

**MEE (Dutch organization for the support of disabled or chronically ill persons)**

Assistance with living with a disability

## **The preventative powers of MEE**

**MEE**





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# The preventative powers of MEE

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**There are many people with a disability in the Netherlands. Most of these people manage quite well on their own. However, some people are unable to manage - people who, without support, find it difficult to be self-reliant and take part in society.**

**Dedicated support and the use of their own networks (family and friends) will allow them to get a grip on their lives: this will make them feel stronger, more autonomous and more independent. As a result, they have greater self-confidence and self-respect, basic values that everyone needs. We believe in a society in which everyone participates, in which people with a disability can also join in as much as possible: an inclusive society.**

## Who we are

MEE supports about 100,000 people with a disability every year. The problems faced by the clients we support are increasingly complex, and occur

in several areas of life simultaneously, such as in the fields of child-raising, learning, working, friends, living and accommodation, regulations and in money matters. A question or an issue in one area of life is often closely related to developments or problems in another area. Quite often, several organizations, agencies, laws and regulations are involved. Because MEE ensures a coherent range of support services, it can act as a linchpin in the coordination of informal support (network, informal carers and volunteers) and formal support (general and special services). This requires a comprehensive approach to our clients' situations.

MEE focuses particularly on the capabilities of people with a disability. The empowerment of clients and the deployment of their networks are always the starting point for providing support. These will make it possible to participate or re-participate.

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### **Dedicated professionals**

In-depth knowledge is indispensable to optimally support people with a disability. MEE consultants are educated to a higher professional education level, which means they are experts in respect of personal and social consequences of disabilities and the vital questions they raise. The quality of our services, training policy and product development, and of the validation of methods and our accumulated expertise, are combined and guaranteed at a national level in the MEE Nederland organization. Because of our country-wide presence, our services have a substantial reach. Because MEE is well-integrated at a local level, it can provide tailor-made support in collaboration with local partners.

Moreover, MEE is easy to access. Clients can turn to MEE without a care assessment or referral letter. Client support is free of charge. MEE gives independent advice and is therefore not attached to specific care providers.

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**Monique, Delian's mother**

**‘We would never have made it without the support of our network’**

‘It is not easy to ask for assistance. Because of his disability, our youngest child is a real tie. This has had quite an effect on our family. It is a good thing that MEE offers a way to organize assistance by a network. MEE's Social Network Strategy turned out to be a godsend in practice. During a network consultation, family members and friends indicate whether and how they would like to help out. We are now surrounded by a number of people who support us on a regular basis.’

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**Esme Zian, coordinator at a debt assistance organization in Amsterdam:**

**‘He did not seem interested. I know now that he has a mild intellectual disability.’**

‘By asking the right questions, it is easier to recognize a mild intellectual disability. You can also tell a great deal from a client's level of language comprehension. Someone with a mild intellectual disability does not always fully understand cause-and-effect relationships. You can check this in a conversation. I have also learned to carefully measure out information, i.e. no barrage of words. And it works. Without exaggeration: MEE's training has been quite an eye-opener in many respects.’

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**The people we dedicate ourselves to**

Our clients are people with either an intellectual, physical or sensory disability or a chronic illness. This includes people with an acquired brain injury or autism spectrum disorder. The members of our target group vary in age and type of disability. Almost half of our clients are less than 24 years old. Approximately half of the clients supported by MEE have an intellectual disability.

We also support the networks of people with a disability, such as family members, friends or colleagues. They can receive advice or practical support in order to help someone with a disability to move forward or to perform their tasks as informal carers.





## What we do for people with a disability

Clients always come first at MEE. With regard to personal support, MEE assists clients in organizing their lives so that they can participate or re-participate in society. MEE does this together with its clients, thereby focusing on all areas of life: child-raising & development, learning & working, social relations and living and regulations & money matters.

MEE also carries out social duties, focusing on activities that create the general conditions which increase the level of participation of people with a disability. Our social duties are closely related to our personal services. Sometimes, the client may not be the bottleneck that prevents participation, but rather a care provider, service provider or business. This may be repaired by providing clear information to these organizations and proper coordination, as well as by offering practical guidelines on how to remove bottlenecks.

