



BRAKE-OUT

3 YEARS OF CHOOSING TALENT

A look at the methodology and effects of Brake-Out, a 3-year learning programme for young adults with cognitive support needs.

konekt

#leefvolut

CONTENT



- 3** Introduction
- 4** Theoretical backgrounds
- 6** The methodology of Brake-Out
- 12** Input for Brake-Out
- 18** Effects
- 21** Conclusions
- 22** Brake-Out 2.0

This publication is based on scientific research around the Brake-Out learning programme. In the following pages, Brake-Out takes an objective look at itself since its launch in 2018. We give a picture of four years of working with young people with cognitive support needs.

Colophon

Scientific research

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
Department of Orthopedagogics of Ghent University, led by Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove, Expertise Centre Equal of Hogeschool Gent, Remco Mostert and Ilse Goethals, Autistem, Luk Dewulf

AUTEUR
Evelien Neiryck (Konekt)

CO-AUTEUR
Jasmien De Meersman

FINANCIAL STEUN
Departments of Equal Opportunities, Social-Cultural Work and Youth Work of the Flemish Government.

HER OPERATION
Bart Van Heeschvelde

OPMA AK
Make it Epic

Brake-Out vzw is licensed by the VAPH
www.brake-out.be

This report is a publication of Konekt and Brake-Out. No part of this publication may be reproduced and/or published by electronic or other means without the prior written consent of the publisher. Except for short excerpts, which may be quoted for review purposes only.



BRAKE-OUT

LIVE TO THE FULLEST

Brake-Out is an experimental learning programme for young adults (18-30 years) with cognitive support needs (intellectual disability, ASD or NAH), who want to explore their future dreams and bring them into reality.

For 3 years, 2 days a week, the young people follow an innovative learning programme. During this period, they activate their talents step by step. They discover where in society they can bring those talents to fruition. Together with their coaches, trainers and network, the young people go out into the world. A world from which, once they have completed Brake-Out after three years, they want to squeeze every drop of juice.

Brake-Out focuses as much as possible on the participants' own choices and talents. Not on what they often cannot do because of their limitations. That way, they build an adult life tailored to their own ambitions and dreams.

Trainees learn dually, in groups of up to ten participants. What starts as a great exploration of all the possibilities that own talents to offer, culminates in a clear outline of what each participant exact needs to succeed. Trainers take charge of the educational group programme, coaches guide each participant individually. Coaches are constantly interacting with the network around our young people, so that the story of 3 years of Brake-Out becomes one of collaboration and inclusion.

In this publication, we give you an overview of the how and why of Brake-Out. From theory to methodology; from partnerships to impact among participants, supporters and staff.

In recent years, Brake-Out evolved into a colour palette to which we are still adding shades every day. And that work of art, which participants and facilitators all over the country are working on every day, is far from finished. In the final chapter, we tell you where our emphases lie for the future.

Are you triggered? *Stay tuned to www.brake-out.be for further developments.*

Interested in the full survey? Request it from communicatie@konekt.be.

LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Examining and evaluating yourself is necessary when working with people. In recent years, therefore, at Brake-Out, we looked with the magnifying glass at what Flemish young people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism need in the transition to their adult lives. That is why we mapped out the building blocks of the Brake-Out methodology. We examined success factors, points of attention and visible effects of the learning programme.

The research was conducted in co-creation by a person with and a person without disabilities. Using science-based methods, they engaged with Brake-Out participants, supporters and staff.



THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

The transition of young people with disabilities into adult life requires a frame of reference, providing us with a capstone for each step we take in practice.

- First, we look at the situation of young people in Flanders. What success factors are needed for a transition to succeed and be supported?
- We then theoretically examine the ways in which people with disabilities participate inclusively in society. And how we can promote this.
- Finally, we talk about how the programme can contribute to the well-being of the youngsters and their environment.

Road to maturity

1

It happens to every one of us: we are young and need to grow towards adulthood. For young people without limitation is a quasi-natural process, as they take hurdle after hurdle of a development process that in most cases -fortunately!
- gets where they need to be.

Where that constraint does exist, the same process invariably involves a course of thresholds and discouragement. Recent research (*Stewart et al., 2014, Clauwaert, Steyaert, Noens & Baeyens, 2017, Koks-Leensen, 2018*) did shining a light on a far from successful course. Despite growing attention to the problem, care during this transition is still grossly inadequate internationally, as well as at home. A shortage of mid- parts and staff; the lack of a coherent transition policy and the absence of sufficient cooperation between all stakeholders do not create the mix of ambition and success that every young person with disabilities deserves and needs.

Behind every learning programme there is a pattern of thinking; a theoretical background against which real-life actions are measured. Brake-Out is no exception in this respect. A spin of the theory will also gave us many insights.

The know-how to deal with the transition to adulthood is also lacking among care staff. A lot of these young people remain in Special Secondary Education for budgetary reasons, because there they are guaranteed care. If that is no longer possible, a place on the often long waiting list for a person-centred budget for adults the best the government can offer them.

To successfully enable the transition of young people with disabilities to adulthood, the strategies from Nguyen, Stewart & Gorter's (2017) Brake-Out research are leading. This involves a holistic approach to support, which includes a lot of life components and really does avoid perpetual focus on care. Learning from people who have gone through something similar; fostering active cooperation between all involved; young people experience; organising specific training for everyone who does their part in guiding young people: the recipes are there. Brake-Out, meanwhile, has been trying hard for four years to get into cooking as well.

Truly part of the whole?

