

Finding work

I left the first and only job I had ever had ever had in August 2004, where I had worked for three years as a CCTV Operator. I decided to leave because I was basically fed-up and I wanted something more challenging. I immediately started looking for a new job and stumbled across Remploy's website (<http://www.remplo.co.uk/>). I saw an Employment Advisor there and her action plan was to work towards finding me employment within something like eight weeks.

As she advised I hunted through the job pages of our local paper, and I applied for numerous jobs without ever being called for an interview. No further support came from Remploy and after about six weeks of paying taxi fares to the weekly 'Job Action Groups' (the irony!) I grew frustrated and cut my ties with them.

Since leaving work I had claimed [Job Seeker's Allowance](#) (JSA). Although I had to sign-on at the Jobcentre every two weeks, I did not receive any assistance from them. I kept plugging away with applying for jobs that were advertised in the local paper and on the Jobcentre Plus website, but I still hadn't been invited to any interviews. After six months of claiming JSA I was referred to a [Disability Employment Advisor](#) (DEA) who was based at the Jobcentre all along.

I soon discovered that the DEA was someone I should have seen in the first place. After a short, friendly and informal interview with her, she put me in touch with a Development Officer based at the [Shaw Trust](#) called Ro. Between us, Ro and I spoke about my experience, qualifications and my disability and the implications that has.

The Shaw Trust, according to their website, is "a national charity that provides training and work opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market due to disability, ill health or other social circumstances. We are the largest UK provider of employment services for disabled people." Their website is <http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/>.

The first thing Ro advised me to do was to omit to mention in my CV that I am disabled, which I had been doing up until then. Amazingly, the very next job I applied for, in which I sent my CV which failed to mention I was disabled, I got called for an interview for. When I got the phone call asking me to attend, I said then that I was a wheelchair-user and asked if this would be a problem, but I was assured everything was accessible. I went to the interview and I thought it went very well. I did however receive a rejection letter in the post a week later. So frustrating!

A few weeks after this Ro told me of a job in administration at one of Coventry's Police stations. I attended an interview and was very pleased to hear that I had been successful.

This placement is one that the West Midlands Police specifically offer to Shaw Trust clients. In accordance to the Disability Discrimination Act an employer is now required to make "reasonable" adjustments for disabled employees, but reasonable is a very vague word and some employees are better than others.

Ro and I devised an Action Plan of the "reasonable adjustments" I may need, which involves making my workstation accessible, the fact that my employers may need to allow more time for me to physically complete tasks and, due to fatigue issues, I would need to start my shift later in the day and work no longer than six hour shifts. This plan can be changed or added to at any time to take into account any problems which may arise in the future. Say if in the future I start to struggle working six-hour shifts it would be possible to renegotiate and cut it down to five.

I have since setup [Access to Work](#) who contribute towards transport to and from work. How this works is, I pay the equivalent of what public transport would be to work (e.g. I pay what

the bus fair would cost) and they pay the extra cost of a black cab. Access to Work will also pay for any physical changes I may need to make to my workstation etc.

With a progressive disability where your needs are ever-changing the possibility of holding down a job may seem remote. You may think that employers would not want to make the adjustments that you need. Charities like the Shaw Trust make the possibility of leading a productive role in the workplace more real than you probably thought. I would advise that your first port of call should be the DEA at your local Jobcentre, who will put you in touch with relevant organisations in your area.

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