via the UK's National Agency Ecotec.

2 Project Partners

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The Cedar Foundation was established in 1941 and is a leading voluntary organisation that delivers services to disabled people throughout Northern Ireland. Cedar employs over 250 staff to deliver services to around 1600 people per year. Services fall into 4 areas: Training Services, Brain Injury Services, Children and Young People's Services and Living Options.

The Cedar Foundation has a wealth of experience in the delivery of European projects, including Leonardo. It also has a high level of expertise and extensive professional competence in relation to business excellence, quality assurance and innovative developments. The organisation is an Investor in People Champion, it retains ISO 9001:2008 registration for all its areas of operation and in 2007 it won the European Excellence Award and a special award for customer focus following assessment against the EFQM Excellence Model.

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The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) is a network of leading European providers of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. EPR's member organisations are not-for-profit NGOs, are influential in their countries and stand for high quality service delivery and equal opportunities for their clients.

EPR aims to represent *best practice* in the rehabilitation sector in Europe and it has accomplished this mission over the last years via its important partnerships, its knowledge management activities and the thousands of professionals active in the EPR membership.

With 28 member organizations from 17 European countries in 2009 and thanks to its key role on the European scene, EPR will ensure a large dissemination of project activities and outcomes and will transfer the project results into sustainable products that will be of benefit throughout Europe.



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Josefsheim Bigge offers rehabilitation services to people with physical disability. Currently about 770 people are using these services. The range of service is independent from the age group and covers the residential areas for children, teens and adults, a remedial kindergarten, the vocational training centre and the sheltered workshop. The trainers in the vocational training centre closely cooperate with the affiliated vocational school, the residential school and the special services (social, psychological, integration and medical services). Their aim is to support the young people individually and to place them on the first job market. The integration service assists and accompanies the young graduates with their search for a job. Josefsheim Bigge was the first German institution for rehabilitation to gain EQUASS Excellence in 2006. Its quality management is based on the EFQM-model. Josefsheim has many years' experience with European projects and co-operations.

National Learning Network
Investing in People, Changing Perspectives

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National Learning Network is a division of the Rehab Group. It delivers vocational and developmental training services to people with disabilities and other forms of disadvantage in 50 locations throughout the Republic of Ireland. It offers a range of centre based, employer based, home based and school/college based services delivered by 650 staff to approximately 4,500 participants annually. All training programmes meet national quality standards and are evaluated internally and externally.

National Learning Network has achieved the EFQM Recognised for Excellence award, the European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) Excellence award and the Excellence through People award (Gold Standard). It has a history of active involvement in European activities and projects.

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The Association Centro Studi Opera Don Calabria was established in 1994; the national seat is situated in Verona and from there are co-ordinated all regional, national and European activities. It obtained the recognition as National Vocational Training Centre as the Italian law N. 40 of 1987 and it has got the recognition of Vocational Training private institution by the Veneto, Emilia Romagna and Sicilian Regions; and has the inscription to the National Research Italian Office "Anagrafe". It also takes care of research, promotion and co-ordination of social activities particularly addressed to disadvantaged people. It develops activities in the vocational training field, addressed mainly for disadvantaged people and aimed to placement and support in order to keep job. Other activities are addressed to the themes of justice of minors, foreigners minors, reparative justice, penal and rehabilitational mediation.

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*Ondersteunt mensen met een handicap
bij wonen, werken, leren en vrije tijd*

Pluryn Arbeid's core-business is qualification/education, but its main aim is employment. The organisation aims to (re-) integrate disabled people with a substantial gap to the labour market. Pluryn offers clients: a professional intake, needs assessment & career choice, job oriented training, vocational education, support in social skills, psychological support or counselling, empowerment training, support in independent living (housing), ambulant support in mainstream education, work experience in simulation firms and in regular firms, job finding, job placement and job coaching. Pluryn employs 50 staff working at 3 sites: Groesbeek, Groningen and Hoensbroek. Together they offer a whole range of products; some are available in all centres, others are only available in one. Pluryn has national (Blik op Werk) and international (EQRМ) quality recognition. One of its specially developed products is its empowerment tool for both clients and staff.



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CRPG's mission is to provide both integrated and individualized rehabilitation services of high quality and value, adjusted to the needs and expectations of the clients, generating the highest level of satisfaction of the stakeholders through innovation and continuous improvement. CRPG's main goal is the social inclusion of people with disabilities. In order to do so, implements comprehensive individual rehabilitation plans, based on bio-psycho-social interventions, and provide consultancy services for employers, enterprises, hospitals, insurance companies and other social partners. On an annual basis, CRPG has more than 1500 clients, and provides approximately 3.067 services, with a special highlight on the vocational training.

CRPG is EQRM awarded and has been involved in the development of both EQRM and EQUASS.



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The University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia, is the central national rehabilitation organisation in Slovenia, with programs of complex rehabilitation for persons with physical disabilities, as well as vocational rehabilitation. It unites medical and psychosocial programs, research and education in the field of rehabilitation.

