

## **Working together for the people of Northumberland**

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Eleven people who had been out of work for more than six months, have now been employed in various roles at the Sainsbury's store in Alnwick thanks to Sainsbury's, Jobcentre Plus and a training provider working closely together to address the needs of the company and the unemployed individuals.

Sainsbury's is one of a number of employers across the North East agreeing to fill some of their current vacancies with long term unemployed individuals. The individual and employers then benefit from tailored funded training to ensure that people are ready for work and able to hit the ground running.

Sainsbury's originally only had four vacancies but were so impressed by the individuals on the scheme, who all live in and around the Alnwick area, that they decided to recruit 11 new colleagues.

Diane Lawson, Sainsbury's Alnwick HR Manager, said: "We worked with Jobcentre plus to recruit a number of colleagues when we opened the store just over a year ago. We have been so impressed with the calibre of these people that we decided to use this method of recruitment again.

"Our new colleagues, all armed with skills specific to our requirements, are able to start working straight away, knowledgeable about Sainsbury's, how we work, our values and what we need from our staff. These colleagues are already making a real difference to the day to day running of the store."

The training and qualifications were specifically designed by Contact Centre Professional around Sainsbury's specific needs and all the individuals achieved a Level 1 Introductory Certificate in Customer Services along with other training around interview techniques, communication skills and numeracy skills specifically relating to the retail sector.

### **Skills Funding Agency**

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An agency of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

Sainsbury's new staff, aged between 19 and 56, are Susan Hamblett, Kim Chater, Jane McKay, Julie Rushford, Toni Imogen Hatton, Sarah Fawcett, and Lucy Simpson, all working on the checkouts, Janine Doleman, and Elaine Sweeney working in the Cafe, Kay Mather in the In Store Bakery and Darren Goward as part of the Produce team.

Sarah, 19, from Alnwick, had been out of work for seven months before starting at Sainsbury's and she is loving her new job. "The training I got beforehand has been really useful, especially teaching me how to deal with different people. I'm learning new skills all the time and I have been told that there is the chance to progress within the company, and that's what I would love to do."

Diane continued: "Working closely with Jobcentre Plus and the provider, we were able to develop a programme tailored to our specific needs and this has really prepared our new colleagues for their roles. The pre-employment training that they have received has not only given them the work skills we require, it has also made them much more confident.

"Having used this recruitment method on a number of occasions, I would not hesitate in recommending it to others. Businesses working with Jobcentre Plus and training providers not only gain access to an excellent selection of potential colleagues but will also help people across the region to find work and further their career prospects."