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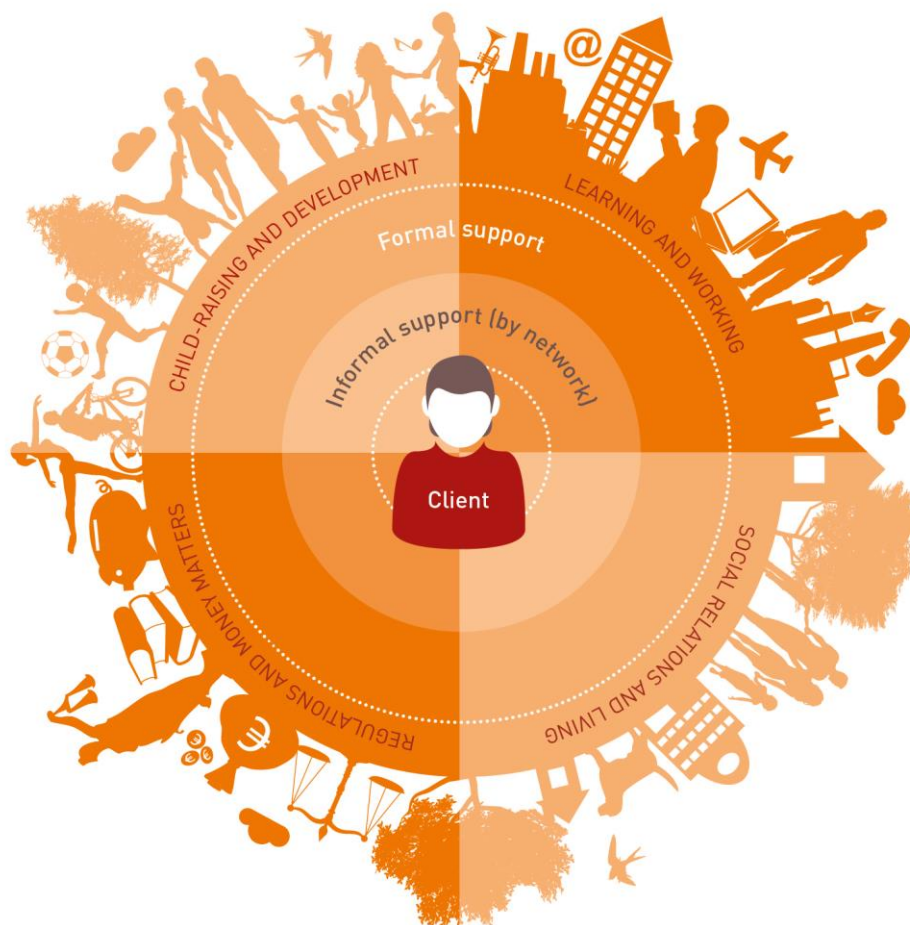
**Marian Eijkemans, regional manager at UWV Werkbedrijf (the work placement branch of the Employee Insurance Agency) Gelderland Zuid**

**‘Our regional school network ensures a smooth transition from school to work.’**

‘Young people in special secondary education or employment-oriented training need extra attention. In our region, we work with MEE to lay out a common pathway for all children with special educational needs. MEE plays a very important role in supporting these children and assisting their parents. In this way, we are able to develop an overall approach that really works. As a result, children with special educational needs end up in the right place.’

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## Scope of MEE client support



MEE's expertise lies in its knowledge of the different client groups and disabilities. For example, MEE is familiar with the developmental process of children with a disability. It also assists parents in child-raising. The approach differs from one disability to another. For example, because a mild intellectual disability is not always visible, it is sometimes difficult to recognize. For this reason, this group is often faced with excessive demands, and this causes adverse effects. MEE knows how to recognize these people easily, and how to make the difference by providing the correct approach. Living with a disability also means accepting that things in life don't always go as planned. MEE can also provide dedicated support here. We offer training programmes and courses to increase the potential and self-reliance of people with a disability.

We also organize meetings for people in similar circumstances.

## What we do for our collaborative partners

A comprehensive approach to people with a disability has proved to be effective, since problems are examined in conjunction. It is often necessary to provide a coherent range of support services in several areas of life at the same time. MEE joins and coordinates the expertise of collaborative and chain partners in this respect. Collaboration means that professionals from different organizations benefit from each other's knowledge and input. MEE's knowledge of disabilities and people faced with disabilities also fulfils a need. MEE will be only too happy to advise civic and other organizations, businesses and government institutions on how they may increase the accessibility of their services to people with a disability.





