



## CUSTOMER CASE STUDIES

### 1. PARTICIPANT'S STORY

When I started on Team North Somerset I had just lost my job. I had lost my confidence and was very nervous about getting back into employment. I had my first meeting at a local supermarket, which was very relaxing and not intimidating. After this first meeting I had a sense of hope, me and my job coach worked out what my career goals were and decided on next steps.

I suffer from an anxiety disorder and find it difficult to travel outside of the local area. My job coach was very understanding and made sure that I felt safe where our meetings were. Through Team North Somerset and my Job coach I started the Ngage course at Weston College Business Enterprise Centre, this gave me more confidence and self-esteem as well as giving me my determination back.

The Ngage course also gave me a bigger insight into what I really wanted to do for my ideal job. Which was to become a Learning Support Assistant and then train to become an employment tutor.

While working with my job coach and Team North Somerset I have now found Part Time Employment at ASDA as a Home Shopping Picker. My job coach has been very supportive with my employment. Team North Somerset and the Job coaches are very supportive and helpful especially when it comes to dealing with the expectations of the jobcentre and supporting you with deciding your career goals and next steps.



## 2. PARTICIPANT'S STORY

Less than 2 months ago I was de-motivated and felt like I wasn't getting anywhere. I had all but given up on any immediate chances of getting into a career in illustration (which was disheartening after 3 years at university) and any opportunities loosely related were few and far between. I even thought about moving to Bristol to improve my employment chances.

When I was first told about Team North Somerset I thought it sounded interesting and the extra support would be useful. When I actually started it was better than I had expected. I suppose I thought it would be a bit of an 'arm's length' support service where you contacted your job coach when you needed advice or help with an application. I didn't realise that I would get as much one to one support, as often as I needed it.

When my job coach arranged a work experience interview with Sparkol Ltd in Clevedon I had good expectations, having read the feedback on their blog. My initial impressions far exceeded my expectations and my most prominent memory from the interview was Jon's positive response and interest in my portfolio of work. After my first week on placement he wrote a letter to my job coach with feedback on the work I was getting involved with. This was totally unexpected and a huge confidence boost for me. So far I have had the opportunity to use a Cintiq tablet and also gain experience with Videoscribe, using different drawing techniques, which is fantastic to add to my CV.

Jon from Sparkol has commented that from an employer's point of view 'It is low risk, low cost and is a way of seeing what talent is out there. If someone can add value, even in a small way, why wouldn't you get involved. I would encourage more employers to come on board and offer someone on Team North Somerset a work placement'



### 3. PARTICIPANT'S STORY

Although I enjoyed school, I did find it difficult as I have a few slight learning difficulties this led to me coming away with no qualifications which led to me entering college on a lower level course than what I would have wanted. I spent 2 years at college studying both brickwork and maintenance operations both at level 1. Upon finishing these courses I tried to applying for numerous jobs in the construction trade but found that I did not hold the relevant professional qualifications.

I was then advised to go onto a traineeship ran by Weston College, this is a course that includes an extended work placement in a local business. Although it was not my first choice placement I was offered a six week placement in Sainsbury's superstore in our local town. Once started I realised that I now wanted to work in retail and make a career of this. At the end of the six week placement period I was offered an interview but unfortunately I did not get offered a job.

I then found myself back at square one with no job, little experience and few qualifications. I found myself at Weston super Mare Job Centre claiming JSA. I would always do my utmost to search and apply for jobs however I just was not having any luck or even being invited for interviews. After a few months of being on JSA I was offered the chance to join the Team North Somerset Project and met with my Job Coach Tom. He explained that although working in partnership with the Job Centre the Job Coaches could offer a little more time and support as they held a much smaller caseload than a job centre advisor. Tom and I looked at why I wasn't getting interviews and made a few adjustments to my CV, he also showed me how to sign up for Apprenticeships.org and look for vacancies. Around this time I found a work experience placement in a national retail store through the links with the Job Centre and Team North Somerset . Tom continued to support me whilst I was on placement and made contact with my manager to see how I was doing. They were extremely impressed with me, as I often went above and beyond.