2

How we view young people with disabilities largely determines how we interact with them. That focus has been strengthened by the

years shifted drastically. Two hundred years ago, we unabashedly called them 'idiots'. And when they were placed in special institutions in the early 20th century, the idea that they as a group could not actually participate fully in society was only reinforced. It took almost another hundred years before this kind of thinking was seen for what it is: a violation of human rights of persons with disabilities. Today, the focus is completely different in this respect: inclusion in society and forms of guidance that support integration into society are gaining more and more recognition. Becoming truly part of the whole is not only a good idea: it has also become a basic right that people with disabilities can exercise.

Feelin' good?

3

Limitation or not: don't we all like to feel good where we are; in how we live; in the choices and decisions that

we make? According to the World Health Organisation, wellbeing is "a state in which the individual is aware of his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively or fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community".

For young people with disabilities, all the presence is not self-evident - although real theoretical frameworks and scientific research for this are currently scarce. US research (*Shogren et al., 2006, Biggs & Carter, 2016*) indicates how important community involvement is for these young people and how connecting with an- learning, making friendships and improving social skills has a serious impact on their well-being. Also, the stigma still attached to disability and the widely held belief that people with disabilities should be treated differently harms the way these young people try to just feel good about themselves.

Perhaps we all need a little education so that they no longer have to ask themselves the 'Feeling good?' question?

METHODOLOGY OF BRAKE-OUT

You don't just start working with young people off the cuff. Working methodically and acting thoughtfully in counselling is crucial not to lose north. At Brake-Out underpins our vision with theoretical and methodical tools.

Our vision

Brake-Out's vision is clear and unambiguous: we believe it is important to put our focus on talents our young people have and to stimulate their interests as much and as often as possible. We do not want to overprotect our young people: trust in their abilities and in what they can achieve together with their environment is the key to success with us. Society often still limits young people with disabilities in their dealings: precisely by demonstrating what they cannot do, they get support. Whereas it should be the other way around. Brake-Out is about people with potential, not people with limitations.

Practice and theory go hand in hand at Brake-Out. By working with a system of *peers* - after all, you learn best from someone who has experienced or done it before - we challenge and inspire our young people. All this is done in small groups of ten people. Each group is guided by a trainer, who zooms in on the educational component, and a coach, who





© Marc Beaucourt



INTO THE WILD!

Hands-on with reality: this is how we stand in life. Our trainees explore that life and the world in which it takes place, by heading their interests to society during trip after trip. They try out new roles: a job or voluntary work; they boom their self-confidence through their abilities discover. The experiences Brake-Out wants to give them should lead to them being able and daring to make their own choices. Into the wild! - Brake-Out-style!

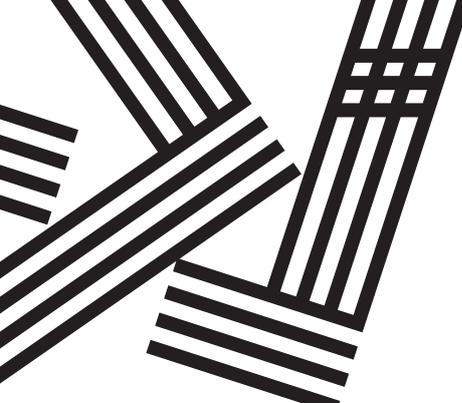
participants individually. The end goal of this common journey is also a new start: after three years, we want the participants to have an attractive perspective in which they can take new steps with their talents (and with all the people around them).

In the pursuit of self-fulfilment for our youngsters, Brake-Out fits perfectly under the umbrella of the umbrella organisation, the Konekt Group. Konekt strives for an inclusive society in which persons with disabilities also take active roles. Konekt's motto, 'Live fully in an inclusive world', is propagated as widely as possible through education, dance and awareness-raising.

Target

Brake-Out targets adults between 18 and 30 years old, with intellectual disabilities or other cognitive support needs. Like all young people, our trainees often start thinking at that point about what the future will bring them. And like all of us, this is accompanied by uncertainty about themselves as well as the prospects.

Brake-Out is not cheap for participants and the network around them, which often makes such participation possible. Brake-Out is recognised as a licensed care provider; those who enrol can (partly) pay the costs with a person-centred budget. The organisation makes an effort to make participation possible for as many young people with disabilities as possible, but easy is that not.



"We had already asked ourselves in the family how to move forward with our daughter. We really did feel a need to grow further, even outside the family. In that respect, Brake-Out couldn't have come at a better time for us."

MUM OF A PARTICIPANT

Brake-Out wants to reach as many young people with disabilities as possible, but at the same time it also wants to ensure that enough can be tailored to the wishes and needs of individual participants. This sometimes requires thinking about balance. Sometimes it turns out that the working method and the approach of the programme are not equally suitable for everyone. Intrinsic motivation, for instance, is a strong requirement to engage in the process; enough 'mental space' is a second factor. Finally, some young people feel less at home in the group approach, as it involves a lot of stimuli.

Building blocks

The wall built together by everyone at Brake-Out has bricks that are both theoretical and practical. The programme is grafted onto a solid theoretical foundation, which serves as the basis for a broad, diverse methodology.

THEORY

The philosophy of The Circle of Courage reflects on the correct way to give people power over their own future. It is a form of emancipation based on four key values: a sense of belonging, knowing one's own talents and using them successfully for society, making independent choices for oneself and using one's own talents for others. These basic values are seen in Brake-Out as a compass, against which the success of the course participants is measured.

Talent in action is a second theoretical angle that trainees and their supervisors get to work with. Talents are developed at Brake-Out not only recognised; but also actively pursued

developed. *Peers*, staff, supporters and others involved in the programme nominate talents to kickstart the youngsters' awareness: going from "Can I do this?" to "Hey, I can do this!" unleashes a lot of power.

