



# Agoriadcyf news magazine

# InSight

summer edition • 2012

Helping people with disadvantages to achieve independence through employment  
Rhoi help llaw i bobl dan fantais ddod yn annibynnol drwy weithio

## WORK PROGRAMME 10 MONTHS ON...



# We have managed to secure over 150 sustainable jobs



Agoriad is now ten months into the delivery of the Work Programme in Anglesey and Gwynedd as a sub contractor for Working Links. Over the course of the ten months over eight hundred benefit claimants have been referred to us, for help to find sustained paid employment.

The Work Programme was launched by the UK coalition Government in the middle of the economic downturn, hence making it a very challenging programme for us to achieve our monthly job targets. However, since the start of the programme in June 2011, we have managed

to secure over 150 sustainable jobs. A pleasing aspect from Agoriad's perspective is that we are on par in terms of performance with all of our delivery partners throughout Wales.

As we move forward to year two of the Work Programme we will continue to face ongoing

challenges. There is now talk of a double dip recession, which will make employers very reluctant to invest for growth within their companies, which in turn will have a negative effect in terms of recruiting for new staff. Welfare to Work is an area which has not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government, which means Work Programme providers in Wales are unable to access European Social Funding

• Continued on page 2

for their Work Programme Customers. This is available for Work Programme customers in England, hence customers on the Work Programme in Wales are disadvantaged, in terms of monies that can be accessed for re-training and courses which would help customers to return to paid employment.

At the beginning of April, a 'Youth Contract' - which is a wage subsidy incentive scheme for employers - was introduced within the Work Programme. The Youth Contract enables us to offer employers a wage subsidy of £2,575.00 during the first 12 months of employment of Work Programme customers between the ages 18 and 24 years old. Employers in the main are apprehensive about employing young males from this customer group due to what they perceive to be a stereotype young male. However with fewer university places and the current economic

climate, more and more people not in employment, education or training are very bright, articulate and highly motivated. Young people can inject new talent, enthusiasm and perspectives into forward-thinking businesses.

For the Work Programme to be a success, people have to be better off financially in work than they are on benefits. This is not always the case at present; quite often parents with young and school-age children are financially worse off once in work than they are on benefits. This is one of the reasons why the Coalition Government is determined to reform the benefit system by replacing all benefit schemes with just one Universal Credit for all benefit claimants. The Coalition Government believes that the Universal Credit will be fairer, more affordable and better at tackling poverty and benefit dependency. From a Welfare to Work providers' perspective, it is



Works Programmes Manager  
John Hughes.

encouraging that the Coalition Government recognises that the returns from low income jobs are extremely low due to Tax Credits and Housing Benefits sometimes taking months to be adjusted. Without any doubt, the new system will be simpler, but we will not know until the Universal Credit is introduced whether or not it will be easier for people to understand what their entitlements are and whether it will respond quicker to adjustments when people return to work. ■



**Please contact:**

John Hughes at Agoriad on (01248) 361 392  
or e-mail: john@agoriad.org.uk

## If you have a vacancy we may have a truly ideal applicant you may not have considered

An experienced employment and training provider with **over 20 years experience** and a real understanding of our local labour markets, Agoriad provides employers with a direct link to genuine and capable people seeking employment.

We have a team of Employment Officers located throughout North Wales with the experience, understanding and local knowledge required to match the right individual to the right job.

Our clients range from people searching for entry to professional levels as we work within the framework of Welfare to Work programmes.

If you have a vacancy or would welcome an informal and confidential chat about future employment issues we will be pleased to hear from you. Email: john@agoriad.org.uk



01248 361 392

James was referred onto the Work Programme after having been unemployed for just over 12 months. Prior to that, he had been in full-time employment but due to the recession, he found himself redundant and disheartened. James had been on a similar scheme before coming to Agoriad but didn't find it very helpful so he was unsure as to what Agoriad would be able to do to help him.

Having enjoyed gardening for friends and family and gaining experience of block paving and strimming whilst working for a property developer on the Isle of Man, James considered becoming self-employed.

Upon arrival at Agoriad in Holyhead, James met Vanessa Camera-Jones with whom he discussed the possibility of getting some advice on self-employment. Vanessa referred James to Louise Evans at Agoriad, Bangor who helps Work Programme customers with self-employment advice and assistance.

