

Recovery Stories

A collection of personal recovery stories
by service users who place employment
at the heart of their recovery



Introduction

Employment plays a central part in any individual's mental wellbeing and quality of life. It also plays an important role in financial independence, personal status, and enables individuals to play a valued role in their community. It offers opportunities to learn, make new friends and have more control over life. Access to employment opportunities is therefore an important issue for mental health and addictions services to address.

CNWL has made a commitment to improving access to employment for our service users, by creating a User Employment Programme to assist service users to gain employment and time limited work placements within the Trust; as well as implementation of the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) which involves integrating employment specialists (ES) into a clinical team. In addition we work in partnership with a range of employment services across the Trust.

The IPS model has 8 key principals:

- The employment specialist and clinical team are based in the same office and work together.
- Competitive employment is the primary goal.
- Job-search is rapid, beginning within one month. The aim being to support people to develop work skills on the job.
- An emphasis on service user choice in relation to readiness to start the return to work process.
- Job search is based on service user preferences.
- Availability of time-unlimited and individualized support for the individual and employer.
- An emphasis on building relationships with employers in order to access the 'hidden labour market'.
- Benefits counselling is provided to support the person through the transition from benefits to paid work.

As the following recovery stories from service users clearly demonstrate, having employment specialists based in clinical teams is making a difference in supporting service users to achieve their employment goals. If you would like to find out more how we can support you to get back to work by accessing a CNWL employment specialist or local employment services please speak to your care coordinator.

Lynne Miller
Vocational Services Manager



Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I write the foreword to this booklet.

The Trust takes pride in the success of its employment services which form a key component of the recovery orientated services which the organisation is committed to delivering.

Since 2004, when CNWL appointed a Trust Vocational Services Manager, we have made considerable progress in developing a Trust-wide employment provision for service users. Our User Employment Programme has been pivotal in supporting individuals to experience work placements and to secure paid work. We also continue to expand a network of employment specialists, based in teams across our mental health and addiction services, who are committed to delivering the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS).

The Trust's employment services strive to provide opportunities for work, supporting those in contact with secondary mental health and addiction services to gain and keep work and supporting those in work through times of mental distress.

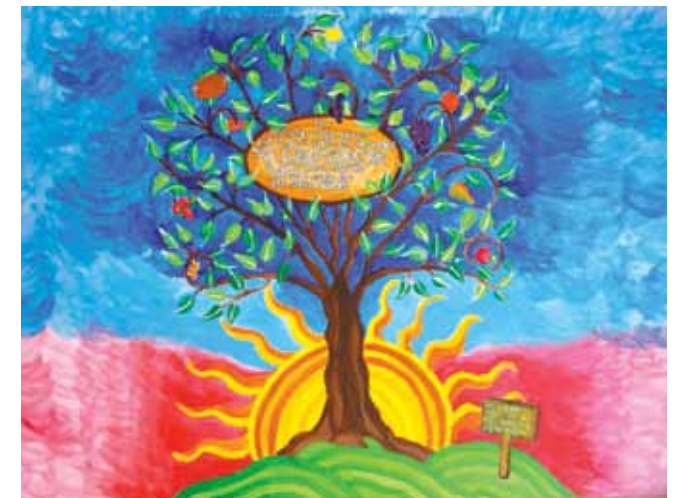
An appreciation of an individual's journey of recovery is best understood by the telling of a personal story and I commend and thank those contributors who have taken the time and found the inner strength to so generously share their experience in writing. The stories reflect those principles of personal recovery such as hope, self-determination, inclusion and choice, which we all value and how for so many of the individuals we work with, the importance of work is central.

I hope this booklet provides further encouragement and inspiration to those who are receiving services and to those supporting them whether they are family, friends or professionals.

Claire Murdoch
Chief Executive

(Right & front cover) This painting of The Tree Of Life by one of our service users, Sarbjot Kallah, carries the message:

"The obstacles that others put in your path can be pushed aside in any number of ways. The obstacles that you put in your own can be removed, only by the same hands."





