

Work Choice Newsletter

Issue 4 – January 2012



Happy New Year from everyone in Azure Employment Services!

This issue is bursting with stories to keep you up-to-date...

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John Gemmell
Senior Manager

Welcome to our latest Work Choice newsletter – the newsletter that highlights the positives in the programme.

There is no doubt that success breeds success and we sometimes feel the need to remind others that the success in retaining and sustaining a job can be just as big an achievement as getting a job in the first place.

In this edition of our newsletter we are concentrating on our module 2 and 3 clients to show the fantastic progress that can be made with the right support.

For some clients in employment the passage to unsupported employment may be a smooth and relatively quick journey, for others the journey may take many detours and have no defined timeline and may never be completed.

A client's development and success within employment is often dependant upon the three-way relationship between the client, the employer and their Work Choice Adviser. The Advisers support can range from advice for the employer on how to handle a specific situation to practical support to help develop the client's skills and ability to progress in their job. Both the employer and the client must be confident that their Adviser will respond quickly to any situation or need and give clear and unbiased advice on how to resolve any issues.

With this kind of support all clients are capable of fulfilling their potential.

Ed's Story (Module 2)

CPA7

Ed has made huge progress whilst being on the Work Choice Programme.

Ed was previously on Workstep with another provider and made the transition to Work Choice with Azure in October 2010. Only three months prior to transferring onto this new programme Ed was successful in gaining employment.

Ed had a lot of changes to cope with at that time; settling in to a new job, adjusting to a new programme as well as getting to know a new provider.

Upon initially meeting Ed, Azure found his confidence to be low; he was incredibly shy, would not make eye contact and would wear his optional uniform cap low over his eyes.

Azure's Employment Adviser Peter Stokel kept in regular contact with Ed and his employer to carry out reviews and monitor Ed's progress. Over the months Ed worked hard to overcome his shyness and improve his communication especially when meeting new people.

During his time at McDonald's Ed has received a great deal of support from his manager, supervisor and work colleagues. Ed's Manager, David Brothers, has given him all the training he can which has helped Ed develop as much as he has. Ed's role is working in the dining area although he has also had the opportunity to work in the kitchen to broaden his experience but much prefers his main role.

Ed's confidence has improved significantly; he now makes eye contact with people and no longer wears his hat. Ed has received positive feedback about how well he is performing in his role at McDonalds and has been offered an increase in his working hours.

Ed's life outside of work has also changed due to feeling more settled and confident he has moved out of the parental home and now has a home of his own.

“

Thank you to everyone at Azure for helping me and to David for giving me this opportunity to work.

”



Ed and his manager David Brothers

Paula's story (Module 2)

CPA7

Paula has been employed by Sunderland City Council as a Kitchen Assistant since 1997; Paula was previously on Workstep and transitioned across to Work Choice with Azure in October 2011.

Azure's Employment Adviser, Marion Marshall has kept in contact with Paula and her Manager, Mary Hanfil and has carried out regular reviews of Paula's progress. Highlighted during these reviews was the development in the range of tasks Paula is now involved in at work, which has increased during her time there; she now prepares and serves corporate buffets as well as serving customers at lunch times, which she really enjoys.

Mary Hanfil feels the expansion of Paula's skills and her increased confidence is due to her being allowed to develop and work at her own pace.

Identified during a review meeting was the fact that Paula works alongside a colleague with hearing impairment and after discussion a goal was set for Paula to learn Makaton (a form of sign language for people with communication difficulties) so she could communicate with him more easily. Paula adapted well to learning this new skill and even took on the responsibility to deliver Makaton training to other work colleagues. Paula and Mary reported that this went very well.

Since learning Makaton Paula supports her colleague to develop his cookery skills and spends several hours each week with him.

Mary feels Paula is a great role model, has excellent people skills and has a profound understanding of others' disability. She is empathetic towards others, especially when supporting colleagues; she is a valued member of the team

Paula has completed other training recently including Health and Safety awareness and a Food Hygiene refresher course. Paula is willing to further develop her skills and will achieve this with the support from her manager and encouragement from Azure.



Paula preparing some fabulous looking deserts

“ Since I've been with Azure, I've made more progress and learned more skills. My manager, Mary Hanfil has been very supportive to me.

”

An Award for Kevin (Module 2)

CPA7

Kevin has been with Azure since 1995 on the Workstep programme. In October 2010 he made the transition across to Work Choice and continued to be supported by Azure. Kevin has had to cope with a great deal of change over the years; originally he worked for Somerfield, the store was then taken over by the Co-op before finally becoming an Asda in 2010. Kevin has found dealing with these changes challenging.

Kevin is now settled and is working 30 hours per week. During 2011 Kevin was given the responsibility for the Butters & Fats section of the store; having to make sure his section is fully stocked, carries out efficient stock rotation and ensures the facing up of goods, duties which Kevin took on with enthusiasm.

Late in 2011 Kevin along with other colleagues of the store were given an ABCD (Above & Beyond the Call of Duty) Award. Asda give these awards to colleagues who do an outstanding job and each month a number of staff are selected to receive the recognition.

Asda encourage staff to demonstrate specific values such as putting customers first, caring for colleagues and striving to be best.

Kevin attended a celebratory lunch with management where he was presented with the award and a £40 gift voucher by the People Manager. This award was also given to Kevin for him having an exceptionally tidy and well stocked section.



