



Peer Review on “Active inclusion of young adults receiving social assistance benefits”

Host country discussion paper Norway

Active Inclusion Policies and Follow-up Methods for Young Adults

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1. Introduction

Norwegian welfare policies have since the 1990s been underpinned by a strong ethos of work inclusion through the so called “work line approach” - “Arbeidslinja”. Aiming at work inclusion for all citizens, the development of active labour market policies (ALMP) that target people with various challenges to work inclusion have been central. During the last decades ALMPs have been extended to target increasingly more groups of service users, including young adults receiving social assistance. This host country paper aims to give an overview of Norwegian policies for active inclusion of young adults. We will look at policies, measures and methods that are relevant for young adults receiving social assistance, with the objective of exploring how the duty to participate in activation measures can be further developed to increase the number entering work or education.

Social assistance is a means-tested municipally funded and administered cash benefit which is meant to function as a security net and temporally ensure basic needs like food and shelter in emergency situations for people who are not in possession of other income securing means. Social assistance is rights-based and should be granted without conditionality. However, since 1993 municipalities have had the possibility to impose conditions on social assistance in cases where conditioning has been regarded appropriate and contributing to making the service user economically independent. In such cases, the use of conditionality must be closely connected to the objective of becoming self-sufficient. More recently, since 2017, recipients of social assistance under 30 years old have been conditioned to activation (Social Service Act, §20). Correspondingly, the municipalities have been obliged to offer this group activation measures.

Social assistance recipients in general are characterised by lack of formal education, many have not completed upper secondary school, have health challenges and poor labour market attachment (Wel et al. 2006). Approximately one third have an immigrant background (Statistics Norway, 2022).

Young people in their early 20s is the largest group among the age groups receiving social assistance (Dahl & Lima, 2021). In 2021 approximately 40 000 young adults under 30 (of a total of approximately 125 000 recipients) received social assistance over a shorter or longer period.

Approximately 14 500 of those under 30 receiving social assistance in 2021 were conditioned to activation (Statistics Norway, 2022).

Table 1 - Number of cases with conditions for receipt of social assistance

	Year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>All ages</i>	33452	42359	40417	36936	35279
<i>Age ≤29</i>	14227	17505	16835	15442	14443
<i>Percentage of cases with conditions, age ≤ 29*</i>	28.7%	36.6%	37.4%	35.7%	36.4%

Note: The figures showing the numbers of cases (in the first and second row) are national estimates for the whole country based on municipal reporting to the KOSTRA municipal-state reporting database.

* Own calculation based on data from two different tables.

Source: Statistics Norway, table 12266: Conditions for social assistance, by contents, region and year and table and table 08900: Number of cases on social assistance, by region, age, contents and year

The table shows that while it clearly has become more common to make the receipt of social assistance conditional on participation in some kind of activity. Nonetheless, at least according to the reported data, the use of conditionality is far from automatic. In about two out of three of social assistance cases that involve young recipients, there is no reporting

of conditions set. This may indicate that the service users did not receive activation measures (see Dahl & Lima, 2018).

Before addressing activation policies and measures for young adults, in the next section we briefly present the Norwegian welfare system and its out-of-work income maintenance schemes.

2. The Norwegian labour and welfare services and the income maintenance schemes

In 2006 the Norwegian welfare system underwent a governance reform in which the previously separate state agencies of social insurance and employment services were merged with the municipal social services into one service – the Norwegian labour and welfare services (NAV). The reform was specifically aimed at better coordinating the services for service users with complex challenges, including those who fell between benefit categories and those who frequently moved between social assistance and other short-term benefits (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2004 -2005).

