

ForthSector

Forth Sector offers a range of trainee positions to people recovering from mental ill health in their Social Firms. Trainees are supported to build their skills and confidence by working in a real business (Social Firm).

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General Enquiries: 0131 659 4710

This is one person's experience of being a trainee at Forth Sector.

How did you first hear about Forth Sector?

I was an inpatient at The Royal Edinburgh Hospital and my Occupational Therapist told me about it.

What did you do in the past?

I was due to start an electrical engineering course but didn't due to mental ill health.

What appealed to you about Forth Sector?

I had been in hospital for about three years. I had been attending the art group, doing some sports and a cookery course. I also did an 'Understanding Your Illness' course. I was feeling quite a bit better and so felt ready for something a little more challenging. I got a day pass from the hospital to attend Forth Sector where I would get to work on my PC skills and to meet new people. It appealed because it would begin to build up my life outside of hospital so that when I was ready to leave I

would have support and something worthwhile to do with my time.

How were you feeling at the time?

I was stable on medication and ready to progress into the community.

How did you feel coming to Forth Sector on your first day?

I was a bit anxious but had the support of my OT who travelled with me on my first day. Once I met the team I relaxed as everyone was really friendly and there was a nice atmosphere. I was really pleased that I had come along.

How did you feel at the end of your first day?

I felt good for having done something worthwhile and constructive. It was great to have a chance to show what I could do.

Social Firms seek to create good quality jobs for severely disadvantaged people within supportive and successful enterprises

For more information on Social Firms and how to join us please go to our website or get in touch by email sfs@socialfirms.org.uk or call us on 0131 225 4178.

www.socialfirms.org.uk

What kind of things did the staff say and do to help?

I got shown round the office and introduced to everyone. The staff talked me through what I would be doing and sat next to me whilst I got started. They encouraged me to ask questions and if I ever got stuck there was always someone there to assist.

Did anything happen that didn't help?

There was no official break room so it was difficult to switch off at break times.

Was there was anyone else that helped you?

My Occupational Therapist.

What did they do?

They gave me help getting to and from Forth Sector initially. I was anxious about getting on crowded buses, but it got easier and now it's no problem.

What kind of tasks did you get involved in?

I had completed the European Computer Driving Licence so I got an administration work placement in the Forth Sector office. This involved keeping the databases up to date and all the usual office tasks.

How many hours a week did you start off doing?

About 12 hours.

Did you do anything in your spare time?

I played sports and watched films. It was important for me to keep doing my hobbies to enjoy life.

What were your worries?

Even though I passed all my ECDL tests I now had to put into practice what I had learnt. I was still in hospital at this time and they helped me to establish a routine of getting up and out in the morning. This was really

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useful. If someone is thinking about attending a placement I would recommend that they start getting into a good sleep pattern and getting up in the mornings.

What were you looking forward to?

Learning something useful.

Who else supported you?

My family really encouraged me and the staff at Forth Sector.

How did Forth Sector help?

They understood my situation and gave me real work tasks. The Social Firms are designed to offer a supportive but realistic working environment. I also got to do personal development plans to set myself goals for development.

Was there anything you found particularly difficult?

Learning to concentrate for longer periods of time was difficult, but I got there.

As I was only in 2 days per week it was difficult to remember how to do new tasks. Once I got used to them it got easier. Also, remembering all the people's names was tricky at first.

How have you developed since then?

I am more confident in the work place now. I am happy to ask questions if I don't understand something. As I now have friendships at work I can laugh & joke and join in the "banter".

What helped you to do these things?

The fact that I could go at my own pace whilst trying out new challenges to keep me developing.

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What has been difficult about this?

Adapting to the different environment and people.

What obstacles have there been?

At first the hospital gave me a short term pass and I had to build up to getting a day pass.

How did you get over them?

I had to show that I would come back after being out. Each longer pass was really appreciated and this was a key part of getting back into the community. Gradually I got my freedom back.

How were you helped to do this?

I got help from the OT to build up my time away from the hospital and as well as work demands Forth Sector also helped me to integrate back into the community by having social events such as football tournaments, Christmas parties, quiz nights etc. They gave me support. There was always a staff member who would check in with me regularly to ensure I was okay and that everything was moving forward.

What didn't they do?

They didn't put too much pressure on me. I got to develop at a pace that suited me. This helped me to keep well and in control of my own recovery.

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ForthSector

Forth Sector is a social enterprise. It operates small, commercial, supportive businesses (Social Firms) to provide employment opportunities for people with mental health problems.

People whose mental health is a barrier to them gaining open employment can attend as a trainee, joining for up to 16 hours per week. By joining one of the Social Firms trainees benefit from practical experience in a supportive realistic working environment. This can help people to recover from the impact of their mental ill health, increase their employability and to regain or retain employment. There is no time limit on how long trainees can attend for.

As well as the trainee placements within the Social Firms Forth Sector are also piloting a project called Workspace. A Workspace trainee is someone who is already involved in some activities throughout the week and is ready to work towards gaining employment in the next nine months. A Workspace trainee gets a placement within the Forth Sector office or in one of the Social Firms which provides real working experience. The group also comes together once a week for training in areas such as IT skills, customer service, team working, assertiveness, confidence, interview skills, CV building etc.

For Workspace and Social Firm trainee vacancies please call the training and development team on 0131 659 4710.

Email: alison.stocks@forthsector.org.uk