Service user who has been supported by his employment specialist with his dream to become an actor

Before I was referred to an employment specialist (ES) I spent my time doing nothing but walking the streets every day and sitting down watching the world go by. I was homeless in London for about eight years. I kept getting moved on because I was always questioned by the police and people complaining. I consider myself to be lucky because I always seem to find shelter in the winter and slept rough in the summer, spring and autumn. I have seen more foxes in my life while being homeless in London!

I have always had a big idea to be an actor and more big ideas such as to start up my own business. I took the plunge and completed two acting courses at City Lit in 2010 and really enjoyed them. I was referred to my ES in the summer of 2010 and have been seeing her on a weekly basis.

I am now registered with two film and television casting agents and have got my first paid job as an extra! I have also put myself online with an extra's website to increase my chances of more paid employment. I am aware that in order to chase my dream I need to train more, so I have, with the help of my ES, identified follow on acting courses at the City Lit.

I feel I am now on my journey. Instead of doing nothing almost everyday of my life, I am now busy on a daily basis using the computer to apply for castings so that I can build my CV. This is also helping me to develop my computer skills.

I aim to do a foundation course in acting next year which hopefully will lead to a three year accredited course which will then qualify me as a professional actor.

Watch out George Clooney!

I FEEL I AM NOW ON MY JOURNEY. INSTEAD OF DOING NOTHING ALMOST EVERYDAY OF MY LIFE, I AM NOW BUSY ON A DAILY BASIS USING THE COMPUTER TO APPLY FOR CASTINGS SO THAT I CAN BUILD MY CV. THIS IS ALSO HELPING ME TO DEVELOP MY COMPUTER SKILLS



Service user who had been unemployed for 21 years

I am 44 and have had a mental and physical illness for over 20 years. Staff at my CMHT in Brent put me in contact with their employment specialist. I have been to the Wembley Job Centre many times but people there didn't seem very interested in helping me.

After a few sessions with the ES she invited me to the job club every Friday between 3-5pm. I quickly became motivated and eager to look for a job. They explained to

me how to draw up a CV and write correct application forms. Within months I had an interview with B&Q but didn't get the job. Then I had an interview with Homebase but didn't get the job! The ES suggested some pointers and we did more interview practice and I got a job – 14 hours a week at B&Q in Chiswick.

I couldn't have done this without constant support from the ES; she kept motivating me even when I felt low after not getting the first two jobs. I considered taking a break but she encouraged me to keep trying. THANK YOU.





Service user whose employment specialist has helped her to fulfil her ambition to work as a fashion sales assistant

Working with my employment specialist was a vital factor in my journey to recovery and putting me in the place I am in now. I have high hopes for my future and look forward to every new day. I feel this is all due to the hard work and support of my ES.

As soon as I met my ES I felt at ease and comfortable in her presence and knew we would get on perfectly. She went through what the program consisted of, and told me that as much as she would help and offer her services I would also have to be active in attending meetings and looking for vacancies. Ultimately it would be a joint effort. The first step was looking at what I wanted to achieve so we set some goals and looked at how they could be reached. Coming out of hospital I felt so disorientated with everyday day life and was eager about getting some full time work, getting out of the house and gaining my independence but I was unsure as to how I could achieve this. I told the ES about my desire for a fashion sales assistant position, and she was able to advise me on how to find different agencies and recruitment services, which could help.

After finding a vacancy online my ES and myself agreed to meet at a local Internet Café where she spent time with me completing the online application. She helped me with answering the questions even though they were extremely long-

AS SOON AS I MET MY ES I FELT AT EASE AND COMFORTABLE IN HER PRESENCE AND KNEW WE WOULD GET ON PERFECTLY

winded and repetitive and helped me market myself as best as possible. All I wanted to do was close the document and leave but I was encouraged to continue and see it to the end, which we eventually did. I definitely would not have been able to tackle such a task had I been by myself and probably given up after the very first question.