Along with the NAV-reform there was also a reform of the income maintenance system and the needs assessment system. Today, there are basically five income maintenance schemes for people of working age: 1) unemployment benefit, 2) sick pay, 3) work assessment allowance, 4) disability benefits, and 5) social assistance. In addition, there is a qualification benefit, which is tied to participation in the qualification program. Unemployment benefit, sick pay, work assessment allowance and disability benefits are funded by the state, while social assistance and the qualification benefit are funded by the municipalities. Except for social assistance, the benefits are universal, meaning that there is no income or means test. All citizens who fulfil the criteria are eligible for the benefits regardless of individual economic situation and status.

These income maintenance benefits are tied to activation requirements in various forms and degrees and some of the benefits come with a promise of employment-oriented follow-up.

In addition to the assessment of benefit eligibility, service users registering at NAV will have their needs for assistance and follow-up assessed (NAV Act §14a). The level of assistance and follow-up is grouped into categories to which the service user may be assigned depending on the service user's needs and distance to the labour market. As ordinary employment seeker you will be assigned to 1) standard effort, meaning that you will not receive any particular follow up. If you are defined as being further from the labour market, you will be assigned to 2) a situationally adapted effort, meaning that you will receive follow up and employment-oriented measures. However, if you are classified as having reduced work capacity you will be assigned to the category 3) specially adapted effort, meaning that you are entitled to comprehensive follow-up and individually tailored measures. Finally, those for whom ordinary employment is out of reach will be assigned to the category of being in 4) permanent need for assistance (Nossen & Gjerde, 2022). The levels of effort do not strictly correspond to benefits, but social assistance recipients will often be assigned to a situationally adapted effort, while service users with health issues receiving work assessment allowance will be assigned to a specially adapted effort. Nevertheless, service users who circulate in the system over time, tend to be moving between benefits and levels

of assistance and follow-up categories depending on their changing status and situation (Hansen & Gubrium, 2021, 2022; Kalstø, 2022).

3. Activation requirements for young adults receiving social assistance benefit

The duty for young people under 30 to participate in activation measures as a requirement to receive social assistance benefit, was implemented in the Social Service Act in 2017 (Parliamentary proposition, nr. 1, 2016-2017, Social Service Act § 20a). The background for the requirement was the concern that young adults seeking economic support from the labour and welfare services would be permanently trapped in inactivity and poverty. The objective was to: “strengthen the individual’s possibilities of becoming employed and economically independent. It is in particular important to help young adults to move out of a passive situation” (Parliamentary proposition 1 (2016-2017)). The new paragraph in the Social Services Act, §20a *Application of conditions for persons below 30*, affirmed activation as a mandatory condition for young adults under 30 receiving social assistance except in cases in which there were strong arguments to the contrary: “Granting social assistance to individuals under 30 shall be conditioned to requirements of activity unless there are good reasons not to do so”. Since 1993 the Social Service Act had provided municipalities with the formal legal opportunity to impose conditions, including in the form of activation requirements, on service users in return for social assistance receipt. However, the change in the Social Service Act from *can* to *shall* set conditions, also meant a change in the municipalities’ responsibility to provide employment-oriented measures: from 2017 the municipalities were obliged to offer activation measures to young adults receiving social assistance. Hence, the §20a introduced a reciprocal obligation for the municipality and the local NAV service, on the one hand, and the service user on the other hand, to respectively provide and participate in activation policy measures. In 2021, there was an additional change in the social service act (§20a), stating a duty for the municipality to condition young adults under 30 to learn Norwegian for those who were not able to be self-supported due to lack of Norwegian skills (Government proposal to the Parliament, Prop. 24, (2020-2021)).

In the 2017 allocation letter to NAV, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs emphasised the obligation to prioritize young adults under 30, through the so called “youth effort”: “...young adults under 30 who after 8 weeks of unemployment is out of work, education or activity shall receive an offer from NAV. The main effort shall be planned and individually tailored employment-oriented follow-up from NAV” (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2017, p. 4). This is followed up further in the 2021 allocation letter: “The labour and welfare administration shall intensify the youth effort in 2021. The increased budget allocation to employment-oriented measures ensures that more young adults in need of training and work experience can be offered suitable employment-oriented measures” (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021, p. 6).

