



NORWAY

**SUPPORT PROVIDED
BY MENTORS IN THE
WORKPLACE TO YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH HEALTH
ISSUES OR DISABILITIES**

Mentoring Scheme

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The Mentoring Scheme is both a national vocational rehabilitation measure and a supported-employment initiative. The scheme is implemented as part of the PES' strategic plan to follow up more closely young people after their job placement. The measure offers support to young people with health issues or disabilities when entering the workplace. This is done through mentoring and support in the workplace, which ensures that jobseekers are not discouraged during the initial months after placement. The scheme has benefited both young people and participating employers: it has helped young people with health issues/disabilities to exit the PES system and gain more sustainable employment, while employers have also improved their knowledge on how to best support their employees. The success of this scheme is due in part to the collaboration between PES offices, employers and local partners, as well as the supported employment approach it's based on.

Name of the PES

Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration – NAV (Norwegian PES)

Scope of measure

National.

The Mentoring Scheme is a national measure which all individual PES offices implement at a local level as part of Norway's Work Strategy for Young People with Disabilities. Some local PES have organised additional activities on their own initiative to complement this scheme.

When was the practice implemented?

The Mentoring Scheme was implemented as a national measure in 2012, and within a couple of years, local PES offices began to operate the scheme.

What was the driver for introducing the practice?
Was it internal or external?

Norway has the highest rate of sickness absence in the EU (and among countries under the Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development) and vocational rehabilitation is therefore a priority for the PES. The Mentoring Scheme is one of its key measures focusing on people with health problems and part of Norway's Work Strategy for Young People with Disabilities. One of the primary building blocks of the Norwegian PES (NAV)'s strategy is to implement programmes that incorporate a 'place-then-train' approach. This consists of providing a range of hiring subsidies and grants, as well as follow-up support for jobseekers who need support after they have been placed in a subsidised job. An example of such a programme is the Mentoring Scheme.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

Some local PES offices collaborated with the municipality at a strategic level when implementing the scheme in order to identify and access the right work places for clients of the Mentoring Scheme. Additionally, the PES offices used their local contacts, and in some cases, worked with tertiary education organisations in order to identify which young person to target (as such organisations are in a better position to know who may be at risk of dropping out of education early). This information helps the PES to prepare by identifying suitable work placements in anticipation of the young person's arrival to the office. In some cases, there has also been collaboration between local PES offices and PES Inclusive Workplace Support Centres, which operate at the regional level. These Centres have extensive knowledge, competence, and a network of employers with whom they collaborate to create more inclusive workplaces.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

Typically, users of the Mentoring Scheme are young people with health issues or a disability who have previously participated in several PES measures and find it difficult to sustain employment over a long period of time. Employers are also targeted by the scheme: grants are available to employers to support the target group of young people registered at PES. Employers – and the employees they select as mentors – are also directly targeted by some of the training methods used under this scheme, such as the Mentor School and Mentor Networks which provide support and guidance to employers and mentors. The mentors are the third group targeted by the practice. Mentors are workplace colleagues who support the beneficiaries of the Mentoring Scheme.

<p>What were the practice's main objectives?</p>	<p>The aim of the Mentoring Scheme is to ensure that young people with health issues or disabilities are given sufficient support before and after they take up employment to enable them to transition smoothly into the workplace and remain there over the longer term.</p> <p>Once the young person with health issues or disabilities has been placed in a job, the idea behind the scheme is that a workplace colleague (mentor) will provide support for him/her. This is particularly important for jobseekers with relatively little (or very intermittent) work experience who might need help navigating the work environment. The mentor is there to serve as a good role model and 'social interpreter' in the new work environment. In general, the mentor is a more experienced colleague or the immediate supervisor of the person, selected by the employer to become a mentor.</p> <p>The scheme seeks to build a long-standing partnership with employers in support of this type of post-placement support.</p>
<p>What activities were carried out?</p>	<p>Through the Mentoring Scheme, PES provide employers with grants to cover the wages of those employees selected to become mentors, who will help the mentee in their day-to-day job. The mentor provides support for the mentee in the workplace and acts as the 'extended arm' of the PES by offering post-placement support.</p> <p>In order for mentors to be more successful, some local PES offices organise specific training initiatives. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Mentor School provides courses for employers and the employees they select as mentors. The aim of the Mentor School is to strengthen social inclusion competencies in the workplace and help mentors (workplace colleagues) to track and enhance the professional and personal development of the mentee in the workplace. These courses also define the role of the mentor i.e. what is expected of them, and suggests methods for guidance and good communication. The courses also provide information and training on how to deal with specific disabilities e.g. mental health issues. ▶ Another form of support for mentors is the Mentor Networks. These aim to support the mentors, creating an open meeting place/forum where the mentors can exchange experiences and gain professional input from peers. These networks tend to have face-to-face meetings every two months. Companies are participating in these networks to learn how to look after their employees more supportively. This includes companies that are directly involved in the Mentoring Scheme, and companies which are not receiving grants from the scheme but wish to learn more about looking after their employees.
<p>What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?</p>	<p>The financial resources received by local PES offices for the Mentoring Scheme are used to give grants to employers to finance the role of mentors in their workplace. Some regional PES offices allocate additional resources to this scheme, for example, to implement activities such as the Mentor School and Mentor Networks.</p> <p>Local PES offices also work with colleagues from PES Inclusive Workplace Support Centres who have an important role in facilitating the process and management of the follow-up process.</p>
<p>What were the source(s) of funding?</p>	<p>Local PES offices are provided with funding for the scheme from the national government.</p>
<p>What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?</p>	<p>The main outputs of the Mentoring Scheme include the support and post-placement counselling sessions provided by mentors to young people with health issues and disabilities in the workplace. Additionally, in some regions mentoring courses were provided for employers and mentors, and Mentor Networks were also created.</p> <p>Young people have benefitted from the support and flexibility provided through this scheme. The Norwegian PES has observed that many young people involved in this measure have returned to school or are now employed. The jobs in which they are now working are better adapted to their needs. For example, some mentees with specific health issues are working part-time.</p>
<p>What outcomes have been identified?</p>	<p>While there have been no evaluations of the practice, there is general agreement in the Norwegian PES that this programme is conducive to more sustainable employment for people with health issues or disabilities.</p> <p>The scheme has also allowed PES offices to gain experience in how to follow-up clients after placement and in how to deal with young people with disabilities.</p> <p>Mentors have experienced improvement in their own motivation at work as a result of participating in the measure. Their job satisfaction levels have risen as a result of being given the opportunity to assist other colleagues.</p>

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

Key lessons learnt from implementing the Mentoring Scheme include the following:

- ▶ An important success factor has been the collaboration between PES, employers, municipalities and other local partners. PES actively interact with the local community and build relations with employers and social partners, thus creating networks that can provide suitable work placements for young people.
- ▶ The Norwegian PES has collaborated with the same employers for many years in the framework of this scheme, which has resulted in the creation of strong and trustful relationships with employers.
- ▶ This scheme involves working by the principles of a *supported employment approach* – according to PES staff, their role of following up on jobseekers post-placement is more important than being a job specialist.
- ▶ Mentoring is a learning-based relationship between two people. It requires trust, mutual commitment and social commitment. This means that one must listen, ask, challenge and support. It is also important for the mentor to be brave, clear-headed, enthusiastic, patient, and tolerant.
- ▶ Where applied, the Mentor Network is very important as both PES and employers highly value and benefit from the knowledge and support provided by this network. Through such a network, employers can build on the PES' theoretical perspective by learning from other employers' practical experience.



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