

VoiceAbility - Changing People's Lives



VoiceAbility offer advocacy and involvement services to a wide range of people, including:

Adults

- Individuals with a learning disability
- Individuals with a mental health illness
- Individuals with physical or sensory disabilities
- Parents with a learning disability

Young People

- Individuals with a learning disability
- Individuals with a mental health illness
- Individuals with physical or sensory disabilities
- Families where one or more members of the family has a learning disability
- Individuals and groups without disabilities

Based at Huntingdon Youth Centre **Dreamers Bar** is a lively drop-in information bar providing a social hub, as well volunteering and paid work opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autistic spectrum conditions.








The graphic features several images: cookies, a drink with a cherry, a cup of coffee, a plate of fruit, musical notes, and three circular photos showing people at the bar. A red ribbon-like shape connects the photos.

“This has built my confidence to go out to public cafés which I was far too shy to do before. I can now talk to staff in public cafés and pay for my drinks which I was too scared to do before.” - (Quote from one of the young people involved)

Lydia, “It is a joy to watch Dreamers members develop confidence, social and practical skills through their involvement with Dreamers. A carer has told me about one member with quite severe autism and extreme difficulty in communicating her feelings, whose first words on waking on a Tuesday morning is “Dreamers”. This person was not aware of what happened on different days of the week before.” (quote from an employee)

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Since 2009, VoiceAbility has received eight grants from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.

In 2012 a grant was awarded from the [Microsoft Research Limited Fund](#) towards volunteering and training opportunities for people with learning disabilities.



Dreamer’s Bar gave Thomas, a 42 year old man with Asperger’s Syndrome, the opportunity to volunteer in a supportive and accepting environment, and take his first steps towards getting back into work again. Thomas received job coaching with VoiceAbility, and continued support to volunteer at Dreamer’s Bar; he also received additional support to interact with other volunteers and customers, building social understanding,

confidence and self-esteem.

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VoiceAbility received a grant from the [Seymour Charitable Fund](#) towards running costs of Dreamers Bar for 6 weeks.

"Andrew, volunteer: Andrew is a calm young man. He does things in his own time, at his own pace and does not like to be rushed. When he started volunteering at Dreamers Bar he did not like it when there was a queue of people who wanted to pay for their drinks at the same time. With support he has learnt not to panic and now never flusters if there is a queue. He takes his time and makes people wait until he is ready to serve them. Not only have we notice this increase in Andrew's confidence and his calmer attitude, but his numeracy skills have also greatly improved. Regular use of the 'till' (a money tin) without a calculator has meant he is now able to quickly do mental arithmetic, something which has never happened before."

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In 2012 a grant was awarded from the Cambridge City South Cambs Reward Grant Fund to provide one-to-one mentoring and coaching support for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Between October 2012 and February 2013 the Work to Success Project succeeded in providing tailored 1-1 support for 5 residents of Cambridge City and South Cambs aged 16-25 with Autistic Spectrum Conditions, to develop skills and confidence towards becoming job ready, via 1-1 mentoring and job coaching. Individuals received 2 hours of 1-to-1 job coaching on a weekly basis for the duration of their programme.

The course provided job coaching, a supported work placement where appropriate, and job search support with the aim of making trainees work ready and moving them into paid employment, volunteering or further training following a placement lasting up to 5 months, depending on the needs and preferences of the trainee.

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Click [VoiceAbility Video](#) to watch a short film about Dreamer's Bar.