



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

## AGORIAD LEADER



**Arthur Beechey**  
Chief Executive

### The real awards for Agoriad are even harder to win

In this issue of Insight you will see that the work of Agoriad has been recognised at the Welsh National Training Awards with us being presented as winners of the "Providing Education and Training" category.

Naturally we are all very pleased to receive the award, as it is a recognition of the quality of our services and work, but the real rewards for myself and all who contribute to Agoriad is to be

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## GOOD GROUNDWORK FOR STEPHEN AT ERLAS KITCHEN GARDENS

It's been the case of two agencies with similar ideals working together in partnership to develop the vocational opportunities for one individual: Stephen Shone of Hightown, Wrexham, with the two agencies being Agoriad Cyf and Groundwork.

Groundwork in Wales is a leading local, regional and national environment agency, building sustainable communities across the principality. One project undertaken by Groundwork is at the Erlas Kitchen Gardens in Wrexham and this is where Stephen has flourished since his appointment to the post of 'Garden Assistant' in November, 2007.

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## The real awards for Agoriad are even harder to win

continually successful in our objectives of helping and guiding disadvantaged people into a meaningful and more fulfilling life in employment.

The real award winners are the people we work with, who even in these difficult times are tenacious in their ambition to make a real social contribution and to overcome the difficulties that life has presented them.

Our other "award winners" are the employers and business people at all levels who over the years have provided the environment and opportunity for our Clients to experience real work through placement, often leading to full time employment. Thanks to them all, they have and continue to make a difference by giving many people a chance to improve their lives and show a loyalty and work ethic that overcome their disadvantages. It brings a very worthwhile and valued contribution to their employment.

At Agoriad we are approachable and "down to earth". We understand our Clients needs and we do our very best to generate beneficial opportunities for both employees and employers alike. That's what we are about here; the team are dedicated and hard working and Clients we have helped tell us that they have found us to be caring, encouraging, helpful and easy to be involved with, in what can be a life improving situation. As Businesses of all sizes have provided the opportunities to give people a chance and so many have been so supportive in helping to develop these people into employment and seeing the real work and commitment they can make; *then these are the true awards for everyone here at Agoriad.*

# CITY & GUILDS CHECK OUT AGORIAD

Early this year we received our first ever visit from a City & Guilds External Verifier to assess the way that Agoriad delivered two qualifications which form part of the City & Guilds portfolio, namely the 'Certificate in Adult Numeracy' and 'Certificate in Adult Literacy'.

The C&G Assessor spent the best part of a day at our offices in Porth Penrhyn, speaking directly with staff members who deliver of the qualifications, also spending part of the day observing a candidate actually being assessed.



After the visit the External Verifier prepared a most positive report of our work and we are pleased to extract some of the comments here:

- *Each candidate's portfolio contained a well-structured personal plan, these were very detailed and obviously the result of an in-depth discussion in addition to the usual initial assessment and diagnostic procedure. Candidates' skills had been improved using methods developed by an experienced teacher. Portfolios were well organised.*
- *The qualifications are delivered by a small team and there is a close working relationship between management and staff. The centre regularly contacts City & Guilds' Cardiff office for advice.*
- *There is a great deal of staff loyalty and the team has had no changes of personnel. Staff have been enrolled on several courses, appropriate to their needs and have been allowed free time to complete course work. They also regularly attend Basic Skills update seminars. Both tutors are fluent Welsh speakers.*
- *There is a very strong Equal Opportunities Policy. The amount of thought and care put into the induction of candidates is outstanding. As all candidates have a disability of some kind, the centre (Agoriad) develops a completely personal plan over an extended induction period. The plan is completely flexible and may be amended at a future date in the candidate's learning programme. During my visit (External Verifier), I observed a candidate undergoing an assessment. She was completely at ease due to the very friendly atmosphere. The company (Agoriad) has an admirable ethos which is encouraged by all staff from the Chief Executive to the Administrative staff.*
- *Assessment is carried out by a well trained team of two. Internal verification is carried out by an experienced teacher.*
- *The centre has a very strong Equal Opportunities Policy. Records are kept efficiently.*

The comments made by the External Verifier are, without fail, of an extremely positive nature and are warmly welcomed by all of us here at Agoriad.

# GOOD GROUNDWORK FOR STEPHEN AT ERLAS KITCHEN GARDENS

The aim of the Erlas Kitchen Gardens is to offer opportunities for adults, young people and children to get involved in a wide variety of gardening activities using organic techniques. The gardens can also be used to promote physical activity and healthy eating to community groups, schools and voluntary groups.

