

SARAH'S STORY

“Tomorrow’s People has been with me every step of the way in my journey back into work, helping me get my life back on track.”

Sarah Field is looking forward to embarking on a career within the nursing profession. Bright, educated and sociable, at age 24 she has a positive future ahead of her.

But just two years ago things did not look so positive for Sarah.

Sarah successfully completed a university degree in 2002, but, like most students, she wasn’t sure which career path to follow. To keep her options open, she undertook a short course in visual merchandising at the London College of Fashion.

Sarah also held various office based positions including an administration and sales role at a family run jewellery business, which furthered her interest in fashion and design.

However, concerns about paying off her university debts were taking their toll on Sarah and she became very anxious and started suffering from panic attacks.

Soon she was signed off work and put on medication to ease her anxiety.

“The doctor was really helpful but I began to lose confidence in my ability to return to the workplace and was worried that my debts would spiral out of control.”

Luckily for Sarah she is a patient at the Pine Street surgery in Islington, London, where a Tomorrow’s People specialist employment adviser provides a one-to-one outreach service for those looking to get back into work.

It was during a consultation with her doctor that Sarah was told about the Tomorrow’s People project, which is based within the surgery, and she registered for help.

“The adviser was really understanding. He asked me what I wanted to do, rather than dictating what I should do. Suddenly I felt that a lot of pressure had been lifted from my shoulders. Meeting the adviser through the GP surgery also meant that he was aware I had medical issues and was sensitive to them.”

The first step was confidence building. Sarah visited the adviser at least once a week talking through her problems and exploring options.

“I decided I wanted to get a job as a fashion consultant or visual merchandiser, building on the fashion course I had completed and my previous job at a jewellers.”

Case Study



As soon as Sarah felt ready to re-enter the job market the adviser helped her update her CV and supported her with interview techniques that were video taped and reviewed to build her confidence.

“In the past I’d been to job centres to look for work but the support provided by Tomorrow’s People is much more personalised and they give you as much time as you need on a one-to-one basis.

“Making the appointment with Tomorrow’s People was the best decision I have ever made. I was able to use support facilities whenever I needed without having to make an appointment. Free use of computers to search for jobs, stationery and the telephone really helped me, especially as I was concerned about my financial situation.”

Sarah was offered two different retail positions at the same time, which boosted her confidence. Following a series of interviews she outshone a high level of other applicants and secured a job in October 2005 with a cashmere company based within a major department store.

“I had to have five different interviews with different people within the company before I was accepted for the job. A few months ago I would never have been able to cope with the pressure. The Tomorrow’s People adviser rang me after my final interview to see how it had gone, which showed he was really interested in whether I reached my goals.”

“The contact didn’t end there. Tomorrow’s People provides an aftercare service and the adviser kept in touch with me when I started the job to make sure everything was going well. He continued to give me support including suggesting that I speak to my bank for more financial advice and suggesting other financial organisations that I could talk to. I am still in the process of paying off my university debts, but my finances are now a lot more manageable.”

Once her confidence was fully restored, Sarah realised that a sales job was not a big enough challenge for her and she began to look into a career in nursing.

“I am so grateful for the support provided both by Tomorrow’s People and the medical profession and I would like to be able to help people in some way too.

“I wasn’t sure if I would be able to afford to undertake another course, but the adviser pointed out that bursaries are available and suggested I should apply for funding. I used the Tomorrow’s People outreach centre to research options and have now applied for a number of different funding options and I hope to start a nursing course in September.”

Sarah’s adviser said: “Sarah had lost a lot of confidence in her ability to find work, but is clearly a very motivated individual. Before she could realise her true potential there were a lot of barriers that needed to be broken down.

Case Study



“Then we worked on what she really wanted to do. At first she thought she wanted to pursue a career in fashion, but actually over time it transpired that she really wanted to deal with people. Sarah is an excellent example of someone who, given a little help, can go a long way.”

There are currently 2.7 million people claiming incapacity benefits, costing the state more than £6 billion a year. Projects like this one, from Tomorrow's People, show that this burden of costs has the potential to be reduced.

This project is based on Tomorrow's People's background of success running similar outreaches across 80 GPs' surgeries, hospitals and health centres in various areas of the UK. This includes a surgery in Kentish Town, North West London where for the last four years it has had an adviser based on site at a busy GPs' surgery. So far nearly 200 patients have seen the adviser in London, and of those who have completed the programme, 87% have returned to employment or are back in education or training. On average, 82% are still in work 12 months on.

Tomorrow's People is a specialist charitable trust, with a 21-year track record of success in helping people out of long-term unemployment, welfare dependence or homelessness, into jobs and self-sufficiency.

The charity has helped change the lives of nearly 400,000 people who had been resigned to long-term, even life-long, unemployment, since it was established in 1984.

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