

NRH Brain Injury Programme Scope of Service

THE 'Next Stage' Vocational Programme at the Rehabilitative Training Unit (RTU)

THE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME SCOPE OF SERVICE

The *Next Stage* Vocational Training Programme at the Rehabilitative Training Unit (RTU) at the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) provides **specialised, interdisciplinary, coordinated and individualised vocational outcomes focussed** training for adults with acquired brain injury (ABI).

The Vocational Training Programme at the RTU is part of the Rehabilitative Training Programme, a national service provider accepting referrals of adults with an acquired brain injury (ABI) living throughout Ireland. The *Next Stage* Vocational Programme is designed to assist people with an acquired brain injury (ABI) to maximise their functional abilities and achieve their individual desired training goals. The Vocational Programme assists those individuals who have specific goals of returning to work and/or education, by assessing their needs and abilities, improving necessary skills, offering work/educational sampling and then helping them to make informed choices regarding future training, educational or vocational options. The Vocational Programme refers individuals to appropriate employment or training services to facilitate and implement their desired vocational goals.

NRH Brain Injury Continuum of Care

The NRH has developed a full continuum of care for people with ABI. This continuum includes:

- Brain Injury Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation Programme (BI/IP)
- Brain Injury Outpatient Rehabilitation Programme (BI/OP)
- Brain Injury Home and Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (BI/HCB)
- Brain Injury Vocational Services (BI/V)
- *Next Stage* Rehabilitative Training Programme incorporating Vocational Programme and Home & Community Programme

This comprehensive interdisciplinary system of continuum of care ensures that all individuals can receive the most appropriate programme of care based on their injury and their individual rehabilitation needs. Treatment can begin anywhere in this continuum, and persons served can progress through this continuum and to other appropriate community and follow-up services.

In some instances the person served can receive services from multiple NRH programmes and services throughout their continuum of care. For example, a person who has experienced a brain injury may also have a spinal or amputation injury. This “dual diagnosis” requires a specialised and individualised treatment plan that addresses the unique needs of the person and utilises the expertise and close working of multiple NRH programme staff and services.

Admission Criteria

To be admitted into the *Next Stage* Vocational Programme at the NRH, the individual must:

1. Have one of the following:
 - a. Acquired brain injury (ABI) is an inclusive category that embraces acute (rapid onset) brain injury of any cause, including:
 - i. trauma – due to head injury or post-surgical damage
 - ii. vascular accident (stroke or subarachnoid haemorrhage)
 - iii. cerebral anoxia
 - iv. other toxic or metabolic insult (e.g. hypoglycaemia)
 - v. Infection (e.g. meningitis, encephalitis) or other inflammation (e.g. vasculitis).
 - b. Have medical, cognitive, physical, communicative and/or behavioural needs related to the neurological injury or disease process.
2. Be aged 18 at time of admission.
3. Have the potential, and level of insight, to develop greater functional independence and to actively participate in group training.
4. Be able to arrange own transportation to/from the RTU
5. Be able to co-operate and work with staff and other programme participants.
6. Have specific vocational goals and demonstrate capacity to engage in a structured return to work plan.

Admission to the *Next Stage* Vocational Programme is based on the appropriate development of positive work-related skills, agreed vocational goals, willingness to participate in and comply with work experience contracts, and required level of motivation and engagement in vocational modules. The waiting list time varies from approx 7 months for day place, and 10 months for

Lodge place. This may also be influenced by delays in discharge and limited availability of Lodge accommodation.

Exclusion Criteria:

Persons with ABI are excluded from the *Next Stage* Vocational Programme where other needs (e.g. medical/psychiatric/behavioural/drug and substance misuse), predominate over the potential to benefit from specialised vocational training and over the cognitive, physical and psycho-social needs of the patient. In these cases recommendations may be made to the referring agent regarding other more appropriate services. Additionally, if the person is not independent in their self-care and medication management, they are required to have appropriate supports while attending the programme..e.g. a PA or Carer.

