



Activity Agreements Opportunities for All

Chris Smart, Skills Development Scotland, West Lothian, reflects on Craig's journey through an Activity Agreement...

Craig was 17 when he started his Activity Agreement. He suffered from depression and anger management issues and had been offending in the community. He had achieved low qualifications at school and now found himself unable to break the cycle and move forward.

The first time I met Craig he seemed nervous and wary, slouching on the seat next to me with his hood over his head.

I spent a lot of one-to-one time with Craig over the first few weeks, getting to know him and helping him think about what he was interested in. He was a polite, friendly young man but had lost interest in most things other than hanging around with his friends, which almost always ended in trouble.

He was honest with me about his anger management issues and admitted he'd been struggling for some time but hadn't been able to ask for help. I offered him the chance to attend some counselling sessions as part of his Activity Agreement and he was relieved when I told him that we would build his participation in other activities at his own pace. As his Trusted Professional, I continued to meet Craig once a week while he attended his counselling and he gradually began to talk to me about the things he used to enjoy.

He had a passion for drama. I told him about a local drama group that he could attend as part of his Agreement, but he said he didn't feel ready. We made an initial plan that involved counselling and an activity to build his confidence. Craig agreed to include the drama group as a goal to work towards.

As part of this plan, Craig attended a RUTs course, which helped him to build his confidence and employability skills. He enjoyed the practical focus of the sessions, which allowed him to work alongside others to achieve something. As part of his Agreement, Craig had agreed not to offend and his enthusiasm to complete this course helped divert him from his previous behaviours.

After four months on his Activity Agreement, Craig felt ready to join the local drama group. He was able to improve his communication skills and confidence whilst rediscovering something he used to love. His focus and passion for this also helped him move away from the antisocial behaviour he had previously been engaging with in the community.

When his counselling sessions came to an end Craig was offered a place in art therapy which gave him a further chance to express himself in a safe environment. He also increased

his timetable to participate in another employability and confidence building course where he gained core skills and an understanding of the range of opportunities for employment and volunteering in West Lothian.

As part of this Craig had learned about volunteering opportunities at the local Ability Centre, which supports adults with a disability to get back into work. He undertook an 8-week volunteering placement there, two days a week. The Centre allocated Craig a mentor who supported him while he was there. Craig undertook administration tasks and helped clients with ICT and form-filling. For the first time Craig felt a sense of worth and realised he had something to offer other people. His mentor gave him positive feedback about his patient and respectful nature when helping other people and helped him recognise his improved communication skills in dealing with the public. As his placement neared the end his mentor recommended Craig for a volunteering position at the Youth Action Group, where he became a peer mentor, helping other young people make positive choices whilst expanding his experience of a working environment.

The volunteering experiences helped Craig decide that, long term, he would like to work in a role that allows him to help others. In the meantime, he has successfully applied for a security guard training course at West Lothian College. This will give him the certificates needed to apply for work at the Commonwealth Games.

Craig – "I'm going to make the most of the chances I've now been given".