The activities of the University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia, can be grouped as follows: Rehabilitation – Healthcare; Research; Education and Administration. The Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (CPR) is one of the rehabilitation services offered under the Rehabilitation – Healthcare strand. CPR was established in 1984 as a part of the Institute for Rehabilitation. It is a central institution in Slovenia within the area of vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with physical disability. Its aim is to develop clients' abilities and capabilities to the degree enabling them to find and retain an employment, and to make progress in it.

3 Customer Focus

The Concept

Excellence is creating sustainable customer value.

How the Concept is put into Practice

Excellent organisations know and immediately understand their customers. They understand that customers are the final arbiters of product and service quality. They also understand that customer loyalty, retention and market share gain is maximised through a clear focus on the needs and expectations of both existing and potential customers.

They are responsive to those customers' present needs and expectations. Where appropriate they segment their customers to improve the effectiveness of their response. They monitor competitor activity and understand their competitive advantage. They effectively anticipate what customers' future needs and expectations will be and act now to exceed them. They monitor and review the experiences of their customers and where things go wrong they respond quickly and effectively. They build and maintain excellent relationships with all their customers.

The Benefits

- Delighted customers
- Strong customer loyalty and retention
- Enhanced market share
- Sustained success for the organisation
- Motivated employees
- Understanding of competitive advantage

4 Innovative Practice

4.1 Empowerment and Customer Focus — Request and VrijBaan in Daily Practice

For Pluryn, Customer Focus means: to respond to customer needs and to anticipate and react to future customer needs. The organisation views empowerment as a means to facilitate this process. Pluryn uses 2 programmes to work on empowerment in an evidence based and structured way: **VrijBaan** and **Request**.

VrijBaan

The key questions in the VrijBaan program were: What is empowerment? How can empowerment be measured? How can empowerment of the client be strengthened?

What is empowerment?

To solve this question Pluryn undertook a scientific literature research and interviews with professionals and clients. The clients that were interviewed had been successfully integrated after their rehabilitation. This study led to the empowerment model of VrijBaan in which six essential components are distinguished.

1. Competence	Belief and trust in one's own skills	I am not sure I can do that. Vs. I will succeed in doing that!
2. Self determination	Autonomous freedom of choice in your own life	Tell me what is best for me. Vs. I make my own choice.
3. Impact	The understanding that your decisions and choices have an effect on your life	Everything that happens to me is determined by others Vs. I decide what is happening in my life.
4. Meaning	The feeling that your decisions and choices correspond with your own values	I am not so sure whether this is what I like to do. Vs. Yes, that's what I always wanted.
5. Positive identity	Being able to accept yourself as you are, including your disability	I have difficulties in accepting my limitations. Vs. I will never use my disability as an excuse
6. Group orientation	The understanding that you are part of a group	I don't need others. Vs. I know that I can rely on other people to support me in my process.

How can empowerment be measured?

To measure empowerment Pluryn developed a questionnaire with 60 statements on the 6 components of empowerment. In a test with 400 "normal" functioning people with labour disability an average score was defined.

How can empowerment of the client be strengthened?

When a customer fills in the questionnaire, this leads to a personal profile. If the customer recognises himself in the profile and if he wants to make changes, his empowerment can be strengthened. A tailor made programme is composed by a trainer that can pick modules that are related to the 6 components of empowerment. In total there are 175 modules.

Request

The Request program looks for a way for the organisation and its professionals to support and strengthen the empowerment of an individual. The key questions in the Request program were: What is an empowering environment? How can an empowering environment be measured? How do organisations become more empowering?

What is an empowering environment?

To solve this question Pluryn undertook research on the “Empowering approach” through a literature research and by interviewing professionals and clients. The components of empowerment were used to define what an empowering environment was.

How can an empowering environment be measured?

To measure how empowering the environment is, Pluryn developed a questionnaire with 41 questions on the 6 components of empowerment. For a professional the questionnaire leads to self reflection, to a personal profile and to recommendations. For an organisation the profile comes about after a consensus meeting based on all the questionnaires. The organisational profile leads to recommendations.

How do organisations become more empowering?

To empower an organisation 4 modules are developed related to the recommendations.

4.2 Customer Focus = The Focus of the Customer: The Policy on Self Determination, Pluryn

Before explaining Pluryn’s policy it is necessary to define the terms Customer Focus and Self Determination and consider whether there is a relationship. Customer Focus suggests that Pluryn, as service providers, should focus on its customers. EFQM confirms this stance, viewing customers as the arbiters of quality who will value an organisation when it does its job properly and in return will be loyal giving the organisation an increased market share.