Along with the implementation of the activation-duty in 2017, there was a renewed focus on the provision of training and education that provide formal qualifications to young adult beneficiaries of the NAV services. Parliamentary report 16 (2015-2016) “From exclusion to new chance – Coordinated effort to promote adult learning” explicitly asks NAV to prioritise measures that are formally qualifying and that the target group for formally qualifying measures should be those under 30. A change in regulations from 2019 concerning who are entitled to training that results in formal qualifications (certificate, diploma from upper

secondary school) made it possible also for those who were not defined as having a reduced work capacity to be eligible for such qualifying measures. This meant that also social assistance recipients under 30, at least in principle, could be entitled to activation measures that provides formal qualifications.

The Government's report to the parliament "No one left aside – A comprehensive policy for labour and social inclusion" (Parliamentary report nr. 32 (2020-2021), expressed the ambition to make the activation duty a more suitable means for fostering the transition of young people into employment and to become economically independent. The Parliamentary report called for the development of a broader set of policy measures that respond to the needs of the service users. Moreover, the report expressed a need for a broader set of competencies in the services to ensure individual assessment and tailored measures (Parliamentary report nr. 32 (2020-2021) p. 16). The report also suggests that young people should be assessed for the municipal Qualification Program (QP), a program that gives access to for example upper secondary education as activation measure (Parliamentary report nr. 32 (2020-2021). Many young adults receiving social assistance would be eligible for Qualification Program and formally qualifying employment-oriented measures (Strand & Svalund, 2021). The parliamentary report nr. 32 (2020-2021) was, however, not approved by the new incoming Labour coalition government in seat since autumn 2021. Nevertheless, the 2021 allocation letter to the Norwegian labour and welfare administration explicitly emphasised the inclusion of young adults, and in particular those with reduced work capability (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021). Furthermore, the 2023 national budget contains a proposal for a renewed "Youth guarantee", offering measures and follow-up aimed at preventing young people from being left outside the education system and the labour market.

So far, there is little or no evidence that the service users' duty to participate in activation and the municipalities' obligation to offer activation measures have had any effect in the form of more young social assistance recipients making the transition to employment or education (Hernæs, 2021; Dahl & Lima, 2018). However, a previous study on the use of conditionality (not necessarily in the form of activation policy measures) has shown positive effect for the youngest social assistance recipients in terms of their probability of completing upper secondary education (Hernæs et al., 2017). As pointed out by Dahl and Lima (2018) the reason for the poor outcomes in terms of transition to work may be that the municipalities had practiced conditionality through activation requirements for young social assistance claimants already before 2017 (see Dahl & Lima, 2017). Hence, the change from can to shall in the social service act might therefore not have had any practical influence. Another explanation may be that the municipalities have not been able to offer adequate and relevant measures for the young adults to move into employment or education (Dahl & Lima, 2017, 2018).

A qualitative study by Lidèn and Trætteberg (2019) evaluating the activation-duty in its initial phases, found that Norwegian municipalities understood and practiced the activation-duty differently, both regarding what measures the service users were offered and how conditionality was practiced. They found that the provision of activation measures basically fell into three categories: 1) 'Turning the service user around in the doorway'; a strategy aiming at moving the service user into employment or work-placement as fast as possible. This strategy represents a work-first approach and a short-term perspective on labour market inclusion; 2) establishing jobcentres where service users were required to meet up to receive training and follow-up and perform job-seeking activities; and 3) establishing job-

teams where the service users performed practical tasks for the municipality – for instance distribution of food to older people or sweeping the streets for garbage. Even though jobcentres and job teams functioned temporarily as important social arenas for the young adults, the policy measures did not provide meaningful and employment relevant activities to any extent (Lidèn & Trættestad, 2019; Leseth, Vilhena & Gjersøe, 2020).