The triangle client, family, counsellor is a place where a lot is possible. It is also a safe source place, from which a lot of support for active development can come. At Brake-Out, we really did recognise the opportunities it offers. In a society where more and more institutions are being dismantled, strength, loyalty, connection, modesty, reflection, knowledge and autonomy come from a source that is amazingly close.

Mission Possible is, as the fourth source of theory and methodology in this list; the tool for our young people to overcome problems in a solution-oriented way by learning new skills. The young people set goals and achieve them through a developmental programme consisting of eleven steps. The collaborators of Brake-Out then translated these eleven into four characters: the dreamer, the detective, the go-getter and the doer. Each step can be worked simultaneously, allowing participant to slowly but steadily puzzle out their dream.

Human Centered Design on which we graft at Brake-Out stems from our belief that key people and partners from the programme should also be involved in its design. In human terms, this means that we see everyone involved in Brake-Out as as resources that can inform and guide the design of our process. So at Brake-Out, you don't undergo a programme; you live it and help build it.



IN PRACTICE

So get to work on that theory! We do this in four well-defined ways. We kick off with the group; emphasise gaining experience; offer individual coaching and reach out to supporters.

1 Group process

Being part of a group and supporting each other during three years of Brake-Out: that is what our young people do. In that group, they have support from their trainer and also take individual steps with their coach. Crucial is that everyone feels safe with each other: the way to grow.

2 Experiential learning

Doing and learning are central to the programme. While trainer and coach observe, trainees go through new experiences and experiment wherever possible. Afterwards, the group comes together to discuss all they have experienced. The ultimate goal is independence - in as many ways and places as possible.

3 Personal coaching

Feeling good about the process you are going through within Brake-Out is important. Individual talks with coaches are important - and a good gauge - for this. After all, every process, even if it follows curricula, is still a bit different. That is why coaching is not just coaching, but that coaching is also a process in which direction is shared with the participant. Looking for solutions together is the message.

4 Working with supporters

The link to the community of supporters around our young people is crucial. Indeed, Brake-Out is a passing programme, which does not aim to keep participants dependent on the support provided for years. Collaborating with the network around participants is second nature to Brake-Out; with specific activities such as supporter and thinker nights.

PROGRAMM ELEMENTS

Brake-Out's programme consists of a number of fixed components. Each group can flexibly supplement these according to the interests and talents of the participants.



DISCOVERY VISITS SERVE TO GET TO KNOW EACH PARTICIPANT'S CONTEXT PERSONALLY. TO SEE HIM OR HER IN HIS OR HER OWN POWERFUL, FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT.



DURING GROWTH CONVERSATIONS, PARTICIPANT, SUPPORTERS AND COACH AROUND THE TABLE TOGETHER. HERE WE DISCUSS THE EXPECTATIONS AND STEPS TO BE TAKEN DURING THE PROCESS. BE TAKEN.



DURING PRESENTATION MOMENTS, WE REFLECT AS A GROUP ON THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE. THE STUDENTS PRESENT THEIR LEARNING PROCESS TO AN AUDIENCE OF SUPPORTERS.



SUPPORTER EVENINGS ARE THERE TO LINK WITH THE NETWORK AROUND YOUNG PEOPLE. BECAUSE INSPIRATION AND SUPPORT IS NEEDED THERE TOO. AL IF ONLY TO STRENGTHEN THE ENERGY AMONG SUPPORTERS.

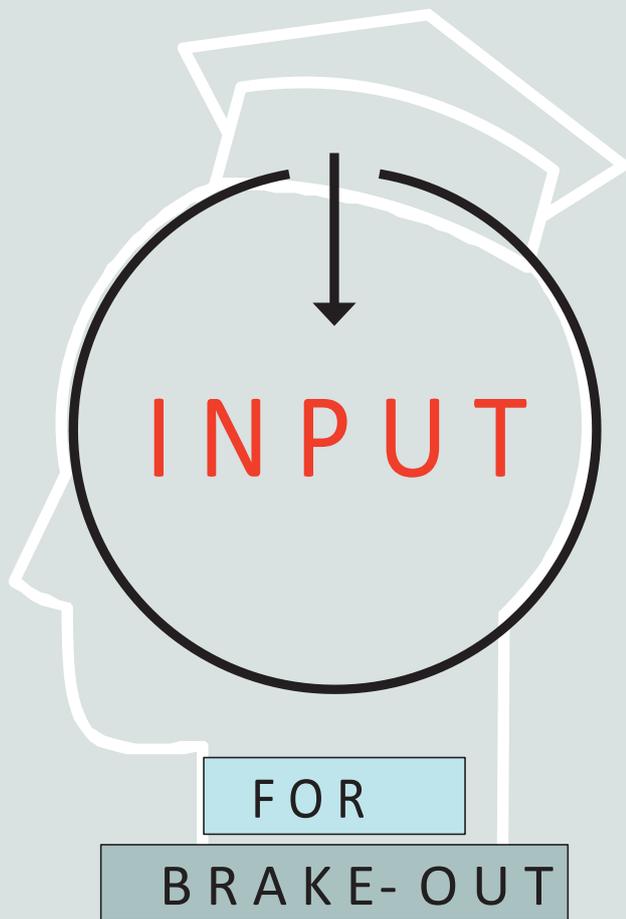
SUCCESSFACTORS

😊	Doin' fine!
	<p>Group process Listening to each other, asking questions, drinking coffee and chatting: all group members strengthen themselves and each other. <i>Friends for life!</i></p>
	<p>Programme flexibility Fixed lines with lots of space in and around them: variety trumps; flexibility all round. Trainer and coach breathe differentiation.</p>
	<p>Observing and encouraging self-reflection Looking at yourself positively and being able to talk about it with someone who looks at you with a friendly but also constructively critical eye: Brake-Out at its best.</p>
	<p>Strengths-based and solution-oriented coaching Coaches and trainers start from a basis full of solutions, with a dash of appreciation for strengths in the mix. First the person, then the limitation.</p>
	<p>Partnerships with local organisations We go out into the world and generate enthusiasm among organisations and companies about working with HUMANS with disabilities. Our network is growing every day.</p>

As in any process that is constantly being honed and evaluated, we find elements in Brake-Out's programme that are extremely successful. But areas of concern also emerge, after four years of experimentation, are quietly surfacing. In any case, our research provides a fascinating picture towards Brake-Out 2.0.

