

Accessing employment after traumatic brain injury: a case study

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Introduction

In an optimal situation, people with partial work ability gain employment or continue in their present employment in an open labor market. However, low post-injury rates show evidence that access or return to work is very difficult after traumatic brain injury. Finland has a large but complex assortment of means, services and benefits to help people with partial work ability – including those with brain injury – stay at work (Figure 1).

Objective

The research question was “How the employee himself, the work ability co-ordinator, and the employer describe the key facilitators and barriers in the employment process?”

Methods

The employee was a 20-year-old man, who had suffered a brain injury in a traffic accident at the age of 12. He participated in a six-month work-trial in a pharmacy as a part of his occupational rehabilitation. We carried out narrative interviews with the employee, the work ability co-ordinator and the employer.

Results

Three interviews focused on the perceptions of the employee, co-ordinator, and employer regarding the key facilitators and barriers of employment after a traumatic brain injury (Table 1).

Conclusions

This case study showed that the support of the work ability co-ordinator and a successful work-trial in a pharmacy helped the young person with a traumatic brain injury find a suitable occupational career and benefit from important accommodations in work schedules.

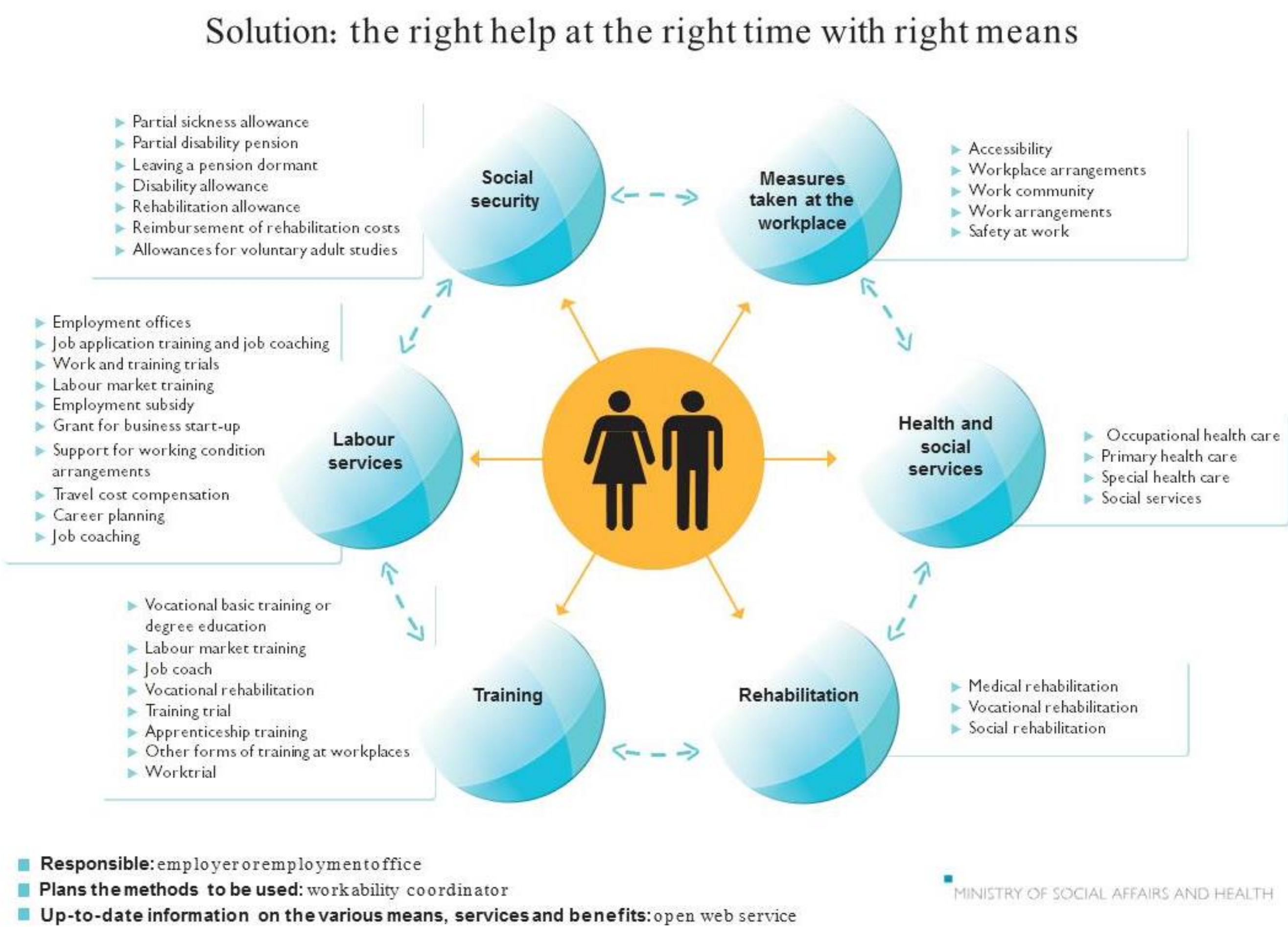


Figure 1. The operating model includes services, means and benefits for people with partial work ability.

Level	Facilitators	Barriers
Personal level	Good work motivation and learning skills, interest in pharmacy, self-advocacy, support of family	Fatigue and decreased ability to concentrate due to brain injury
Organizational level	Support of the employer and community, equality, familiarization, procedures, vocational counselling and guidance, suitable work tasks, peaceful work environment, modified work schedules	Organizational changes of the pharmacy, co-workers' unawareness of his brain injury
Societal level	Flexibility of the work-trial in a pharmacy, support of a work ability co-ordinator	Fragmented services and benefits, unclear roles, responsibility and co-operation between different actors

Table 1. Key facilitators and barriers in the employment process of a person with traumatic brain injury.