Quote	Thoughts behind the quote
“We don’t need to discuss or reconsider the issue of Self Determination because all that we do is already focused on Self Determination”.	The conviction that services are all inclusive and Self Determination is implicit in those services as a logical consequence of efforts.
“If you ask clients to name issues they think are important to self determination they will only come up with silly, impossible or irrelevant things”.	The thought that Self Determination is similar to “do whatever you like” which will only automatically lead to human beings to trivial things.
“Why should we bother about self determination of our clients? After all: they are here for something different, aren’t they?”	Self Determination is at its best a by product of the much more focused practical goals clients and financiers are putting forward.
“The focus on Self Determination of clients will negatively influence the professional standards of our organization because: who needs professionalism if you should just do the things that a client is asking you to do?”	Originating from the view that professionalism consists of the knowledge, abilities and experience that are incorporated in you as a professional and that it is your duty to transfer a certain part of that knowledge, ability and experience to your client.
“Our clients are not yet ready for Self Determination. They still are in need of a lot of training, coaching and counselling. So there’s no point in focussing on that item now. Maybe later”.	The thought that Self Determination must be a phase, a stage in personal development and that it can only be achieved when a person is first enabled or even empowered.
“Ultimately, when a person needs a substantial amount of care and/or support, he or she cannot be fully autonomous”.	Confusion between the terms “independence” and “Self Determination” is the background to this thought. It stands opposite to the view that a person can be dependent on some indispensable help from others and still be entitled, and able, to steer his own course.

Pluryn has further considered the term Customer Focus by asking if what is it really meant is: the Focus of the Customer? This slight shift in perspective almost automatically brings the

words Self Determination into view because Self Determination, takes an organisation one step further and one step deeper into a true understanding of Customer Focus. Understanding the concept of self determination is not the same thing as applying it in daily work as the 6 quotes on Self Determination and the thoughts behind the quotes above illustrate.

Self Determination at Pluryn

Pluryn works for a wide variety of target-groups and is aware that Self Determination can differ very much from one client to another. However, every person is able to express some notions about who, where, what or how they wish to be. In other words: in one way or another every person is capable of identifying a certain number of elements that are important as a goal or a condition in their life. In that respect there is basically no difference between clients with very profound intellectual limitations and clients with relatively mild limitations and much more verbal competence. The client that, after a long period of trial and error, finally has got across that they feel comfortable and safe in an environment with green as the dominant colour and without too much noise is equally involved with Self Determination as the client that is quite detailed in what they expect from their vocational reintegration programme at Pluryn.

A person does not have to qualify for Self Determination. As a member of the Client Board stated: *“Self Determination is a good thing and our right, but it doesn’t work without a clear structure and support from your network. I would plead that the word ‘Cooperation’ would be put right after the words **Self Determination**. ‘Self Determination in Cooperation’, that’s how it should be.”*

Whilst Pluryn recognises that self determination must be individually applied the organisation has developed a series of indicators that can broadly show whether self determination has been achieved. To take this forward, Pluryn drew up a project plan consisting of 7 elements:

1. Defining Self Determination and identifying indicators on a corporate level.
2. Adapting definitions and identifying indicators on a target group (department) level.
3. Identifying with every individual client the Self Determination goals and indicators and laying those goals and indicators down in their individual support plan/contract.
4. Applying the Self Determination concept to the Quality Management System.
5. Developing and applying a parallel Marketing (external) and Communications (internal) Strategy concerning Self Determination.
6. Monitoring the progress of the process as a whole as well as in detail (content).
7. Project Management (process).

Pluryn recognises that this process will be time consuming to complete due to the following:

- Factors related to self determination such as attitude, approach and reflection cannot happen automatically.
- Conditional factors such as empowerment and competence building also take time.
- The involvement of all clients, staff and executives is essential, yet time consuming.

If neither the client nor the organisation has a clear focus then a lot of joint work is needed. Essentially, as long as clients feel that Pluryn supports them in getting and staying sharply focused on their desired destination, the organisation may consider itself to be Customer Focused.

4.3 Partnership with Clients' Associations and Committees, Centro Studi Opera Don Calabria

According to the Italian welfare system, training services for people with disabilities normally depend on the health-social system. The services involve different subjects with different roles, but the disabled people and their associations are almost never either funders or customers; the system is thoroughly a public one. The existing associations of disabled people are almost all specific about one single disability or pathology. There are practically no local associations of disabled people, or citizens in general, created on the basis of geographical area, or on a single service or body.

Therefore their role and interest is as stakeholders of a certain specific disability. Within this role they undertake political or cultural lobbying, or they conduct research on the specific disability with which they are concerned. This has positive and negative aspects as follows.

A negative aspect: in the Italian context, groups of disabled people have limited input and involvement in issues beyond the sphere of their specific disability e.g. quality systems. This primarily remains the domain of service providers.

A positive aspect: high specialisation and research on specialized problems and themes.

In this framework, the mission of the Opera don Calabria is always valid: *the person is the centre* is the slogan of the whole congregation and the founder's message.

The service to the person is by now tailor made: personalised services both in training, in rehab, and in healing, with in-depth tools for analysing needs, for programming and for managing the interventions, for monitoring and assessing.

Moreover, a holistic approach is another must, as far as services are concerned: the focus is: succeeding in healing "everything", without becoming "everything" for the disabled person.

Within the Italian welfare system, which is characterised by the particular structure of clients' associations described above, organisations wishing to have partnership with disabled people must find new forms and tools in order to be customer focused. An organisation's committee of customers; service provision card; involvement groups; and the standard activities to involve disabled people are important, but they are not enough.