☹️	In Progress
	<p>Programme under development Brake-Out is young and still growing. The house is beautiful, but rooms - and extra comfort - can still be added. Working in the long term and reflecting on one's own actions by all those who run the organisation sometimes fall s h o r t .</p>
	<p>Empowering supporters The network around our young people is MEGA rich. Involving them is too, although sometimes that demand creates an extra burden - we need to recognise that. More and stronger links would be good; additional clarity on the role of supporters would go a long way.</p>
	<p>Attention to individual trajectories Even more attention to the individual would be welcome. Parents and staff see the same thing: the need for personal guidance on future dreams is great.</p>

FOCUS AREAS



Brake-Out is a living fabric, thriving through input from young people, staff, parents, networks, partnerships, volunteers, supporters and venues. The organisation continues to thrive thanks to financial contributions. Both sources help - each in its own way - to achieve the objectives of our programme.



FINANCING

To finance Brake-Out, we use a hybrid model of different revenue streams. To be and remain financially sustainable, the roll-out of groups to even more different locations is necessary in the coming years.

– **Person-following Budget and RTH points**

The Person-following Budget (PVB) and (in some cases) the Directly Accessible Assistance (RTH) are funds provided by the participants themselves are invested in the programme. Both sources represent a support budget allocated to people with disabilities.

– **Participants' own resources**

Outside the Persoonvolgend budget, participants pay 'living expenses' to Brake-Out from their own funds. This is a fixed amount of 21 euros per day (about 1700 euros per year), which is used to pay for food, drinks, activities, entertainment, transport, insurance and so on.

– **Direct and temporary grants**

Brake-Out vzw is a recognised care provider. In this role, it receives subsidies from the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities (VAPH). These subsidies come in monthly as advances based on staff and user data, and the staff points and operating costs included in the subsidy decisions. In this sense, the subsidy therefore depends on the number of participants who pay for the support with a care budget.

The umbrella non-profit organisation, Konekt vzw, also contributes to the learning programme. In turn, Konekt receives subsidies for this. In addition, there are also temporary project funds allocated to Brake-Out. These are projects that flesh out the organisation's role as a laboratory in the socio-cultural field. So innovation pays off here: it is a way for Brake-Out to generate operating funds through innovative initiatives in the community.

– **Donations**

Finally, the Brake-Out learning programme can also rely on donations from sponsors and in-zamel campaigns such as Music For Life.



© Anne Scheers



PARTNERSHIPS

Brake-Out enjoys working with all kinds of partners, who make it possible for us to carry out our activities.

– **Konekt Group**

The Konekt Group is one of Brake-Out's key partners. This involves financial support, of course, but just as much in terms of supporting processes, logistics and know-how present in our umbrella organisation. Moreover, Konekt is also officially the employer of our trainers - a not inconsiderable boost.

– **Leaders**

Brake-Out also exists by the grace of the people who know the organisation and refer potential students to us. Very specifically, we involve professionals from Extraordinary Secondary Education, from the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities and from the Support Plan Department.

– **Companies, organisations and associations as learning places**

We are fortunate to be able to do many projects with our young people in companies, organisations and associations. We can only do that, of course, if all those partners effectively give us the permission to do so and support us in this. Each division of Brake-Out therefore also actively seeks collaborations with organisations and companies in their own region.

Time and commitment
OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

– **Development partners**
The fresh spirit in our programme and the drive towards new developments comes, among other things, from collaborations with partners who inspire, support and strengthen our learning programme. These include, for example, the cooperation with the Department of Orthopedagogics of Ghent University; that with the Equal expertise centre of HoGent and local collaborations in our departments with training centres of colleges and universities. We also pull together with talent coach Luk Dewulf when it comes to working from talent. Finally, Autistem vzw helps us make the programme accessible to students with ASD.

A full team of staff and volunteers invest a lot of time and commitment to make Brake-Out what it is. Part of that time is professional - paid working time; another part comes from the voluntary commitment of volunteers and interns.

– **Coach and trainer**
Coaches and trainers are the primary supervisors of each Brake-Out group. Coaches focus on the individual needs of our young people; trainers develop the content programme for their group.

Coaches have an individual analysing function and support young people in their function of self-reliance as best they can. They work disability-specific and are often in contact with the participants' network. They also keep a portfolio on the growth process and individual processes, which is discussed regularly. Finally, the coach is also the central hub between needs and requirements of training providers, participants, volunteers and trainees.

Trainers tailor the learning programme to their group, provide training and methodologies and develop learning content. They work together with the participants, their network, other professionals and regular partners also projects

out and organise inclusive learning moments. Finally, trainers are also responsible for organising show moments where trainees present their learning to the public.

– **Coordinating and supporting roles**
Coordinators monitor trainers and coaches within Brake-Out. They represent the board and deal with financial, personnel and accommodation matters and also arrange external affairs and public relations. Their tasks also include recruitment, contact with external partners, intake, education, training and guidance. Content coordinators deal with the content development of the learning programme, among other things.

In addition, there is the bridge builder: a coordinator who bears ultimate responsibility for Brake-Out. Stakeholders in the programme know the bridge builder: he or she recruits participants, enters into collaborations, secures funding and thinks up projects. Part of the communication with parents also goes through this coordinator.

