



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

AGORIAD LEADER



Agoriad Trustee
Brace Griffiths

Past, present and future

Some 15 years have elapsed since Agoriad was formed. Based on the desire of a small group of individuals who wanted to provide more opportunities for people with learning difficulties and mental health issues, (our clients), to lead more rewarding and independent lives.

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MINISTERIAL VISIT FOR AGORIAD

Welsh Secretary Peter Hain, also Minister for the Department of Work and Pensions, visited Agoriad recently to mark the launch of Pathways to Work across the country. Pathways is to be launched in North Wales from December.

The scheme is designed to get people back into work, recognising that currently receiving Disability Benefit are a great many people who really want to get back into employment, and other people who will go on to claim benefits but could find employment if given the right guidance.

Mr Hain said of Pathways "Smaller providers already have great records in delivering very specialised, innovative and targeted help that is essential to overcome deep-seated problems. We will continue to



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Past, present and future

The initial operation consisted of a Board of Directors, two dedicated staff and a small office in Port Penrhyn, Bangor courtesy of Gwynedd Social Services. At that time, whilst there was a range of support services to help occupy our clients, there was no structured routeway to help and support them into work, training and ultimately independent living. However, there was a great deal of enthusiasm amongst those organisations and people involved in their daily lives to effect change and nourish their undoubted abilities. It was this enthusiasm and co-operation that enabled Agoriad to work with key organisations to develop such a routeway with very many of our clients now having secured employment and improved lives.

Time has moved on, our client base has grown to include people with disabilities and other disadvantaged people who benefit from the distinct support offered by Agoriad.

We continue to work closely with the Social Services Departments of Gwynedd and Anglesey County Council, hold contracts for services to people with disabilities with Department for Work and Pensions' Jobcentre Plus and support Coleg Menai to deliver Skillbuild. Our dedicated staff has grown to 26 and are located across North Wales. Links with local employers are strong, with their essential support for our customers being recognised by an annual award ceremony.

As successful as we have been, Agoriad wants to do more. The circumstances we face are

challenging: Government policies aim to help more people with health conditions into work, which we support; however their contracting practices which promote voluntary sector participation favours larger organisations. Increased competition in the labour market and the changing skill needs of employers means that we need to keep our services up to date with these new demands.

With more pressure on Social Service Department budgets, we need to ensure that we continue to provide value for money.

That said, these are challenges that Agoriad is facing with relish. With the support of Gwynedd Social Services, Agoriad has acquired one social enterprise, Caffi Coed y Brenin, Bethesda.

This serves as a commercial outlet where our clients can develop their confidence and skills. Our aim is to establish other such enterprises to offer an even broader range of opportunities that help them acquire the skills that employers need and lead more independent lives.

Agoriad is also building its partnership base and will be supporting a new initiative that helps people with health issues get back into work. Coupled with our existing portfolio of support we believe that we will be able to offer more choices and a more flexible service to our clients.

WORKING WITH THE AUTHORITIES

Through Service Level Agreements, Agoriad has forged strong links with both Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Social Services to provide placements for people with learning difficulties.

From working in a bottling plant in Dolgellau to having supported employment opportunities in shops on Ynys Môn we work with Social Services to provide worthwhile experiences for people within our communities that may otherwise find themselves excluded.

We continue to enjoy excellent relationships with the Authorities and our clients themselves and between us strive to ensure that the people we work with are given the opportunity to develop in the direction that is best suited to them.

Local Authorities Contracts Manager Andy Unwin says of the relationship, "It is communication between ourselves and Social Services that is key to our healthy partnership. Yes, Agoriad is employed by the Authorities to provide services, but we look upon it as much more of a partnership. We rely on Social Services for their expertise and dedication but equally they look to us to provide the things we specialise in also. We share a common aim and that is to do the best we can for our clients, based on their own personal needs. We will continue to look for innovative ways to create opportunities, and with the local authorities' backing, we feel that we are doing a good job."



DAVID ROSSINGTON AT THE VALLEY HOTEL



David Rossington is a familiar face to all who frequent the Valley Hotel, situated 4 miles from his hometown of Holyhead in Valley (Dyffryn) on the Isle of Anglesey.

David, who works a total of 25 hours per week at the hotel, is employed as a 'Kitchen Assistant' within the busy catering section of the 18 bedroom establishment. Working five hours each weekday, David has a regular working routine revolving around food preparation as well as other kitchen porter related duties. It has been known for David to also help out in other sections of the hotel when required.

Under the guidance of David Hall, Managing Director at the Valley Hotel, David has developed vocationally to become an extremely valuable member of staff who is popular with hotel staff and guests alike.

The hotel also ensures that David receives adequate training within his role, holding the relevant 'Food Hygiene Certificate' as well as numerous other bespoke qualifications which are of use to him vocationally.