Yet, according to the caseworkers, the municipalities' duty to provide activation measures resulted in improved follow-up of the young service users (Lidèn & Trættestad, 2019). As pointed out in other studies, close follow-up is important for mapping of the service users' individual needs, and according to the caseworkers the activation duty facilitated better follow-up and possibilities for mapping of the service users' needs (Lidèn & Trættestad, 2019). Being able to do a thorough mapping of service users' needs is considered a success factor, in particular for individuals and groups who face barriers against labour market inclusion. Mapping of needs also means a quicker clarification of appropriate measures and trajectories – whether that is into education, towards employment or health related benefits (Dahl & Lima, 2018). However, smaller municipalities often lack resources to provide close follow-up as well as offering relevant activation measures (Dahl & Lima, 2018; Hansen, 2020). For caseworkers in these municipalities, the activation duty meant more bureaucracy and administrative work without having the intended effect on service users' self-sufficiency (Dahl & Lima, 2018).

4. Other active inclusion policies and follow-up methods for young adults

4.1. Strengthened Youth Effort

The Strengthened Youth Effort was initiated in 2017, along with the activation duty for young adult social assistance recipients. The policy aimed to bring more young adults into employment and activity. In the allocation letter from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs NAV was called on to prioritize the group of service users under 30 for employment-oriented follow up and employability enhancing measures. The service users should be offered individually tailored follow-up and measures within a time limit of 8 weeks after registration at NAV. Young adults lacking training and education and those who had not completed secondary upper school should be prioritized for formally qualifying measures (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2017).

The Strengthened Youth Effort targets young adult service users under 30 regardless of what income maintenance scheme they benefitted from. Strand et al. (2020) who have evaluated the Strengthened Youth Effort found that 20 % received social assistance, 35 % received work assessment allowance and 18 % received unemployment benefit. The distance to work was considerable for the service users that were targeted in the Strengthened Youth Effort. Many of the service users lacked formal qualifications. The majority had not completed upper secondary education and had non or limited work experience. Many suffered from mental health issues, lack of self-confidence and motivation for work (Strand et al., 2020).

Instruments and methods used in the Strengthened Youth Effort were: 1) rapid clarification (1/3 within 2 weeks), 2) job-clubs, 3) motivational work, 4) relational work, 5) job specialists,

and 6) traditional employment enhancing measures. The case workers considered relational work just as important for the service users' job prospects as concrete employment-oriented measures. Creating good relations between service user and caseworker was emphasised also by service users as an important factor for obtaining employment. Work training in ordinary workplaces, education or qualification in the ordinary education system were considered the most effective employment-oriented measures. The job specialists were considered to have an important function as labour market contacts. Job-clubs, local initiatives developed in the NAV services, offered tailored courses, with cv-writing, interview training, meetings with local employers, counselling about private economy, etc. In addition to employment-oriented activities and close follow-up, the job-clubs were also considered an important arena where service users received training to enhance their social skills. Moreover, the job-clubs were used as arena for follow-up and supervision of service users in groups rather than in one-to-one conversations with individual service users which is how follow-up work tend to be conducted (see Hansen & Natland, 2017). The group-wise follow-up of service users was considered by caseworkers a time-saving and effective way of doing follow-up work.

Collaboration with other sectors and services was highlighted as an important success criterion, although sometimes difficult to achieve. Caseworkers reported to have regular and frequent contact with local employers, providers of labour market measures, health services (both GPs and specialist services), schools, housing services and childcare services, but less frequent contact with civil society organisations (Strand et al., 2020). The caseworkers stressed that frequent contact was important for development of fruitful collaboration. Collaboration with the health sector was experienced as challenging due to different logics and aims. While NAV focused on moving people into or closer to employment, the health services were to larger extent focused on keeping people out of the labour market until the patient had fully recovered or had completed medical rehabilitation.