James arrived at Bangor and told Louise what he was thinking of doing. Firstly, James was advised that he would need Public Liability Insurance and surfed the internet in search of the best deal. Agoriad funded James's insurance and also added his trailer to his vehicle insurance so he would be able to offer garden clearances as another service.

Having decided upon a suitable company name, James went away and set up an email address whilst Louise got to work designing business cards and advertising cards to put in local newsagents and on notice boards.

James said that he wanted a dark green uniform for work and Louise advised him to get his company name and phone number printed on them as this is a form of advertising. Prior to their next meeting, Louise designed a layout for James's work t-shirts and Agoriad paid for these and green work trousers from Huws Gray to match the t-shirts and to give a more professional appearance.

In the meantime, James was starting to take bookings in preparation for starting work. Now fully kitted out with his uniform and fully insured and with his own equipment he'd collected over the years James was keen to get working. James was now in a position to sign off Job Seekers Allowance.

Louise had previously given James advice regarding his bookkeeping requirements but James also needed to contact HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs) to inform them that he was now self-employed so he will now have to submit annual Self Assessments. He also had to advise them that his National Insurance contributions would be changing.



## James Pierce Self Employed Gardener - doing the business

Although James has been on the Work Programme now for several months, once in employment, customers receive In Work Support until they have been with Agoriad for two years. As part of this In Work Support, to help promote James's business further, Louise had listed the names of letting agents and holiday letting companies in the Anglesey and Gwynedd area and written a letter explaining about James's services. A mail merge was then performed and the letter and advertising card were sent out to all the recipients.

James is now happy that his business is up and running and knows that should he need any further assistance, it's just a phone call away.

Becoming self-employed can seem an appealing idea but many people are put off because they're not quite sure how to go about it. Agoriad can provide that help. ■



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# A Journey into employment, with new confidence and new skills

An open letter to Agoriad from Paul Davies, a Works Programme Client

I first heard about Agoriad when I was sent a letter from Working Links to attend a Welcome Session. My initial thought was 'not another one', as my previous experiences with employment providers have not been good. Having not worked since 2005, I've been with several of these companies who have promised training and sent me to various office locations around the Gwynedd area to be passed from one consultant to another with nothing to gain from any of it.

Arriving at Agoriad, I met Gareth Roberts an Employment Officer, who was holding the Welcome Session that day. Gareth explained about the Work Programme and what Agoriad would do to help us find work. He explained that workshops would be provided to enhance our employability skills and funding would be available such as for CSCS cards, also interview clothing and work uniforms. The way that Gareth talked to us, I felt assured that his words were genuine but only time would tell. Following Gareth's introduction, we went into Agoriad's computer room to answer questions about ourselves, our work history and the kind of work we were looking for. We met Louise Evans, Administration Officer on the Work Programme who helped us with the My Way Up session as the majority of us had no idea how to use a computer. During my time there, I had been made to feel welcome, relaxed and respected and left Agoriad feeling inspired.

During the next appointment, I met with my personal Employment Officer, Bethan Hughes who discussed my Into Work Plan that was generated from the answers I inputted onto the computer in My Way Up at the Welcome Session. Bethan and I agreed that it would be helpful for me to attend an Application Form Workshop and an Interview Technique Workshop which were promptly arranged for me. I met another Bethan Hughes who ran the Application Form Workshop with Iona Jones, both from the Training Department. I found this workshop very helpful and kept the ideas discussed in mind for future applications. The next workshop that I attended was Interview Techniques which was a one-to-one mock interview with Karen Jones, also from the Training



Department. Karen asked me questions that I may be asked at an interview and encouraged me to think of alternative ways of wording my responses which gave the interviewer more information. I really appreciated her constructive way of encouraging me to think deeper about my responses and this helped me so much. I was so grateful to her.

My next few appointments with Bethan entailed job searching in Agoriad's computer room that they call The Hub. Bethan advised me of the best websites to search for jobs and assisted me in my searches. When I felt confident to do this alone, she would leave me to search and print off any jobs that I was interested in for the Employer Liaison Officers to approach. Although she said I would be left alone, staff would regularly walk in and ask if I was all right. I never felt that I'd been left alone at any point.

I then met with Paula Kyle from the Employer Liaison team. I informed her that I had previously worked as a wheel builder for a bicycle company but I was unable to find this type of work anywhere. Paula informed me of a vacancy with Currys electrical store in Bangor working as a Storeman. She informed me that the position would involve unloading the delivery lorries and sorting the equipment into the

appropriate sections. When customers ordered goods, they would have to be selected from the stock and bought up to the store and large items taken to customers' cars if required. I felt that I had received so much encouragement, that this was such a good opportunity, I shouldn't let it pass by.