– **Freelance employees**
A small part of the own funds that participants pay monthly is buckled as an educational budget. That is, it can be used, for example, to hire external trainers who have a particular expertise. After all, everyone can rap, but not everyone can give a workshop on it.

– **Volunteers and trainees**
Volunteers make the team stronger: that is a simple truth. Moreover, in an organisation like Brake-Out, they are also simply needed, both in the preparation and the supervision of the programme. In an average Brake-Out day, in addition to the coach and trainer, there are at least two extra forces at work - as interns or volunteers. This can be for logistical support, but equally a reinforcement in the development of the programme. The Council of Sages, for example, consists of volunteers and partners, and helps think through the challenges in the learning programme. There is also room for researchers with disabilities in these roles within Brake-Out, by the way.



© Jeroen Willems

Time and commitment

OF SUPPORTERS AND NETWORK

It's the supporters that do it: that's a law not only in football.

Each of our young people has a dense network of parents, siblings, friends, other relatives and helpers around them, which

can reinforce each step. At Brake-Out organising

we therefore run a number of group activities each semester aimed at involving supporters throughout the process. We also reach out to supporters in individual pathways: This can be in the intake, preparation and supervision of the discovery visit or a growth conversation. They are also often the supporters who bring in potential partners for collaboration with Brake-Out. Finally, supporters are also invited to non-committal activities, such as thinking evenings or the Council of Sages discussed earlier.



LOCATIONS AND FACILITIES

The Brake-Out locations are more than just a place to complete our programme: they are chosen according to their potential to enable encounters between people with and without disabilities.

- Brake-out locations

Konekt vzw has in-house locations in Ghent and Leuven. In Leuven, they also rent a place in the maakleerplek, a creative hub in the city. The group in Antwerp found its place in a local office building for non-profit organisations and social enterprises.

Every Brake-Out location should be wheelchair-friendly, with accessible toilets and easily accessible classrooms. The kitchen is used for cooking and eating together; a decent storage room houses all the equipment and learning materials for the activities.

Our venues should also be easily accessible by public transport so that participants can get to Brake-Out as self-sufficiently as possible. Because the programme days are often intensive, A low-stimulation rest room is also provided, where participating youngsters can unwind for a while, should they need it. In order not to make the location too scholarly, we aim to personalise it - if possible. Finally, our Brake-Out places are also best located in the vicinity of other organisations: this only fosters much-needed cooperation.

- Facilities

Brake-Out relies entirely on the facilities held by the Konekt Group. That is, accounting and financial monitoring, participant administration, invoicing and insurance, reception and general administration, purchasing, logistics and maintenance, personnel administration and ICT are provided by that partner.