Both service users and NAV caseworkers emphasised that the housing and economic situation has to be solved for young adults to be able to engage in activation measures. This is in line with other studies suggesting that basic needs must be taken care of before one can direct the attention towards employment and strategies to find paid work (Frøyland, 2020). This suggests a holistic approach to the young adults who experience unpredictable and unstable life situations. According to the caseworkers, responding to the service users' complex needs requires a broad set of competencies, such as social work, relational work and labour market knowledge, in addition to personal suitedness and agency (Strand et al., 2020, p. 93).

The Strengthened Youth Effort seems not to have had any effect on young adults' transition to employment. However, there is a positive effect on transition to education (Strand et al., 2020).

4.2. Extended Follow-up

Extended Follow-up of service users in NAV was implemented in local NAV services from 2017. Extended Follow up builds on principles from Supported Employment (see below) and is a policy-measure that resembles the Strengthened Youth Effort, except from the age-unspecific targeting. The target group for Extended Follow-up are people for whom a job in the ordinary labour market is not considered realistic without extensive development of their employability and adjustments and support in the workplace (Proba, 2020). In practice more

than 40 % of the service users receiving extended follow-up is under 29. Under the Extended follow-up service users are offered close follow-up from job specialists employed in NAV. This means that the follow-up is not outsourced to external agents but organised and carried out by staff from the local NAV office. The follow-up method is structured by a 15-point scale quality guide developed in NAV (the so called Kvalitetsveilederen). Service users who are motivated for work and who have comprehensive support needs and who are assigned to situationally adapted or specially adapted effort are referred to Extended Follow-up. An evaluation has shown that Extended Follow-up was more effective in terms of obtaining employment than ordinary follow-up in NAV (Proba, 2020). Work training and wage subsidies, often in combination, were the most often used measures.

4.3. Supported Employment

Supported Employment (SE) – with a five-stage process – is a work inclusion approach targeting service users with reduced work capacity and who are experiencing significant barriers to labour market entry. The strategy aims to bring the service user quickly into ordinary employment and use the workplace as an arena for training, learning, recovery and social inclusion. The emphasis is on ‘placement and training’ as opposed to the traditional ‘training and then placement’-strategy. The aim is that service users should obtain and maintain employment. Both service users and the employers are provided with comprehensive follow-up from job specialists. The five-stage process includes the following stages: 1) contact and agreement between service user and job specialist, 2) mapping and planning of career, 3) finding a suitable job, 4) collaboration with employers, and 5) training and learning (in and/or outside workplace) (Bakkeli et al., 2020). Service users who are defined as having a reduced working capacity and categorised as being in need of situationally adapted effort or in need of specially adapted effort are eligible for the SE-five stage process. Young social assistance recipients are eligible for the SE-five stage process. A recent randomised controlled study comparing SE to ordinary follow-up in NAV found that service users receiving SE had a higher probability of obtaining employment or taking up education. However, the effect decreased by time, and disappeared three years after the intervention (Dahl & Lima, 2021).

4.4. Individual Placement Support (IPS):

IPS is a variant of Supported Employment, targeting service users with mental health issues. The approach comprises a set of tools and qualitative measurement scales that should be applied in the follow-up. IPS builds on 8 principles: 1) the goal is permanent employment, 2) participation is based on service user’s own wishes and interests, 3) follow-up in the workplace is part of the treatment, 4) job search is based on individual preferences, 5) the beneficiary will receive counselling about their rights and obligations, 6) job search starts early in the process, 7) building relations and networking with potential employers, and 8) individually adapted follow-up without time limit. A previous study comparing IPS and ordinary follow-up of service users in NAV, found that IPS is effective for the service users who stand farthest from the labour market – those with severe mental issues and who have not completed upper secondary school (Holmås et al. 2021).