Within days, Paula had arranged an interview for me at Currys. Paula met me there and we had a very informal chat with the warehouse manager, Andrew. Paula advised me beforehand to take three forms of I.D. with me and she took a copy of my CV. All of these things were needed at the interview and I was so pleased that Paula had prepared me so well as this looked really impressive when Andrew asked for them. We talked more and I remembered some of the tips that Karen and I discussed at my Interview Techniques Workshop and I answered all the questions thoroughly. I was really happy with the way that the interview went and I felt quite confident about it. The job also sounded perfect and Paula phoned me the next day to say that Andrew at Currys wanted to offer me the position.

I couldn't believe it. It was the most amazing feeling that I'd had for years. I only slept for three hours that night. I couldn't stop thinking about it, I just wanted to start the job there and then. Although Currys would provide protective clothing, I realised that if Agoriad would kit me out, I would be able to start work earlier as I would not have to wait for Currys to order my size in so I contacted Paula to discuss this. She made me an appointment the next day to meet with Louise Evans who I met at the Welcome Session to sort this out for me.

I went to Agoriad the next day and met with Louise. She drove me to Huws Gray, the local builders merchants that supply quality work clothing and got me kitted out for my new job. I left there feeling that I would really look the part now at my new job. The following week I received the phone call I'd been awaiting from Paula with my start date.

I can't begin to describe how happy I am and how grateful I am to all the staff at Agoriad for everything that they have done for me. ■



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In Work Support (IWS) is a vital aspect of the Work Programme, especially with the increasing emphasis on sustaining employment, not just gaining it. The need is recognised to end the “revolving door” scenario that often occurs with the long term unemployed and the benefit trap they can often find themselves in. IWS is a special service that is tailored to the individual and their employer’s requirements.

# We’re with you all the way in Work Support

Those hardest-to-help or who have been out of work for a long time may require extended periods of In Work Support. The Work Programme participants are able to access this special service for up to 2 years. Agoriad realises the importance of effective emphasis on the provision of IWS to ensure sustainability of employment and to encourage good working partnerships between local employers that give our Work Programme participants a chance when they have recruitment opportunities.

IWS involves keeping in contact on a weekly basis during the initial 9 weeks of employment. Regular contact with employers and participants is usually on a weekly or fortnightly basis, either by telephone or in face-to-face meetings. This then moves onto monthly contact when appropriate. Keeping in touch with the employer and candidate ensures any issues which may arise are dealt with sensitively and positively. IWS is a service to assist both parties in ensuring successful transition into employment, to enhance performance of new recruits, and to initiate remedial action if necessary to assist with sustainability of employment.

Once we have helped our customers to find a suitable job we continue to support them to ensure they are happy in their new role. Agoriad offers a range of In Work Support assistance which includes everything from mentoring to sourcing further in-work training if our customer wishes to continue gaining further skills and qualification.



Starting a new job can be a nerve-racking experience, so our customers have a dedicated named IWS officer who they are introduced to. Agoriad offers a seven days a week IWS telephone helpline number that customers on the Work Programme can call between 8am and 10.00pm. Any concerns can be heard, and advice, support and sign-posting given, mediation and financial assistance can be provided as the need arises.

The first nine weeks in a new job can be daunting as you adapt to a new position and way of life. For the long term unemployed, making the transition from coming off benefits into employment can be quite a challenge. *As part of our IWS we are here to give you step-by-step help so the Work Programme participant can be successful in their new role. We assist with financial help during the first month, advice and assistance in applying for relevant in work benefits, support with resolving and work related issues, travel, mediation with employers, general support and advice, advocacy and sign posting.*

We'll stay in touch with customers for up to two years, so they feel confident that they have the support required to be able to stay in work and plan for the future. When they feel ready to progress with their career and take on further training through IWS we are able to be there to guide them through their options.

IWS officers help to keep the customers CV up to date so if for any reason their job does not work out, we are ready and able to do everything we can to help them secure alternative employment as soon as possible.

IWS is there to help if a customer’s job is at risk or they lose their job. There are lots of reasons why a job might not work out but IWS encourages sustainability of employment and not a return to benefits. Agoriad offers a flexi desk service so if Work Programme customers are not happy in their current position we are there to assist them, whilst they remain in post, to find them a more suitable position. ■



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# Courses

**Our services and courses offer employers and prospective employees unique choices across Anglesey and North Wales.**

### Work Programme

A recruitment service that is a personalised welfare to work structure helping the unemployed and the employer to fill local vacancies in the work place.