We talked about me giving my CV personally to retailers but it was something I wasn't ready to do alone. So we agreed to take a trip together to a local shopping centre; this way I had my ES by my side for support. It definitely made it easier and it just felt like a casual shopping trip with a friend.

Days after I received a phone interview from Topshop and was invited to an interview. Result! I was on my way to securing a job I so desperately wanted. However the thought of an interview scared me. Presenting myself in front of a panel of people I didn't know and taking part in group discussion made me extremely nervous. My ES was able to tell me about her past experiences with retail interviews so I knew what to expect. We went through some areas we could research in preparation for the day. I was also given some interview tips and 'dos and don'ts' which I still refer to now. On the morning of the interview I had a mock interview with my ES and was given feedback after. This definitely put me at ease and I knew exactly what to do and say for the real one.

The interview was a great success and a day after I received the news I had been offered

a position as a sales advisor. It felt great and everything seemed to be falling into place. So what was next? I was told it wasn't the end of the work between my ES and me. I would still be receiving support from the ES and we would meet for updates every so often. A month or two after employment I met with my ES and we discussed how the job was going and my plans for going back into education. I was unsure about applying but she gave me some reassuring words so I took my chances and went for it.

The result of this is I am now a full time buying and merchandising student at the Fashion Retail Academy, with a part time retail job. I think back and I am amazed at how far I have come. I feel so lucky to have met my employment specialist and working with her has been such a rewarding life changing experience.

I acquired a work placement in the IT department of the NHS and it has immensely improved my confidence



Service user who completed a placement with CNWL and is now in paid employment with the Trust

My world seemed to fall apart after my mother's death. Prior to this I was going through bouts of unemployment. In 2005 the year when my mother died, I was doing a work placement with an IT firm for a year. In September 2006 I started to suffer with auditory hallucinations for the first time as a result of the stress caused by worries over my financial problems and not sleeping well for months.

When I was suffering the early stages of auditory hallucinations I spoke to my older sister about it. She took me to the local hospital, St. Mary's in Paddington to seek help with the Mental Health Crisis Team. My bouts of auditory hallucinations have recurred a couple of times, but each time it re-occurred I would deal with the early stages before it got worse.

In the summer of 2009 after having psychiatric therapy for a couple of months, the Crisis Team then referred me to an employment specialist at Westminster mental health services. I acquired a work placement in the IT department of the NHS and it has immensely improved my confidence and the response rate from employers, leading to me getting interviews.

The good news is that my placement within CNWL has resulted in a paid job with the Trust.



Service user who, with continuing support from the User Employment Programme, is now happily settled and employed helping others on the road to recovery

10 years ago I was trapped in a destructive marriage. I felt unwanted, useless, totally defeated by my environment but terrified at the thought of leaving at the same time. I never dreamt that I would ever return to full time office work. I had no hope and my future looked very bleak. I eventually decided for myself and the sake of our sons I had to get out.

During this period I became dependent on alcohol. I was referred to Hammersmith Drug and Alcohol Services from which I received counselling and had my first detox in 2001. I didn't follow through with after care and found myself back to square one within a few weeks. In May 2002 having lost my driving license through drinking I resumed attendance at HDAS and was re-referred to a detox unit in December 2002. I decided to really make it work this time. I took all the help on offer and did everything suggested and complied with my aftercare plan.

I started doing some computer training, but really felt that I needed real work experience to get myself in the right frame of mind for work. I couldn't find anything. I tried agencies who weren't interested due to my lack of experience and poor CV, along with stiff competition. Again, I thought that although I was regaining my faculties, I would never get back to full time work and off benefits.



It was around this time I found out about the CNWL User Employment Programme. I was given a tremendous amount of help and advice during the frequent meetings I had with my employment specialist who also helped me with my CV along with tips on going for interviews.

