

TAILOR MADE LEARNING PROGRAMMES FIT THE BILL



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Low self-esteem and lack of confidence can be substantial barriers to employment, but Project Somerset, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) through the European Social Fund (ESF), is successfully working to overcome those challenges.

The project is being delivered by Connexions Somerset Ltd and is being delivered across the county using learning programmes tailored to each individual. It is aimed at 300 14 to 19 year olds in the county who are not in employment, education or training, or who are at risk of disengaging from full time education.

The project's flexibility means programmes can be built on each individual's skills, abilities and ambitions with resounding success.

That was the case with Sarah Barker. Sarah had already completed an NVQ Level 2 in Hairdressing but lack of confidence meant she felt unable to take a job in a salon.

She said: "I turned to Connexions Somerset Ltd for help and was introduced to learning adviser, Lee-Anne Hodges. We worked together to design a programme which focused on the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualification. It made the most of my abilities and involved writing job applications and developing communication and personal skills. I also worked on my presentation and interview techniques and learnt about employment rights and responsibilities."

Sarah also completed other certificates including one in First Aid and another in Manual Handling before she moving on to do work experience in a well established local salon. She is now waiting to begin an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Lee-Anne said: "It's my job to help young people get where they want to be. The flexibility of Project Somerset means I can help them make a positive transition into employment, training or education."

Mark Williams, ESF Director for the LSC South West, said: "I am delighted that Project Somerset is proving so successful and that young people like Catherine and Sarah now have the confidence and skills to move forward with their working lives. I wish them ongoing success in the future."

Ends

Photo:

Sarah Baker

Notes to Editors:

In 2007-2013, the European Social Fund (ESF) will invest £2 billion in England and Gibraltar, which will be matched to £2 billion of national funding. The new European Social Fund programme will support two key priorities:

1. Extending employment opportunities to people who are unemployed or at a disadvantaged in the labour market, including disabled people, lone parents, older workers, ethnic minorities, low skilled people, and young people not in education, employment or training.
2. Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce, with a particular focus on employees who lack basic skills and good qualifications.

The new projects are the first to start under the 2007-2013 England and Gibraltar ESF programme, following the launch of tendering rounds in autumn 2007. The tendering rounds were organised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Learning and Skills Council and other ESF Co-financing Organisations.

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and

skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers. For more information visit: www.lsc.gov.uk/southwest

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