

READY FOR WORK

*Down Syndrome Ireland helps adults
with Down syndrome prepare for
unique employment opportunities.*



Down
Syndrome
Ireland

National Leadership Local Support



Down Syndrome Ireland's Ability Programme is preparing adults with Down syndrome for meaningful employment.

With less than 5% adults with Down syndrome obtaining employment in Ireland, Down Syndrome Ireland is setting out to not only ensure that there are increased opportunities, but that this unique community is prepared for them.

"People need meaningful work," explains Gary Owens, CEO of Down Syndrome Ireland. "We all need to use our brains and we need social interaction. Without it, people with Down syndrome

often see their peers achieving milestones which they themselves are not. What we are most interested in is working with adults with Down syndrome and asking them, 'What are you interested in? What would you enjoy doing? What can we help you become competent for?' So, we've developed the Ability Programme that focuses on key sectors such as hospitality, catering, retail, hairdressing, horticulture and business administration.

There is huge opportunity. What we are finding is they are truly adding value and their employers are really happy."

First, Listen.

The Ability Programme offers numerous options around training and skills. Beginning with first listening to the individual's interests and educating them on different jobs to the nuts and bolts of applying and interviewing. Lastly, work experience and hands-on

training prepares students for workplace life learning everything from practical skills to how to handle the inevitable stresses of a work day.

Companies participating in the program are recruited by Down Syndrome Ireland and the organization provides training for employers as well to ensure that all involved are supporting the key goals of meaningful work.

Beauty In All Its Forms

One particularly successful training and employment partner has been ALFAPARF Milano, a leading Italian hair salon and beauty product manufacturer with a strong presence in Ireland. Its "Beauty In All Its Forms" program gives adults with Down syndrome an opportunity to train as Hairdressing Assistants with a path to long-term employment.



THE ALFAPARF MILANO PROGRAM CONSISTS OF:

- 2 weeks of pre-employment course work
- 8 weeks in the ALFAPARF Milano salon where students learn the basics of a hair salon environment, product use, how to greet clients, how to wash hair, and basic cleaning and sterilizing tasks
- 4 weeks of work placement where students work in salons, many in their local communities, for 6 hours a day, 1 day a week
- A final practical exam to assess their knowledge level which, upon passing, earns them an ALFAPARF Milano certified Hairdressing Assistance Certification

Thus far, it has shown an 80% success rate of employment after training.

STEPHEN TRAVELLED **4 HOURS** A DAY
TO RECEIVE THE TRAINING FROM ALFAPARF MILANO

ALFAPARF
MILANO
Beauty
IN ALL ITS
forms

THE TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN BEADS STUDY

Thanks to support from The Ireland Funds, Down Syndrome Ireland partnered with Trinity College Dublin to undertake a groundbreaking study on cognitive training for adults with Down syndrome.

The BEADS Study (Brain Exercises for Adults with Down syndrome) was undertaken in light of the fact that adults with Down syndrome are at greater risk for developing dementia than the general population. By employing early intervention with cognitive training in the form of puzzles, games and specific brain challenges, the study sought to see if brain connections could be strengthened through

those activities and an effect could be seen on the adults' brain health and function.

40 people with Down syndrome took part. The study showed that strategic brain-training games helped people with Down syndrome with their memory, planning and attention skills. As a result, the BEADS program is currently a priority agenda item for the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies in Ireland. **This program has the potential to be rolled out across 60 intellectual disability services around the country.**



"OUR STAFF MORALE HAS GONE THROUGH THE ROOF. I HAVE 25 YEARS IN THE HAIRDRESSING INDUSTRY, 25 YEARS TEACHING PEOPLE, AND THIS PROGRAM, SINGLEHANDEDLY IS THE BEST PROGRAM I'VE EVER PARTICIPATED IN." — Ger Hand, Employer at ALFAPARF Milano



"THE TRAINING WAS GREAT. I LEARNED LOTS, HOW TO FOLD TOWELS, CLEANING AND WASHING HAIR. GETTING A JOB IN LLOYDS MADE ME HAPPY AND CONFIDENT. IT MAKES ME NORMAL." — John Mulligan, one of the first participants to secure employment after training

"I'VE SEEN HIS CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE GROW SINCE BEGINNING THE PROGRAMME, MEETING PEOPLE AND BEING IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT. I HOPE THIS PROGRAM SHOWS THAT WITH PROPER TRAINING, PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME CAN GAIN EMPLOYMENT." — Margaret Mulligan, John's mother



Also as a result of the study, people with Down syndrome are, for the first time, included on the agenda for the Global Brain Health Institute, with the lead researcher selected to join the Atlantic Fellowship program for Equity in Brain Health. **This now ensures that people with Down syndrome are part of the mainstream agenda of global dementia research.**

"Part of why this study is so key to us is it supports our objectives of bringing meaningful work to adults with Down syndrome," explains Gary Owens, CEO of Down Syndrome Ireland. "Meaningful work

is also very much about using your brain, having physical activity, and enjoying social integration. Without meaningful work, people's mental health can be affected. Then you can see early dementia in their late 30s and early 40s if the brain hasn't been challenged. We are here to help prevent that from happening. **It's an investment with great returns.**"