Whilst I was doing all this I still had the benefit mine field to contend with. This is a very tricky area and I had to be very careful what I did in terms of hours. Job Centre Plus was behind me all the way, making sure any jobs I applied for paid enough for me to come off all benefits.

Once I felt confident enough my ES managed to persuade Harrow Drug and Alcohol unit to give me a go. After much encouragement and advice, her enthusiasm started to rub off on me. As a result of this, when she took me there for a proper

interview I started to actually believe there may just be chance that one day I would be able to lead a normal life again. And, of course, on this visit I also gave the Harrow team a chance to see what they were letting themselves in for. I think we were all pleasantly surprised at the result. I was made to feel part of the team in no time at all and shown all sorts of things which had radically changed during the years I'd spent as a housewife/mother and then, eventually, as an alcoholic with no permanent address. During this period my ES kept in contact with me regularly to see how I was getting on and gave me pep talks when going for interviews. I felt very looked after and encouraged. This part of my life will always be remembered with much affection.

After 2 years I felt it was time to move into a higher-grade post and with the help of the User Employment Programme was

successful. I am now happily settled and will always be grateful to the programme for bringing it all together.

I would just like to emphasise the importance that being employed has played in my recovery. Not just in having a job but also in finding people who encouraged me to find long forgotten aptitudes and incredible enthusiasm. Through their confidence and belief in me I found these qualities in myself. Looking back on the whole experience with my ES, the User Employment Programme and Job Centre Plus, I will never forget the thrill and excitement that I felt at being, for want of a better word, reborn.

And now 10 years on I am working amongst people who are just starting out on the road to recovery. I can relate to a certain extent what they are going through emotionally, as although everyone has a different story to tell, the devastating effect of losing one's free will and dignity to a substance along with the resulting mental health issues are pretty similar. There is not much hands on help or sympathy available from the majority of people or employers, especially in the current financial setting, but a chance such as the one I was given, that tiny glimmer of hope, can make all the difference between success and failure in finding a future for someone who has lost all hope, self belief and confidence. There is no therapy I have come across that can give a person back their self esteem and belief in themselves as effectively as being of positive use and valued as part of a team.

I WOULD JUST LIKE TO EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE THAT BEING EMPLOYED HAS PLAYED IN MY RECOVERY



Service user who is now working as a local authority field research interviewer

After many years working in the public sector, I had a period of unemployment due to redundancy and then did a couple of temporary jobs that did not work out. As I felt I had let my wife and family down badly my mental health problems became worse and I felt very depressed and inadequate. As a result I had a short spell in hospital after taking an overdose of my medication. I then started to get Incapacity Benefit. After my health improved, my psychiatrist referred me to the employment specialist at Brent Mental Health Service. Being introduced to the programme, and the support I was given made me feel less daunted and gave me some hope that I may find work. On first contact my employment specialist (ES) was very welcoming and I felt comfortable straight away. She explained every stage of the process and remained very approachable and contactable.

At the start we discussed my needs, and the facilities that were available to help me with getting into work. We then met regularly to redo my CV and look for vacancies in bulletins, newspapers and on the internet. My ES also helped me with filling in applications and kept a lookout for vacancies. There were also workshops in the library where I could use the internet to look for jobs.

She also continuously kept in touch with me and we regularly discussed progress. She was encouraging and supportive and

On first contact my Employment Specialist was very welcoming and I felt comfortable straight away

kept up my confidence and belief when I did not get jobs and if I was not feeling 100%.

In October 2009 I got a job as an electoral canvasser with Brent Council on a temporary project until November 2009. I achieved a high response rate and was invited back for the 2010 project, which I worked on. In January 2010 I successfully applied for a job as a field research interviewer, via an advert in the local paper, and after a period on probation was promoted to the first established grade in October 2010. I am still working as an interviewer and I have found the set up of working from home and keeping contact with area managers has suited me.

My ES is a very supportive, caring and dedicated person and I think the service I received helped to give me a new start and restore my pride and usefulness. I believe this is an important service as it helps members of the community with problems which sometimes can be misunderstood or overlooked.