David is known by the hotel management for his reliability and his excellent time-keeping, both pre-requisite skills for the nature of the work David carries out.

Away from the workplace, David can often be found on the local bowling green, where his prowess has gained recognition through winning many local shields and trophies. David has also represented the County of Anglesey on many occasions and in September 2007 travelled to Guernsey as part of an Anglesey team in a nation wide bowling competition.

The pictures show David carrying out some 'prepping' work in the kitchen of the Valley Hotel as well as in the company of the hotel Head Chef, Keith Roberts.



**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

MINISTERIAL VISIT FOR AGORIAD

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work with the voluntary sector which has produced extraordinary results with some of the hardest to reach people.”

Pathways will enable people to gain worthwhile employment whilst continuing to provide support through personal advisors who will monitor progress and also search for the right employment opportunity.

Work Preparation and Workstep

Through our highly successful Workstep and Workprep programmes we have continued to enable people to take that step into employment. We are delighted that, over the past two months Agoriad has received “Substantial Assurance” level accreditation for our Workprep programme and “Full Assurance” for Workprep. Contracts Manager John Hughes commented, “I am delighted that my team has been recognised for the hard work that they have put in, and that these accreditations reflect their professionalism. From a first class administrative service through to the Employment officers and sessional workers who assist in work placements, we have enormous enthusiasm for the important work we do.”



David Stuart: Age 19 from Llynfaes in Anglesey with his employer Lillian MacGregor and the Minister.

“WE ARE EXTREMELY HAPPY WITH DAVID AND HE IS WITH US”

David was first referred to Agoriad on to Work Preparation in August. He has Cerebral Palsy. David was referred because he had difficulties with interviews because of lack of confidence.

A placement was secured for David with Marco Cables Management. The placement was very successful; hence David was offered full time employment with Marco as a General Operative. His employment commenced in September 2006. Reviews carried out have been very encouraging.

Lillian MacGregor is delighted with the way that David has fitted in at her company. “If David had applied for a position here through a standard application, it’s possible he would have been unsuccessful. Agoriad played an integral part in David’s placement here, and it is the advantages of having David on placement that led to his full time employment. We were able to assess David as he was able to assess us. We were happy to give David open employment and he has proven an extremely hardworking and pleasant member of our team. We are extremely happy with David, and he is with us.”

Operations Manager Kevin Roberts commented, “It is forward thinking companies like Marco Cables that lead the way in the employment market. Marco Cables have given David the opportunity to prove his worth in the workplace and have benefitted by gaining a productive and enthusiastic member of staff. Breaking away from stereotypical thinking is not just the Agoriad way; it is clearly the way of some excellent employers out there.”

STEPHEN WILLIAMS A CONTINUING SUCCESS FOR THE AGORIAD WAY

Stephen had experience of working in a senior management environment and having responsible management positions in Britain and the Middle East.

He had a relapse of his mental health breakdown in 2002. He was referred to Agoriad onto ROBUST (similar to RURAL) in August 2005. A placement was secured with Gwynedd County Council and placement was extended through Work Preparation. His Employers were very impressed with Stephen and offered employment through Workstep as a Project Development Officer. His employment commenced in November 2005, Stephen continued to impress and has since progressed to open employment (see Insight Summer edition 2007).



Stephen Williams age 57 from Llwynhudol near Pwllheli, pictured centre, with John Hughes of Agoriad and Peter Hain.

AGORIAD HELPED KAREN JONES



Welsh Secretary Peter Hain with Karen Jones of Agoriad.

Peter Hain meets Agoriad success story Karen Jones who not only came through the Workstep programme with the company but went on to work within Agoriad on an Interreg project run in partnership with an Irish company.

RURAL has been responsible for getting some of the most isolated people into employment, and at the forefront has been Karen.

"Agoriad helped me through a difficult phase in my life and gave me the confidence in my own ability to re-enter the workforce. That they decided to actually employ me themselves was such a lift. The Agoriad way really works because we believe in the progression of clients and not training for training's sake, and I'm proud that I can give something back."

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE AWARD

Following a Welsh Assembly review in December 2007 Agoriad Cyf has retained its Investor in People standard.

The feedback from the review report comments that the company is truly committed to offer learning and development opportunities to its staff, and is continually striving to improve the services it offers to both employers and service users. It also noted that staff commitment to training was producing real benefits to the company in terms of efficiency and new business.

Arthur Beechey, Agoriad's CEO comments: "The investment in developing people has produced benefits for all involved and we are particularly pleased with the commitment from our teams to deliver the professionalism with good management practise that we need to deliver our objectives".



Job Centre Plus Accreditation

Agoriad Cyf has just received further good news with confirmation that it will be continued to be recognised as an Approved Provider by Job Centre Plus following an assessment of its processes and policies. The assessment looked at a number of areas including financial risk and viability, health and safety and equality.

