

Case study: adviser / trainer skills

At Age Concern North Tyneside we provide considerable support to those seeking employment who are aged 50+. While all staff have to have a Level 3 NVQ in Information, Advice and Guidance, that is where our pre-requisite qualification requirement ends. For us, personal skills and experience are just as important and are as much of a predictor of whether someone is going to be good at helping more mature people back into work. Will they be a good communicator and listener, or example, as this is really key to their success? Are they likely to patronise? Older people in particular are sensitive to this. It's no good having someone who says "I know exactly how you feel" unless they really do which is rarely the case as this just serves to create a barrier between the person and adviser.

We like to have people with some experience of providing employment learning advice and guidance on both a one to one and group basis. We look for a certain degree of confidence and skill in being able to do this too.

Experience of working with other organisations and partners is also very important, and not just working with them either but really understanding what those partnerships have to offer our customers – how they add value to our work. Being able to identify partners and then forge and sustain good links with them is of real value to us.

Knowing the barriers the 50+ jobseeker faces is also vital. These include the feelings of those who have been made redundant, what some of the health problems they may be experiencing are, how de-motivated many older jobseekers feel (many believing they are finished and of no use to anyone, which of course is very rarely the case).

Being able to motivate people with these feelings and get them thinking in a different and more positive way is essential. We have a course *Mid Life Moves*. This covers a range of topics not normally associated with job seeking such as healthy eating and living, motivation skills, confidence building as well as the more traditional job search, CV, and interview technique training. Staff need the skills to be able to deliver sessions on each of these topics. When we select staff we work very hard to get the people with just the right mix of experience and skills so they can carry out their role effectively.