

## Introduction

The TSW Bridgend Employment Pathway is a WCVA-funded Active Inclusion project that supports individuals in the region aged 25+ with low skills or from jobless households to develop the skills and knowledge required to form a clear pathway in employment. Delivered to cohorts of 12, individuals learn such skills as how to apply for jobs, write and develop CV's, explore online branding for career success and develop their resilience for work. They also research self-employment as an alternative to getting a job and what business activity would be suitable for them based on their skills and experience.



*Rebecca and Alan*

## Journey

One of the participants on this course was Alan Gallacher. Alan and his family left London for Wales when he was a teenager to escape bullying. This bullying resulted in a long-term battle with depression leaving him with a severe lack of confidence and self-esteem. Although Alan is now in his late 20s, he has never had meaningful employment. He previously completed a work placement at Tesco Bakery but this did not lead to paid employment due to his limited skill-set.

Initially, Alan didn't engage much with the other course participants and just got on with his own tasks, but after a few days he started to gain real confidence. There were many participants in the group with low literacy and IT skills, therefore, once Alan had finished his own work, he would support the person next to him. As the course progressed, Alan would finish his work promptly before moving on to help those who needed support.

Throughout the course Alan developed a range of skills, including interview and presentation techniques that led to him receiving excellent feedback from interviews he later attended; however, a lack of work experience was often cited. Alan and Rebecca, the course tutor, spoke about this employment barrier and considered various options to overcome this, including volunteering. Due to his natural ability to support others, Alan was accepted as a volunteer on the next TSW Active Inclusion course meaning he could help more people whilst continuing to develop his own skills. This volunteering experience may be the final step towards him gaining meaningful and sustained employment.

"When I first started training at TSW, I was a nervous wreck who would not speak to anyone, but after a few days I started speaking to a few people and making new friends. Once the tutor had explained what we were doing, I went around and helped other people and after that I could feel my confidence grow.

I am gutted the course is finishing and I could not have asked for a better tutor. I loved every moment that I spent on the course and want to give other people the same experience that I had."

*Alan Gallacher*