



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

AGORIAD LEADER



John Hughes
Work Programmes Manager

Competitiveness

I'm employed as the Work Programmes Manager at Agoriad. The economic downturn has meant that Agoriad is working in a very competitive sector in trying to obtain work placements and finding paid employment for its Clients.

However, despite the recession Agoriad's Employment Officers have been very successful in securing work placements and paid employment as we assist

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SARA CANNON - WORKING WITH AND FOR AGORIAD

Three years ago I had surgery to remove a pituitary tumour and for the following two years I thought I would never work again as I felt so unwell.

I had spent nine years supporting students with special needs at Bangor University but, after surgery, had lost the confidence needed to return to this work and also to travel unaccompanied outside Bangor.

Things changed dramatically for me in May 2008 when I contacted Agoriad. I wanted to know what options were available to help ease me back into work. Through discussion, it emerged that I had a number of transferable skills that were of interest to Agoriad and I was given a chance to sample working for the company before obtaining a job as Employment Officer, helping to find placements for its clients.

Within a couple of weeks, with the understanding and support of all staff, I was travelling quite happily to Llandudno and Colwyn Bay - a big step for me at that time. I have to thank Agoriad for all the opportunities



Thomas Matthias (left) in his role as Assistant Groundsman on the Agoriad Workstep Programme with placement provider, Walter Standing, Head Groundsman of the superb Soughton Hall Country House Hotel.

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Competitiveness

disadvantaged people into the workplace. This has been achieved through having staff that are able to identify the needs of Clients and the ability to match these needs with current vacancies. Agoriad works with people with a range of disabilities; our staff have attended specific disability awareness training programmes to have a better understanding of the difficulties Clients face in their daily activities.

Agoriad prides itself on the ability of staff to motivate people through our programmes. This is of great benefit and helps to find and sustain meaningful employment. Clients can start off on Pathways to Work, move onto Work Preparation for confidence-building and a work placement before moving into supported paid employment through Workstep, and eventually the ultimate goal, which is open employment. With some Clients this can be a very quick process, because all that's required is confidence building and some guidance throughout the process. For others this will be a much slower process, but, what is important to Agoriad is that disabled and disadvantaged people get the opportunity to realise their full potential.

By becoming an approved Basic Skills provider in 2007, the training department of Agoriad has been very successful in assisting Workstep and Work Preparation Clients to gain City and Guilds certificates in literacy and numeracy, helping them to enter the world of work and others to enrol on full time college courses.

SARA CANNON - WORKING WITH AND FOR AGORIAD

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It has provided me and for restoring my confidence. I feel that I can frequently relate to the clients for whom I now try to find placements. Working for Agoriad has given me the boost I needed to realise that I could return to work and being focused has really helped in my physical recovery. Although I am now a Lecturer in Basic Skills at Coleg Menai, Agoriad has been kind enough to offer me summer work alongside Gareth Roberts, organising work placements for clients in North East Wales. This has involved a fair bit of long distance travelling but, again, my confidence has been built still further.

This summer I have found placements for a number of clients. One particular success story is that of Thomas Matthias. Thomas attended the Welsh College of Horticulture in Northop from 2005-08 and, gaining qualifications in horticulture, was keen to put these into practice. Agoriad helped him to achieve this by organising a 30 day voluntary placement between September and December of 2008 in the Organics Department of the College. His duties included tractor driving (to cut grass and transport equipment and produce), sowing seed, harvesting, weighing and bagging produce.

After this voluntary placement Thomas spent a long time looking for paid work and, after no success, became withdrawn and downhearted. I had been asked to find a suitable garden centre placement for Thomas but had no luck. One day I found myself driving past an impressive stately home with extensive grounds, Soughton Hall Country House Hotel, Northop, on the way to Mold.

Everything changed for Thomas when I arranged a Workstep interview for him with the Groundsman of the hotel, Walter Standing, in mid June 2009. It just so happened that the hotel had a vacancy for an Assistant Groundsman. Thomas was delighted to accept the offer of a one day per week paid post. A minimum of 16 hours per week has to be worked on the Workstep programme so Thomas needed to work more than one day per week to meet this requirement. The Proprietor of the hotel, Rosemary Rodenhurst, mentioned the possibility of a Kitchen Porter vacancy and so Thomas acquired a two-fold role within the hotel and its superb grounds, working the required 16 hours per week. Agoriad has been able to provide Soughton Hall with a monthly subsidy for Thomas's work.

Thomas has settled into his two roles very well. His gardening duties include mowing the extensive lawns, raking, clearing leaf litter, brushing and tidying up and his kitchen duties include salad preparation, washing up, cleaning and sorting crockery and cutlery into the storeroom.

Thomas's working hours have been increased as he has made a very good impression on the staff.