Tom and a colleague of his then spoke to a manager at Savers about taking me on as an apprentice as the company were advertising online for their national apprenticeships scheme. My manager went away and spoke to someone above her in the company and they thought this was a great idea as I already knew how the store was run. I was offered an interview with a regional manager and this went really well. Although there were some worries about my lack of English and Maths Qualifications. This is now all sorted and as part of my apprenticeship I will be up-skilling my Literacy and Numeracy.

Thanks to Team North Somerset I am now more confident in my job searching and have improved my interview techniques but it has also given me a huge confidence to ask questions. This is something I would have never have done before. Thanks to Team North Somerset and its staff I now have an apprenticeship in place with a national retailer starting the first week of March.



#### 4. PARTICIPANT'S STORY

I left home soon after my 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday due to a poor relationship with my mum. Due to my young age I immediately became a 'looked after child' living in supported housing. Since turning 18, I've been supported through the resource service as a care leaver. After gaining GCSE's in school, I looked into attending college and enrolled on a level 3 equine management course. After hurting my back in the stable I had to take a few weeks off and the tutor promised to email me all coursework and class notes. My tutor failed to do this which led to me falling behind on the course and my tutor saying I could no longer continue.

I then tried to enrol on the same course at a different college but they told me I was too heavy to do the course with them. Instead I got a job on the pier, hosting children's' birthday parties and working within the indoor play area. Although I loved this job, it stopped at the end of the season. I went through a few different jobs, all low skilled, minimum wage and mostly temporary. I settled on a summer job at Brean Leisure Park and a Christmas job at a card shop. My social worker introduced me to Gemma from Team North Somerset and after speaking with her she pointed out an opportunity within the council as an apprentice. Gemma thought the job would really suit me so helped me apply for the job. We worked together on my CV and then she helped me fill in an application form.

I was invited for an interview less than a week later, where I met with Paul and Becky. The interview went really well, some of the questions they asked were a little intimidating but they were easy to talk to and gave me plenty of guidance in my answers. I received a phone call a few days later asking me if I wanted the job subject to DBS checks and a few other things so Gemma took me to Castlewood to fill in my DBS forms and all the relevant paperwork that came with getting the apprenticeship. I received funding for new uniform and shoes and some support towards rent and food until I receive my first pay. I also received a bus pass to help with travelling to and from work.

I love this job, every day brings a new challenge and the staff here have accepted me instantly. I do a lot of different things every day, but mainly I help setting up the conferences and clearing them away, library work, front of house service and booking people in and out of our meeting rooms. As well as working in the campus, I am involved in the Team North Somerset focus group. Our aim is to help other care leavers into meaningful employment. I hope that when I finish the apprenticeship I can either carry on full time work at the campus or go on to train to be a support/youth worker.



## 5. PARTICIPANT'S STORY

I graduated as a Graphic Designer in summer and have spent the past few months trying to find employment in this field. I applied for over 100 vacancies before being told about the new Team North Somerset initiative and decided to meet with one of the Job Coaches to find out more about it. The additional support on offer sounded really good and I had nothing to lose by signing up to it.

I started to meet with her each week and we agreed a venue that was convenient for me. This was great as I live in a rural location and the fact that your Job Coach comes to you is quite unique. Together we identified various opportunities to apply for. I was already using numerous websites and media to look for vacancies but this helped to expand my job search further. We spent time looking over my CV and covering letter as well as honing my interview skills. When I first completed my degree I expected to find employment straight away and I was very focused. However, prior to starting on Team North Somerset I began to feel a little despondent and my goal of working in graphic design seemed to be further away than ever.

My Job Coach was determined to find me some relevant work experience to enhance my CV and give me an up to date industry reference. She asked me to produce a list of companies that I would like to work with and we also looked at employers with current vacancies. We sent out speculative emails and one by one responses started to come in. I was offered a work experience interview with Better Reach Ltd in Cheddar and they have given me the opportunity to work with them on various design projects. I opted for the maximum time allowed on work placement – 30 hours per week for 6 weeks – as I value the additional experience that this affords me. Since starting on placement I have been for an interview with a Graphic Design company in Bristol. I was one of 6 shortlisted out of 30 applicants and had excellent feedback on the quality and quantity of work that I have produced. I am currently waiting for the outcome of this interview and in the meantime continue to enjoy my time at Better Reach.

I hope to become another success story of the Team North Somerset initiative and encourage others to find out more and take advantage of the support on offer.