

Free from learning difficulties

(Oppiva)

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Learning difficulties

- About 25% of population have learning difficulties
- Difficulties are much more common among inmates
- Often hereditary
- Different ways of learning, perceiving and processing information
- Not stupidity, not laziness
- Undiagnosed learning difficulties often contribute to low self-esteem, depression, intoxicant abuse, marginalisation

You can have learning difficulties in:

- Reading and writitn
- Concentration
- Mathematics, foreign languages
- Memory
- Perception
 - Time, direction, space
- Motor functions
 - Manual skills, movement control, clumsiness
- Typically there are difficulties in several areas

Reading difficulties

- Reading is slow
- Makes mistakes when reading
- Problems with reading comprehension
- Hard to find the main points of tekst
- Hard to follow lines
- Gets tired, headache or eye pain when reading

Writing difficulties

- Letters/sounds get mixed up
- Letters missing or letter reversal
- Missing word ends and words
- Difficulties in grammar rules
- Difficulties in producing tekst
- Awkward handwriting

Concentration difficulties

- Difficult to concentrate on tasks at hand
- Difficult to focus attention on two or more things at the same time
- Gets distracted easily
- Slowness or becoming absorbed in own thoughts or restlessness
- Typically moves from one job to another and drops out of school

Our target group

- Inmates under 30 years of age of the District Prison of Southern Finland
- The under 30 year old customers Probation Service (serving their sentence in the community)
- Staff of the criminal sanctions field.
Organisations working with the customers and the public sector

How did the clients come to our project?

- With the guidance of the Assessment centre of the Southern part of Finland
- Clients were motivated to participate after hearing projectworkers info-hour
- With the guidance of employees of the Criminal Sanctions Agency
- Prisons from WOP-rehabilitation were obligated to participate to our project
- Clients contacted us

We have reached

- 311 customers
- 181 actual long-term customers
- 1200 professionals
- Most of the customers have continued in the Oppiva project after release => the release stage is challenging

Learning difficulties of our clients

- Learning difficulties because they were “untrained”
- Diseases and injuries
- Social background and situation
- Problems with mental health
- Problems with substance abuse
- Inherited learning difficulties

Observations on our customers

- Average age 25 years
- Three women, the rest are men
- The majority of the customers learn best by doing and experiencing

What did we do?

- We identified learning difficulties by using:
 - OPPIVA test, perception channel test and ASRS test (ADHD)
 - Dyslexie screening, dyslexia test, calculation test (Niilo Maki Institute)
 - Assessment of working ability (IMBA/MELBA)
 - Neuropsychological/neurological examinations as an outsourcing service
 - Discussion

Clients Total 181 +(130)

- 86% has participated special education at comprehension school
- 12% dropped out of comprehension school
- 90% is without occupational education
- 29% hasn't ever been working
- 69% has got reading/writing difficulties
- 80% has got concentration difficulties
- 51% have been at Neuropsychological examinations
- 90% has got a substance abuse problem
- 26% dropped out of our project

We gave

- Guidance and support in learning problems
- Advised how to apply to schools
- Supported in managing everyday activities after release from prison
- Dyslexia rehabilitation

- Supporting Management skills
 - Reminding of things
 - Running erranda after different kind of offices
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- Rehabilitation guidance
 - Making rehabilitation plans (studiying, workshops, ADHD coaching..)
 - Working in grups
 - Reading rehabilitation
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- Identfying learning difficulties
 - OPPIVA test, perception channel test and ASRS test (ADHD)
 - Dyslexie screening, dyslexia test, calculation test (Niilo Maki Institute)
 - Assesment of working ability (IMBA/MELBA)
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Our working model

- Flexible
- Individual
- We honestly appreciate our clients
- From prison to freedom dimension
- Cooperation with the networks of clients
- Approximately 5 meetings per client

How did the clients benefit from the project?

- Project has given self knowledge of themselves and about their opportunities
- Has leaded to the right places
- Has helped with self esteem issues
- Has given hope
- Has given support with reducing substance abuse
- Has helped to pass driving exams
- Has helped to understand the situation of ones own child and motivated to search for help

Observations(1)

- You should definitely increase recognition of learning difficulties at criminal work => it helps to integrate the clients to the society
- You should add cooperation with networks especially at the transitional stages => You should name the coordinator to the network
- There should be more work oriented and supported studying models (both inside of prisons and at freedom)

Observations (2)

- Working with learning difficulties suits also to be used hand by hand with substance abuse rehabilitation => if it's done properly it can even assist the rehabilitation
- At the beginning of the sentence while evaluating client's working skills you should also evaluate learning difficulties of all prisoners/probation office clients

Observations (3)

- Every employ who works with the criminal sanctions should have the basic knowledge about learning difficulties
- Special education teahers/ learning coaches are needed to prisons to work with all prisoners (not just the studying ones)
- Clients have bid difficulties in running their errands at offices etc. => Who's going to be the "interpreter" between client and authority?

Challenges

- Clients' multiple and changing needs
- Difficulties in rehabilitation continuums after prison
- Unflexible social and health services
- Complicated rehabilitation system
- Working with different cultures
- Funding