



# Good News Stories



job

Thera East Anglia's supported employment programme aims to find enriching and meaningful employment opportunities across all sectors for people with a learning disability that have been recognised as ready to work.

Our three Job Coaches – Terri, Rick, and Eloise, are extremely dedicated and passionate about helping individuals build on their social network and transferable skills to ensure they can be a valued member of any working team.

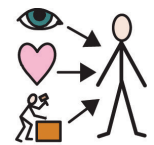
Here, we want to offer a spotlight feature for trail-blazing job seekers who have successfully landed work through the programme.

## Amy's Story



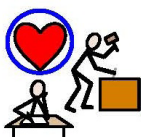
work

For Amy, her passion to work in the hospitality industry has consistently ignited her drive to undertake as much work experience as possible. With an impressive CV already under her belt - ranging from working as a Food and Beverages Assistant at a luxury hotel in Cambridge, to gaining various qualifications including a Level 2 in Food Safety and Catering, Amy has worked hard to carve herself a path to the top.



experience

"I really think that getting that experience and learning as much as you can is the best way to build your confidence," reflected Amy. "I knew what it was that I wanted to do, and it was a great way to just get stuck in. I learnt so many skills this way, such as customer service, food hygiene and working on the till".



career

In May 2020, Amy began her exciting career as a Café Assistant at Prospects Unwrapped. The Prospects Trust at Snakehall Farm - established in 1989, is a charity that runs on an 18-acre organic farm set in rural Cambridgeshire, supporting between sixty and seventy young

adults with a learning disability, also known as co-workers throughout the working week.



vision



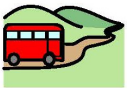
team



training



skills



journey



task



confidence



aim

Wanting to expand their horizons (and roots!) further afield, it was in 2019 that Unwrapped was born in Ely. “One of the co-managers at Snakehall had a vision of a more customer facing experience for our co – workers that included a refill larder and a coffee shop”, mentioned Clare Rees, the manager of Unwrapped. “We have a great team of support workers and we are so well supported by our customers in Ely, who genuinely understand and buy into the ethos of what we do here. It really does give our co-workers a sense of achievement and confidence”.

Unwrapped has successfully established a warm, welcoming environment that nurtures their co-workers with in-depth training to help build on their transferable skills. “For some of them it would be something as simple as working on eye contact, and so we would work with them to welcome and greet customers as they come through the shop door,” said Clare. “Sometimes that could just be the first step. It can be particularly hard for some people, but it is such a useful skill to have and a good practice to carry through into paid employment, even if it isn’t necessarily customer facing”.

When reflecting on Amy’s journey, Clare said, “Amy was incredibly nervous and shy at first, however over time we really could see an increase in her independence. She participated in tasks such as preparing recipes, unpacking deliveries, stacking shelves, and working on the till, so it was an incredibly varied role. We try to ensure that tasks can be rotated so that she grows in confidence with each task – even if it is the mundane jobs such as doing the washing up!”

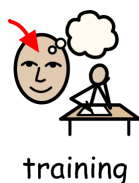
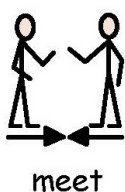
Throughout her time at Unwrapped, Clare noticed that Amy’s confidence began to flourish. “We managed to see some really big wins! Watching Amy oversee a customer’s order all the way through, from serving the customer at the till before plating up their order and carrying it out to their table – that was truly wonderful to see”.

“Not all co-workers transition in to paid employment which is fine, as we have no end to our placements. Our aim however is to create a nurturing environment where they can build on their skills before finding them suitable and supportive paid employment, and I truly think Amy has been a perfect example of that”.

For more information on The Prospects Trust Unwrapped (or if you want are tempted to try their delicious cakes and local honey, as recommended by Eloise!),

please visit <https://prospectstrust.org.uk/prospects-trust-unwrapped/>

For Amy's mum Jane, finding Amy a place in paid employment had felt like an uphill struggle. "With an NVQ in hospitality and catering I was confident a job would be on the horizon. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case and a frustrating couple of years combined with lockdown gave us the impression that all Amy could hope for was a volunteering role in the community. As a parent who knows how capable Amy is, this was depressing to say the least. I approached a charity local to where she lived, who promised to support Amy into paid employment, but this was not a success so once again I started to search for anyone who might be able to do this for her".



From searching online for another suitable alternative for Amy, it was here that Jane came across Thera East Anglia. "A meeting was set up for the following week with an enthusiastic, positive member of staff".

In May 2022, Amy met with Eloise at Thera East Anglia, where they were both able to complete a Vocational Profile together. "I really liked that I was able to tell Eloise what I wanted to do and what environment worked best for me. She even asked me what my dream job would be in the whole world, and I said to be a waitress! I love to make people happy by interacting with them and knowing I am helping them in some way".

Eloise contacted Emmanuel College regarding a Buttery Assistant vacancy advertised online, where they successfully secured an interview. "I was a bit nervous at first as the college was phenomenal!" laughed Amy, "but once I got through the interview, I felt so relieved. The environment was so welcoming and everyone in the college was really friendly".

Once Amy received a job offer from Emmanuel College a few days later, a new project for her started to form. "Amy is already able to travel independently to her volunteer placements in Ely, and so we wanted to implement some further travel training with the aim that, over time, she would be able to safely get to and from her new work-place on her own", mentioned Eloise. "Travel training is a fantastic way to increase the independence of those we support and will really help to boost their self - esteem and confidence. It can cover and therefore help to develop a number of key skills such as journey planning and preparation, as well as personal and road safety awareness".



personal



independence



responsibility



progress



proud



support



recommend

Eloise and Rick accompanied Amy on the route to Emmanuel College on several occasions, before creating a set of personal keychain cards accompanied with widgets for Amy to use independently. “These cards can be great prompts as well as small tokens of reassurance for the person supported, whilst still ensuring their independence can flourish and isn’t limited”.

Amy started her new role as a Buttery Assistant in July and is already getting stuck in. “I really like getting to talk to the students and even learning new things such as how to portion the different types of food. I love the job already as it gives me a sense of responsibility”.



When Jane was asked to reflect on Amy’s progress with the employment team at Thera East Anglia, she commented – “Amy was supported every step of the way and as a result she was offered her first paid job. I couldn’t quite believe it after so many knock-backs! Amy was so proud of herself - she gets the bus in and out on her own and is managing really well. The staff at Thera really seem to understand the difficulties that young adults with disabilities face when trying to find employment.

They know how to support and encourage and realise that when problems arise there are ways around them. I have been so impressed with the team supporting Amy and I have already spread the word amongst my friends who have children with special needs. As Amy gains more experience and confidence in the workplace the chances of her moving on to different roles might also be possible - I will of course be contacting the Thera Trust”.



advice

### What advice does Amy want to give other budding job seekers who would want to make their first step into the world of employment?

“Don’t give up – there are always new experiences out there for you. And remember to be yourself!”