

## OFFERING A PERSONAL COORDINATOR

Research, surveys and reports, including those from the National Board of Social Affairs in Sweden, had clearly indicated that the end users themselves, and particularly the unemployed and those with severe difficulties, had had negative personal experiences of the lack of genuine cooperation between integration agencies and that they wanted better collaboration amongst the authorities and organisations involved. Together these experiences underlined the fact that an individual approach was necessary and the DP was interested in testing this approach in a wider context. The holistic approach that it adopted was based on the assumption that all possible hindrances to successful participation in the workforce must be considered from the perspective of the person in question, and that all necessary measures must be provided in order to assist that person to eliminate or manage such hindrances.

The DP did this by listening to each person's own story and taking his or her own definition of the situation as the point of departure. The DP then motivated these people to take charge of the situation and assisted them in pursuing their own interests, goals and ambitions. All of the participants were offered a personal coordinator who was available to advise and support them throughout the whole process and with all their contacts with various services and agencies.

It was the coordinator who had to take responsibility for ensuring that the user's situation and needs were properly assessed. The coordinator had to spend time with the user in order to get a proper picture of his or her situation, as seen from the user's own perspective and this required a type of listening similar to the one we use when listening to a friend, rather than the sort of listening used to conduct a therapeutic interview. The picture obtained was not limited to the person's problems, but also included an overview of the resources to which the person had access and of the person's interests, goals and/or expectations. To broaden the picture, it was sometimes necessary or helpful to bring in other professionals, with the agreement of the user, who helped to generate a more complete picture, sometimes by undertaking more specific assessments.

The level of trust and the relationship between the user and coordinator were vital in ensuring that the planning process worked well. Experience shows that good chemistry between people is extremely important in this context. It was therefore important that the person had the opportunity to *choose* his or her own coordinator, even though the personal coordinator represented the whole of service system.

Each coordinator had to be competent in giving guidance, advice and objective information but also had to recognise the active and central role in the process that the users had to play and be capable of motivating and stimulating them to take the initiative on their own behalf.

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