

Jack's Story

Cheshire West and Chester Council's new project, Gateway to Work, aims to give people with a learning disability many different work options. The Council hope the project will make a real difference to the lives of people with a learning disability who want to work.

Since the start of the recession many highly skilled people have not been able to find work. A lot of the people who talk to Cheshire West and Chester's Supported Employment Team have had no work experience at all, making it even harder for them to find a job. The Gateway to Work team set up work placements with the Council so that people can learn new skills and make a difference to the way things are run.

The Supported Employment Officers have been working with managers at the Council to create job roles. Each role will offer 3 hours paid work per week for up to 45 weeks and will help people gain the skills they need to find long term work. The Officers will also work with the council to set up new methods of interviewing that give people with a learning disability the chance to show the skills they have to offer.

To make sure every placement is a success the Supported Employment Team will offer support and advice to both the Gateway employees and the staff they are working with.

Jack Lloyd is the first Gateway to Work employee. He has been working for the Purchasing Team as a Human Resources (HR) Assistant for a month and says he already feels at home.

'I am really enjoying my work so far, hopefully I can work more.'

At first Jack's Supported Employment Officer, Roy Mayoh, went with him to work. Jack fitted in so well he now goes to the office on his own. He was happy to talk about his new role and what he hopes will happen in the future. He wants to improve his skills and learn new ones. He is confident his new role will help him make this happen. In the short time he has been working as an HR Assistant he feels he has already gotten better at the job.

'I definitely feel already like I have more confidence in myself. I hope it gets even better and I can be more confident in the future.'

Jack would really like to gain more confidence. He hopes that working in a team will help him feel more sure of himself.

‘I work with 5 different people in the mailroom and I get on well with them all. They are all really friendly and we help each other do the work.’

He beams when talking about his job, a clear sign that he is happy in his role. Jack’s skills have clearly improved as he has already been asked to work more hours.

‘I did not really know what to expect before I started but it has been brilliant. I look forward to every Tuesday and Wednesday knowing I will be working.’

Without the Gateway to Work Project it is unlikely Jack would have been offered an interview for a job with this team. The Gateway Project has given Jack the chance to show people how much he is able to do with the right support.

As for the future Jack hopes his job with the Council will help him find more work.

‘I hope I can stay here for a while because I really like it. I have friends here already and my communication skills have improved as we have to work together.’

It has been a very good start for Jack and the Gateway to Work Project. Cheshire West and Chester know how important it is to help people with a learning disability take that first step towards paid work.

At the moment the Supported Employment Service is working with 97 people with a learning disability who are starting a new job, 45 people with a learning disability who are looking for a job and 37 people with a learning disability who are starting a new volunteer role.

To find out more about the Gateway to Work project please contact **Celia Chapman** by phoning **0151 356 681** or sending an email to **elia.chapman@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**