

ÚTRÁS - THE ICELANDIC IPS WAY

Oral Presentation

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2010 a group of individuals in recovery and professionals at Hlutverkasetur met to discuss why individuals with long-term mental health problems who wanted to work did not succeed. A number of challenges were identified. In 2013 Hlutverkasetur applied for a grant from the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund VIRK for a pilot project. The grant was used e.g. to hire two people; an occupational therapist to assess work readiness and a former volunteer with good connections with commercial companies. Four videos, 3-4 minutes long, were posted on the website of Hlutverkasetur on the important issues concerning work.

Individuals participating belonged to three different groups: people receiving disability benefits, young people with reduced work ability reluctant to take part in work rehabilitation, and unemployed people over 50 years of age. All parties involved, employees and employers, were viewed as clients needing support, guidance and easy access to assistance. Participants' wishes for assistance were mostly related to mental health issues and misconceptions regarding people's reactions. Employers and co-workers were looking for information and advice on mental health issues, work adjustments and/or flexible work hours. In the years 2013-2015, 70 enterprises were contacted. Of the 137 individuals taking part in the project, 40% held a job. Other participants had left the project, had only been seeking advice, or had had unrealistic expectations regarding work demands.

Diagnoses were not instrumental in success. Success was more related to environmental factors, having the opportunity to work, gradual immersion into work, lack of prejudice and discrimination, and receiving sufficient support. The project revealed that interdisciplinary research needs to be more coordinated. The focus of the Universities, now mainly on professionalism and individual barriers, should be broader. Perhaps further scrutiny is needed of the educational system, the health sector and the labour market.