Opera Don Calabria recommends the following additional actions to underpin partnership with Clients' Associations and Committees:

1. Available free and autonomous rooms for the associations in the Centre premises.
2. Participation of specialists from the Centre in groups and meetings organised by the associations outside the Centre
3. Revision of documents – shared with users' associations
4. Advice and support to the autonomous implementation of target groups

Opera Don Calabria's supporting initiatives are mainly a preparatory action for reinforcing tools and partnership abilities in user's associations or committees. All this beyond the normal ways of participating; client groups have today very specific interests; and Opera Don Calabria helps them structure themselves in groups with more general interests. The following 2 examples illustrate Opera Don Calabria's approach.

1. Ferrara: Partnership between the Training Centre and the Association of the Relatives of Brain Injured People

The training and job insertion pathway is a fundamental part in a Life Project, but it is not the only one. For this reason, starting from the idea that the person must be the centre of all, a complete project is created, aiming at offering opportunities of autonomy, independence, sport, leisure time, holidays, beyond, of course, job insertion (either normal or sheltered jobs, according to the individual's potential). All this increases the opportunities of an active and socially integrated life.

In order to implement such a mixture of activities and services, different funds are needed. The Vocational Training Centre Centro Studi Opera Don Calabria in Ferrara and the Association of the Relatives of Brain Injured People undertake to raise funds, helping each other and/or co-projecting common programmes. The Association also works with other similar organisations, to raise society's awareness for the removal of barriers and discriminations.

2. Practice for Putting the Person in a Central Position - Verona: Protocol for the Access to Services for Clients – Shared with User's Family Associations

The centrality of the person is a fundamental aspect for the whole Centre. It must be addressed from the moment a person first requests information at the Centre's reception area, through to the assessment of their rehabilitation needs and the involvement of both the client and their family in the rehabilitation project.

Some elements in the reception process, in which the centrality of the client is fundamental, are contained in the service provision card. Opera Don Calabria operates a number of practices over and above those used to receive a client into the service. These practices aim to ensure the personalisation and humanisation of individual clients. These are outlined below.

Quality Factors	Commitments of THE REHAB CENTRE
Politeness, kindness, respect	All the Staff in the Centre will be available for you and will try to understand your points of view. They will talk with you and prompt your questions and observations without hurrying you.
Clear and exhaustive explanations	All the Staff in the Centre will be available for you and will try to understand your points of view. They will talk with you and spur encourage questions and observations without hurrying you.
School and social integration	The rehab team will cooperate with all the internal and external structures for helping a complete school and social integration, through periodical meetings with the local operators.
Management of the health and social needs	The reference health responsible for each person taken in charge will periodically evaluate and organise with his/her relatives all the possible familiar and social consequences, as far as the problems that have been pointed out are concerned.
Advice and provision of aids and prostheses	On the basis of the individual needs, indications and evaluations will be provided on the proper aids for improving the client's functional and relational autonomy.

4.4 Neuropsychological Rehabilitation Programme and Individual Plan, CRPG

CRPG's Neuropsychological Rehabilitation Programme provides a practical example of Customer Focus.

Part I – The Programme from Staff Perspective

In 2001, CRPG started a research process for a specific need: rehabilitation of people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) for work/ vocational training. Healthcare services ensure acute rehabilitation, however, there was no structured response in Portugal at the level of cognitive, behavioural and psychological rehabilitation.

CRPG's experience with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) clients in the vocational programmes demonstrated no success in dealing with their needs. In fact it demonstrated a lack of understanding about their condition, needs and behaviour. Most of the time there were behavioural problems and conflict in relationships with colleagues and staff members. Strong feelings like anger, hopelessness and frustration required daily management. The attitude of a "peculiar indifference" to their problems was very common amongst clients and related to this a lack of awareness of their problems, resulting in of unrealistic projects.

Guided by a research-action methodology, CRPG commenced its learning process in the *EPR TBI Group* between 2001/03. This experience enabled the organisation to contact other programmes and experienced professionals. As a result, a neuropsychological rehabilitation methodology, based on the Holistic Model was developed.

In 2006, CRPG's team carried out an internship at the Rusk Institute in New York University, with Ben-Yishay and his team. This allowed the organisation to fully understand the principles of clinical intervention within this model, as well as rehabilitation strategies and practices. In the same year, CRPG organised in partnership with the University of Oporto and EPR, the 1st International Symposium of Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation, with great results in terms of establishing and strengthening national and international networks. Results included:

- a. scientific consultancy from Professor A. Castro-Caldas, PhD in Neurosciences, consisting of a Journal Club dynamic, clinical discussion and training;
- b. in a partnership with University of Medicine of Oporto CRPG has been developing a Virtual Reality technology in the rehabilitation of executive dysfunction and memory; and
- c. the partnership with Psychology University has allowed CRPG to extend staff during school time to the internships of master students.

In 2007 CRPG carried out, a retrospective study to evaluate 5 years of practice. This study confirmed the need for a more comprehensive programme. Consequently, 3 new activities have been carried out at experimental level: 1) *7th Dimension in NR*, aims to promote self-awareness through video image; 2) *Movement and Body Awareness* - this work supports the psychotherapeutic use of movement and body expression to facilitate body awareness; and 3) a room for relaxing moments between therapeutic activities.

