

Case Study



Ana

Background

Ana is a young woman with learning difficulties and Autism. She was previously a student at a local special needs college through which she completed a supported internship at the Royal Stoke Hospital. This programme had led to her successfully gaining employment as a part-time receptionist where she was placed to work in the main hospital reception. Unfortunately, this open and very busy employment opportunity proved to be too demanding for Ana and her job offer was rescinded after just 5 months. Ana was emotionally shattered by this experience which proved to be a big blow to her confidence and self-esteem.

Encouraged by her parents after a brief period of respite Ana began to re-group and look to the future. She made a claim for U.C. and in January 2020 she was referred to the Connecting Choices programme by her Work Coach. The referral advised that Ana was highly motivated to move towards some sustainable provision, it recognised both her potential but also her state of fragile emotional resilience and therefore her need for additional support.

Ana through supported careers guidance was enabled to acknowledge her current situation, understand the true competitive nature of the employment market, and also become aware of her current skillset and the importance of her positive attitude, drive and desire to move on.

A concise action plan was discussed. The following SMART targets were agreed:

How she was supported?

Ana received a thorough initial needs assessment. This revealed the clear contrast between her strong motivational desire to quickly find another job and the state of her heightened level of anxiety. It also revealed her naive understanding of the local labour market.

Ana had been making steady progress during her teenage years socially and educationally. She had been one of the more able students at her college and her vocational training scheme had led her to being one of the few to achieve the goal of employment, she was simply not used to failure. Her transition from college to work had been relatively seamless and this had left her with the notion that it would be easy to just get another job.

- For Ana to receive support in re-drafting her CV for this document to present the best possible picture of her skills and abilities.
- For Ana to consider possible voluntary work options as a means of helping her to re-build her confidence.
- To explore further social opportunities as a means of preventing isolation.
- To consider further education options particularly around functional skills to enhance her future employability.

Ana began to meet with her personal coach on a regular basis. Her CV was quickly updated, approved and added to a range of Ana's online job vacancy accounts.

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She was immediately referred to the Starfish Social Hub. Ana was thrilled by the opportunities that this offered and quickly became an avid member. She said that she enjoyed attending this facility and that meeting new people was a great help to her improving her self-confidence.

Throughout all her contacts her personal coach was keen for her to acknowledge the universal benefits Ana was gaining through each “small win” and Ana was pleased to be making progress again. During this time Ana also appeared to be regularly making applications for job vacancies she had seen which was again encouraging.

Ana was introduced to a supported volunteering programme run by Support Staffordshire. Following discussions, she was referred to this project so that she might get bespoke help in sourcing, securing, and sustaining a voluntary placement. Her Personal Coach maintained ongoing liaison with the Support Staffordshire Project Manager to progress this plan and by the beginning of March an interview for Ana was arranged at the Caudwell Children’s Charity for consideration for a voluntary work placement as a receptionist. This went well and Ana followed this up by attending an induction day, completing a Level 1 Safeguarding Children course with the organisation, and providing evidence for a DBS check.

Through her Personal Coach Ana was also introduced to a Positive Directions opportunity offered by Acorn Training. This consisted of 1-2-1 tutor support for young adults (up to the age of 25) in the development of Functional Skills. Ana was eligible for this offer and remained extremely keen to work to achieve Level 2’s if possible. A referral was made, and Ana was provided with an appointment for an initial assessment with a tutor.

Progress seemed to be developing well on all fronts.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK in mid-March. Ana reported that all her job interviews had been put “on hold”, the social hub which she enjoyed so much was suspended, her functional skill assessment was cancelled and although Caudwell Children’s Charity had agreed to offering her a work placement in principal, this would now not be offered until after the lockdown!

For the next 5 months Her Personal Coach maintained regular contact with Ana using telephone call, emails, and texts. Ana became a member of the virtual social hub via Zoom meetings which proved a vital distraction as she found the period of lockdown particularly hard to cope with.

During one of her engagement calls Ana said that she had seen an online Teaching Assistant course that she thought that she would like to do, but as she only had a tablet at home undertaking this was problematic. Her Personal Coach was able to arrange for her to loan a laptop so that she could pursue this educational option. Ana was delighted to receive this kit and started her course with enthusiasm.

As the summer progressed Ana’s progress, or lack of it was reviewed by her coach. The Teaching Assistant course was Level 2, and Ana found this just too difficult to cope with independently. She was dispirited and ultimately gave up on this learning. Her coach encouraged her to consider another option. He suggested an online Level 1 Business Administration course offered explaining that some of the modules would involve reception duties which would complement nicely activities that she would likely be involved with when commencing her voluntary placement. Ana agreed with this plan and she was referred to and started her 14-day online training course on Monday 10th August.

Ana successfully achieved her level 1 qualification and was exited from the Connecting Choices programme as a result of her training outcome.

Postscript

Ana commenced her work placement at Caudwell Children’s Charity in September and enjoys attending this enormously.

Her 1-2-1 functional skills support also commenced in September and she is doing well in working toward her Level 2 in both Maths and English.

She continues to carry out independent job search.