Service user now working as an administrator for a charity in Islington

I became involved with the User Employment Programme via my Westminster ES. I had been working with an employment specialist there to look for work but I felt I needed to gain some new experience and get used to the workplace before jumping into a paid role. A placement was organized for me at Latimer House. The reception was fairly quiet but it did get busy at times and it gave me the opportunity to see how I felt being at work again. I found Latimer House a very friendly and pleasant place to work; this has not always been the case in jobs I have held in my life. I enjoyed coming to Latimer House and was sad to finish there - which, according to my diary, was on the 28th May 2010.

Once my placement had finished I continued to work with my employment specialist (ES)

who contacted a charity in Islington, which I thought I would feel comfortable working with; they were looking for an administrator. I went for an interview and did a day's trial.

I now have a one day a week, temporary, paid position there and I go each Friday. I am hoping it may become two days a week and become permanent; I will then stop receiving benefit and have that as my sole income. The people there are nice and it gets me out an extra day a week. I am doing general administration, mail shots, and a bit of IT work - all of which is below the level I got to career-wise on my CV. However it is what I feel is manageable with my anxiety issue, and I enjoy going there.

So I am getting back into the swing of things bit by bit, and hopefully it will lead to something part-time and permanent. Thanks a lot for the experience of working with the User Employment Programme.





I HAVE TAKEN A FOOTBALL REFEREE'S COURSE AND AM A QUALIFIED LEVEL 7 REFEREE; THIS IS SOMETHING I COULDN'T HAVE CONTEMPLATED DOING TWO YEARS AGO



Service user who followed the Employment Programme and is now working as a customer services assistant

Over two years ago I had to quit work due to depression. A few months later I was diagnosed with a mental illness. I was out of work for about six months before I found a voluntary job working in a charity shop in Pinner. I worked there for a year and a half, which really boosted my confidence, and the manager at the charity shop was extremely helpful and understanding.

During the time whilst I was suffering with mental illness I was referred by my doctor to the Early Intervention Service, which was the best thing that could have happened to me.

In September 2008 I met my new care coordinator, my employment specialist and met with a psychologist. I cannot thank them enough for all that they have given me. Two years on I joined the job club in Harrow and managed to get back to work at Gregg's the bakers.

I am currently attending the Early Intervention Service and with the help from everybody there I have made excellent progress; for example two years ago I couldn't attend a football match but now I go regularly which is what I did before my illness. I have taken a football referee's course and am a qualified level 7 referee; this is something I couldn't have contemplated doing two years ago.

I am now working as a customer service assistant at Wilkinson's, it's going really well and with the In Work Support I receive from my ES, I am managing work well. I occasionally have set backs due to work pressures and stress but thanks to all the help I have had, and I am still having, I can cope much better now.

In conclusion two years ago life was very bleak but thanks to all the help life is much better now and I hope I am a better person for the experience.



Service user who with the support of the employment specialist gained the confidence to return to work

After recovering from being diagnosed with drug and depression related symptoms I needed support in getting my life back on track. I wanted to get back into employment and was given help by an employment specialist.

Coming out from hospital made me aware of how difficult it was getting back into employment and getting on with my daily routine. At this point I was very confused and had no idea where to begin.

My ES sat with me and helped draw up an action plan of what I wanted to do. We would meet up and plan out what my next step would be. I was offered full support with building up a good CV, composing covering letters, filling in application forms and even with mock interviews. Doing this really helped me to build my confidence right back up.

I was out of work for a while and needed support in approaching employers. Accompanied by my ES I handed CVs out to employers face to face, which really helped me to approach people with full confidence. I was also encouraged to take up a course that interested me, which I did. I felt that my life had a normal routine. I was able to travel and meet new people on my own which really made me proud.

My ES helped in finding current vacancies, which we would apply for together. I was offered all the help I could use and felt that the full support I received really helped me gain my confidence back and helped me successfully find employment.