Stephen first came into contact with Erlas Kitchen Gardens in July, 2007 when he was offered a 16 week training package through an ILM (Intermediate Labour Market) scheme.

Such was the impression made by Stephen, that Groundwork was eager to employ him after the completion of his 16 weeks. However, there were funding issues which restricted this from happening. This is when Agoriad became involved, with Stephen being employed at the gardens through the introduction of the 'Workstep' supported employment scheme in November, 2007 when Stephen was formally appointed to his post, and now, over 12 months later, he has prospered within his duties and has become a highly valued member of staff within the Groundwork team.

Having started the ILM with absolutely no gardening experience, Stephen has found his niche within the vegetable and flower beds at Erlas and has now developed an excellent understanding of the world of horticulture. As part of his ongoing vocational development, Agoriad has arranged for Stephen to undertake various OCN (Open College Network) qualifications, which will add formal qualifications to the practical skills he has developed since July, 2007.



*"I can't tell you how much I enjoy coming to work in the morning. I've learned a lot being here and everyone has been so helpful. Working here has changed my life it means so much to me that I have been helped in this way."*

Stephen has become an extremely valuable member of staff at Erlas and is fully respected by colleagues and visitors alike. It is rewarding for us all that he is truly happy and continues to enjoy his work at Erlas Gardens

Check out [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)



**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**



*Gwenan at the recent National Training Awards showing off Agoriad's award for Providing Education and Training.*

## GWENAN CHARTERS

*I'm an Employment Officer for Agoriad, work I have been doing for the past six years. My routine is quite very varied from day to day, and I'm going to give you an insight into my working day.*

On this particular day I started from home at 6.30 am, to attend the annual Career Wales meeting at Llyndir Hall, Rhossett, over a buffet breakfast of course!!!

The meeting lasted until 10.30am; I had an opportunity to discuss with the Director of Career Wales, the need for further training for individuals who have learning disabilities in the Wrexham area.

My next appointment was at the Jobcentre, where I needed to interview an individual who had been referred to us by the DEA to attend the Work Preparation provision, that interview lasted around an hour gathering information and explaining the advantages that the service offers.

I then sat down with the DEA to discuss other Clients I am currently working with in the Wrexham area.

I stayed at the jobcentre for a couple of hours to prepare some of the Final reports that need to be done.

After lunch I made a couple of monitoring visits, the first being to a client who had just started a work placement at the Wrexham council on the work Prep provision, the second was to

visit an individual who is employed under the Work Step scheme, who at the moment needs regular monitoring to ensure that the job is done to the standard expected of him.

My last appointment for the day was to go with a Client for an informal interview for a post as an admin assistant at Brymbo, under the Work step provision. I explained to the employer what Agoriad has to offer the Client the advantages to the employer; the interview went well and they offered my Client a 2 week trial, with the hope of employment at the beginning of December under the Workstep provision.

By now it was 4.45pm and I was ready for home, arrived home at 5.30, checked to see if there were any e-mails for me, and to make notes for the next day and catch up with the necessary paperwork.

Basically that is what an Employment officer does, it's a very interesting and challenging job, which I would not change, as every day is different, nothing beats the feeling of seeing an individual realise their potential and achieving their goals in life. It gives me a real buzz to be part of a caring organisation that can make such a difference to people's lives.



*Pictured receiving the award from Dame Gillian Morgan (left), Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Assembly Government, are Jude Butcher (Agoriad's Qualification Development Co-Coordinator), Tom Jones (Chairman of the Agoriad Board of Trustees) and Robyn Williams (Agoriad's Skills Programme Manager).*

## WE ARE THE WINNERS OF THE "PROVIDING EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARD"

*"Our finalists this year have reached a level of excellence that will act as an inspiration to us all." These were the words of John Griffiths, 'Deputy Minister for Skills' of the Welsh Assembly Government, before 'The National Training & Modern Apprenticeship Awards (Wales)' for 2008.*

For us here at Agoriad these words carried extra significance as we were one of the five finalists within the 'Providing Education and Training' category, one of seven categories which formed the presentation evening held at the City Hall in Cardiff.

The presentation night was merely the end of a lengthy judging process, which had seen the National Training Awards adjudicator visit us to assess for themselves whether Agoriad were potential worthy

candidates for success within the chosen category.

Following on from this visit, we were formally acknowledged as one of the candidates for the 'Providing Education and Training' category and duly received an invitation to attend the 'Gala Presentation Evening' to be held in Cardiff on 23rd October.

