



**SPOTLIGHT**



**Azure**

*charitable enterprises*

**On Azure Employment Services**

Issue 11 – May 2016

## Work Choice



Elaine

I'd like to welcome you to the latest edition of our Spotlight Newsletter.

Azure is a diverse organisation whose mission is to improve the lives of people who are disabled or disadvantaged.

Participants on our Work Choice Programme come with a wide range of health conditions, work history and transferrable skills. Some may need to retrain and begin a new career whilst others may be taking their first steps into employment.

Azure's own Supported Businesses have a significant part to play in our delivery of the Work Choice Programme. In this edition we will showcase how our businesses have provided us with a strong base from which to provide opportunity for work placements, work tasters, retraining, and employment, both within the Supported Business itself and ultimately as a platform to achieve unsupported employment and a new career both internally and with external employers.

## We're proud to be working with ...



## Charlene cleans up!



Charlene has been with Work Choice for two months and has impressed her Adviser with her positive and enthusiastic attitude to finding work.

Charlene is also impressing her colleagues at Gear House in Gateshead where she is enjoying a work placement with Maxim Cleaning.

The work placement has actually been extended for her as her Supervisor believes she can do a fuller range of roles. Charlene is profoundly deaf and can sign and lip read with confidence, allowing her to interact with her colleagues. She was surprised at work last month with a birthday cake and card, a reflection of what a positive impression she has made in her work placement in such a short time.

Next step for Charlene is to gain paid employment in the cleaning sector and then she can really sweep to success!

## Sarah unsupported at Wetherspoons

Sarah was referred in June 2015 after having been unemployed for 6 months. Sarah has lots of experience both in paid employment and via work placements and was keen to gain work.

Sarah expressed a wish to work in hairdressing – having a City and Guilds level 2 in Female Hairdressing and work experience in this field. With support from a dedicated Recruitment Adviser, Sarah applied for numerous Hairdressing Apprenticeships, unfortunately nothing came to fruition.

Sarah's Adviser felt that her bubbly pro-active personality would be suited to most customer service roles and Sarah reassessed her job preference areas. Sarah had enjoyed her time working in a bar and considered this type of work again.

Her Adviser suggested that she apply for a short term contract at Café Azure as an Assistant to gain some up to date experience. Sarah jumped at the offer. Sarah had a successful interview and started work for Azure in January.

Still keen for longer term work, Sarah, with the assistance of one of Azure's Employment Advisers applied for a job with JD Wetherspoon. Sarah was invited for interview where she was able to demonstrate her experience by talking about her job at Azure. Sarah was then invited for a work trial. Sarah impressed the team and was offered the job. Sarah feels she no longer needs our support.

Well done Sarah on this great achievement.

“ **Getting the work placement was great in helping me move forward into long term employment. Brian was a great help in securing me invaluable experience within the Azure Garden Centre Cafe.** ”



# We'd love to hear from you!

We strive to deliver a professional service to our clients, host employers and other stakeholders. So we can check on how we are doing we welcome any comments, compliments and suggestions. We use feedback in our annual self assessment process.

If you have an area for improvement or a concern, please also contact us so we can work together to resolve the matter and to allow us to develop our service for the future.

If you would like to give us feedback please get in touch.



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## Kevin - painting his dream!



If anyone has been in Head Office over the last few months they may have seen Kevin hard at work painting the offices, meetings rooms and corridors. All of which are looking much brighter thanks to his efforts.

Kevin has had some previous employment but needed additional support to get back in to the labour market and so was referred to Work Choice in October 2015. Kevin was interested in gaining work in painting/decorating or in a labouring role.

An opportunity existed within Azure to paint and redecorate the Head Office building. As soon as we saw Kevin's work history and his level 1 and 2 qualifications in painting and decorating we knew he'd be the perfect candidate.

Kevin applied for the position and was successful in gaining the job. His initial 13 week contract has been extended twice as new areas of the building are identified for upgrade. Even offices beyond of the Head Quarters building have opted to have Kevin's expertise after they'd seen his achievements.

Kevin's enthusiasm is infectious and his personality brightens up the place as much as the new paint has. Kevin is keen to gain longer term employment and has successfully applied for a position within Café Azure – one of our own supported businesses.



We knew it wouldn't be too long before a good employer snapped him up – and it was us!

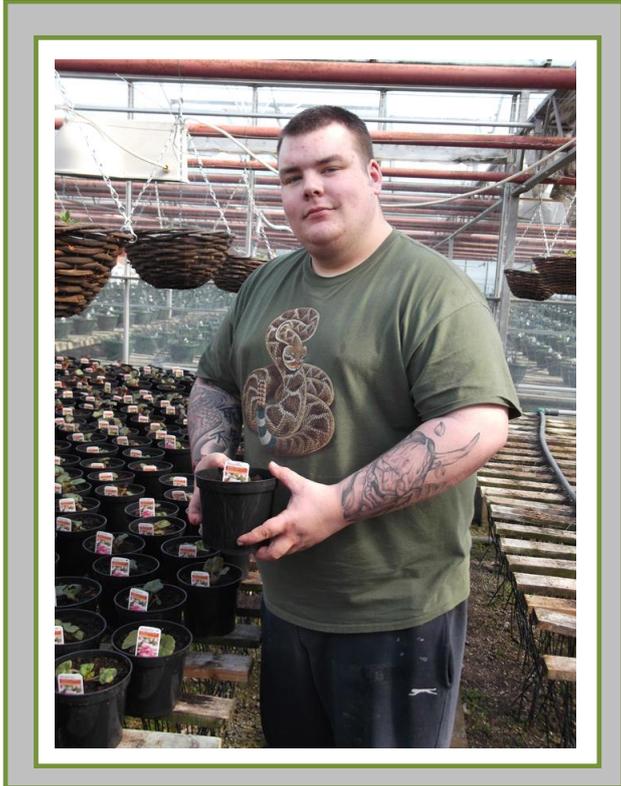
**I really appreciate the confidence the job has given me  
as well as the trust and belief Azure had in me.**

