

LET'S GO TO WORK, CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMME

The 'Let's Go to Work' programme is the outcome of the study carried out on the job insertion process for disabled people within the research project *Job insertion for the disabled through Supported Employment in Spain*.¹ This study showed that even where training programmes related to different aspects of the world of work existed for the disabled, in many cases they did not actually meet the needs of mentally disabled people on supported employment programmes. Neither the general aims nor the methods were adequate for this group, and these training programmes did not provide contextualised learning related to the current job market. For this reason, the aim of this research project was to design an effective training programme which met the needs of this social group.

An analysis of the factors that help disabled people enter the regular job market demonstrates the importance of having the knowledge and socio-personal skills needed to achieve this goal.² The study also confirms that disabled people tend to consult supported employment services with very little previous knowledge or training in employment matters: they do not know how to look for work, they have few socio-personal skills applicable to the work environment, they have limited ability to learn work-related tasks and they have not previously considered what they are interested in or what their preferences and expectations are. The conclusions of this study, presented below, provide the basis of our proposed programme.

Firstly, the study shows that *both general and work-related socio-personal skills – characteristics of the world of work, job-search techniques and recognition of one's own abilities, personal interests and expectations – must be included in the training programme.*

Secondly, we must take into account the fact that the working world evolves and changes very quickly and that employment services confirm that many different types or groups of people use their services. Therefore, we need to provide *general, versatile training which focuses on attitudes and improves motivation to work. The programme must encourage independence and provide the individual with relevant socio-personal skills and the ability to adapt to*

¹ *Estudio de la integración laboral de personas con discapacidad mediante trabajo con apoyo en el Estado español. Análisis de los factores clave y estrategias para la mejora de los procesos de inserción.* Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology, General Directorate for Research. Reference: BSO 2000-0321 (2000-2003).

² PALLISERA, M.; FULLANA, J.; VILÀ, M. (2005). "La inserción laboral de personas con discapacidad: desarrollo de tres investigaciones acerca de los factores favorecedores de los procesos de inserción". *Revista de investigación educativa*. 23(2), 295-313.

VALLS, M. J.; VILÀ, M.; PALLISERA, M.; CARDONA, M.; JIMÉNEZ, P. and RIUS, M. (2002). "Estrategias para el acceso y el entrenamiento en el puesto de trabajo de personas con discapacidades, aportaciones a partir de una investigación en el contexto de Catalunya". In VERDUGO, JORDAN. *Hacia la integración plena mediante el empleo. VI Simposio Internacional de Empleo con Apoyo*. pp. 201-215. Salamanca: INICO.

different working environments. Furthermore, the training programme must be flexible in order to adapt to individual needs.

Thirdly, research shows that the individual concerned must be involved in the decision-making process regarding both training and work if the job insertion process is to be successful. *The commitment of the individual to their own learning must be one of the objectives of the programme and all activities must be considered within this context.*

The study also shows that the services which prepare individuals to enter the regular job market, like supported employment services, should also provide these same people with the support and encouragement they need to enjoy more independence in other areas of their lives. Therefore, these services should not be concerned simply with social integration through job insertion, but should also, where possible, offer support and encourage social integration through cultural and free-time activities. Therefore, *the training programme should include activities aimed at providing support and encouraging independence in all areas of the individual's life, especially in their free time.*

Finally, the study demonstrates that training courses should last for between nine months and a year, and that the courses currently on offer should be more flexible. Therefore, *the programme must be organised in such a way that the content can be covered in a year, and it must have a flexible structure in order to adapt to different services.*

In summary, in order to create an effective training programme we can recommend the following:

- *The content of the programme must include socio-personal skills, self-awareness, understanding of the working world and job search techniques.*
- *The training programme must be versatile and it must focus on attitude and improve motivation to work. It must encourage independence and provide the individual with relevant socio-personal skills and the ability to adapt to different working environments.*
- *The programme must be flexible in order to adapt to the needs of the individual.*
- *The activities included in the programme must be designed to encourage the individual to take their own decisions regarding training and work*
- *The training programme must include activities which provide support and encourage independence in different areas of the individual's life, especially in their free-time activities.*
- *The programme must be flexible in order to adapt to the varying needs of the service.*
- *The programme should last for between nine months and a year.*

These recommendations provide us with the basic characteristics of the programme.