JUDE OVERCOMES 'THE ODDS' TO WIN TOP TRAINING AWARD

Jude Butcher, aged 64, is the winner of the prestigious National Training Award (NTA) in the Individual category.

Organised by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) and promoted and supported in partnership with UK Skills - the NTAs celebrate the achievements of individuals, training providers and employers committed to training and education.

Around 2002, Jude struggled to find employment because of mental health and disability problems. But she was determined to take control of her life and sought the help of Agoriad.

The Agoriad management was so impressed by Jude they offered her a role researching training opportunities for clients via the qualifications awarding organisation - Agored Cymru (formally known as Open College Network OCN Wales). Jude also completed an assessor's qualification and was successful in Agoriad being recognised as a registered Agored Cymru Centre.

Later, as Qualification Development Coordinator, Jude developed an employment training programme called Agor y Drws (Open Door), offering qualifications ranging from pre-GCSE to A-Level standard. She also successfully registered Agoriad as an accredited centre for providing City and Guilds qualifications in Basic Skills and IT - helping more than 100 people each year to gain these qualifications through Agoriad.

Jude said: "I've been able to turn my life around for the better with help from Agoriad and it's given me the confidence to take on other new roles



Jude receives her award from Colin Jackson at Cymru Wales, Llandudno.

outside of work as well. Winning a National Training Award is the icing on the cake."

Arthur Beechey, Agoriad's Chief Executive, said: "Jude has made the transition from being a Client of Agoriad to being a respected member of staff. She epitomises the fact that potential and ability need to be given opportunity.

"In offering Jude the opportunity, Agoriad has been paid back with a person who is totally committed and determined to succeed. Her loyalty and belief in what Agoriad does is total."

Jude received her award at a special dinner at Cymru Wales, Llandudno on 12th November, accompanied by the training staff of Agoriad, Arthur Beechey and Tom Jones (Chairman of the board of Trustees).

Are you finding difficulty in getting employment opportunities, or are you an employer looking to fill a position and willing to offer a work placement opportunity? Please call us to arrange for one of our Employment Officers to contact you.

01248 361392

ELUNED BURKE



Eluned is Agoriad's Office Manager. She has been with the organization since April 2002 being promoted to her present position in 2007.

Agoriad has significantly grown over the last three years and my own role has developed to reflect this rapid growth. It's down to me to make sure our procedures and administrative systems are followed and I have the responsibility for monitoring and controlling the overall financial aspects of the organization.

A large part of our expansion has been concerned with the development of our social enterprise programme. These include the two Café operations, in Bethesda (Caffi Coed y Brenin), and at Llys Llewelyn Tearooms on Anglesey. Agoriad has of course also acquired at the beginning of 2009 the Mineral Water Business near Dolgellau and formed Dŵr Cerist Cyf.

Normally my day starts with an overview of the Bank details for each business area of Agoriad. This is done primarily to view the individual cash flow situations. From the information I obtain, I then carry out various procedures to ensure that Company cash flow is appropriate.

Agoriad processes around 450 to 500 transactions each month and I have two members of staff who are involved in collating and preparing these transactions for payments. I take on the responsibility for ensuring payment is made through our cheque or on-line banking system.

Payment of Staff wages is a part of my workload and I will spend a part of each day preparing for the payroll run on the 17th of each month.

My other daily duties include acting as a first port of call for administrative/financial queries from staff, board members and suppliers etc as well as being responsible for providing the administrative support to the C.E.O and the Board. This involves preparing agendas, taking minutes, and attending and dealing with correspondence issues.

I truly believe in the objectives of Agoriad. My work can be extremely varied and provides me with the kind of challenge I enjoy and I have to say that it is rewarding for all of us here at Agoriad to contribute to the success of the organization.

WORKING WELL FOR MARK

Mark Griffiths first came into contact with Agoriad when he started attending the Dwyfor 'Skill Build' group in Pwllheli.

At that time, Mark was unsure what vocational line he wanted to follow so a number of work placements were established as part of the Skill Build course to enable Mark to formulate ideas as to what he would like to progress to as a future career. Over time, Mark attended placements with the Royal Mail, Harlech Frozen Foods, Hufenfa De Arfon as well as Hafan Y Môr. However, at the time, none of these placements developed into offers of employment.

We then decided to help in a different way, with Mark leaving the Skillbuild group but shortly afterwards being referred back to Agoriad via the JobCentre Plus 'Work Preparation' package. The reason behind this decision was because it was felt that the 'Work Preparation' scheme would offer Mark the chance to gain more 'hands on' practical experience within a working environment.

As part of the 'Work Preparation' scheme, a placement was arranged for Mark at Cerrig Ltd based at the Glan y Don Industrial Estate in Pwllheli. Cerrig Ltd manufacture granite, slate and marble products.