Currently I am employed and do feel I could not have come this far without the support and motivation I received from my employment specialist.

I WAS OFFERED FULL SUPPORT WITH BUILDING UP A GOOD CV, COMPOSING COVERING LETTERS, FILLING IN APPLICATION FORMS AND EVEN WITH MOCK INTERVIEWS. DOING THIS REALLY HELPED ME TO BUILD MY CONFIDENCE RIGHT BACK UP

My ES sat with me and helped draw up an action plan of what I wanted to do

WHAT HAD
ORIGINALLY BEEN
INTENDED TO BE SIX
WEEKS UNPAID WORK-
EXPERIENCE WAS
THEN EXTENDED TO
FULL TIME PAID WORK
AND I HAVE NOW BEEN
IN FULL-TIME
EMPLOYMENT FOR
OVER FOUR YEARS



Service user who after being introduced to the User Employment Programme completed a placement with CNWL and is now employed full time by the Trust

I was introduced to the User Employment Programme after a prolonged period of unemployment and mental health problems. Not having worked for so long had left me with serious confidence issues about my ability to function in any workplace, and this was causing a barrier to further dealing with my mental health issues. I was given excellent support during the crucial first few weeks, both by the user employment coordinator and by the Trust staff involved in providing the placement. A sensible timetable of gradual exposure to more work was set in place, starting at two half days a week and leading to full-time working. All those around me were sensitive to my needs.

What had originally been intended to be six weeks unpaid work-experience was then extended to full time paid work and I have now been in full-time employment for over four years, with my confidence in my abilities to handle all workplace challenges fully restored. I have also had the opportunity to develop skills, move departments, gain qualifications and secure promotion in my time since starting with the scheme.

It is easy for me to forget just how daunting and impossible the prospect of any workplace exposure felt to me before my involvement with the programme. However thanks to the structured and supportive approach of all those involved, and my own commitment to making it work, it has been a huge success and has had an extremely positive effect on my mental health, future work prospects and overall quality of life.



Service user who after completing a placement with CNWL is now employed by the Trust as an administrative assistant

I chose to participate in the User Employment Programme because I wanted to get back to work. The programme has helped me develop my confidence. My mentor is aware of my disability and he is supportive of me.

Thanks to the Care Programme Approach I manage my mental health well. With the support of my workplace mentor and my employment specialist I have been able to focus on what I want from my career and to consider the direction I could take.

When I was diagnosed with acute psychosis, I thought my life was about to end. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Going to hospital was a blessing in disguise. I was put through to an employment specialist (ES) who got me a placement as a project assistant at Trust HQ.

This was an important step forward for me. I am aware that employers can discriminate against people like me but doing the programme has made me feel so much more optimistic. Since starting the Employment Programme, which lasts 4 months, I feel so much more confident. I upgraded my CV with my ES and applied for jobs. Whilst I was on my placement I found a job as an administrative assistant in one of the Trust's day services. I was then offered the opportunity to continue my placement in a paid capacity.

I am now a patient and public involvement assistant and my current contract is for 6 months. I feel proud, as I have shown that for people with a mental illness anything is possible.

SINCE STARTING THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME, WHICH LASTS FOUR MONTHS, I FEEL SO MUCH MORE CONFIDENT





Service user who completed a work placement and is now in paid employment

I was attending CNWL Drug and Alcohol team because of alcoholism for a number of years. I had reached a point in my treatment, where my therapist and I decided that I would try and return to employment through the User Employment Programme. I had not worked for 8 years. I also had a criminal conviction and realised in my sobriety how difficult it was going to be to return to employment paid or unpaid.

My therapist arranged a meeting with an employment specialist, to discuss the way forward. She informed me of the options open to me and worked hard to find a placement for my chosen "job". I had no idea the obstacles I had to overcome because I had been out of society for so long. Just getting on the tube at rush hour in the morning was frightening, plus I had no confidence. I will always remember my ES offering to come to the placement with me on my first day. She supported and helped me in every possible way throughout my placement. I commenced paid employment and seven and a half months into my job, my ES still supported me.