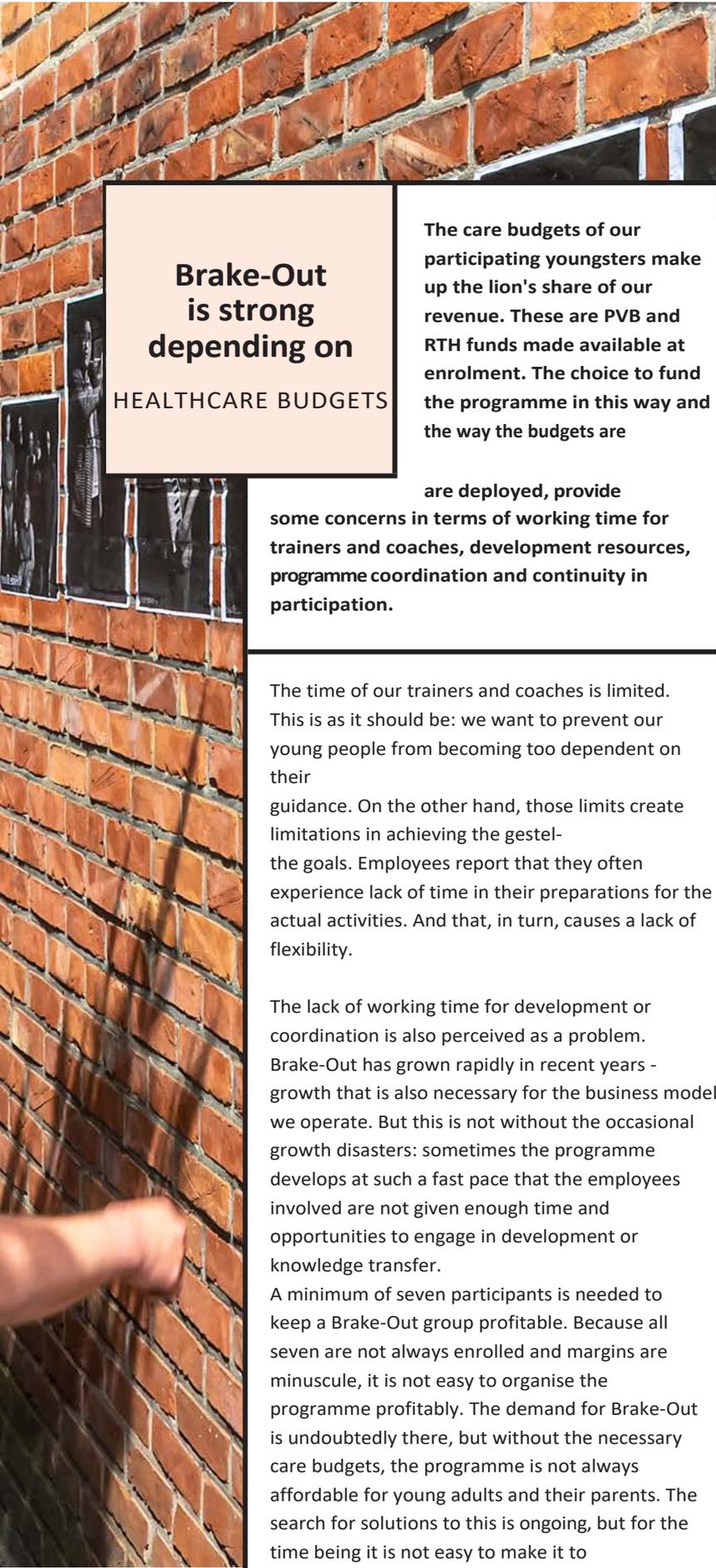


KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- Many of Brake-Out's staff have expertise that enables them to deal with young people with disabilities in a very focused and professional way. For example, they come from the Buiten-ordinary Secondary Education, or have experience as a supervisor in the Support Plan Service. A number of them also have a secondary profession as a car coach. Their training often also focuses on working in the social sector; quite a few of them are also very open to additional therapy or coaching training.
- The Brake-Out staff also hit enthusiastically because they feel strengthened by their own life experience. Experiences with family members with disabilities, for example, are an additional asset in day-to-day practice.
- Finally, we also purvey a lot of knowledge and experience from the Konekt Group. There is a lot of know-how there around, for example, learning pathways for people with disabilities, which only adds to the value of the Brake-Out programme. Also the experience available in organising inclusive activities, comes in handy for us.



© Marc Beaucourt



Brake-Out is strong depending on

HEALTHCARE BUDGETS

The care budgets of our participating youngsters make up the lion's share of our revenue. These are PVB and RTH funds made available at enrolment. The choice to fund the programme in this way and the way the budgets are

are deployed, provide some concerns in terms of working time for trainers and coaches, development resources, programme coordination and continuity in participation.

The time of our trainers and coaches is limited. This is as it should be: we want to prevent our young people from becoming too dependent on their guidance. On the other hand, those limits create limitations in achieving the gestel- the goals. Employees report that they often experience lack of time in their preparations for the actual activities. And that, in turn, causes a lack of flexibility.

The lack of working time for development or coordination is also perceived as a problem. Brake-Out has grown rapidly in recent years - growth that is also necessary for the business model we operate. But this is not without the occasional growth disasters: sometimes the programme develops at such a fast pace that the employees involved are not given enough time and opportunities to engage in development or knowledge transfer.

A minimum of seven participants is needed to keep a Brake-Out group profitable. Because all seven are not always enrolled and margins are minuscule, it is not easy to organise the programme profitably. The demand for Brake-Out is undoubtedly there, but without the necessary care budgets, the programme is not always affordable for young adults and their parents. The search for solutions to this is ongoing, but for the time being it is not easy to make it to to a successful conclusion.

FOCUS AREAS

Every organisation owes it to itself to take a critical look at its daily work process. A few points of interest therefore deserve to be put under the microscope for a while.



PARENTAL COMMITMENT UNDER PRESSURE

Supporters have an important role in the Brake-Out universe. Parental involvement can make or break a young person's trajectory. Finding a balance between involving parents in the right way and not falling into too much demand for involvement is a challenge our staff face every day. A clear definition of the role of supporters - expectations included - would already be a step in the right direction for this.



BRAKE-OUT AS AN ISLAND IN THE KONEKT GROUP

Finally, there are a number of barriers to the gains that could be made by Brake-Out from the Konekt network. We are a relatively new member of the Konekt family, which makes it difficult at times not to be an island from which too little contact is maintained with the rest of the group. Even if Brake-Out is seen as a project implementing 'the best of Konekt', then yet it is a shame not to cross the bridge to the figurative mainland, where a lot of know-how and support can be found. As a group, Konekt has a strong base in East and West Flanders. In Flemish Brabant, this is under construction; Antwerp and Brussels are in their infancy. Of course, connections can and must be sought outside; but a lot of valuable under-support can be found in one's own group.

EFFECTS

OF BRAKE-OUT

At Brake-Out, we are very aware of the need for modesty, but ultimately our goal is to create as much effect as possible. We call our programme 'life-changing', but our aim is that anyone who spends three years at Brake-Out will see the effects in his or her own life.

Belonging

New contacts; being part of a group; feeling confidence in people: belonging is important for all of us. Our facilitators notice a clear evolution among the young people at Brake-Out. As the programme progresses, they take more account of each other's needs and support each other at times when stress is just around the corner. The network around our young people also notices this: they often put forward the social aspect as one of the most important benefits of the programme for the participants.

Personal mastery

Being able to do something is one thing; realising and trusting that you can do it...that is something else. Our participants are often proud, not only of the new experiences they have lived through, but also of the way they did them. The result is often a renewed confidence: in themselves, but also in the capacity to try out new tasks or roles. So an extra load of daring, accompanied by a curiosity to discover talent in themselves as well as in the friends in the group. In turn, this results in a different view of one's own disability: it is experienced in a more nuanced way and is often more negotiable.

Being meaningful to others

By exploring new contexts and trying out roles that match their talents, confidence grows. As a result, our trainees' focus shifts. They move from a self-image of someone who needs care to someone who has the capacity to contribute to other people's lives - inside and outside the group!

Self-determination

Brake-Out is all about listening to what the participants care about. They take steps towards self-reflection and look at themselves in a detailed way - resulting in awareness.

Having the courage to indicate what they want and expect - including, for example, in the family context

- is a quasi-logical next step, which is of course taken together with members of the family and network.

AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS

The Circle of Courage, which we already discussed in the Brake-Out methodology section, allows us to measure the effects that become visible after going through the difference-

I stages of our learning programme. The table on the next page shows, clenched, what it is all about.