1. ***Who the programme is for.*** Our programme is aimed primarily at young people who are looking for work through supported employment services. The programme is aimed at this group rather than adults because young people have a greater need for coordinated training courses to help them make the transition from adolescence and the education system to adulthood and an active working life. Adults can also benefit from this programme, but they would probably need to focus on certain areas of the programme rather than follow the whole training course.
2. ***Socio-educational application of the programme.*** The programme is designed to be implemented by services which provide supported employment for disabled people who wish to enter the regular job market. As most services that offer this programme also provide other job-related training courses which last for up to one academic year, our programme is also designed to be completed within this time period. Other educational services which help young people through the transition from school to work can also offer this programme, for example secondary schools, social guarantee schemes and others which could include disabled individuals. Again we would like to reiterate that the programme is aimed primarily at young people, even though certain areas or units could be relevant to adults with specific training needs.
3. ***Contents.*** Work is an integral part of adult life which interacts with and is closely related to other aspects of adulthood: relationships, independence, free-time activities, socio-personal skills etc. We cannot improve an individual's employment prospects without providing a corresponding increase in resources in these other related areas. The results of previous studies carried out within this research project show the need to include the following training areas in the programme: *understanding the working world, relationships and communication, self-awareness, 'How to live and work' (coping with your working life) and versatile work-related skills.*
4. ***The relationship between the programme and job insertion.*** The central concern of the programme is work, and so the training programme is divided into the following four teaching units: 'I want to work', 'How to find work', 'I'm starting work at ...' and 'How to live and work.' We reiterate that the main aim of the programme is to improve the employment prospects of the individual, and so work is the core concern of the training course.
5. ***Theoretical model.*** Our programme is framed within the model of *transition to adulthood and an active working life*. This transition is understood to be the process of maturing and adapting to the different aspects of adult life as independently as possible. Focusing on work is fundamental, but we must also consider other areas such as how to increase involvement in community life. The aims, methodology and evaluation system of the

6. ***Educational aims, methodology and evaluation.*** We decided not to follow the classic practice of a long list of contents to describe the aims of the programme. Therefore, there is no definitive list of objectives. The main focus is the content which is related to the central themes of the four teaching units and is structured to allow for the further development of previous teaching points where necessary.

Each unit includes *teacher's material and student's material*. The teacher will devise a personalised study plan for each individual based on the contents of each unit and including specific learning aims. Each teaching unit includes evaluation material.

The programme has been designed to adapt to the needs of users and their environment and to be relevant to a specific age group. The content is flexible enough to be used with different groups of people within the community. The programme is designed to promote learning (procedural, conceptual and attitudinal) in accordance with the social environment of the individual.

The training programme includes both individual and group activities. These activities are based on the principle of *learning in the community* and should, therefore, be carried out at the workplace and in community centres. The aims of the training material provided for each activity are clear. The varying needs of the users are taken into account and different ways to achieve learning are suggested. The material is related to both daily life and work and is relevant to the age of the participants. The overall aim is to be able to apply the content of the programme to different situations.

We will now describe the main components of the programme and how they are organised. We must remember that it is aimed principally at young people who are making the transition to adult life and the working world, and that it is applicable to supported employment services as well as other organisations and services that deal with young people. It is aimed principally at disabled people who have had no previous experience in the ordinary job market, and who would benefit greatly from this type of intervention.

The programme is based on the following **content areas**:

- A. Understanding the working world
- B. Relationships and communication, involvement in the community
- C. Self-awareness

D. “How to live and work”

E. Versatile work-related skills

Below we provide an overview of each of the content areas:

A: Understanding the working world
The content of this area is designed to introduce the individual to the working world from a legal point of view (rights and responsibilities of the employee) and from a social and cultural standpoint (what working means in our society nowadays). The focus is on the complexity of the modern working world, including job search techniques and health and safety at work. The specific contents are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does it mean to work? The value of work in today’s society.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different jobs and professions. Professional sectors and professional categories.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young people and work today. Difficulties and job insecurity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The rights and responsibilities of the employee. Labour law, contracts, understanding wage slips.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job search techniques. Where to find job offers, CVs, interviews etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job security and health and safety at work. Risk prevention and health and safety at work.