Eight months later: I now work 30 hours, which I enjoy, and I am happy. I never thought it would be possible. My heartfelt thanks go to my ES, to the User Employment Programme and to the Drug and Alcohol Team. I will never forget the enormous help and support from you all.

Two years later, I am still part of society and working. There is a possibility that I will be made redundant this year. I am worried but it is not consuming me. I remind myself, this is two years of "normality" I wouldn't have enjoyed if I had continued with my drunken lifestyle. If I am made redundant, I will find another job.

I now work 30 hours, which I enjoy, and I am happy. I never thought it would be possible



I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER MY ES OFFERING TO COME TO THE PLACEMENT WITH ME ON MY FIRST DAY



Service user in paid employment as a graphic designer

At the beginning I was feeling very low, I had no direction, I was very depressed and feeling very lazy, I slept a lot, I was not going out at all. The team discussed the problems and I was given advice on a weekly basis, and different steps were taken to help with my mental state.

I was referred to Employment Services when I felt I was ready for work. The ES helped me with my motivation level and confidence, and I found going to different shops to hand out my CV's very helpful. She also came with me to Ingeus so I could register with them and use their services as I had limited access to the computer and internet at home.

My ES helped set up a placement at Westminster Library, this helped me to develop routine and structure and helped my mental state, as I felt ready and fresh. This was the beginning of my recovery. Whilst on the placement I continued to look

WHEN THE BUSINESS WAS READY TO EXPAND MY EMPLOYER CONTACTED ME AND I WAS PUT ON A TRIAL PERIOD FOR ONE WEEK, AND NOW I HAVE SUCCESSFULLY BECOME A PAID EMPLOYEE

for work, and my ES helped me to concentrate on one career path, rather than several. I found that very helpful, as she helped me to focus in one direction.

By going out to meet employers looking for work, I became more confident in networking, and I approached my current employer 2-3 months back and discussed my skills and capabilities with him, and explained that I was keen to work.

When the business was ready to expand my employer contacted me and I was put on a trial period for one week, and now I have successfully become a paid employee. There is much more growth and scope in this company, and I will eventually be making and managing the website as soon as the company grows.

Working has helped me with my concentration level, and helped me to maintain structure and routine. I am very willing to share my story and help others in their recovery journey.



WITHOUT THE HELP OF MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST AND THE USER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME TEAM I REALLY BELIEVE THAT I WOULD STILL BE STRUGGLING TO FIND WORK



Service user supported to access paid work within Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust

I left university earlier this year after a particularly bad manic episode. Even though I have suffered for several years with bipolar disorder, the admittance that I could no longer cope and had to abandon my degree left my self-esteem and confidence at an all time low. After a few months undergoing treatment with the Early Intervention team in Ruislip I felt well enough to begin getting my life back on track.

I decided to look for work as an administrative assistant. I would apply for jobs everyday but seemed to be getting nowhere and as a consequence of this I felt as bad as I had a few months previously. Then my care co-ordinator suggested I talked to the employment specialist with the Early Intervention Team in Harrow and Hillingdon. She was an incredible help in the months when I was looking for work. She introduced me to the team at Latimer House where they run the User Employment Programme and it was through these people that I would eventually find a



position as an administrative assistant. However before this occurred, my ES would look at my CV and various covering letters and suggest ways I could improve them. She would talk me through interview techniques and how to fill out application forms; and she would also recommend various websites that might prove useful when job searching.

My ES would always listen to any worries I had and would always try to keep my spirits up when my morale was low. After three months of seeing my ES and taking her advice, I found paid employment as a temporary personal assistant and straight after this I found my current post which is as an administrative assistant. My confidence has soared and I am so different in comparison to how I was earlier this year.

Without the help of my employment specialist and the User Employment Programme team I really believe that I would still be struggling to find work. They have given me the opportunity to gain valuable experience within the NHS and they still continue to support me whilst I am in employment.