Initially, the placement was only for a couple of hours per week, with Mark being accompanied within the workplace by a Support Worker provided by Agoriad. As time went on, Mark gradually increased his attendance at the placement and the level of support provided subsided due to the excellent natural support being provided by the host company.



Mark (right), alongside Ian Williams (Production Director at Cerrig Ltd), who has played a significant part in Mark's vocational development.

It also became apparent that Cerrig Ltd provided Mark with a working environment where he felt comfortable in his surroundings. The range of duties being carried out by Mark at his placement were varied, ranging from the preparation of samples through chiselling, the painting-in of engraving work cast in stone, polishing of the stones as well as general maintenance in and around the workshop.

Such was the impression created by Mark through his eagerness and willingness to learn, an offer of employment with the assistance of 'Workstep' was made at the termination of the 'Work Preparation' package. Mark was delighted with the offer and duly commenced employment with Cerrig Ltd through 'Workstep'.

Mark now integrates far more freely within his working environment and has been an integral part of the Cerrig team for over four years, with Agoriad providing ongoing support for him through the 'Workstep' provision.



BASIC SKILLS & SKILLBUILD COURSE 2009

ROBYN WILLIAMS

SKILLS PROGRAMME MANAGER

The Skillbuild training programme is part of the Lifelong Learning agenda for Wales.

Its purpose is to assist young people between the ages of 16 and 25, particularly those who are disadvantaged through either a learning need, disability or who are unsure about the type of work they want to do. The aim is to enable these young people to improve their confidence and self-esteem as well as provide them with the breadth and flexibility of skills and knowledge to enable them to participate and contribute to their communities and prepare them for employment.

The Skillbuild training programme lasts at least 13 weeks and involves classroom based activities to improve Basic and Key Skills as well as employability skills. There is the opportunity to go on and gain recognised City & Guilds and ASDAN qualifications in these skills. As part of the scheme the learner has the chance to gain valuable work experience and job relevant skills through work tasters.

Once learners have gained relevant experience and knowledge the hope is that they have a clearer understanding of the kind of work they want to do. The aim is that each individual progresses either into further education, additional training or employment.

We are keen to hear from anyone who wishes to be considered for Skillbuild - contact Robyn by email robyn@agoriad.org.uk or for an informal chat on 01248 361 392.



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NEW SKILLS IN RETAIL FOR RICHARD

Richard Baxter was referred to Agoriad by Leanne Lewis, the DEA in Caernarfon, under the Work Preparation scheme. Because of health issues he had not worked since he attended a youth training scheme approx 17 years ago. He was unsure which direction to take but felt that he would like a work placement as a stock room assistant as this is what he had done previously.

Richard had spent many years working as a volunteer for various charity shops in the local area and was happier working in the background e.g. sorting and pricing the goods. As he had an interest in fashion and designing clothes we decided that a placement in a fashion retail store would be ideal. We were fortunate enough to secure a work experience placement in the local Peacocks store in Caernarfon under the management of Sharon Langley. Richard has been attending the store for two days a week and deals mainly with the deliveries. He accepts the goods from the



Richard Baxter: "Now I am learning new skills and settling down well. I have met new friends and all the staff are really friendly."

delivery van and sorts out the clothing, in turn putting them on to hangers and size capping the goods. He has also been dealing with sale items and marking down the goods using the scanner. In the next few weeks he will be learning how to carry out stock taking. Richard is extremely happy in his placement and is continually learning new skills. He is in a working environment where he feels comfortable and at ease and receives excellent support from management, shop floor workers and delivery drivers alike.

Richard says "On my first day in Peacocks I was very nervous

but by now I am learning new skills and settling down well. I have met new friends and all the staff are really friendly."

Sharon, the store manager, stated that Richard has worked really well since starting his placement and he gets on well with all members trying hard at all tasks undertaken and carrying out his duties exceptionally well. In fact the store management is so impressed with Richard's pleasant manner and strong work ethic that they are making Richard an offer of seasonal work to cover the Christmas and January sale period.

DOING WELL WITH WATER

Mark Satterthwaite was firstly introduced to Agoriad via the Pathways programme last summer. He was a voluntary customer who needed advice regarding going back to work and benefits.

He found a part time summer post at the local Co-op store. That post came to an end in September '08. Mark felt he would like to try something different. He was referred onto the Work Preparation Programme, where we found Mark a support worker's role on a placement. This was completely new to him, but he felt that he could offer something to other people. A placement was set up at Dŵr Cerist Cyf, supporting individuals who have learning difficulties, working at the mineral water bottling plant.

Mark has thrived at the placement; he clearly has got what it takes to be a very good support worker. Dŵr Cerist has been very impressed with Mark's attitude and commitment whilst on placement. So much so, that Mark has been offered a position as a support worker under the Workstep Programme.



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