As member of EBIS (European Brain Injury Society) CRPG has been challenged to participate in the QOLIBRI Taskforce. This international research group was created under the aegis of EMN (Euroacademia Multidisciplinaria Neurotraumatologica), EBIS (European Brain Injury

Society), EBBS (European Brain and Behaviour Society). QOLIBRI Taskforce has been developing a methodology to evaluate QOL of people with ABI.

From a management by facts perspective, CRPG has submitted a project for a prospective study with the main goal of “Evaluation of the impacts of the Programme at the level of QoL, cognitive functioning and neuronal systems. The organisation aims to confirm the added value of its intervention, with a methodological structure of pre-test and post-test figures.

In summary CRPG has been supporting its work in programmes with deeply implemented methodologies, making necessary adjustments and adding new rehabilitation activities, instruments and techniques that enable results of integral rehabilitation of people with ABI.

Part II – Brain Injury – client’s phenomenological perspective

From a Client’s perspective a key aspect of the Neuropsychological Rehabilitation Programme is the film which resulted from the 6 month workshop 7th Dimension in NR. This workshop is a component of the bigger programme. It is located in the field of art therapy, aiming to promote self-awareness through the confrontation with a new self-image. Symbolic language and image in movement are used for the construction of a new identity.

The film pretends to examine rehabilitation after brain injury: common concerns; different stages in the rehabilitation process; awareness/unawareness of deficits; realistic/unrealistic projects for the future; capacity to change and adaptation/perseveration in the old reality.

Two central ideas that guide CRPG’s practice include: rehabilitation after brain injury is essentially a psychological process; and reconstruction of identity after brain injury is the ultimate goal of rehabilitation.

Part III - Individual Action Plan

A Client’s Individual Action Plan (IAP) provides a means of internal evaluation. The aims / objectives of the IAP are to: plan; support and monitor the rehabilitation activities; and evaluate results. The Principles underpinning the IAP include the following.

- Individual idiosyncratic – based on the specific needs and potentials of the client. It is coherent with the client’s life project.
- Comprehensive – consider the different dimensions of life (bio-psych-social): aims are defined in the sphere of rights, citizenship, social integration, qualification and work.
- Clients’ and “significant others” involvement in the IAP. IAP definition is in itself a moment to promote engagement in the programme, autonomy and advocacy.
- Support and challenge – aims of the rehabilitation programme should challenge the client, should guarantee change, develop and create new opportunities. But the programme has to offer support where the client is challenged to develop himself.
- Environmental - based in the community, the staff articulate with the community network.
- Focused on results – it is a contract with explicit roles and responsibilities for both parties: the client and CRPG
- Monitoring and evaluation – in a period of 6 months, the client and case manager should meet to evaluate goal attainment. This presents an opportunity to evaluate client satisfaction, difficulties and expectations and if necessary make changes.

4.5 Getting Older Together in Olsberg—An Integrative Network for Elderly People with and Without Disabilities, Josefsheim Bigge

Demographic trends in Germany and in Josefsheim Bigge's target region, Sauerland indicate that increasing numbers of people are living longer in retirement. In Sauerland, the population of people aged 80+ is set to increase by 70% by 2025. However, experience shows that people tend not to consider retirement plans until shortly before it occurs. This is true for elderly people with and without disabilities. Josefsheim Bigge's Project *Getting Older Together in Olsberg* aims to discover the needs and wishes of elderly people.

Meeting the needs of elderly people who have disabilities poses a particular challenge for service providers and society. The majority of disabled people currently working and approaching retirement live in rehabilitation centres and work in sheltered workshops. Up until now, these workshops have not developed any concept of preparing people for retirement. Josefsheim Bigge's project was developed to formulate a response to this problem. The Olsberg town council had a good understanding of the issues and was identified as a partner.

The ZWAR Zentralstelle NRW became the consultant for the project. This institution has founded more than 130 social networks of elderly people in 50 towns all over Northrhine-Westfalia and Josefsheim worked with them to customise the model for the target group.

Olsberg town council and Josefsheim selected 50 multiplier groups, e.g. private associations to attend a multiplier meeting in January 2009. This is a standard event in the ZWAR concept. The aim was to inform groups about the planned social network and to reassure them that the project would not compete with existing local activities and associations.

Next the public was informed about the project. This was taken forward in two complementary ways: a press release; and a town council address to all Olsberg inhabitants aged 55+ inviting them to the foundation event of the social network. The response was overwhelming with more than a 100 people with and without disabilities attending the event in March 2009. This event established the basic group of the social network which has since met fortnightly. This group comprises the actual participants of the network and about 25 persons take part in the meetings regularly. This rate corresponds with the previous experience the ZWAR institution in establishing other networks.

The participants learn to organize the social network themselves. Self-determination is a major aspect of the ZWAR concept that fits perfectly with empowerment approach of Josefsheim Bigge. Thus the participants' interests are the decisive factor. Two moderators guide the way, but they do not make any decisions for the group. After two years, they will retreat. So the social network is not only customer-orientated but also customer-determined.