Before the 'Presentation Evening', the National Training Awards team sent a camera crew to our offices in Bangor to record interviews which, in turn, would be screened as part of

the ceremony evening. Representing Agoriad on camera were Dave Austin (on behalf of the Board of Trustees) and Jude Butcher (Agoriad's Qualification Development Co-Coordinator). As part of the interviewing process, the duo explained the complex nature of the work of Agoriad, paying particular emphasis to the provision of education and training provided to our Clients.

The awards ceremony in Cardiff duly arrived and a team of 8 (6 staff members and 2 board members) ventured to the capital to represent Agoriad on the evening. Their journey proved to be more than worthwhile as Agoriad were successful in our nomination, winning the 'Providing Education and Training' category against other larger, excellent training providers from within the Principality.

It is a prestigious award recognising everyone's contribution at Agoriad as we continue to provide quality training to help our Clients.



*Dave Austin is in front of the camera being interviewed to be later shown as part of the presentation evening.*



David monitoring the rate of production as part of his quality control duties.



Chris Wright (on the left), Production Manager with Marco Cable Management, holding the Phillip Case Award for 2007. David is alongside Chris holding the regional Anglesey award for 2007.

## MARCO CABLE MANAGEMENT & DAVID STUART

David was initially referred to Agoriad via the Job Centre Plus 'Work Preparation' package. Through this package, a 30-day placement was established for David at Marco Cable. The objective of the placement was to offer David an understanding of the work, as well as giving a potential employer an opportunity to assess David.

Based at Bryn Cefni Industrial Park in Llangefni, Marco Cable Management currently employ around 40 members of staff and are primarily involved in the manufacturing of UPVC trunking, aluminium power tools and bench trunking.

During the early stages of his placement, David was involved within the packing section of the operation and very quickly made a favourable impression with his work, positive attitude, and genuine interest in the production process. Marco Cable Management quickly offered David employment before the termination of his 30-day placement, with the employment initially being assisted through the provision of the Workstep supported employment scheme.

Since that time David has further developed within the work-place and today carries out duties relating to both packing and quality control within the production process.

The Production Manager for Marco Cable Management is Chris Wright. He quoted 'When the placement was established we were a little bit sceptical, primarily it was a journey into the unknown for us. However the 'Work Preparation' aspect proved invaluable to us as employers, as it provided an ideal 'low risk' form as assessing an individual with a view to potential future employment. The support provided by Agoriad both at the introduction of the placement and then when discussing employment for David and future support provisions was excellent... it is doubtful that without the initial trial and support from Agoriad that this project would have got off the ground. However, the primary reason behind this success story is the fact that David always puts in 110% within the workplace. He has proven to be a magnificent employee.'

This is a "good news" outcome. David has the opportunity to develop a worthwhile career within a successful and expanding company only a stones throw from his home.



David in the workplace at Marco Cable Management.

*I was a little nervous about Agoriad but I was very pleased to find just how easy it was to talk to them. They were so helpful and easy to get on with.*

*I have had a few work experience placements and now I'm glad to say that I'm in full time employment and enjoying it so much.*

*It could not have been simpler, we have been pleased to offer work experience to Agoriad Clients and have considered it worthwhile for our business, so much so that we are pleased to have full time employees join us through this route. Agoriad were cooperative and dealt with all issues professionally and to everyone's benefit.*



Tom Jones (Chairman of the Agoriad Board of Trustees), Jane Hutt, Keith Bowen, Jude Butcher (Agoriad's Qualification Development Co-Coordinator) & Brace Griffiths (Agoriad Trustee).

# JANE HUTT VISITS AGORIAD

Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills within the Welsh Assembly Government visited Agoriad during November.

The visit was arranged as a result of our success at the National Training Awards (Wales), with the Minister showing great interest in the work of Agoriad, putting particular emphasis on the innovative training packages available for our Clients.

The visit offered an opportunity for the Minister to see our training facilities and offices and to meet a current group of Clients attending the 'Skill Build' group in Bangor.

Accompanying the minister during her visit was Keith Bowen, Senior Performance Improvement Manager within the Welsh Assembly Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Services and Skills.

*"Providing everybody with the opportunity to reach their full potential is central to the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda. I hope that we will be able to continue to work closely with Agoriad, to continue supporting individuals to gain employment, education and training."*  
- Jane Hutt.

When you are introduced to Agoriad you can be confident that we will be helping to get you into the workplace. Our friendly people will initially interview you to find the best way we can help and with our recommendation of how you can continue. Call us on **01248 361392** for an informal chat.

## COURSES 2009

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