### Walkways

A service that helps people with severe learning disabilities, who often have a physical disability, sensory impairment, a mental health problem, challenging behaviours, medical condition and/or autism.

### Essential Skills Wales

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## Interreg Project - PEER Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch



*Alan getting on very well with his peer mentor, Leon on his work placement in Rowlands garage.*



*Natasha and her beautiful bouquet, made with her own fair hands at her work placement in the florist.*

As part of our Walkways project, Agoriad has been working closely with pupils from Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, Amlwch, supporting them to take their first steps towards employment.

A small group of pupils was selected to attend a 'Work Awareness' training programme that introduced them to important aspects of employment such as the rules of the workplace, health and safety and essential interview techniques. After completing the training module, each pupil then took part in twenty hours of work experience with local businesses. These included: a florist, a body building gym and a mechanic's workshop to name but three.

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones, particularly Ms Lia Jones, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator for the school, was very enthusiastic and extremely supportive of the Walkways project from the start and throughout our time working with the school; special efforts were made to ensure that all arrangements were taken care of.

As part of the work experience aspect, Agoriad recruited peer mentors from the school's Sixth form to support each participant within their placement. Their role was to shadow the pupil during their placement and assist them in learning their work duties.

All mentors studied and achieved an ASDAN award in Peer Mentoring. The course covered key topics such as confidentiality and possible in work scenarios. As an additional learning experience we

also organised for Jan from 'Project Lydia' to provide training in body language and non-verbal communication.

The local businesses in Amlwch were all extremely supportive of the programme and keen to help the young people gain new skills and experiences. As a result of their support, the pupils and the peer mentors all thoroughly enjoyed their work placements. The group were also taken out for a day of 'worksite visits' which involved going to see each other's placements. Each pupil had the responsibility of introducing, explaining and demonstrating their duties to the others.

As part of the course, pupils also visited a number of local service providers including Jobstart, a training and employment provider, who gave advice on self-employment and the help available for individuals wishing to start their own business, and The Volunteer Bureaux where Rob Griffiths spoke about the benefits of volunteering and the diverse volunteering opportunities available in the local area.

The feedback received from all involved has been extremely positive.

The employers who gave their valuable time to the project have all expressed interest in working with future participants; the parents were positive and supportive throughout and gave positive constructive feedback. Comments included:

*"I think... (he) now has a better understanding of what an employer might be looking for ...and how best to put himself forward."*

*"It has given him more confidence."*

Finally Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones. The Peer mentoring scheme was a great success and as the school had been planning their own Sixth form mentoring scheme for the whole school they asked Agoriad to assist in making this a reality. Agoriad provided peer mentor training for the sixth formers who wanted to volunteer with this service. Now all the pupils have a place where they can go for some advice or just a friendly chat. ■



*Danny gets busy on his placement in the Quays Café.*



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# An eye-opening work placement in Hungary

Earlier this year Walkways Job Coach, Kath Griffiths, was accepted onto the Leonardo Mobility Programme and given the opportunity to expand on and share her experience of working with young people by volunteering in another European country. Here, she gives an insight into what she gained from the opportunity...

During the first fortnight of April this year I completed a two week work placement in the city of Debrecen, Hungary, where I planned and delivered activities for young people.

I visited four different schools - a Church-run special school, a State-run special school and two mainstream high schools. I learned about a pedagogical approach called Conductive Education and observed it being put into practice. I also observed the use of a broad range of resources, from expensive electronic equipment to homemade toys and games. I learned traditional Hungarian songs and

folk dances and delivered lessons about cultural stereotyping.

I visited a day centre for disabled adults, where the activities on offer were very similar to those with which I am familiar from my experiences at home. Again, there was singing and dancing and I taught a group some English language songs. I also assisted in a pottery class, although I'm not sure how much use I was!

In the local youth club I practised

my limited Hungarian and organised activities which transcended the language barrier, for example, art, craft, games and sports. I took a similar approach when I visited the city's refugee camp - I arranged a football tournament and learned to cook traditional dishes from the home countries of the camp's residents.

This was an exciting adventure for me, but it has also broadened my horizons and given me a different perspective on my life and work. ■



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