Discharge Criteria:

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To be discharged from the Vocational Programme at the RTU, one or more of the following must be true:

1. The person has achieved their vocational goals, including onward referral to specialist vocational training, employability or similar community-based service, or is engaging or in a return to work plan or has returned to work.
2. The person has received maximum benefit from this programme and has the functional level that will allow discharge to another specified vocational environment or service.
3. The person experiences major intervening surgical, medical and/or psychological problems that precludes further benefit from a continuing the training programme.
4. The person's ongoing training needs can best be met in an alternative environment or service. Relevant services have been contacted, referrals made, and the details provided to the person.
5. The person is no longer willing to be an active participant in the programme. (The Next Stage Vocational programme is strictly voluntary and persons can request to discontinue their programme at any stage).
6. The person is in breach of or non-compliant with programme policies and procedures.

Discharge Outcomes and Environments

The *Next Stage* programme aims to discharge all trainees after they have achieved their vocational training goals and received maximum benefit from the

programme. The Next Stage Vocational programme strives at all times to discharge each trainee to their most appropriate and desired discharge environment, taking into consideration the trainee's and family's wishes, their clinical and functional status, legal restrictions and availability of vocational options.

Discharge options include referral to Employment and Training Board (ETB) National Learning Network (NLN), Solas, Employability etc. Prior to their discharge the trainees engage in a comprehensive discharge planning process, where they work in collaboration with their RTU caseworker to identify a desired vocational option and work towards consolidating their work transferable skills. Contact is made with the vocational service/ organisation and a plan is formulated, e.g. referral to job coach, referral to specialist vocational training, site visit with employer, etc. The RTU caseworker continues to work with the trainee during the transition phase when they begin their engagement with the new service. Discharge takes place once full transition occurs of the trainee to the new service, and an identified contact support person takes responsibility for the trainee.

The trainees are also encouraged to avail of any community-based brain injury supports, e.g. with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (ABII), Headway Ireland, or community therapies as recommended by RTU team.

Main Aims of the RTU Vocational Programme

- To build on specific work related and transferable work skills
- Increase levels of independence & community re-integration that supports a return to work
- Identify gaps in work related skills and provide individualised skills training
- Provide a safe and graded learning environment that encourages participation
- Retrain previous work-related skills and learn new skills
- Provide a work like structure to the daily routine and build stamina
- Provide relevant educational support, computer training, and explore assistive technology (AT) needs/ refer to AT clinic
- Liaison and referral with various employment support organisations
- Conduct work site visits and engage with employer on return to work plans
- Assist individuals in making informed choices regarding future training, educational and /or vocational options

An ABI may be caused by trauma, tumour, vascular accident (e.g. stroke or subarachnoid haemorrhage), cerebral anoxia, toxic or metabolic insult (e.g. hypoglycaemia), infection (e.g. meningitis, encephalitis) or other inflammation

process (e.g. vasculitis). These impairments can cause a wide range and level of medical, physical, cognitive, communicative, psychological, social, behavioural, vocational, educational, cultural, family, spiritual and leisure needs in people with ABI. These impairments may also impact the functional abilities of people with ABI to live independently, drive, use public transport, return to work or education, participate in leisure and social activities, and fulfil varied roles external to the work environment, but that enrich them as working individuals.

The *Next Stage Vocational Programme*, in conjunction with the persons served and their families/carers, provides individualised, goal-directed vocational training which focuses on the development of transferable work skills, independent living skills, and personal development, all of which contribute to reducing the impact of impairment and assist individuals with ABI to achieve their desired vocational and life goals. While trainees will have a common disability, the effects of brain injury are diverse. Therefore, the training programme is designed to meet individual needs and goals in a person-centred format by providing a high-quality and individualised training plan. The necessary qualifying factor for entry is that applicants show insight, potential and motivation to engage in the vocational aspects of the programme.

The services of the *Next Stage* vocational programme are provided by an interdisciplinary team through a case-coordinated approach that also addresses:

- Ongoing access to information, referral and transition to services available within the NRH Brain Injury Continuum of care.
- Support for information sharing, movement and access with external brain injury community resources and stakeholders.
- Provision of education and support to persons served, their families/support systems and employers/ workplace community.
- Opportunity to avail of work experience placements, in the NRH and external work sites.
- Referral to specialist vocational training or supported employment services
- Co-ordinated pathway for a graded return to work, including work site visits, assessments, and liaison with potential employers.

