

Traineeship sends 61-year-old on a new path

Having accepted Voluntary Redundancy after nearly 21 years' employment with Bristol City Council I spent nearly a year looking for suitable employment without success and I was beginning to lose hope.

I had attended a 'Groupwork Course' arranged through Jobcentre Plus and went into the Jobcentre for a follow-up session. Whilst waiting I saw a poster on the wall advertising N.H.S. Traineeships and thought it may be a good way of 'getting my foot in the door' and proving to a potential employer that I wasn't 'over the hill' at 61 years old.

I enquired about the scheme and was told that candidates would be meeting as a group the following Monday. This was a problem for me as I was going to be away that week. However, when Dave at the Jobcentre contacted the N.H.S. and let them know how keen I was they agreed to meet me separately when I was back. Meeting Julia and Julian they offered me a place to start on 24th July last year.

The first week of the Traineeship consisted mostly of Induction, along with all the new starters from across the Trust; clinical, administrative and ancillary staff. I also met my fellow Trainees and the Tutors from Weston College who would be involved in our training.

The next nine weeks consisted of a work placement and sessions with the Weston College Tutors. My work placement for the first 8 weeks was with the Medical Records Dept. at The Bristol Eye Hospital; however, when it became clear that they wouldn't be able to offer me a paid position at the end on the Traineeship I switched to Medical Records at The Bristol Dental Hospital. After three days the Manager, Ann Parslow, offered me a job!

Some people I know couldn't understand why I was prepared to work unpaid during the Traineeship, but I'd been considering looking for voluntary work anyway beforehand and I was happy to be working in public service (I probably wouldn't be so keen on working unpaid in the private sector). It got me back into the routine of working and I learnt about the processes and procedures (including the Trust Values) involved. It was, and is, a lot more physical than the work I'd been doing previously, and it took a few weeks to adjust but I feel it has benefitted me physically (including losing some excess weight!).

The sessions with the Weston College Tutors were mostly of value to me as an opportunity to share experiences with the other trainees. The training on looking for jobs, preparing a C.V. and additional information and interview techniques were, I felt, of more value to younger people who maybe hadn't the depth of experience I have – but interesting nonetheless. However, I felt the 'Functional Skills' element (Maths and English) were well below my personal skills in these subjects and I would have preferred to remain in my work placement than attend those sessions.

The end result was a permanent position within the N.H.S. whom I am very proud to work for and I couldn't be more grateful to the N.H.S., Jobcentre Plus and Weston College staff who had faith in me and helped me to get my life back on track.

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