B. Relationships and communication
The content of this area includes topics related to relationships and communication in different situations. The emphasis is on how to develop relationships with colleagues, authority figures and customers, and also with colleagues of the opposite sex. The specific contents are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verbal communication and gestures. Basic communication skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate social interaction in different situations. Family environment, the working environment (introduction), friends. Relationships with colleagues and friends of the opposite sex.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social interaction at work. Relationships with colleagues, managers or supervisors and with customers. Relationships with colleagues of the opposite sex.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assertiveness. Tools and strategies for positive interaction.

C. Involvement in the community

This area covers various points related to encouraging involvement in community life. The content also includes organising personal finances, practical skills for travelling from home to the workplace, knowing which basic services are available and how to use them, and civil behaviour and citizenship. The specific **contents** are:

- **Organising personal finances.** Understanding the concept of money and how to use it, basic expenses and saving, and managing personal finances. Responsible spending: the difference between necessary and unnecessary purchases. Consumer rights.
- **Geographic mobility.** Using public transport and other means of communication.
- **Basic community services and facilities.** Knowledge and use of free-time, cultural and sports-related services.
- **Fun and accessible free-time activities.** Hobbies and interests: what your interests are and how to get involved in these activities.
- **Civil behaviour and citizenship.** Respecting and looking after the environment: city and nature.

D. Self-awareness

The content includes topics related to self-awareness, self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, preferences and opportunities (especially related to work), personal health and hygiene (nutrition, personal hygiene, sexuality and health, etc). The specific **contents** are:

- **Knowing your needs and potential.** Self-awareness.
- **Self-esteem and ability.** Knowing your capabilities.
- **Personal motivation.** Motivation in general and in relation to work.
- **Preferences and work opportunities.** Balancing expectations, especially related to work, with capabilities.
- **Health and personal hygiene.** Healthy eating to prevent illness, personal hygiene and taking care of your appearance, basic ways to prevent illness, sexuality and health.

E. “How to live and work”

The content focuses on how to cope with working life, including how to keep your job, knowing how to go about improving your current job situation and what to do if you lose your job. The specific **contents** are:

- **How to keep your job.** Good work practices.
- **Changes at work.** Changing tasks at work, moving to a different position within the same company; changing companies; manager or supervisor changes.
- **Losing your job.** Starting again. Unemployment: how to claim unemployment benefits; role changes within the family.
- **Promotion.** How to improve your current job situation. Life-long training.

F: “Versatile work-related skills”

Understanding cognitive, manipulative and academic skills related to both daily activities and work. The specific **contents** are:

- **Cognitive skills.** Classifying, ordering, planning etc.
- **Manipulative skills.** Precision, hand-eye and hand-finger coordination, etc.
- **Academic skills.** Reading, writing, arithmetic.

The contents are organised into **four teaching units**. These units are:

UD1: I want to work

UD2: How to find work

UD3: I’m starting work at...

UD4: How to live and work

Below is a summary of the objectives and central ideas that link the contents of each unit.

Teaching unit 1: I want to work

The primary objective of this first unit is to get an idea of the individual's initial level and to establish what they know about themselves and their surroundings. This is the starting point of the training. When somebody says that they want to work they are saying that work is something necessary and important in their lives. This intrinsic motivation is fundamental for the person to begin the process to reach their goal. The individuals who start the programme will have varying degrees of motivation; therefore, it is important that in the initial stages the priority for the teacher is to maintain or increase participants' motivation to work. The teacher must help individuals find out more about the world of work in general, understand what work means (not simply the tasks that the job involves, but also the wider significance of work in relation to personal and social relationships) and find out which jobs would be most suitable for them.

Central themes	Contents
WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT WORK?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v What work means: the value of work in today's society. v How to keep your job: good work practices. v Different professions and jobs: professional sectors and professional categories. v Young people and work today: difficulties and insecurity.
WHAT CAN I DO? WHAT DO I THINK I CAN DO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Knowing your needs and potential. v Evaluation of personal skills (versatile work-related skills).
WHO DO I HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH AND HOW DO I COMMUNICAE WITH THESE PEOPLE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Verbal communication and gestures. v Social interaction: adaptation to different situations: family, friends. Relationships with the opposite sex. v Assertiveness. v Civil behaviour and citizenship: respecting and caring for the environment. v Geographic mobility.
WHAT AM I LIKE? HOW DO I LOOK AFTER MYSELF?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Self esteem and personal capabilities. v Intrinsic motivation. v Preferences and opportunities. v Outside work: interests, preferences, relationships. v Health and personal hygiene. v Personal finances: using money etc.

