

CASE STUDY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF)

Shropshire accounts clerk Sarah Davis landed a new job just three months after being made redundant thanks to a support programme for workers facing uncertain futures in the economic downturn.



SARAH DAVIS

“ It was invaluable help at a very difficult time. ”

Sarah is among more than 8,000 people to receive support through the first phase of the European Social Fund (ESF) Better West Midlands redundancy response programme, which works with a variety of partners including

Unity and the economic development company, Transforming Telford - www.transformingtelford.co.uk.

Sarah found herself out of work after her previous employer closed their Telford-based operation last October. Fortunately, managers had accessed Better West Midlands support to identify skills and deliver training solutions for their employees.

Through the programme, Sarah received one-to-one advice on training to increase her employment prospects and elected to take a funded course in accounts and bookkeeping. As a result, Sarah landed a new job as the office and accounts manager with 'For Every Body' - a new, Telford-based business importing and selling a wide range of sustainably sourced candles and related products.

Preparing to launch 'For Every Body' late last year, managing director Paul Travis approached Transforming Telford for support and it was then that an increasingly 'joined up', multi-agency approach to meeting employers' training and skills needs proved equal to the test.

"I was new to the area in terms of accessing the support needed to launch a business," says Paul.

"Among many other practical considerations such as premises, IT equipment and telephones, I needed a reliable, versatile office manager with good accounts management skills. Transforming Telford drew up a shortlist which resulted in my recruiting Sarah. As an employer launching a new business, it was a very impressive service."

Sarah says the support gave her a much-needed boost when her morale was at its lowest.

"I was in denial at first," she admits. "I'd worked for my last employer for seven years and, when you're facing the prospect of redundancy, there's a temptation to keep your head down and hope that will count for something. But we were given three months' notice and it was during that time that Unity came in to offer us support and advice. It was invaluable help at a very difficult time and led to the training I needed to get a new job."

John Day, operations manager for the Better West Midlands Project, said: "From 2006 to 2008, the project supported more than 5,000 people from 142 companies facing the prospect of redundancy."

"Thanks to that support, three quarters of those people are in work today and that work continues, with the latest phase of the project supporting a further 3,000 people."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT PLEASE CONTACT BETTER WEST MIDLANDS ON:

01782 266775

info@betterwestmidlands.org.uk

"There is no doubt that timely and individually-tailored skills and training advice and support can make a substantial difference to the continuing employability of people facing the prospect of redundancy."

Julie Robson, Deputy Regional Director of West Midlands Skills Funding Agency, said: "The current economic slowdown poses major challenges to individuals and employers and our job is to be flexible and responsive in supporting people to meet those challenges."

"In the West Midlands, we have considerable experience of working with partners to develop integrated solutions so that an individual's skills, training and employment needs can be addressed in a joined up way."

"The Better West Midlands project is an excellent example of this approach, and clearly demonstrates responsive and co-ordinated support to individuals and employers prior to redundancies being made."

"All the lessons we've learned in responding to major redundancies in recent years are informing the work we're doing now to help reduce the uncertainty so many people are facing."

Project Information (May 2009)

Better West Midlands

- The Better West Midlands redundancy support programme is co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency. It is led by a consortium of trade unions including Community, Unite and the GMB.
- The Better West Midlands project supported over 8,000 workers from 382 companies between September 2006 and February 2009.
- Up to 2008, the project supported 5,033 people from 142 companies, with 75 per cent of those people returning to work.
- The second phase of Better West Midlands has been running for just over six months and is currently supporting more than 3,000 people from 240 companies across the region.

Any employers intending to make redundancies can access funded training and support for affected staff by calling the Better West Midlands Project on 01782 266775.

A dedicated website has been launched signposting advice and support for businesses during the economic downturn at www.supportwm.co.uk.

More information:

www.betterwestmidlands.org.uk

Transforming Telford

Transforming Telford is an economic development company working in partnership with Advantage West Midlands, The Homes & Communities Agency, Telford & Wrekin Council and the private sector. It has been set up as part of the Telford & Wrekin Local Area Agreement (LAA) with the Government. The primary objective of the LAA is the long-term transformation of Telford to create a strong and sustainable community and to enable Telford to fulfil its wider role as a sub-regional focus for growth. Transforming Telford is responsible for the local Economic Development Strategy and will directly support and help to facilitate its implementation through the Telford Economic Development Partnership.

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