**AFTER
BRAKE-OUT**

BELONGING

<u>YEAR 1</u>	<u>YEAR 2</u>	<u>YEAR 3</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am there in the group. - I have visibility into my network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am stronger in social behaviour and contact. - My network has grown qualitatively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I contribute. - My network has expanded qualitatively

Confidence in others has grown

**PERSONAL
MASTERY**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I discover my learning and growth questions. - I discover my talents/non-talents and limitations. - I experience success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I get my growth and learning questions in focus. - I practice competences I need to realise my dream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I appoint development points myself. - I have specific competences to take on roles.
---	--	---

I am more successful in participating in society

**MEANINGFUL
TO
OTHERS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have more visibility into my personal mission. - I show my talents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have more visibility into my personal mission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I can take up roles that match my identity and mission.
--	--	---

I can take on new meaningful roles in the future

SELF-DETERMINED

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am aware that I can choose. - I learn to know more choices and make choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I get to know my dream. - I am learning to cope better with setbacks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have the power to make choices. - I have a frame of reference to make my own choices.
---	--	--

I set my own goals in my life



AMONG SUPPORTERS

Having confidence in Brake-Out

Parents of a child with a disability have a lot of concerns. There is not always room in everyday life to think about their child's long-term goals and dreams, but parents strongly realise that need. In their search for support in this, they pass on part of that task to Brake-Out. They do so in confidence, which is very clear. Their contacts with counsellors in that area, in which they find that their concerns are effectively taken up, further strengthen them in that.

Being involved

How could it be otherwise: the parents of our young people are involved in what their children experience with us. This involvement is not optional, of course, but requires energy from people who are often in the field and care for a sense. However, parents also often derive value from their involvement: for instance, they indicate that they find it pleasant to exchange experiences and opinions with other parents involved in the programme.

Seeing opportunities for the participant

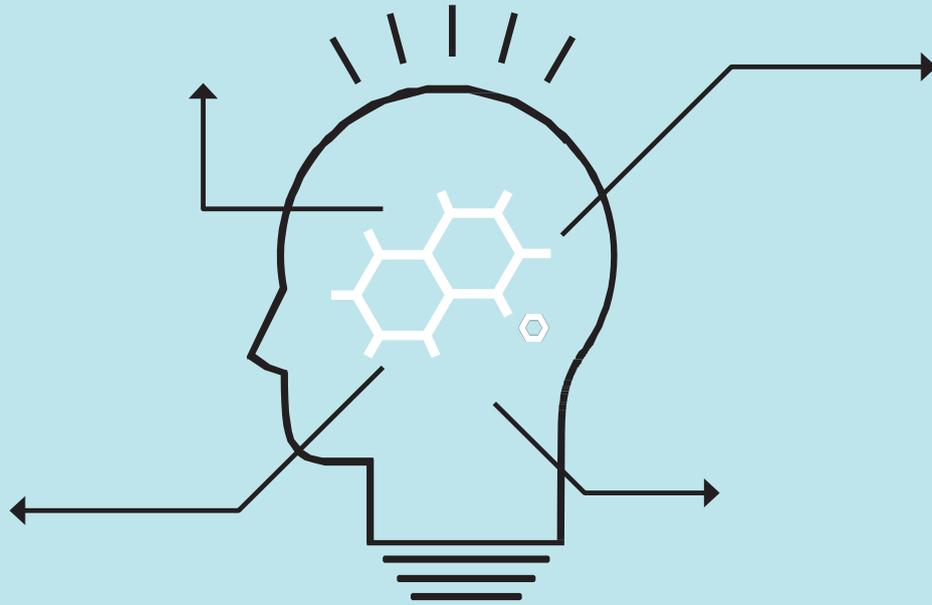
Seeing your daughter or son, sister or brother, family member or friend grow at Brake-Out has a positive side effect for many supporters. Seeing young people explore and appreciate their talents, they often discover new opportunities in them themselves. The common language and vocabulary around talents used at Brake-Out helps them in naming and makes it easier to steer and make decisions together.



© Marc Beaucourt

AMONG EMPLOYEES

Employees also experience effects through their involvement in Brake-Out. Through the feedback they receive from course participants and supporters; through the ongoing reflection they have internalised, they increasingly customise the programme. As a result, their sense of expertise in developing activities and didactic tools for the learning programme grows. And this in turn adds to the general enthusiasm in the job for the better. Despite great motivation and commitment, there are also pitfalls: certain experiences with the young people are so meaningful that it sometimes becomes difficult to maintain the necessary distance that every caregiver needs to function properly. It is not always easy to let go of something you are so intensively involved with.



CONCLUSIONS

The voluminous report, of which this publication is a boiled-down version, went in search of knowledge. We can draw these conclusions from the first years of Brake Operations.

Jhe young person with a disability will only be in the transition period between adolescence and adulthood. Many of the questions that often receive a natural solution during this period pose additional challenges for our young people.

STRENGTHS

Brake-Out is a programme that, based on a strong foundation in theory, provides young people with disabilities with important building blocks. These building blocks not only enable them to make a successful transition to adult life, but also contribute to their quality of life. The strengths of the programme include group learning, partnership with supporters and local actors, the holistic approach, offering participants concrete experiences, challenging them to reflect on themselves and their environment, encouraging insight into one's own emotions and others, training social and cognitive problem-solving skills

present and focus on opportunities and strengths in young people.

CHALLENGES

However, Brake-Out as a programme also has challenges. A first of these, is categorical transition care. A categorical offer and a shortage of resources and personnel, do not make it easy to create integrated and coordinated support at the system level.

