

Case Study - Victoria's Story

A South Lakes woman who said she used to lack confidence and would not have been able to complete an online application in the past was able to secure a permanent part-time job, thanks to help from the Building Better Opportunities Getting Cumbria to Work project.

Victoria, who has had historic mental health and self-harm issues as well as an eating disorder, was referred as a mental health participant to BBO GCtW key worker Nicki Milby, who at that time worked for the former South Lakeland Mind. When Nicki moved to Cumbrian charity CADAS she continued to support Victoria.

Following a change in her personal circumstances Victoria, who had not worked since the mid-1990s, needed to find some paid employment.

“She lacked confidence, having not worked for such a long time,” explained Nicki.

When a part-time volunteering role at a retail store was advertised, Nicki escorted Victoria and offered moral support when she went to introduce herself.

“I was really nervous about it because I did not know the manager and I didn't know what would happen and how it would turn out,” explained Victoria.

But having Nicki alongside her was a great help.

“It always helps if you have someone with you. She could start the conversation off, fill in the blanks when I got stuck and was encouraging afterwards,” said Victoria.

It helped me to believe in myself - that I could make changes in my life and those changes would be successful

Victoria got the job and soon grew in confidence.

“For a while it was really scary, and I would be terrified if someone came into the shop and wanted to buy something,” said Victoria.

“But that passed and I was able to work on my own and feel very happy to serve customers and use the till. My confidence was really growing.”

Nicki continued to see Victoria for one-to-one meetings once a week and, as her confidence grew, Nicki supported and encouraged her when she was dealing with benefit inquiries, to the point where Victoria felt able to make the calls herself.

Victoria then started to look for a paid role. *“Nicki helped me to compile a curriculum vitae, which incorporated my new skills, such as using a digital till and credit card readers,”* she said. *“I would not have known how to apply online without Nicki’s help.”*

Victoria was offered a job in a South Lakes retail store and is still working there.

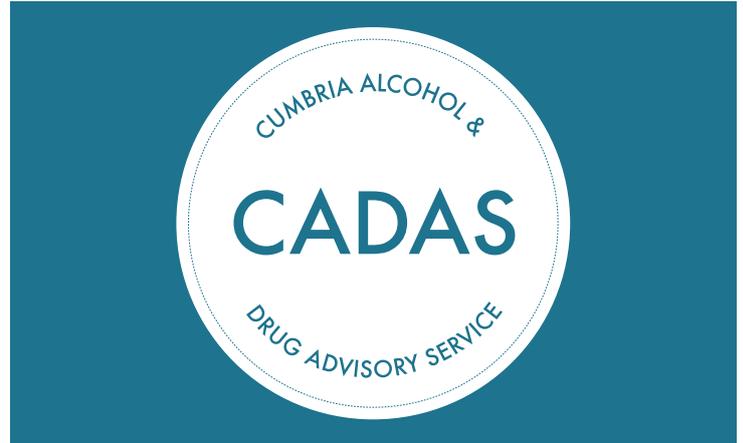
How did having paid employment make her feel? *“I feel kind of normal. It is nice to feel normal and not just like the exception to the rule all the time,”* she said.

And how did she think being involved with BBO GcTW had benefited her? *“It helped me to believe in myself - that I could make changes in my life and those changes would be successful.”*

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Earlier this year Victoria was presented with a certificate for participating in the BBO GcTW project and progressing as a result of it.



BBO GcTW and CADAS Key Worker Nicki Milby

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