Programme Setting

All trainees on the *Next Stage* vocational programme are screened for their vocational potential. Screening is completed by team with reference to trainees' needs, goals and abilities. The programme can facilitate up to 17 full time equivalent trainees. The unit has a reception area, group training /resource room, computer room, large group conference room, kitchen, manager's office, psychologist's room, small assessment room, and a general office.

The *Next Stage* Vocational Programme is a national programme, and those living outside commutable distance may apply to avail of on-site Bed & Breakfast accommodation in the Corofin Millennium Lodge.

The Corofin Millennium Lodge is an 8-bedded residential facility located above the Rehabilitative Training Unit. Accommodation is laid out in single rooms en-suite and can facilitate one carer if required. It has common living, kitchen and laundry areas and a quiet room. All areas including bathrooms and a lift cater for trainees in wheelchairs or with mobility difficulties. The lodge is open Sunday evening to Thursday morning.

For trainees who reside in the Lodge there is a €15 per night fee. This fee may be reimbursed from either the HSE or Department of Social and Family Affairs depending on eligibility requirements.

Programme Duration and Hours

Trainees attend up to five days/week (max 30 hour week)

Hours: 9.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9.30am to 1pm Fridays
Corofin Lodge opens Sunday evenings at 6pm

The average duration of the *Next Stage* Vocational programme was 8.5 months in 2022. Trainees attending the Vocational Programme will also engage in brain injury education, cognitive rehabilitation, independent living skills training, social and communication skills training according to their needs, and successful completion of a number of graded work placement experiences. Alongside this they will participate in and complete a flexible 16-20-week Vocational Training module, run once a week. Trainees are assessed on their readiness to engage in the vocational programme, through a comprehensive process, assigned to the vocational modules, matched to suitable work experience placements, and referred to vocational and employment agencies prior to being discharged from the RTU. This process also takes into account reasonable accommodations that might need to be made by potential employers, and compensatory strategies that the trainee will need to employ while at work.

The Services Provided For Trainees

Following appropriate referral to the RTU *Next Stage* Vocational Programme, the person will be invited to attend a comprehensive intake assessment, the Initial Interview, to identify their unique medical, physical, cognitive, communicative, psychological, social, behavioural, vocational, educational, cultural, family, spiritual and leisure needs. This is also an opportunity for persons referred to

receive information about the RTU including characteristics of clients served, types of services offered, programme outcomes, and any other information required. Following this assessment and if the person meets the RTU admission criteria, they may be offered a trial programme place. A trial programme is 4-6 weeks long and provides the opportunity for trainee and staff to ascertain if this programme is appropriate for them at this time.

The programme starts with an Induction period. During the Induction period, a member of the RTU team will be assigned to the trainee as caseworker, and they will liaise with the client/family and establish initial vocational and life goals and potential outcomes with the client. After this induction period, the interdisciplinary team members, in collaboration with the person served and their family/support network, will develop a comprehensive individual training plan that addresses the identified vocational goals of the person served and their family/support network. Persons served and their family/support network are offered appropriate information and opportunity for feedback at every stage of the training programme and are actively involved in decisions regarding their training programme. Persons served and their family/support network are also offered education on ABI and strategies to aid their rehabilitation.

