

Client Case Study - John

We first met *John in November 2013, when he registered with Community Renewal. He had been on job seekers allowance for several months.

John was originally from the north of Scotland and had moved to Edinburgh when he was 21. He was diagnosed with Aspergers and ADHD at a young age.

When John came to the Community Renewal hub, like many of our clients, he was anxious and frustrated and overwhelmed with the pressures of job searching and felt a lack of the right support from statutory agencies. During his registration, John disclosed that he had problems with reading and writing. His Community Renewal Caseworker discussed the idea of John attending a local adult literacy class and an autism support service. He was reluctant to go along and said he would prefer to carry on attending the local hub and work on a one to one basis with his Caseworker.

His Caseworker worked intensively and holistically with John to give him the kind of support he needed:

"I supported John to write his CV, create an e-mail account, sign up to universal jobmatch, and showed him how to undertake job searches using the internet. He was facing homelessness and struggling to sustain his tenancy. I referred John to the Cyrenians Homeless Prevention Team who helped secure some funding for the shortfall in his rent. I also advocated on his behalf, liaising with his Landlord to resolve issues around rent arrears. Fortunately John was able to retain his tenancy.

Over the coming weeks I researched Aspergers syndrome and became aware of the way I communicated with John at our meetings. I adapted our sessions to ensure he felt comfortable in the hub environment and over time we built up a level of trust and understanding. I quickly learnt that John had a passion for gardening. He had developed his own freelance landscaping projects within the community. We discussed the possibility of applying for gardening jobs. Although he was keen to do so; John was lacking in confidence and felt that his disability would prevent him from securing this type of role.

Whilst job searching we found a role within the public sector for an Apprentice Gardener. At first sight the competency based application form appeared lengthy, complex and overwhelming to John which put him off applying. Due to the nature of his condition, he found concentrating on long pieces of written work to be very difficult. We decided to break the form down and split our meetings into shorter sessions to tackle each competency. It took a number of hours to complete, however John's previous experience allowed him to answer each question comprehensively and professionally. We were both extremely pleased when he was offered an interview.

In the weeks leading up to his interview John became increasingly anxious and there were times when he didn't feel confident enough to go through the process. Again, we decided to approach the interview preparation the same way we had his application, in short training sessions. I also helped him to obtain extensive information about the company using the internet.

Information gathering can be a source of enjoyment for people with autism spectrum disorder. John relished the opportunity to research and prepare for his interview which in turn quickly helped his confidence to grow. He developed a detailed knowledge of the work carried out by the organisation he would be interviewed by, in particular the garden where the job was located.

This preparation and practice allowed him to relax into his interview. On the day he met with a panel of four interviewers and was able to discuss at length the facts he had learnt and his expertise of plants and trees. His enthusiasm and skills were noted and John was delighted to be offered the job. He is now working for the organisation.

Despite the strong competition for apprenticeship positions, along with the many barriers John faced, he applied himself tirelessly and securing this role was a huge achievement. He said that the opportunity in securing this job had changed his life immensely.

I continue to be in contact with John to ensure that he is supported to sustain his employment."

*Name has been changed to protect client's privacy.