

## Right2Work Key Worker

A Building Better Opportunities Getting Cumbria to Work project key worker who says the project 'pretty much saved me' during a very difficult period in her life is now successfully supporting others to move towards employment.

Ann Williams, 42, of Sedbergh, is a BBO GCtW key project worker at Right2Work, one of the project's delivery partners.

Ann, who grew up in Oxenholme and attended Kirkbie Kendal School, became ill with gastroenteritis at the age of nine and subsequent complications meant she was in and out of hospital for the next seven years.

She also developed chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME), which meant she was unable to do school course work and only took two GCSEs.

*"I could not hold a conversation at that time - my mental state was awful,"* said Ann. *"I was hoping to go to Newton Rigg College because I wanted to work with animals but I could not take my GCSEs and I was unwell, so that opportunity went out of the window."*

She had a number of jobs over the years but, by 2018, as a single mum and on benefits, she had not worked for six years.

*"I had ME and also chronic pain and then I was diagnosed with pernicious anaemia,"* said Ann. *"I reached the stage where I had literally given up. I did not want to do anything or go anywhere. I had no motivation other than looking after my son."*

At this stage she was introduced to a key worker at the BBO GCtW project. *"She said 'sign up and we'll do all the hard work for you',"* said Ann. *"They helped me with my CV, looking for jobs and applying for jobs. They also helped me look for an employer who was sympathetic to illness."*

A role came up as a part-time administrator for the BBO GCtW project at Right2Work and Ann was taken on. *"I had always wanted to help animals or people so when the job came up it was ideal,"* she said.

Getting the job gave her a huge confidence boost. *"BBO GCtW pretty much saved me to be honest because I was in a really bad way. I loved the job. Even if I was ill or tired, they let me work around it and do the hours to suit me so long as I got the job done."*



Ann Williams, a BBO GCtW key project worker at Right2Work

Later she became a part-time key worker for the BBO GCtW project at Right2Work and is now a full-time key worker.

Over the past three years she estimates she has helped about 50 individuals who were either unemployed or not in work move toward employment.

They have included people who were already being helped by Right2Work, such as those in its furniture warehouse, where unwanted furniture is collected and recycled, as well as other people, including victims of domestic abuse, ex-offenders and people with problematic alcohol and drug use.

Ann and the project support people in many ways, including helping them write CVs; opening online job search accounts; accompanying them to job interviews and helping them find voluntary or charity work.

Confidence building is another huge part of the role and Ann liaises with South Lakes Community Learning and Skills, which runs courses for participants in basic maths and English, health and safety and life skills.

Ann said she felt the work of BBO GCtW was very important. *“We offer holistic support,”* she said. *“We listen to what participants want and need. We don’t push them. They do everything in their own time so it is under their control. Everything is for them. We are not trying to achieve an outcome for us - we are trying to achieve an outcome for them.”*

Support does not end if a participant gets a job, said Ann. *“We continue to keep in touch and support them. We need to know they are happy and that everything is working out for the people who have employed them.”*

Ann said she gained a huge amount of satisfaction from her role. *“I enjoy meeting people and being able to make a difference. I like to help people who are overlooked and perhaps unseen. We aim to recognise people as a person, not as someone with a problem or an issue. I see a lot of people who think no one is ever going to employ them. When they realise that they are being recognised as a human being who can achieve their goals, it completely changes them.”*

I enjoy meeting people and being able to make a difference

*“In the past I felt on my own and that no-one was interested. But the BBO GCtW project recognised me and helped me and that is why I am so keen to help others in a similar situation. People can become lost and the BBO GCtW project can help people to find themselves.”*

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