



Case Study: Nathan's Employment Journey – Constructing His Career

This case study explores how Nathan secured a job and his return to work following COVID-19 restrictions.

Getting Support & Showcasing Skills

Nathan was referred to Jonathan Smith (Targeted Employment Team) as part of Essex County Council's NESTA 100 Day Challenge. Nathan was already employed by Market Field School at the time but wanted to be challenged outside of his comfort zone.



Nathan and Jonathan met at Market Field School, with the help of Claire Skeggs (Employability and Careers Lead). Jonathan would support Nathan in this transitional stage by exploring employment and industry pathways based on Nathan's profile. Understandably, Nathan was very anxious to meet but he became more at ease the longer the session went on. They agreed for Jonathan to meet Nathan's family and support network in his home environment; this meant Nathan could showcase his practical skills in the form of a self-made brick barbecue and a shed he built with his dad.

Later that week, Jonathan visited Nathan's home where additional profiling took place to understand the support Nathan would need to get a job. It was apparent that Nathan possessed the motivation to work but lacked both social skills and understanding of his capabilities in a working environment. Also, Nathan had passed his driving test recently but had limited understanding of his geographical area.

The Job Search & Getting Work-Ready

Jonathan set about finding suitable employment based on Nathan's profile and characteristics. Through social media, Jonathan uncovered a possible opportunity as a self-employed gardener to maintain a small garden and to create a 'mini vegetable allotment'.

After visiting the premises and speaking with the manager, it was agreed that Nathan would start on a four-week work trial, with potential for self-employment following the trial. Jonathan successfully approached the Princes Trust for a Development Grant; this enabled Nathan to purchase tools up to the value of £100 to assist with his new role. Nathan was now equipped to start his new role and, with the help of his family, travel independently to his place of work.

Finding the Right Role & Interviewing

Nathan arrived on day one fully motivated to succeed but Nathan, Jonathan, and his family felt the role would not provide the continuity Nathan needed; coupled with the fact that this was a seasonal role, which did not offer the longevity and career prospects that Nathan desired.

After lengthy discussions, Nathan and Jonathan agreed to look at alternative opportunities within the construction/landscaping industry. Fortunately, a family member provided a soft lead with an organisation called PMC Landscapes. Jonathan quickly arranged a meeting with Ian Hull (Managing Director) the following week.



To help calm Nathan's anxiety on the interview day, Jonathan drove Nathan to the offices and explained the process. What was surprising to Jonathan was that Ian was also nervous about the interview and asked for some guidance to understand how best to recognise Nathan's characteristics. Jonathan also discussed how Nathan could be integrated into PMC Landscapes through Training Systematic Instruction (TSI) and explained the importance of training colleagues on the workplace support Nathan would need, which benefits everyone involved. After 30 minutes it was evident that both Nathan and Ian saw potential in the situation and a work trial was arranged.

Preparing for Work & On the Job

Ahead of starting the trial in January, Nathan was tasked to complete an Online Manual Handling Qualification (pre-requisite of all employees). With the support of Jonathan and his family, Nathan passed the test with flying colours and started the trial the next week.

The first day 'on the job' was a mixture of health and safety inductions and meeting new colleagues. Nathan's first practical task was to paint wooden fence posts – a job that allowed him to feel part of the team and develop his confidence. As Jonathan was with Nathan, it was a good opportunity to undertake practical job coaching and to create structure for the tasks.

The day ran smoothly, however Jonathan realised that some employability skills needed slight development, such as communication with colleagues, timekeeping around break times, and work speed. This was something that all parties worked on over the course of the trial.

Nathan's Success!

After a successful four-week trial and continuous job coaching by Jonathan, it was clear to see that all parties were onboard with Nathan becoming a permanent member of the PMC Landscape team. This also resulted in PMC becoming a recognised Disability Confident Employer.

"Nathan has now been with PMC Landscapes since January 2020 and is working independently amongst his colleagues whilst completing his duties. In the short space of time Nathan has been working with us, he has quickly settled in and become a real asset to the company. Regardless of the type of task we set him, he approaches it with the same conscientious and committed attitude and carries it out to the best of his ability, which is a quality seldom found in lads of a similar age to Nathan. He has an excellent sense of timekeeping and an easy-going, friendly nature. We hope to have Nathan with us for a long time to come."

- Ian Hull (Managing Director, PMC Landscapes)



Due to the confidence between Nathan and PMC, they were able to offer Nathan extra hours of work – something that Nathan jumped at – but unfortunately, this was short lived due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Nathan decided that he would not be complacent and set himself the challenge to complete his CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) training during the 'lockdown' period. To date (August 2020), he has completed 70% of the training and hopes to pass the course very soon.

The good news is that the restrictions have now been lifted and Nathan is back to work with PMC with increased hours. Of course, as part of Nathan's reintroduction to employment, Jonathan was there to support him back into the workplace and to alleviate any concerns from all parties.

As an experienced Careers Practitioner, Jonathan has learnt many things during Nathan's journey:

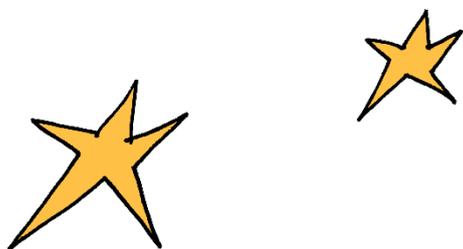
"Throughout this process, it has made me realise how important it is to have job coaching and an employer's understanding working together hand-in-hand. Not only does it allow the individual to be supported, but it also allows the employer to have confidence in the service as a whole. Nathan has exceeded my expectations and has showcased why we should focus on individual characteristics and skills, rather than just qualifications and work history."

"I never thought I'd get this job and thought no one would want me, but it turns out they do. Hard work pays off!! Jonathan supports me and my mum. The whole thing is just excellent."

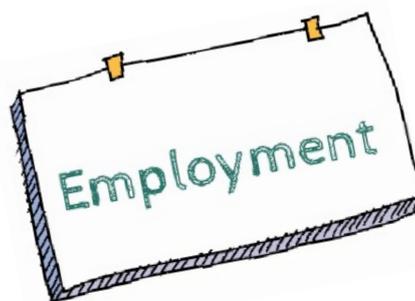
- Nathan

"We are so proud of Nathan. Seeing him thrive and grow is an inspiration to us all. He knows what he wants and pushes himself out of his comfort zone every day to achieve his goals."

- Nathan's Mum



Nathan's motto:
"Hard work pays off!"



This case study was published in August 2020.