MEE also advises public services and businesses on how to approach with people with a disability. This type of collaboration has worked out extremely well in practice. The collaborative ventures in respect of safety, labour, education, debt assistance, domestic violence and the approach to multi-problem households have already shown this. Additionally, MEE often provides assistance at the Social Support Desk and the Youth and Family Centres (networks of integrated early assistance).

### **Role during decentralization**

Because of the decentralization that has been scheduled for the years ahead, municipalities will be assigned a large number of new tasks and responsibilities in respect of participation by people with a disability. New responsibilities call for new knowledge and competences. Municipalities can use MEE's expertise in this field.

At present, client support by MEE is still subsidized nationally under the Dutch Exceptional Medical Expenses Act. The intended transfer of the responsibility for this service and the corresponding budget to municipalities (which will then fall under the Dutch Social Support Act) fits in with their increasing overall responsibility. MEE can already be of service to municipalities preparing for decentralization; for example by providing the following services:

- Organizing first meeting with several professionals to clarify questions and problems;
- Support during the process by keeping a professional 'finger on the pulse';
- Training courses (professional development);
- Identifying bottlenecks;
- Information and advice.

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Annemiek de Winter, Director  
Regionaal Veiligheidshuis (Regional  
Safety House) in Oss

**‘Being able to recognize  
a mild intellectual  
disability is of great  
value in the safety  
house.’**

‘Thanks to MEE, we are able to pick out the people with an intellectual disability from amongst prisoners and former prisoners or people involved in domestic violence. MEE is therefore of great value during the case consultations on after-care for former prisoners and those involved in domestic violence. MEE consultants will recognize the symptoms during a case consultation. Indeed, subsequent examinations often reveal an intellectual disability. Only then can proper support and assistance be organized. This makes it easier to free people from a spiral of domestic violence. And former prisoners stand a better chance of making it on their own in society. This is why recidivism rates in our region lie far below the national average.’

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## Why MEE?

### Social value and cost-savings

The preventative powers of MEE yield many benefits. An investigation has revealed that every euro invested in MEE is recouped at least four times. The recoupment aspect is largely reflected in the decrease in social costs. The need to use costly services or care can often be avoided or postponed. Moreover, services are provided more effectively. What is to be gained by this?

- The number of benefits received under the (Dutch) Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act will decrease;
- Debt assistance will be more effective;
- The number of evictions will decrease;
- Because people will be more self-reliant and their networks will be used, the expenditure on care and the cost of services will decrease;
- Clients will have to rely less often on special education.

Although it is not measurable, increased well-being, happiness and peace of mind for people with a disability is eventually noticeable. Being in charge and being appreciated for the role you play in society is of great value to everyone.

## More information?

Would you like to receive more information on our services? Visit: [www.mee.nl](http://www.mee.nl) .  
Or read our catalogue of services on: [www.mee.nl/alle-publicaties](http://www.mee.nl/alle-publicaties) .





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Ko Scheele, alderman, municipality of Ommen

**‘Independent travel not only means independence for people with a disability,- but also results in transport cost savings’**

‘It is important that everyone takes part in Ommen. Thanks to the ‘MEE op Weg’ project, young people with a disability can choose their own mode of transport to school or place of work. It fills people with a sense of pride if they no longer have to take disabled transport all the time but can travel by themselves by bicycle. Their self-confidence and independence will increase as a result. We must give young people free rein and instill them with the confidence that they can travel on their own. The fact that this also results in savings on the transport budget is a nice side-effect.’

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Toon Gerbands, Director, AZ (soccer club, major league)

**‘MEE offers the right preconditions for businesses to take part in our project.’**

‘Top-class sport is not only about playing football. Young people with a mild intellectual disability receive an education at AZ so that they can subsequently go to work for one of the businesses in AZ’s network. By working together with MEE, many of the initial doubts of businesses have been dispelled. MEE not only assists these young people in finding and holding on to a job, but also provides businesses with information.’