R.U.R.A.L. VISIT TO THE DELTA CENTRE, CARLOW, 6th-9th DECEMBER, 2007

As part of the ongoing R.U.R.A.L. (Redressing Under-representation through Reskilling and Active Liaison) scheme, a team of staff from Agoriad recently headed to County Carlow in the Republic of Ireland to visit the Delta Centre in the Strawhall region of the county town of Carlow.

The three day visit was organised as part of the scheme which will see staff from the Delta Centre return the compliment and visit North Wales in early 2008.

Despite inclement weather, the six members of staff who made the journey thoroughly enjoyed their visit as well as finding it most informative in relation to their day-to-day work.

Doubtless the highlight of the trip was the invitation to attend the 'Preview Night' of the Delta Centre Christmas Fair where the produce made by service users throughout the year were placed on open sale to the general public.

The evening started with a warm welcome being extended to the Agoriad staff by Eileen Brophy, Director of Services at the centre, before a guided tour of the centre, when the Agoriad representatives were shown around the splendid gardens as well as the craft centre where the service users produce items of excellent quality, which, in turn, were for sale at the fair.

As part of the trip, the Agoriad team also visited the Carlow Area Supported Employment Offices and were given an informative presentation on the methodology in which supported employment places are found and developed within the Republic of Ireland.

The trip was a most worthwhile venture and was a great success partly due to the magnificent hospitality offered by the hosts in Carlow.

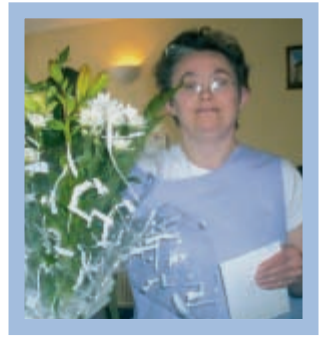
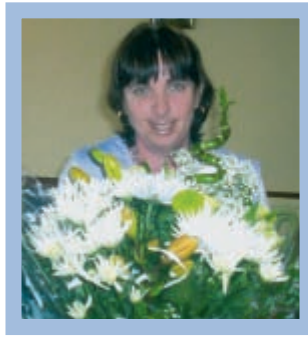
Website Links

Delta Centre:

- www.deltacentre.org

Carlow Area Supported Employment:

- www.carlowsupportedemployment.com



15 YEARS SERVICE PRESENTATIONS AT CAFFI COED Y BRENIN

Three members of staff at Caffi Coed y Brenin, Bethesda recently celebrated 15 years continuous service at the Caffi and to celebrate the occasion, presentations were made in recognition of their excellent service provided over the course of the decade and a half.

Celebrating their long service were Sharon Thomas & Susan Pritchard of Caernarfon as well as Bethan Jones of Bontnewydd. The trio were presented with flowers as a token of thanks for their service by Tom Jones, Chairman of the Agoriad Board of Trustees.

Pictured are the trio with their flowers. From left to right Bethan Jones, Sharon Thomas and Susan Pritchard. The final picture shows the trio who between them, have a total combined service of 45 years at Caffi Coed y Brenin.





GILLIAN RICHARDS MBE

Trustee of Agoriad, Ms Gillian Richards, was recently honoured for services to the disadvantaged in Wales when she received an MBE from the Queen. Her children, Anna and Adam, and mother, Mrs Gilly Hughes, accompanied her to the Investiture at Buckingham Palace.

She said: "I was so surprised that someone had nominated me for this but I am delighted and extremely proud to receive this honour. This is as much a tribute to our dedicated staff and board of directors at Agoriad and I hope it raises awareness of the special work and the support they give to improve our clients' lives."

Ms Richards has served on the Arfon/Dwyfor Community Health Council and both the Wales and North Wales Advisory Task Forces for the New Deal. She was one of the group that set up Radio Ysbyty Gwynedd, formerly Radio C & A, and is also the founder and co-director of employment agency Atebion Recruitment Ltd in Bangor and is a Director of the Gwynedd Business Network.

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 2008



WORKSTEP

The Workstep programme provides disadvantaged people with an opportunity to develop the level of contribution they can make to the workplace and the chance to progress to employment.

WORK PREPARATION

Agoriad provides this service for people with generic disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health needs throughout North Wales. Clients need to be referred by their JobCentre Disability Employment Advisor [DEA].

R.U.R.A.L

Redressing **U**nder-representation through **R**eskilling and **A**ctive **L**iaison

This is an excellent project for people currently on Incapacity Benefit. It provides the chance to develop their experience with new skills and provides a base for the search for further training and employment opportunities.

AGORIAD AN OCN CENTRE

Since 2003, Agoriad has been recognised as an 'Approved Centre' for the delivery of National Open Colleges Network (NOCN) qualifications.

Agoriad has also developed its own nationally approved qualification through the above, known as 'Open Door'. This qualification is available at every NOCN level, through from 'Entry Level' to 'Level 3'.