



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

In Olympic year we will see improved levels of excellence, let's hope we can also achieve an equal understanding of the needs of others

I recall writing in our last issue of Insight of the changes, challenges and opportunities for Agoriad as the coalition came to power bringing its proposed welfare reforms.

Over the last 20 years Agoriad has helped many people into the workplace as we have increased the scope of our services across Wales. We have increased our range of beneficiaries from Clients with disadvantages and those with chronic health conditions (or who have suffered accidents or illness that has changed their career choices) to a much broader definition of disadvantage in the workplace.

Much of Agoriad's development has been responsive to the changing focus of government, stakeholders and funding streams.

So much is said these days about equality, equal opportunity, positive action etc, but my fear is that these ideas simply

emphasise differences, disability and inequality.

We must be aware that there will always be discrimination... it is part of human nature. No matter how much legislation, it will not change the attitudes of some and all the support and mediation we can provide will continue to show it is not ever a level playing field.

This year we have the Olympics,

the pantheon of sporting excellence. Yes we have the Paralympics with outstanding displays of achievement and determination, but no one suggests a competition between a paralympion wheel chair sprinter and Usain Bolt.

We are all aware of the difficult economic climate; everyone is making tough decisions about employing staff, negotiating contracts, trying to balance cost. It is a hard sell getting employers to take on clients when there's a shortage of work and cases where there is not enough spare money to justify "doing the right thing".

I'm not sure it's helpful for businesses to be told that they have to abide by equality laws, to take positive action, nor is it helpful to demand that everyone on benefit immediately goes out and gets a job (where?)

It is certainly unfair that organisations such as Agoriad are expected to make these



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things happen overnight, to pick up the pieces when it goes wrong or when funding or priorities change.

Why do successive governments go on and on about treating all employees as equal, are they missing the point? We are all different; we all have our strengths and weaknesses. Rather than be equal to everyone else we choose to seek employment in areas where we have the skills, experience and aptitude to work well. Of course finding our talents and abilities is partly instinctive; however they can be honed and channelled by effort and by working with an advisor, just like a natural athlete improves their performance through coaching.

It is imperative that we move forward as service providers, employers, as a whole society to a world of work where everyone can and does participate, not as an exercise in equality but as a celebration of each and everybody's unique contribution.

Arthur Beechey, CEO.

We are here to help you all the way

We understand the needs and difficulties of getting into employment if you are disadvantaged or long term unemployed. Give us the right spirit and ambition and we will work with you to provide a real opportunity, a chance to change your life by entering the workplace.

As an experienced employment and training provider with over 20 years experience and with a true knowledge of local employment needs we can provide you with genuine opportunity. Our friendly and non invasive services will make sure you are well prepared to enter the workplace.

We help you through training and provide courses for your development and education and a better understanding of the employers' workplace, we are proven providers of these services, delivered in a friendly and effective way and tailored to your individual needs.

Our job coaches and support workers will help you along the path into employment; we will show you how to present yourselves to employers and take care to guide you through each stage to generate confidence and awareness that can lead to a rewarding and enjoyable work experience.



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

The important first steps to employment

Over 40 people from Gwynedd and Anglesey will begin their journey back into employment and gain valuable insight into the world of work through Agoriad's Engagement Gateway Schemes.

The Engagement Gateway projects are funded through the European Union's Convergence programme that is aimed at organisations who work with people outside employment and those hardest to reach.

Both our Gateway projects are specifically targeted at removing the barriers to work and to reduce economic inactivity by improving the employability of people, in particular those individuals who are considered furthest from the labour market.

Focused on assisting individuals build their knowledge, skills and confidence, supported throughout by a dedicated team, the project empowers each participant to engage with mainstream employment activity by participating in valuable work experience and gaining accredited qualifications.

One person who has benefitted from his time on the course is Barry Francis.

Barry, who lives in Anglesey, self-referred onto the Gateway programme in May 2011. Barry had not worked since 2003 and was eager to get back into the labour market.

On starting the programme, he lacked confidence especially within group situations, but due to the small size of the group and our informal approach it was evident that Barry was becoming more confident as he participated fully in group discussions and enjoyed the social side of the course, often initiating conversations during coffee breaks.

Barry had studied Landscaping and Horticulture at a local college and was keen to pursue this area of work. As part of the programme, Agoriad set up a work placement for him at Treborth Nurseries. The placement was for 8 weeks and increased from one to two full days per week as Barry became accustomed to the work.