Individual Placement Support YOUNG is an ongoing project in NAV, targeting young people with mental health problems. The project is currently being evaluated by researchers from Oslo Metropolitan University (Malmberg-Heimonen, Sadeghi, Frøyland, Tøge & Spjelkavik).

4.5. The Qualification Program

The Qualification Program was implemented along with the NAV-reform in 2007, and targets service users who are long-term recipients of social assistance or have significantly reduced working capacity and labour market participation due to complex problems and challenges, including diffuse and undiagnosed health issues (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, 2006–2007). The program is regulated by the Norwegian Social Services Act (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2009). In comparison to social assistance, the program has been said to be an offer of ‘more’, in terms of higher benefit levels, improved services with individual and tailored measures and close follow up, and a daily schedule of 37,5 hours, a structure associated with regular work life (Gubrium et al., 2014). The principles for follow-up of service users in the Qualification Program is thorough mapping, close follow up, continuity and predictability for the service users. In addition to activities directly related to work-seeking and training, the program also includes a focus on personal aspects such as need for resting, medical treatment, leisure activities and other activities that enhance the person’s motivation and self-efficacy (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Inclusion, 2006–2007b). The Qualification Program is considered a best practice in NAV. However, research has also shown lack of thorough mapping and tailoring of measures and that service users rather have been referred to standard activities (Hansen, 2019, 2020). Moreover, we do not know to what extent or how personal aspects and motivational activities have been addressed in individual service users’ programs.

While Lima and Furuberg (2018) suggest that the Qualification Program has positive effect and facilitates transition to employment, they also found a reduction in young people being enrolled in the Qualification Program from 2010 to 2017. Strand & Svalund (2021) suggest that since 2017 and the implementation of the activation duty, young adults are more often referred to social assistance than the Qualification Program, even though they would qualify for the Qualification Program and probably benefit from participating in the program. For young people the Qualification Program represents a long-term perspective (up to two years) with comprehensive follow-up and the possibility of receiving formally qualifying measures, for instance upper secondary vocational education. Moreover, the qualification cash benefit is more generous and predictable than the social assistance benefit and, thus, ensures more economic stability for the participants while they are enrolled in the programme.

5. Success factors in active inclusion of young adults

A recent review of Nordic research literature on inclusion of young people (Frøyland et al., 2022) identified factors that are considered important in bringing young people into education and employment. Several of these factors are also identified in the policy programs and measures presented in the previous section. The most important factors are:

- Individual and close follow-up from competent professionals over time, e.g. case worker, counsellor or job specialist with social work competency, relational competency and labour market knowledge.
- Holistic approach – which means working with a complex of challenges, such as social-, health-, housing-, family-, skills and competency-issues, as well as the basic needs like housing and financial situation which should be taken care of before one is able to concentrate on qualification, education and employment (Hansen, Jensen & Hansen, 2020; Frøyland et al. 2022).