Teaching unit 2: Looking for work: job search techniques (ensure that this coincides with the programme)

<p>People take a proactive role in looking for work. Potential jobs must suit individuals and their capabilities. Therefore, participants need tools and techniques to both look for a job and to assess whether a particular job is within their capabilities.</p>	
Central themes	Contents
<p>WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO FIND A JOB?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Job search techniques. v Rights and responsibilities of the employee (related to different jobs). v Job security and health and safety at work.
<p>WHAT CAN I DO AND WHAT CAN I LEARN TO DO?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Versatile work-related skills.
<p>WHO WILL I HAVE TO COMMUNICATE WITH AT WORK AND HOW DO I DO THIS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Verbal communication and gestures v Social interaction: adaptation to different situations, especially at work (social interaction with colleagues, with managers and with users of the service). Relationships with the opposite sex. v Assertiveness.
<p>WHAT AM I LIKE? HOW DO I LOOK AFTER MYSELF?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v All the contents. v Personal hygiene and taking care of your appearance. v Prevention of illness.

Teaching unit 3: I'm starting work at....

<p>When the individual finds work this brings about many life changes: having one's own money and more independence, new social relationships, new tasks to complete etc. All these changes pose new challenges for the individual which will require a certain amount of support.</p>	
Central themes	Contents
HOW TO GET AROUND MY COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Geographic mobility. v Basic services in the community. v Free-time activities. v Responsible spending: which purchases are necessary and which are not.
HOW TO COPE AT WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Rights and responsibilities of the employee: contracts, wage slips and company rules. v Job security and health and safety. v How to keep a job.
WHAT DOES MY WORK CONSIST OF? WHICH TASKS DO I HAVE TO DO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Content related to the basic functional skills required to carry out the tasks at work. v These activities may have to take place at the workplace itself.
RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Social interaction with colleagues, the manager and users of the service. Initiative, responsibility, dealing with mistakes, acceptance of authority figures and relationships with the opposite sex. v Assertiveness at work.
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Involvement in the community. v Basic services in the community: free-time, cultural, sports-related, hobbies...how to access these services and facilities (especially the latter). v Social interactions with family, friends and partners.
WHAT AM I LIKE AT WORK? HOW DO I LOOK AFTER MYSELF?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Self esteem and personal capabilities. v Intrinsic motivation. v Preferences and opportunities. v After work: hobbies and interests.

Teaching unit 4: How to live and work

This unit concentrates on the basic skills required to keep a job and to cope with possible difficulties or problems related to work.	
Central themes	Contents
UNDERSTANDING YOUR SURROUNDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Managing personal finances: basic expenses and saving. v Civil behaviour and looking after the environment. v Consumer rights. v Promotion: how to improve your work situation (lifelong training). v Job search techniques (finding a better job). v Losing your job: starting again (how to claim unemployment benefits).
WHICH TASKS DO I HAVE TO DO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Work-related skills. v How to keep your job. v Changes in routine: changing tasks and moving to a different position within the same company.
RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v How to keep your job. v When colleagues change, when the supervisor changes.
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v As described above, but paying particular attention to coping with changes within these social relationships. v Different free-time activities.
WHAT AM I LIKE? WHAT DO I LEARN AT WORK?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v Understanding needs and opportunities. v Losing a job: starting again.
Activities related to being at work, to getting to and from work, possible free-time activities, organising your life and how to manage money.	

The **Let's Go to Work** programme is presented in two dossiers, one for the teacher and one for the students. The **teacher's dossier** includes the four teaching units, each structured in the following way: a description of the unit, an explanation of the content and a brief explanation of the structure of the unit. This is followed by introductions to the different activities. The objectives and content are explained as well as how to use the activity. The resources required (materials and/or documents), how and where the activity will take place and finally how the activity will be evaluated are also included. In this dossier, there is a section at the end of each activity that states which supplementary material needs to be used. Finally, there is another section which indicates information sources for those who wish to learn more about the topic dealt with in the activity (manuals, research projects, audiovisual resources etc.)

The **student's dossier** contains the four teaching units each of which includes all the proposed activities organised into worksheets. These worksheets are designed to make the writing task easier for the student.

The material in this programme can be used all together, or certain units or activities can be isolated for use to meet the individual needs and demands of the student.