The Vocational Programme aims to achieve the following training goals:

- The identification of possible realistic career options and specific short- and long-term goals needed to be developed in order to pursue this option
- The identification of the trainee's own personal strengths and weaknesses which are relevant to working options identified
- Completion of vocational interest self assessment and other inventories
- Referral to vocational assessment (NRH OT dept or other)
- Development of vocational and job seeking skills and work profiles
- Reviewing desired workplace behaviours, including role of policies and procedures
- Review of health and safety policies in the workplace
- Compilation of current CV and cover letters
- Practice of interview techniques and participation in mock interviews
- Referral for individual career guidance from Local Employment Services/ HSE occupational guidance officers where appropriate
- Onward referral to local employment support agencies where appropriate
- Development of return to work plan in collaboration with employer

Modules delivered in the Vocational Programme include:

Module 1: Introduction

Module 2: Transferable Skills

Module 3 & 4: Skills Assessment

Module 5: Closing the Skills Gap

Module 6: CV Workshop

Module 7 & 8: CV Builder Worksheet

Module 9: Guest Speaker AHEAD
 Module 10 & 11: Individual CV review
 Module 12: Cover Letters
 Module 13: Job Advertisements
 Module 14: Interview Skills
 Module 16: Disclosure
 Module 17: Professional Communication Skills
 Module 18: Past Trainee Talk
 Module 19: Fatigue Management
 Module 20: Benefits of Diverse Workforce

Trainees who attend the Vocational Programme have access to the full *Next Stage* Rehabilitative Training Programme. (See RTU Scope of Service for details). They can also be referred to ancillary services within the NRH or community services, including:

- Advanced assistive technology assessment and prescription
- Dental Service
- Physiotherapy Services (incl. Aquatic physiotherapy)
- Medical assessment and management
- Speech & Language Therapy
- Neuropsychology
- Medical speciality consulting including Psychiatry, Neuro-ophthalmology, Neuropsychiatry.
- Nutritional counselling and management
- Occupational Therapy
- Pastoral and spiritual services
- Patient advocacy service
- Substance abuse counselling

People with ABI frequently have complex disabilities and needs which require specialist intervention by professionals with knowledge and experience in the management of brain injury. The composition of the NRH/RTU interdisciplinary team for each person served is determined by the assessment of the person's individual medical and rehabilitation needs. These team members could include:

- RTU Manager
- Occupational Therapist
- Counselling Psychologist
- Training Facilitator
- Speech & Language Therapist
- Sports Therapist
- Rehabilitation medicine specialist
- Medical Social Worker
- Dietician
- Neuropsychologist
- Physiotherapist
- Neuropsychiatrist

The Services Provided to Employers

If the trainee has a goal of returning to work, either with a new employer, a previous or current employer, the caseworker will liaise with the employer with

regards to the adjusted job description and work contract. Each return-to-work plan is unique to the individual and the workplace supports or accommodations they may require. The job description is informed by work experience placement performance and observations, with regards to duties, responsibilities, potential risk and control measures. The employer is provided with education and supports for the trainee's transition back into the work environment. Work site visits and assessments are arranged where appropriate and according to the choice of the person served. Once the individual has been returned to work the caseworker can agree a period of time where they liaise with the employer for feedback and to identify any further adaptations required. When person served and employer are happy that there has been a successful transition back into the workplace the caseworker can set the programme discharge date.

The Services Provided for The Families, Carers and Support Systems of Person Served

Families and carers are partners in the rehabilitation process and are encouraged to participate in all phases of the vocational programme. Information, counselling, emotional and psychological support can reduce the emotional sequelae experienced by the family/carer. This support may help them to adapt and come to terms with the changes that have come about as a result of the ABI, and so result in better long-term outcomes for both the trainee and the family. Rehabilitation is a continuous and lifelong process. The carrying over of new skills gained in while on the training programme into daily activities and into discharge environments is critical to the success of any rehabilitation programme.

Many services are available within the *Next Stage* Vocational Programme to meet the needs of the patient's family/carers including:

- Education/training about management of ABI related issues (e.g. Family Conferences, electronic and printed resource material, instruction and practical skills training in preparation for discharge).
- Weekly meetings with RTU caseworker for support, information and guidance.
- Psychological support services
- Peer support through interaction with other families and various community support groups (e.g. Acquired Brain Injury Ireland (ABII) and Headway Ireland).
- Information about community support, trainee progress within the service, advocacy, accommodation and assistive technology resources.
- Annual Family Education Day & Past Trainee Reunions
- Feedback on independent living skills and support needs identified while staying in the on-site accommodation facility

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