Service user who has gained new skills which are helping him to achieve his ambition to be an IT trainer

After relapsing again in June 2010, I was referred to the Equinox Alcohol and Drug clinic by my key worker at the Gatehouse Community Alcohol Service. My 10 detox treatments at the clinic were helpful. The treatment was supportive and educational especially the group therapy discussions, where I was able to talk about my addiction and to finally realise that alcohol will never work for me anymore.

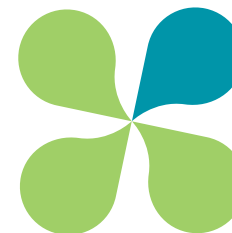
In July I returned to the Gatehouse for further aftercare support sessions with my key worker, where I was introduced to an employment specialist, as I was interested in returning to work. I hadn't worked for three years, during which period I had been a full time father to my two sons and I didn't really know where to start. All I did know was I had a definite goal; I wanted to be an IT trainer. My interest was born a few years ago when my son persuaded me to do an evening computer course for parents at his school. Not only did I enjoy it, I did so well that the trainer asked me to assist her in the training. I enjoyed it so much that I decided that I wanted to do it as a career. However, raising my sons and my drinking got in the way of this career goal, but I had made some steps by the time I met with my ES. My ES helped me to identify all the steps to take, to move forward. This included a CV and covering letters and how to tailor a CV to each job I applied for. In addition I learnt skills on how to tackle the hidden job market and effective ways to

I NOW FEEL THE FUTURE IS OPEN TO ME AND THAT MY LONG TERM GOAL IS IN REACH

cold call and approach prospective employers and training providers.

As part of my action plan we conducted research and we identified that to teach adults IT, in the major companies I was interested in, I had to complete my numeracy and literacy levels 1 and 2. So I started attending weekly training and have so far been successful in passing literacy 1 and 2 and numeracy 1. I am currently working on numeracy level 2, which I hope to pass in the New Year. Another part of my action plan was to find a placement as an IT trainer in the local community to build both my skills and confidence.

Thanks to my ES's help in giving me the skills and confidence to approach employers I have been very successful in gaining voluntary work and am now an IT trainer at both the Ealing Resource Centre and Kenton Library. Both jobs, along with giving me invaluable experience have also increased my confidence and have given me many new skills. I now feel the future is open to me and that my long term goal is in reach. Through these steps I have progressed forward which has given me the confidence to now feel I am ready to search for paid work, which my employment specialist and I have just started doing.



If you would like information in another language or format, please ask us.

Nëse dëshironi të merrni informacion në një gjuhë apo format tjetër, ju lutemi na pyesni.

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

اگر این اطلاعات را به زبانی دیگر و یا در فرمتی دیگر میخواهید لطفاً از ما درخواست کنید

જો તમને માહિતી બીજી ભાષા અથવા રચનામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી અમને વિનંતી કરો.

ئەگەر زانیاریت بە زمانیکی که یا بە فۆرمیکی که دەوی تکایه داوامان لی بکه

Jeżeli chciałby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

Se deseja obter informação noutro idioma ou formato, diga-nos.

Haddii aad rabtid in warar lagugu siyo hab luuqadeed o kale, fadlan na soo waydiiso.

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

தகவலை வேறொரு மொழி அல்லது வேறு வடிவத்தில் பெற விரும்பினால் தயவுசெய்து எம்மைக் கேட்கவும்.

We would like to thank all CNWL staff, funders and employers who played a role in supporting service users to make the journey back to work.



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills

Vocational Services

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
Latimer House | 40-48 Hanson Street | London, W1W 6UL
Tel: 020 7612 1664 | email: rash.patel@nhs.net
www.cnwl.nhs.uk

Picture credits: front cover, Sarbjot Kallah, page 12; David A. Ingham.
Design & typography: Portugal Prints, Westminster Mind

CNWL Recovery Stories, July 2011.