Josefsheim is determined to improve the quality of services offered to elderly people with disabilities and the social network provides an opportunity to learn more about the participants' interests. In addition, the organisation seeks to raise awareness amongst elderly people of the services on offer within Josefsheim. Finally, Josefsheim Bigge hopes that part of the activities will evolve into volunteering as this could be an answer to the challenges of the demographic trend especially in rural areas like the Sauerland.

4.6 Hitting the Mark Together: Cooperation with ASBH, Josefsheim Bigge

The ASBH Association

ASBH is a self-aid organisation for people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. It was founded in 1966 by parents who intended to improve their children's future prospects. Today ASBH has about 3,700 members who are active in 60 local and regional groups all over Germany. ASBH's main competences are counselling and the exchange of experiences.

The Living Facility Project "House Angelika"

Since 1999 ASBH sought to establish a modern living facility customised to meet the needs of people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, offering the support and therapy needed. But funding agencies would not resource a living facility operated by ASBH itself. Their advice was to cooperate with an already existing facility or a social enterprise to build a new house. Therefore ASBH checked several rehabilitation centres in the area of Westphalia and finally decided for the JG-group (as holding company for Josefsheim Bigge).

Following an investment of 1.8 M € House Angelika was opened in March 2008. 24 residents aged between 19 and 46 are housed in a range of accommodation with tailored support. Staff are trained to meet the unique medical, psychological and care needs of the persons served.

The aim is to empower people to live a self-determined life. Residents prepare and train for future independent, supported living. They do so by, for example, supporting each other in their daily life instead of being supported by the staff or by dealing with their own money.

The residents can use the network and all the facilities of Josefsheim or work independently in the community. The system is open and flexible.

The Use of Latest Technology

House Angelika offers all 24 residents the latest wireless telecommunications technology:

- High speed but low cost internet access for all residents
- Emergency calls are forwarded to staff mobile phones
- The staff are available via mobile phone all over Josefsheim area
- The system is connected with fire emergency call system at Josefsheim

House Angelika was the first living facility at Josefsheim to be equipped with such technology. This is now standard for all new buildings and older buildings have been retro-fitted.

The Benefit for Both Partners

Both ASBH and Josefsheim benefit from the cooperation. From a public relations perspective Josefsheim becomes more attractive for potential service users and ASBH becomes more attractive for potential members. In addition, the staff of Josefsheim take part in ASBH further training regularly, increasing expertise. The Executive Directors of Josefsheim and the ASBH Board exchange experience. Learning from each other leads to Josefsheim's company development. In future, Josefsheim plans to establish a European project dealing with the improvement of vocational training for people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. Project partners will include ASBH and the Technical University of Dortmund.

4.7 Maintaining a Customer Focus, The Cedar Foundation

In 2007, the Cedar Foundation won the EFQM Business Excellence Award including a special Award for Customer Focus in recognition of the very strong focus the organisation places on its customers. These include its external customers, i.e. service users, purchasers and policy makers and internal customers, i.e. staff in operations who receive support from corporate services. The organisation is actively engaged with purchasers and policy makers, both in terms of responding to their needs and influencing their agendas towards the vision and mission of the Cedar Foundation. With regards to service users, the Foundation has an innovative and role model approach to identifying and meeting their needs through its User Forum which has been integrated into the leadership and governance of the organisation. The Foundation's 2008-2011 Strategic Plan has "Valuing user involvement and focusing on customers" as one of its strategic priorities. Reaffirming the role of the Forum as a consultative, lobbying and governance body and capturing and responding to customer feedback are associated objectives.

The Cedar Foundation User Forum

The development of Cedar's Forum has its roots in the organisation's involvement in research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and led by the University of East London in the late 90s which focused on the democratic model of user involvement, i.e. how to engage users in the governance of an organisation so that they can be fully involved in decisions about how the organisation organises and delivers its services. This model contrasts with the traditional consumerist model which aims at improving the quality of services by making them responsive to the needs and preferences of those who use them, but which has been criticised as it does not seek any transfer in power and control to the user.

As a consequence of this research, the Cedar Foundation User Forum was established in 2001. The Forum, which draws representation from service users from across all Cedar Services in Northern Ireland, has its own budget, its own staffing and a Facilitator who is mentored in the role.

Cedar has put in place a number of cultural and structural practices designed to ensure the success of the Forum and to ensure that service users play a central role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Cedar services. These include:

Facilitative leadership – The Forum meets quarterly with the Chief and Deputy Chief Executive and a number of champions have been identified from the staff team who have been allocated time to support Forum activities. The role of the Forum is included in staff induction and staff are evaluated through appraisal regarding their commitment to supporting user involvement.

Transparent and accountable process for the Forum to influence policy and practice – Forum members are members of council which means they appoint the organisation's Executive Committee. There is also a joint User/Staff Annual Conference co-hosted by the User Forum and Chief Executive.

Ensuring the centrality of service users in operations – The Forum is involved in all key operational activities including project steering groups, business planning, dissemination activities, staff recruitment and selection.

Support mechanisms – The Forum has its own budget which includes resources for empowerment and capacity building training for members.