Kevin proudly standing in his section

“

I'm chuffed. I felt I'd achieved something.

”

10 years service for Andrew (Module 2)

CPA7

Andrew has a learning disability and was referred to Workstep with Azure. With assistance Andrew applied for a vacancy, attended an interview and was offered a position as Kitchen Assistant with MHA at their Harwood Court care home in Cramlington, Northumberland; his employment commenced in January 2002.

Andrew began working 16 hours per week making sandwiches and carrying out basic kitchen duties. Over time and with the support of his manager, colleagues and his Adviser, Andrew has developed significantly. He now works full time and serves food to the residents. Andrew is also responsible for opening and closing the kitchen each day. Andrew transferred across to Work Choice in October 2010 and continues to be supported by Azure.

Andrew's Manager, Tracey Hartley invited Azure to attend a surprise presentation event at Harwood Court. Andrew was being commended for his 10-years service; being awarded a certificate, badge and vouchers to spend.

The event was well attended by Andrew's colleagues and residents. His colleagues felt that "Andrew is a hard worker...truly amazing... his work is impeccable...he gets on well with our residents".

Everyone spoke very highly of Andrew and his achievements; also recognising that Andrew has only ever had one day sickness absence in the decade he has spent working for MHA. So dedicated is he that Andrew even turned up for work that day and had to be sent home by his Manager as he was ill!

Andrew was shocked but pleasantly surprised by this presentation "I am proud of myself and feel really good about it".



Andrew and his Manager Tracey Hartley displaying his 10-year service certificate

“ I have worked with Andrew for seven years now, over this time I have seen him grow into a fine young man who works very hard. Andrew has a great rapport with residents and staff. Andrew is a well respected member of staff; something I don't think he fully appreciates. We think a lot of him. ”

Vicky's Progress (Module 2)

CPA7

Vicky was referred to Azure in 2005 for the Workstep programme due to having Agoraphobia, anxiety issues and would often have panic attacks.

Vicky was supported by Azure and after some time searching for employment Vicky applied for a vacancy within a local florist. In September 2006, Vicky was successful in being offered employment as a Florist Assistant with Majories Florist.

Joanne Sullivan, Proprietor and Manager, began training Vicky in basic flower arranging. Over the years Vicky worked hard and demonstrated her ability and flair towards floristry. Vicky and Joanne would meet regularly with Marion Marshall, an Azure Employment Adviser. Marion would review Vicky's progress and set goals for her to work towards.

Huge progress was made and Vicky's confidence grew; she started to design and arrange a wide variety of floral displays including bridal bouquets, bespoke funeral arrangements and Christmas wreaths. Vicky has undertaken several training courses arranged by Azure; Emergency Life Support and Health & Safety as well as being successful in attaining an NVQ level 1 in Customer Service organised through her employer.

As Vicky developed in her role at work she felt able to try to travel independently and slowly Vicky found she was able to visit places on her own. Joanne has been very supportive of Vicky and understands her fears.

Joanne was so impressed with Vicky's attitude and determination that she nominated Vicky for the David Grainger Award; an award for outstanding contribution to work. Although not a winner of the award, everyone feels Vicky is a winner for overcoming her fears and for her achievements.

In October 2010 Vicky transferred to Work Choice with Azure and discussions have started to take place about Vicky progressing into open employment.



Vicky showing off one of her beautiful floral creations

“ Getting this job has been fantastic. My confidence has improved lots, to the point where I can now go out with friends and socialise which is something I couldn't do before. My manager Joanne is great and is very supportive of me.

”

Job Start Photo Gallery

Congratulations go to all of these clients who have secured employment since October 2011- **well done!**

CPA7



Wendy
Checkout Operator
B&M Retail Ltd

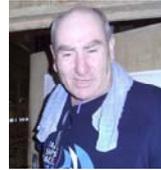


Jonathan
Sales Assistant
Home Bargains



Josephine
Admin Assistant
Gateshead Council

CPA8



Peter
General Farm Assistant
Oaklands Farm Ltd



Thomas
General Assistant
Aldi Stores Ltd



Elaine
General Assistant
Heron Foods Ltd



If you have any vacancies or could offer any of our clients the opportunity of a work placement, please get in touch:

es@azure-charitable.co.uk or **01670 717 106**

Supported Business Update

CPA7

Photo Gallery

Congratulations go to all of these clients who have secured employment within our own Supported Businesses since October 2011- **well done!**



Paul
Horticultural Assistant
Azure Landscapes



Robert
Horticultural Assistant
Azure Landscapes



Rachel
Horticultural Assistant
Azure Cash & Carry



John
Horticultural Assistant
Azure Landscapes

Our Supported Businesses

Supported Businesses is the term used to cover the different operations Azure run, with a key aim of providing employment opportunities for people with disability. Azure has been running supported business for some 25 years and these currently are:

- **Azure Garden Centre** – based in Cramlington providing a quality garden centre and restaurant experience to the local community and a cash & carry facility to the regional landscapes industry.
- **Azure Nurseries** – growing a range of plant material for sale through our garden centre and Cash & Carry.
- **Azure Landscapes** – providing a grounds maintenance service to housing associations and industrial sites across the North East.
- **Azure Print** – providing high quality printed material to both business and private individuals.

Our supported businesses provide up to 54 employment opportunities for our client group and we also use the facilities to offer appropriate training and work experience placements.

All the photographs and stories used in the production of this newsletter have been obtained with the full consent and permission of each client.