

Ellie's Story

My name is Ellie, I am 27 years old and I live in the London Borough of Redbridge. I am a wheelchair user and have always had an interest in acting. During my time as a student on drama courses I realised I wanted to act but was finding it hard to get out there due to not understanding what I needed in place to get started. I did not know how to get to places due to access issues and I did not know what would happen if I wanted to audition for something. So I joined the Go inc To Work programme.

Since being on this project I have grown in confidence and am now sending off my CV and photos to agencies that I wouldn't have done before, as I was too nervous to do it. I have managed to do this by:

- Having a mentor. He is an actor and I get along with him really well. He has taught me about how to be a better actress by working on games with him that increase my awareness of my ability to act. He has made me believe in myself and I have created a story with him about myself that I didn't think any one would want to hear, but I have since realised it is very important for others to know.
- I have worked as a workshop leader, vocal coach, support worker and actress for Spare Tyre through the assisted employment scheme. When I workshop lead at Charlton School in Greenwich, I worked on a one to one basis as well as running some warm ups for the group. It was challenging as I had never done anything like it before, but I really enjoyed it.
- We have a Co-ordinator in place that helps us to find out information about acting professionally.
- I have an advocate who helps me find out what it is that is holding me back from moving on and suggests ways of dealing with these problems.
- I have a support worker and travel buddy that give me real life experiences and help to get to and from places.

Learning about benefits was very scary as I found it quite confusing. I also find it quite upsetting to find out I can only earn £20 a week and still be on my benefits and did not want to come off of them. I think I will still find it hard to come off of benefits, but am not so against it as I was at the beginning.

I like earning money for the work that I do and being able to have the money but I have found out that it is not as important as I thought it would be. But, earning money makes me proud of myself and want to go out there and earn more money.

I am finding it difficult to find my own carer who can take me to and from places to work and audition. I am trying to get around this by finding out information from other agencies. I am with an organisation called Crossroads who provide my care but they work on a weekly basis so might find it difficult to find someone at the last minute, but they do try very hard.

If you are looking to get into work yourself you need to know that

- 1) You will get knock backs, but they only make you stronger
- 2) It takes a lot of time and effort to get things into place but it is worth it when you do
- 3) Having someone to talk to so they can explain to others what it is that YOU want if you have difficulty in saying it yourself is really important.
- 4) Some local authorities provide free transport for disabled people that can **possibly** be used to go to auditions/interviews.

It might be hard at first but you can get there in the end; I know I will. Who knows, you might see me on the TV in the future.

If you would like to contact someone about this story please call the Co-ordinator of the Go inc To Work assisted employment scheme Claire Taylor on 020 8597 7883 on Mondays and Tuesdays or email inc.Theatre@redbridge.gov.uk. The web address is www.sparetyre.org