

Becky's Story

Becky has a moderate learning disability, a speech condition and a mental health condition. She started working for The Camden Society in November 2009.

The Camden Society was created in 1965 to promote equal rights for people with disabilities. Lewisham Works is a project run by The Camden Society and paid for by Lewisham Council. The project aims to make it easier for people with learning disabilities to find paid work. Lewisham Works have been giving free training to employers who want to make sure people with learning disabilities are able to succeed in their work places.

The Camden Society has hired 4 people with learning disabilities to work as Co-trainers so that employers can see it is possible for people with learning disabilities to work in important roles. Becky works as a Co-trainer for The Camden Society for 6 hours a week. A company called New Horizons helped Becky to find her job as a Co-trainer.

New Horizons work with people living in Lewisham. They support lone parents on income support and people getting health-related benefits. They help people to find work, training courses and improve their skills and confidence. New Horizons is paid for by Lewisham Council and the London Development Agency. The project is run by the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust's Community Opportunities Service.

Becky made it clear to her Disability Employment Advisor that she wanted to work and was referred to New Horizons. She already had a certificate in Food Service from college and had done some work experience through a local project. She had tried other work placements since then which had not gone as well. Becky had not been given the support she needed. This had left her unsure about what kind of work would be right for her.

Becky spoke to New Horizons about her work placements and college course. Together they started to think about her work options based on what she is like as a person and what she is good at. With Becky's permission her support worker at New Horizons spoke to services that support people with things like

independent living, speech therapy and mental health conditions. Together they planned how Becky would move into work.

Becky joined a confidence-building course at New Horizons and went to a talk at a local college to learn about their different courses. She went to an event run by Lewisham Volunteer Centre and met people from companies offering volunteering roles. Within a few months Becky had found a part time volunteering job and was having extra speech therapy. With support from services including New Horizons Becky was able to leave her parent's home and move in to supported housing.

Her brother Joe says that moving out has been good for Becky. Becky's mother is a lone parent with disabilities and a mental health condition. Becky also has two brothers with severe learning disabilities who live in supported housing. Becky acted as a carer to her mother. Joe says this made them rely on each other too much. He says that Becky has become much more confident since moving out. She travels on her own and has much more freedom. She still chooses to visit her mother daily and help her family as much as possible. Her mother has also become more independent. Joe says it would have been good for both of them if Becky had left home earlier.

When Becky and her support worker found out there was a job going for a Co-Trainer at The Camden Society Becky thought it was unlikely she would get it. After looking at the application pack together they realised Becky had many of the skills needed for the role. Becky liked the idea of a job that would help her build confidence by talking to people and really wanted to apply.

New Horizons supported her to complete the application form and to prepare for the interview. They went to the interview with her to offer extra support if Becky needed it. New Horizons have been there to support Becky and The Camden Society while she gets used to the job.

Each stage of the hiring process was made clear. There was a day when everyone who had passed the first interview could find out more about the job by joining in with lots of different activities. This helped The Camden Society decide who they wanted to ask back

for the final interviews. Becky's last interview was relaxed and there was a person with a learning disability on the panel.

Becky's confidence has grown since she started working for The Camden Society. She knows that if she needs help or needs changes to be made to make things possible for her to do she is able to ask. Her speech has improved which has made it easier for her to talk to people. While she was training for the job she found it hard to stand up in front of a group of strangers and talk, but she is much more confident doing this now. She is chatty, works well in the team by offering ideas and is far more confident than she was at her first interview.

A number of services have worked together to support Becky, including her employer The Camden Society. This support, along with Becky's drive, dedication and hard work, has led to Becky finding a job, becoming more independent and growing in confidence. This shows how vital it is for different services to work together to support people to succeed.