The Cedar Foundation Customer Feedback Tools

Cedar undertakes customer satisfaction surveys on an annual basis using the following tools with its 3 distinct customers:

1. Service User Satisfaction

In 1998, Cedar developed a ServQual satisfaction questionnaire in partnership with Queen's University Belfast's School of Management. Trainees are asked to respond to questions which are designed around the following 6 service quality dimensions including:

<u>Reliability</u>	The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
<u>Assurance</u>	The knowledge and courtesy of staff to convey trust and confidence
<u>Tangibles</u>	The appearance of physical features, equipment, staff and communication materials.
<u>Empathy</u>	The provision of caring, individualised attention to customer.
<u>Responsiveness</u>	The willingness to help customers and to provide a prompt service
<u>Outcomes</u>	The end product or output from the service encounter and what the customer expects to receive and take away from the process on completion.

2. Purchaser Satisfaction

Cedar has developed a customised approach using the EFQM Business Excellence Framework to secure feedback from purchasers. Respondents are asked to rate satisfaction levels with Cedar's performance in relation to the following:

- Leaders in terms of their management skills;
- Policy & Strategy in terms of reflecting best practice and ethical concerns;
- Staff in relation to their competence to deliver contracted services;
- The ability to make realistic project costing and to provide value for money;
- Processes in terms of providing an effective intervention for the service user; and
- Focus on achieving results which achieve the social inclusion of disabled people.

3. Internal Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

There are 4 parts to this questionnaire concerning Marketing and Appeals, Finance and Administration, Human Resources and Organisational and Service Development. Questions target the courtesy, efficiency and effectiveness of internal services provided.

Cedar issues satisfaction questionnaires to all customers on an annual basis and with the help of the User Forum if needed. All survey tools have targets and where possible benchmarks. There is a clear link between customer feedback and improvement activities across the organisation.

4.8 Monitoring and Reviewing Experiences and Perceptions of Customers in the Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, IRRS

The customers and stakeholders of the Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (VRC) of the University Rehabilitation Institute, Republic of Slovenia (URI) include several customer groups such as founders, financers, referral agencies, employers, and organisations of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities (clients), their families and/or care takers. Because persons with disabilities (clients) are the most important customer group, their perceptions and experiences are the main focus for identifying, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating in the rehabilitation process. The other focus is on the actions of the VRC resulting from these experiences and perceptions.

Vocational rehabilitation is a comprehensive and relatively long lasting process. Therefore the monitoring of clients' experience and perceptions ranges over all phases, from initial assessment to final activities that most often take place in a real work environment. The comprehensiveness of the process requires monitoring and evaluating at the individual, group and process levels. Different methods, techniques and instruments are presented that are being used at each level across the rehabilitation process. The structure and the contents of the system are presented in Table 1. The phases of the rehabilitation process where the monitoring and evaluation takes place most often include the following: (1) initial assessment; (2) centre based training; (3) employer based training and (4) employment or social inclusion.

Table 1: The structure and the contents of monitoring, reviewing and evaluating clients' perceptions and experience	
Level	Areas of monitoring and reviewing of the experience and perceptions of clients in the vocational rehabilitation process
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry interviews - basis for IRP • Individual rehabilitation programme feedback: - centre based - employer based • Assessment and Self assessment of work behaviour • Satisfaction questionnaire
Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily assessment of group dynamics • Weekly follow up groups for employer based clients • Weekly achievement assessment - centre based groups • »The New Way Club« - exchange of experiences of employed and unemployed former clients (after conclusion, optional, no formal referral)
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and evaluation of customer experience and satisfaction questionnaire

In the continuation the methods and actions resulting from evaluating and monitoring clients' experience in each rehabilitation process phase are summarised.

Individual Level

Initial assessment	Centre based training	Employer based training	Employment/ Social inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry interview • IRP preparing • Self assessment of work behaviour • Daily feedback • Vrij Baan Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry interview • IRP review • Self assessment of work behaviour • Daily feedback • Vrij Baan Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry interview • IRP review • Self assessment of work behaviour • Weekly feedback • Vrij Baan Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 monthly feedback and follow up

Resulting actions:

- Providing additional information to clients
- Changing the IRP
- Empowering the client

Group Level

Initial assessment	Centre based training	Employer based training	Employment/ Social inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily and weekly • Assessment of group dynamics (evaluation at the team meeting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily and weekly • Assessment of group dynamics • Weekly achievement assessment (evaluation at the team meeting) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly follow up groups • “The New Way Club” • Monthly Exchange of experiences, perceptions of employed and unemployed former clients (after conclusion, optional – no formal referral)

Resulting actions:

- Providing additional information
- Organizing tailor-made activities (training, visits, projects, etc. – based on group’s initiative)
- Enabling /encouraging realization of proposed group projects (e.g. the New Way Journal)
- Applying/ creating empowerment training (e.g. Vrij Bann exercises)

Programme Level

Initial assessment	Centre based training	Employer based training	Employment/Social inclusion
Review and evaluation of customers’ experience and satisfaction - questionnaires			-

Resulting actions:

- changing – developing programmes

With monitoring and reviewing experiences and perceptions of customers it is crucial that the activities are performed at all levels and phases of the rehabilitation process. This enables a holistic picture of the experience, perceptions and satisfaction of clients that can be followed by a holistic response to the needs of clients in the entire vocational rehabilitation process.