Brake-Out further situates itself at the intersection of welfare, education, labour, socio-cultural work and leisure. This makes the programme very comprehensive and broad. But the time and budget to coach young people is limited to two days a week for three years. The effects of a shortage of resources and staff are felt by staff.

Interested in the full study, which covers all chapters in detail?

Apply at communicatie@konekt.be.



2.0

BRAKE-OUT

As an organisation, Brake-Out consists of living tissue. The programme delivered its first alumni after three years and continues to evolve towards the future. Everyone involved, from young people to staff and supporters of all kinds, takes a constructive, critical look at what goes on in Brake-Out. That produces an organisation that is constantly moving, but needs that same movement to permanently improve and perfect the already great results.

Femke Houbrechts finds it important that the Brake-Out universe is constantly changing and that it is programme is continuously improving itself. "I think society is evolving very quickly, which makes it necessary for a programme as ours to evolve with it. Besides, it is never finished: we are always working on a version 2.0, 3.0,... Certainly when it comes to inclusion, we are far from being there in society - but not within Brake-Out either - there is always room for improvement.

Konekt, the umbrella organisation, is working on a lot of very innovative projects in different fields. A lot of expertise comes out of that, from which we constantly draw lessons and extract new insights. We regularly come across things that represent progress in terms of inclusion. And we then apply those at Brake-Out."

Picking out the basics

Brake-Out 2.0 continues in the same vein what concerns talent thinking. Houbrechts: "I think

that the same emphasis will always remain on the power-focused, talent-focused growth mindset. Of course, inclusion thinking will also remain prominent. I do think we can tease things out: we have worked very broadly over the past four years and tested all kinds of things. Along the way, there was little time for employees to determine what the real essence was - especially when it came to things to be passed on to new colleagues. Brake-Out 2.0 will really start from a basis that is important to all participants, and then enrich that base with additional things. For example, we are currently looking very hard towards individual modules that we could offer. That could be at personal request, or at the request of a group."

Bridge to one's own life

Brake-Out's DNA is evolving with the times.

Houbrechts: "We are very punishing in group learning. Our group courses are a real strength.

I think we can take additional steps in making that learning more sustainable in our trainees' personal networks. Making the bridge to our young people's own lives: that is something we want to make even stronger with Brake-Out 2.0. We will also try to formulate the roles of trainer and coach even better. At the moment there are still a number of overlaps, and I imagine they are not always obvious or effective for everyone."

Mum/dad

The role of mothers/fathers in Brake-Out is also a topic of conversation for the think tank behind Brake-Out 2.0. For example, some parents express a desire to be able to create their own version of Brake-Out

What was applied with the best of intentions at the start of Brake-Out may have been adapted, tweaked, filed down or replaced by something else today. Femke Houbrechts, who delves into new theoretical frameworks and *good practices* around education at Konekt, shows the back of her tongue about our train of thought towards Brake-Out 2.0.



FEMKE
HOUBRECHTS

follow; which would help them better understand their child's trajectory. Houbrechts : "We want to be realistic about this: not all parents can or want to be involved in our operations in the same way. On the other hand, we aim to provide an intensive link to all our parents, without giving some of them the impression that it is too much of a good thing. Ideally, they can decide for themselves how fiercely they step into the story, while still making them all feel that they play a valuable role in their child's journey."

Uniformity

In Brake-Out 2.0, we also try to reduce the differences in emphasis between the branches. Houbrechts: "Brake-Out Leuven is currently not the same as Brake-Out Antwerp. And although we welcome diversity, we want to strive to bring a certain uniformity to the programme. That means, for example, that the pathways that participants can follow look the same everywhere. We are also thinking about the relationship between group and individual courses. We would like to give trainees more ownership of this, by giving them the chance to supplement the basics with individual choices in a modular system. In that respect, the process within Brake-Out parallels regular education. With us too, young people would be able to choose their next step based on their own wishes, needs and learning pace. Those modules, by the way, will ensure that the partitions between disappear a little more over the different years. Currently, we speak of a learning stage within Brake-Out 2.0: a number of fixed basic modules that are

finishing everyone step by step. But what exactly you complete that step with is your choice."

Cents

The new version of Brake-Out is a combination of knowledge from practice and guidance from above. Houbrechts: "We try to set up a co-creative process, in which we listen very carefully to what our staff/young people/supporters give us from day-to-day practice. At the same time, we set out a number of lines so that everyone has a clear goal." That goal will not cost the parents of Brake-Out 2.0 any more money than it currently does - an important detail. Houbrechts: "Rest assured: we are very aware that participating in Brake-Out is not a good-kope business. Having a budget on time is a sine qua non for many participants to think about signing up. When it comes to 2.0, then I do say in advance about that that that will have no effect on the fees charged to parents. And while the question of budget is always a huge consideration for us too. Konekt already has a lot of money invested in Brake-Out. The trainers' salaries, for example, are paid by the umbrella organisation - something we are very grateful to them for."

Touch the box

Femke Houbrechts is positive about the future of Brake-Out: "My final message is very simple: I really believe in this programme - also in the 2.0 version. This programme works. Brake-Out was already an incredibly punishing programme and it will only get better. We have really made a difference. Brake-Out 2.0, because it will be carried by all employees, will do even better."

HELP US ENABLE YOUNG PEOPLE SHINE IN THEIR TALENT

THANKS TO YOUR GIFT

- ... more young people with disabilities get the chance to build the future they want for themselves.
- ... we are shifting the focus in our society from disability to talents.
- ... Brake-Out can continue to pioneer and inspire others.

YOU CAN DO IT !

- Offer a learning experience to our trainees in Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp, Leuven or Brussels
- Do internships or volunteer work
- Or support with a donation
BE44 7380 4118 8545



WWW.BRAKE-OUT.BE

