

Case study 1: exit routes

The following information has been provided by an employability programme adviser specialising in working with unemployed people aged 50+.

It offers an insight into the background and interaction that can take place when helping a customer to develop and implement an exit strategy that is realistic for them.

Carol's story

Carol was approaching 59 when she was referred to the employability service by a local Jobcentre Plus New Deal 50+ Plus adviser. Carol was a very private, single woman who had led a sheltered life and had no real personal support network. She had not worked outside the home for 18 years as she had been caring for both of her disabled parents. When both her parents went into a care home Carol was left with a very reduced income from the loss of benefits. She had very little self confidence, and little knowledge of the labour market and the support available to unemployed people.

Many years before she had worked as a clerical assistant for the local council but her skills were out of date and as she had no IT skills she was uncertain if a clerical job was a viable option. Her lack of engagement with the world of work meant she had a very poor understanding of the current working practices, the job market and modern recruitment methods.

The adviser's insight

Her needs assessment revealed that for Carol a return to work was a very frightening and difficult prospect. She believed she had little to offer a prospective employer.

Her confidence and self esteem were very low and she was nervous when among groups of people. She needed a range of measures over a period of time to help her to lift her confidence and skill level sufficiently to be able to take positive steps towards actively seeking and securing sustainable employment.

Providing Carol with an opportunity to create a realistic personal development plan that would help her form choices on a career goal, address her development needs and make a progressive return to work was critical. Carol's initial plan included:

- using Adult Directions to help identify her skill set and possible career directions
- using the empowerment tool Promicad to identify her personal skills and qualities
- creating and regularly updating a CV that reflected her current and developing qualities and transferable skills
- one-to-one mentoring support and information, advice and guidance sessions

- achieving short course generic vocational qualifications (e.g. basic first aid / health and safety) to enhance her CV
- gradual participation in peer group sessions and work experience to increase her confidence and development of effective working relationships
- undertaking job search support and guided learning to develop proactive approaches to seeking and applying for appropriate jobs.

As Carol progressed, she undertook a 13 week work experience programme through a local voluntary organisation, Active Care Team, which provided services for older people. This placement, in a very sheltered environment, gave her a sense of familiarity as it drew on her care experience. She found she enjoyed the challenge and her confidence improved.

During her progress reviews she reflected that she was nearing state pension age and indicated that she had made a choice about her future and her exit strategy. She decided 'to retire' when she turned 60 a few months later but not to return to her solitary life at home. Instead she planned to use her revived confidence and new skills to take up an unpaid care role a voluntary organisation.

Carol started as an official volunteer just prior to her 60th birthday.