4.9 Identifying Individual Strengths and Needs, NLN

This paper describes the process whereby National Learning Network works with its service users to identify their individual strengths, needs and aspirations to enable it to offer an individualised service.

National Learning Network is regarded as a specialist training provider in Ireland and is contracted by the State to provide vocational and rehabilitative or developmental training for people with disabilities. The role of the specialist provider is to provide a variety of individual-centred learning options and delivery methods using a multi-disciplinary approach. The objective is to enable people who are excluded through disability or other forms of disadvantage to achieve mainstream qualifications and employment.

Effective initial assessment is a vital element in providing an individualised service. Assessment of need is a tool to identify and overcome barriers and should never create a further barrier. Assessment must involve continuous communication and full participation by the service user.

Objectives

The objectives of initial assessment are to:

- Enable service users to identify and express their individual objectives, strengths and needs
- Allow the organisation to collect enough information to deliver a person-centred service
- Facilitate successful outcomes

Assessment Process

National Learning Network's assessment process is designed to establish suitability based on agreed programme criteria and capacity to achieve a successful outcome and to identify any potential risk factors. The process is holistic and covers all aspects of the person's life that may influence successful participation. It includes the following elements:

Vocational

- Training & Employment

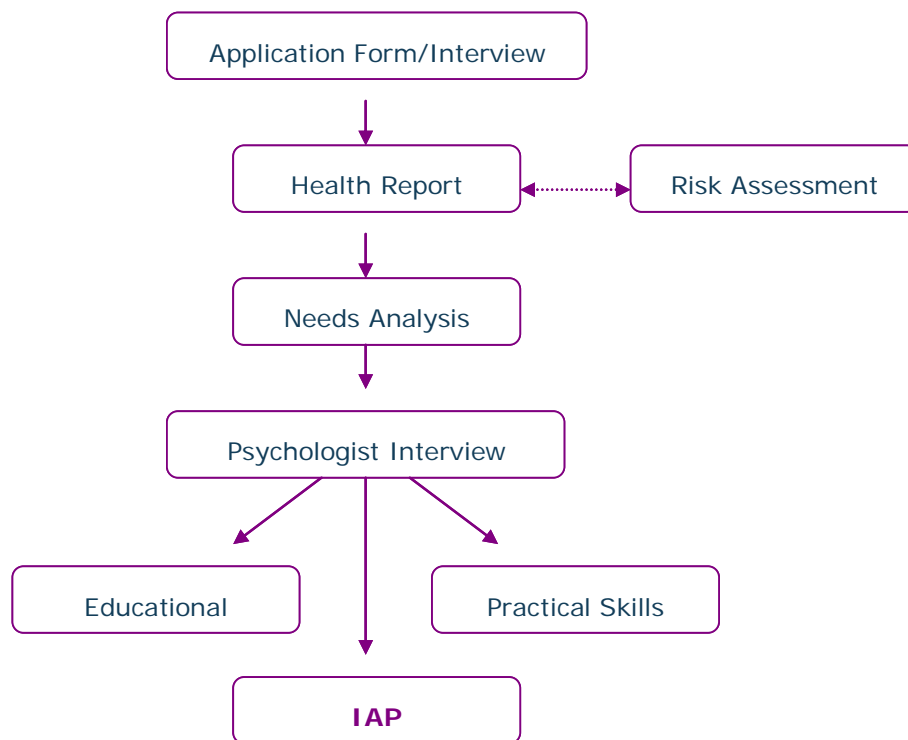
Social

- Educational
- Environmental
- Psychological

Health

- Cognitive
- Medical
- Psycho-motor

The measures used may be summarised as follows:



The application form, interview, health report and risk assessment (where appropriate) are carried out at the pre-entry stage. After the service user enters training, the following are carried out to determine the service user's strengths and needs and what additional supports will be required while the service user is attending training:

- Needs Analysis by the instructor and service user
- Interview by the psychologist
- Educational Assessment by the resource teacher
- Assessment of practical skills by the instructor

The information collected forms the basis for setting up the service user's individual action plan. This plan sets out a series of actions under the seven headings to address the needs identified.

Outcome Measures

National Learning Network measures the success of its individual assessment processes by the outcomes achieved by its service users. Quantitative outcome measures include progression to employment and further education/training and achievement of qualifications. Qualitative measures include health & social gain and perceptions of service users as recorded in satisfaction surveys and feedback received from service users through their representatives and during internal and external audits.



EQUABENCH—Benchmarking European Excellence

Customer Focus Innovative Practice Guide

This Innovative Practice Guide was produced by the EQUABENCH network as part of a Leonardo da Vinci funded project running from 2008 to 2010. This Guide explores the innovative practice used by a number of Vocational Education and Training (VET) organizations from across Europe in relation to the EFQM Fundamental Concept of Excellence – Customer Focus.

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- Leadership and Constancy of Purpose
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