At the end of the work placement the feedback from the Nurseries was extremely positive and reflected on the effort Barry put into completing his tasks to a high standard. The placement gave Barry the opportunity find out more about working in horticulture and gave him a better idea of whether it is a suitable career path for him. Barry also gained invaluable and current practical experience that



could give him a better chance of standing out from the crowd when applying for a job.

Through attending the course, Barry has achieved the Asdan Employability Award at Level 1 that has enabled Barry to produce an up to date CV, covering letter as well as improving his job searching skills. Barry says that he has gained confidence during the programme and would definitely recommend it to others. He feels that he is able to approach employers independently and has already applied for several posts.

By increasing the skills, motivation and confidence of individuals, through tailored support, advice and guidance, and by providing real work experience, supported job search activities and personal development training, our Gateway projects aim to help each person make that progression towards employment and become active members of their community.



The Gateway projects are funded by WCVA as part of the Engagement Gateway programme. For further information on this or any of our other Gateway projects or to signpost participants to the project.



Please contact:

Robyn Williams on (01248) 361 392 or e-mail: robyn@agoriad.org.uk

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.

Gateway Project Mental Health Gwynedd & Anglesey

Addressing the needs of the individual in terms of confidence, self-esteem, motivation and career development.

Gateway Project Learning Disabilities Anglesey

The programme is designed to improve the skills, confidence and capabilities required for employment and to help each individual to progress towards becoming economically active.

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

Focuses on the skills required for success in all aspects of education, training, work and life in general.



Left to right: Joe Mason - CEO of Walk; Sioned Rees - Director, External Partnerships, North Wales; Mick Barlow - Agoriad trustee; Catherine Devine - Director of Services, Walk; Roger Seddon - Ireland-Wales Project Development Officer, Welsh European Funding Office; Arthur Beechey - CEO of Agoriad.

Walkways launched in Wales at Penrhyn Castle

Walkways is a new initiative to provide opportunities for disabled people, to give them the best choices towards progression to employment.

It focuses on giving people with intellectual disabilities - many of whom often have a physical disability, sensory impairment, mental health problems, challenging behaviour, medical conditions and/or autism - the tools necessary to address this chronic situation. Through tailoring and customising employment programmes on a person by person basis, employment outcomes become more achievable and realistic.

The Welsh Walkways Initiative has been launched at Penrhyn Castle, Bangor. The project is being delivered in partnership by WALK (Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability Ltd) in Ireland and Agoriad in Wales, supported by Anglesey County Council. Amongst the attendees was Roger Seddon, Ireland-Wales Development Officer for the Welsh European funding project, Joe Mason CEO of Walk, Andrea Wayman, Director of ELITE Supported Employment Agency Ltd,



Left to right: Robyn Williams - Training Manager, Agoriad; Karen Jones - Project Development Officer, Agoriad; Jude Butcher - Qualifications Development Co-ordinator, Agoriad



Left to right: Arthur Beechey - CEO of Agoriad; Roger Seddon - Ireland-Wales Project Development Officer, Welsh European Funding Office; Andrea Wayman - Director ELITE Supported Employment Agency Ltd; Chris English - Operations Manager (Training) ELITE Supported Employment Agency Ltd; Simon Higgins - CEO, North Wales Advice and Advocacy Association

Simon Higgins, Manager, North Wales Advice and Advocacy Association and Sioned Rees Director, External Partnerships, North Wales who says:

"In my new post one of my key tasks is to pro-actively support regional collaborative and partnership working to support the improvement of public service delivery in North Wales helping to drive efficiency and effectiveness.

The Programme for Government sets out the priorities for service delivery which will make the biggest difference to the lives of people in Wales. At the heart of the Programme for Government is a focus on people. To achieve change and take the

actions forward we need to work together in partnership across the public, private and third sector. This is why I was pleased to officially launch the Walkways project as it is an example of working in partnership to support people into the world of work through the provision of a supportive environment for the disadvantaged, disabled and those with learning difficulties making the most of their abilities and contribution to the community which they live".

Walkways is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland Wales Programme.

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Central to the success of Work Programme, will of course be jobs!

