



Client Success Story: Christine Mental Health Employment Service

Christine was referred to Enable's Mental Health Employment Service in August 2015. Having worked for many years abroad, Christine returned to Shropshire after being unwell for five years.

"Before coming to Enable, I didn't know where to start when it came to looking for a job. I didn't have the confidence to do it. I wasn't familiar with the local job seeking market as I had been overseas for 30 years. Looking for work was a new challenge as I am in my 50's and recovering from a severe mental illness. I was concerned about whether employers would want to take on someone of my age. I needed support to work out what to apply for and how to go about it. It was a whole new sphere of what is and isn't feasible."

At first Christine made the decision not to disclose her mental illness to employers – this meant that Ruth, Christine's Employment Officer, worked behind the scenes offering support and advice to Christine, but was unable to contact employers directly.

"My first job through Enable was a temporary role at the Wildlife Trust – Enable helped me to complete the application form for this role. I had been volunteering at the Wildlife Trust and heard about the position through the Volunteer Coordinator. When this position ended, Enable helped me to update my CV - developing different versions for different types of jobs, such as retail, catering, admin, Forest School. Enable also facilitates the provision of DBS certification; this support was essential if I was to train as Forest School Leader, or work as a volunteer in schools."

Ruth also supported me with regular meetings and weekly phone calls, looking at all types of applications, handing my



CV out in town, applying for advertised jobs and using recruitment agencies. I found Enable to be an important source of support and encouragement whilst I was unemployed – helping to build my confidence. Ruth would encourage me and make suggestions about what to try next; sending through vacancies that came up and flagging up other places to try. Weekly contact was crucial for keeping me well as I was very worried about my financial situation and this was impacting on my anxiety levels and my mental health."

Ruth and Christine regularly discussed the pros and cons of disclosing her mental health to potential employers and Christine agreed to a change in approach. Ruth was able to

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contact employers directly to find a role for Christine that would not otherwise have been advertised. Through discussions with a local Not for Profit organisation – Shropshire Partners in Care (SPIC), Ruth found an admin assistant role for Christine. Ruth was able to speak openly with the manager about Christine’s mental health and the type of role and working environment in which she would flourish and also to provide the reassurance that Enable’s support would be ongoing for as long as it was needed.

“I’m enjoying my job at SPIC, my daily tasks include; compiling evaluations from the training courses, answering the phone and welcoming guests over the intercom. I also have isolated projects that are ongoing - these usually take about a month to work on and involve analysing data. This job is great for me as it offers me regular hours, regular income and variety without being too challenging. After my previous temporary contract ended - I was briefly employed in the catering sector on a zero hour’s contract doing a very menial role, the variable shifts and the tasks I found extremely difficult to manage and it affected my health.”

As Christine’s current job is part time, it allows her the time to pursue her interest in environmental education.

“I am a lot more confident now, being employed has helped my self-esteem a huge amount. Work for me is essential – it is vital for me to have a job that I can go to each week as it gives me structure. The 16 hours is a great help financially, if not essential. The regular hours allow me to commit to volunteering during the week in Forest School – this is important for my mental health too. If I wasn’t working I would spend every day looking for work.”

Christine’s managers at SPIC have been extremely impressed with her progress and feel that the support provided by Enable has been hugely beneficial:

“We didn’t have any reservations when hiring someone



through Enable as we knew that the staff there would offer us all the support we needed. We also knew that by going down this employment route we would find someone who would be appropriate for the role and selected with the view of fitting into our organisation - so I was confident that whichever candidate we got they would fit in reasonably well. I didn’t think there were going to be any issues from that perspective. Clearly, when bringing in any new member of staff there are always going to be challenges but we knew that Enable would support us through these challenges. You could go through a different recruitment process but you don’t know who you’re going to get - at least this way, going through Enable - we had a lot more confidence in terms of ongoing support.”

“Christine has bought many benefits to the company. Particularly with the admin staff; she has been able to take phone calls and messages and answer the door.

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phone calls and messages and answer the door. Day to day admin support has been a major benefit for us because most of our admin staff are part time so there are often days when we need more support, having this extra pair of hands has really benefitted us.”

“Christine has been able to do some bigger projects in terms of evaluations and reporting which she has been able to do quickly and efficiently. This takes a work load off the rest of the admin team. The skillset that Christine has brought to the organisation has also been extremely useful to us. The way in which she approaches her tasks has been fantastic and it’s meant that we have been able to identify staffing gaps in our organisation that need to be filled. A useful mix of extra resource and extra skills has worked really well.”

“Her confidence has grown throughout her time here, especially with understanding and speaking about what the organisation does and getting to know the staff. There are a lot of part time staff which means it is challenging to get to know everyone but she has been able to grow her confidence with getting to know people, taking phone calls and messages and knowing what we are all doing. I feel like she is very confident in this environment. It’s great that she is now relaxed enough to make conversation with other staff and getting to know them.”

“We would certainly recommend Enable to other employers, it’s been a really positive experience for everyone. From the perspective of engaging socially, this is a great thing to do. If other employers are thinking about using Enable then I would say definitely go for it!”

Christine’s employment has not only had a positive impact on her own life but also her family’s. Her daughter said:

“My Mum has always been a career orientated woman, who took pride in her work. She is always more motivated and engaged when she has a job to bring routine to her day-to-



day life. Having just moved back to the UK, having a support system to assist her with applying, preparing and getting a job was of great assistance. In her new position, she has a job that provides tasks with a reasonable amount of challenge, without creating too much stress. It has been a pleasure as her daughter to see her get back on her feet, and get a position where she can feel fulfilled and do worthwhile work.”

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