- Establishing trusting relationships over time. Relational work requires time and competency – typical social work (Frøyland, 2018; Solheim et al. 2021; Kane, Köhler-Olsen & Reedtz, 2017)
- Follow-up should continue also after employment is achieved (Frøyland, 2018).
- Individually adapted programs, measures and activities that are flexible and adjustable over time, and which matches with the person's interests and capacities (Frøyland et al., 2020; Kane, Köhler-Olsen & Reedtz, 2017). These programs, activities and measures tend to be employment-oriented and do normally not include leisure activities.
- Appropriate and relevant employment-enhancing measures, matching of jobs and interests (Frøyland, 2018b, Kane, Köhler-Olsen & Reedtz, 2017).
- Use of job specialists – The function of a job specialist is to liaison between the service user and the employer and to follow-up and support both parties closely and over time to ensure work inclusion for a person who face difficulties accessing the labour market. Hence, the job specialist needs both labour market competency, relational competency and understanding of the situation for individuals with complex challenges. It is suggested that NAV recruit and employ job specialist.
- Building relationships with employers. Employers' involvement requires follow up and fixed contact person from NAV, for instance job specialists (Frøyland, 2018).
- Placement and training, rather than training and placement – wage subsidies and training in workplace seem to be the most effective means for labour inclusion (Proba, 2020; Frøyland et al. 2022).
- Interdisciplinary and cross sectorial collaboration is important. Collaboration with schools works well, but more difficult to collaborate with health services due to diverse logics – 'moving into work' and 'keeping out of work' due to health issues.
- Allocating measures in NAV that are easy to access for the service users – e.g. job clubs. Running measures inside NAV instead of purchasing from external suppliers creates team spirit and collaboration among the staff in NAV and ensures better follow-up of service users. Organising of the work in dedicated youth teams in NAV.
- Long term perspective on labour market inclusion: Need to view labour market inclusion as an unlinear process, not a predefined straight forward trajectory (Hansen and Gubrium, 2021, 2022).
- Develop new understandings of the work inclusion 'problem' in collaboration with the individual, the services, the support system and the labour market/employers: motivation and work capacity are not a characteristic of the individual but is created in interaction (Frøyland et al. 2020).

For further information the report can be read here:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11250/2984527>

6. Discussion points for the peer review

In the following we will point out some issues for discussion in relation to how the activation duty can be developed.

- *The dilemma of social assistance's relative short-term perspective and young adults' needs for longer lasting and formally qualifying measures and follow-up*

Social assistance is a means-tested benefit which is meant to function as a security net and ensure people their basic needs in emergency situations when they are not in possession of other income securing means. As a subsidiary benefit social assistance is meant to temporarily cover basic needs like food and shelter. This short term 'emergency' perspective is the basis for social assistance and might conflict with the intention and expectation that the activation measures should bring young adults into education or employment. Nicolaisen and Kann (2019) recommend that NAV should pay more attention to the service users' needs than to the kind of cash benefit the service users receive, and offer qualifying measures and education also to those who are receiving short-term cash benefits, including social assistance recipients.

- *A broader spectre of measures*

Standardized services may not pay sufficient attention to individual needs and may be insufficient for service users with complex challenges. The activation duty should offer more individually tailored measures and follow-up. Policies should include service users' experiences and focus more on service users' participation and involvement - to succeed with the policies in the future (Strand et al., 2020; Hansen & Gubrium, 2021, 2022).

- *Service users moving in the system, across benefits, over time*

In principle, individual service users should be offered measures according to their needs and not according to benefit type. However, in practice, benefit schemes seem to determine the measure on offer ((Nicolaisen & Kann, 2019). For service users with complex challenges who tend to move between benefit schemes, this might create problems in terms of interrupted labour inclusion trajectories as they transfer from one type of benefit into another. Hence, there is a need to look at the individual young adult service users in the labour and welfare system over time, not only in relation to the benefit received at a certain point in his/her labour inclusion trajectory.

- *A broader focus on outcomes*

For those who stand at the longest distance from the labour market the goal of labour market inclusion may seem unobtainable. It is therefore necessary to have short term goals, such as attendance at the job club or in other activities. Qualitative measures such as enhanced self-efficacy or quality of life should also be included in policies aiming at inclusion of young adults.

- *Organising of the active inclusion work in local labour and welfare services*

Do the agencies have the time and resources dedicated to follow-up of young adults receiving social assistance – in dedicated teams, and/or with specialised competencies; caseworkers, counsellors, social workers, job specialists?

- *Policy governing signals following from the yearly allocation letters, and the municipalities duty to offer activation according to the social service act –are there dilemmas, contradictions or ‘added value’?*

What is the relationship between the municipalities’ duty to offer activation measures and the increasing regulations of how to provide activation, and the guidelines that follow from the allocation letters from the government on how this should be used – for instance measures aiming at enhancing staff’s competencies in the labour and welfare services? How does it influence the municipalities’ ability to fulfil the law?

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