Working with employers and getting the right offer is critical

Working Links was set up in 2000 to help long term unemployed people into work. Our relentless focus and expertise has been at the forefront of supporting disadvantaged people, and 11 years on, we have delivered hundreds of contracts across the UK helping more than 200,000 people to find jobs - 23,000 of those have been in some of Wales' most deprived communities.

The Work Programme signifies an ambitious step change in the way employment schemes have operated in the past. It provides a single, personalised welfare to work structure for all jobseekers regardless of which benefit they receive and supersedes the complicated raft of UK programmes previously provided.

Notably, the Programme will provide longer term support to people currently on a range of benefits. And it's not just about helping someone into work but also in sustaining them in the workplace for up to 2 years.

Working Links is directly delivering 78% of the contract and we have

invested in putting in place a significant infrastructure to support our delivery, including the establishment of 23 offices across Wales along with a team of 200 experienced and skilled people who will provide expert support to our customers. In addition, we have put in place a dynamic diverse supply chain including 4 main delivery partners from the third, public and FE sectors. We're very pleased to be working with Agoriad to deliver the contract across Gwynedd and Anglesey.

It's early days, we're only 6 months into a 5 year contract but we've



already had some success in getting people back to work.

But of course, it's not just about getting people into work; Work Programme is as much about sustainability as it is about people entering employment. It's for this reason that it's so important that Work Programme is not seen in isolation but works in tandem with the range of skills and other provision to not only support people into work but to help with retention and progression in the workplace too. But there are clearly challenges here when responsibilities are divided between Westminster and Cardiff Bay - Benefits and employment is the domain of the UK Government whilst Skills and other connected areas are devolved.

A key part of our remit as Prime contractor operating at both Wales and UK level is to work with politicians and officials at both ends of the M4 to help deliver social and economic improvements.

In that regard, Work Programme is not simply another contract - it's a political programme as much a delivery programme. There's been a huge amount of interest and scrutiny from a number of areas and stakeholders across all sectors in addition to the media and politicians. In the past few months we've welcomed three UK Cabinet Ministers to our offices -

Mrs Cheryl Gillan, the Secretary of State for Wales, Mr Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. And of course, the Prime Minister himself during his last visit to South Wales.

Why is there so much interest? Because so much hangs on Work Programme; because it's outcome focused; because it's being delivered in challenging economic times; because, in the current climate of reduced public spending, delivering smarter more cost effective public services takes on keener urgency; because it will impact on so many people's lives; but most importantly, Work Programme has the potential to act as a fulcrum for tackling entrenched issues of worklessness and economic inactivity, help address skills deficits and ultimately support economic growth.

Central to the success of Work Programme, will of course be jobs! Working with employers and the getting of the right offer is critical.

It's essential that we work with employers and Sector Skill Councils to ensure we're delivering the right skills to meet employer demand.

If ever we need a stark reminder of why we have to make this work, in Wales there are over 120,000 unemployed and another half a million people who are economically inactive - many are third or even fourth generation families who have never worked, entire communities with poor prospects. We're helping to reverse decades of inactivity and exclusion and this will take time.

It's up to all of us to ensure that we see this as a collective challenge and that we work together to create a more prosperous Wales.



There's so much to find out on our website

Check out all the courses and the ways we can help

www.agoriad.org.uk

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

The Agoriad advantage for your business

Our service is tailored to your individual needs. By letting us get to know you and your business we can provide you with the right candidates who will be specifically selected to suit your business requirements. We offer our clients a range of training and development courses which ensures that, if you choose to let us help with your recruitment, they come to you fully equipped and ready to start work.

- Free recruitment and employment support service
- Database of skilled available jobseekers
- Access to a committed, local work force
- On-going support from professional Job Coaches
- Advice on employment grants and supports

By having an informal discussion about your appropriate recruitment needs we can help with the profiling and assessment of our clients to suit the job specification, and recommend prospective employees to you

We provide job coaches and support workers to help our clients integrate into employment and become loyal contributors to your business.

Agoriad helps to access and provides training and courses for disadvantaged people for their understanding and development into the workplace. As part of our client placement programmes we access equipment that can help disabled employees carry out their job duties more effectively and safely. Agoriad always provides sourcing of client specific help and advice wherever necessary.



Financial Support may be available for some supported employees

We will be pleased to hear from you, you will find us helpful and non invasive as we do our best to build the best advantage for both employers and employees.



Please contact:

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



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