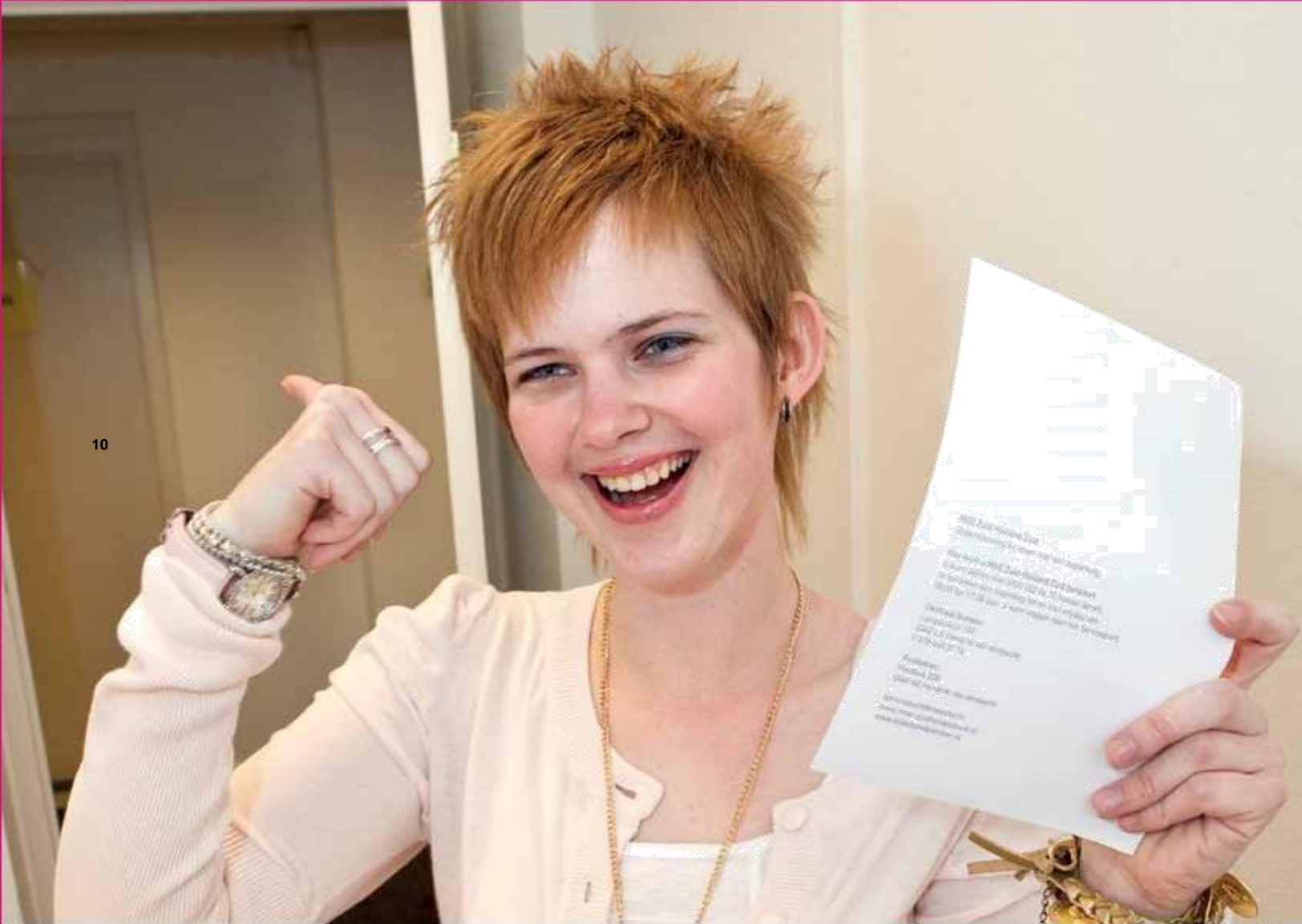
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There are 22 MEE organizations, spread throughout the Netherlands.



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## Colophon

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## Mission

MEE supports people with a disability and their networks in all areas and stages of life. As a result, they can take part in society to the best of their ability. We are independent and stand by our clients. We help to increase their potential and to make optimal use of their networks. This increases their self-reliance and quality of life. We use our knowledge and experience to secure a place in society for people with a disability. In this way, MEE really makes it possible to participate.

## MEE Nederland

Organization that provides assistance with living with a disability

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