**Azure helped me move from being with Jobcentre Plus to  
employment and I'm enjoying it.**

# Liam's Park Progression

Liam was referred to Azure's Work Choice programme in January 2016. Liam had previously gained some work experience in decorating and labouring roles but had very little employment history. Liam was assigned to work with Recruitment Adviser Brian Hunt. Soon after starting on the programme Liam expressed his desire to gain a job where he could work outside.

An opportunity became available for a short term contract within Azure's own horticultural Nurseries and Brian supported Liam to make an application. At this time Liam also applied for a job with North Tyneside Council.



Liam was invited for an interview with Azure and was offered the position. Liam threw himself into his new role.

About 4 weeks later Liam was invited for an interview for the job with North Tyneside Council. Liam attended and was able to confidently talk about the experiences he had gained whilst working with Azure.

Liam felt the interview had gone well and was delighted when he received the news that he had been offered the Apprentice Park Manager position.

Liam is due to start his new job mid May and feels the support he received whilst at Azure has helped him when he progresses without support with his new employer.

A dream of outside work achieved!

Well done Liam and best of luck in your new job.



**STOP! ... Think ...**



Could you help one of our clients take a step closer to achieving their goal of getting paid employment?

Could you offer a work experience placement, work trial or employment opportunity?

If you could give someone the green light to test or demonstrate their skills, please get in touch!

We welcome any partnership working – *your support is much appreciated.*

Call us on **01670 717 106** or email **es@azure-charitable.co.uk**

# Azure Printing

Callum was referred to Workstep back in 2007 and Azure supported Callum in a variety of short term jobs.

A position became available at Azure Printing and Callum was interested in the job. An application was made and Callum gained an interview. After a successful work trial Callum was offered the position of Driver

Soon after Callum started, Manager Allan Lynn decided that Callum would be an ideal candidate as a Print Finisher and although Callum found maths difficult, training was sourced and Callum was given time off every week to attend classes.

After five years Callum became accomplished as a Print Finisher and although Callum has enjoyed his time at Azure, he wanted to begin a new career and was successful in gaining a job with Q.E. facilities in Gateshead as a Driver. With Azure's assistance over the years, Callum now feels he will be able to do his new job unsupported.

Everyone is sorry to see Callum leave, but we wish him all the very best for the future.



Charlie and Callum wishing each other well

**“ I was nervous and a little excited when I started at Azure, my confidence was not too good. Azure helped me gain confidence and though I am not good at maths, with their support I became a Print Finisher. ”**

**I think whoever comes in next, Azure has the facilities to guide them through.**

As Callum spent more time carrying out duties relating to print finishing, there became a need for another driver.

In May 2015 Charlie was referred to Azure's Work Choice programme. Charlie wanted a driving job and we thought he would be a perfect candidate for this role at Azure Printing! Charlie had a successful interview and was offered the position and started work in June 2015.

Due to the distance from home, Charlie needed his own transport to get to and from work. Not being able to afford a car, Azure supported Charlie to access Wheels to Work. Charlie rented a motorbike at reasonable rates from them so he could sustain work. Charlie was able to save up some money and now has a car of his own.

Allan was impressed at how quickly Charlie learned new tasks and when Callum gained his new position Allan immediately felt Charlie could take over the role and train to become a Print Finisher; Charlie enjoys his new job and is now working hard to become proficient in his new role.

Charlie summed what Azure's support has meant to him.

“ Azure has put my life back on track. ”

Due to Charlie's transition to this new role there was a need for another driver, again!



David on his first day

David has had a range of previous employment but due to a health condition he could no longer pursue a career in that field.

David was referred to Azure in May 2016; Work Choice being the best programme to support him back into employment.

David would need to retrain before moving into a new area of work. However one of David's many skills was his ability to drive.

This along with the fact that he was incredibly keen to re-enter the labour market meant he was the ideal candidate for the job at Azure Printing!

Obviously we had to broach this with David and when we did he was delighted at the prospect.

After an introductory meeting and interview with the Manager of the Printing department, David was offered the position. Judging by the smile on his face we think it's fair to say he seems to be enjoying his new position.

“ After injuring my elbow in previous employment I was finding it difficult to get back in to work with my skill set. I am extremely happy to now be at Azure where unlike some of my previous jobs, provision has been made to work around my injury. Also with the support and training offered I am now able to not just work, I can retrain in a new career and could not be more grateful. ”

Although this unique set of events is unlikely to be repeated, it shows how well the Work Choice programme works; supporting clients to try something new, seeing clients gain confidence when gaining new skills, achieving progression within their roles and witnessing when a client feels ready and prepared to leave the programme and continue their working life without our support.

We are in a very privileged position and observe some incredible moments, this being just one amazing example.

We wish Callum, Charlie and David all the very best.