An £83 million package of measures to help the unemployed back into work has helped make a dream come true for a Wallsend woman who has landed the job she always wanted after months out of work.

Angela Howes, who is celebrating her 50th birthday next month, was facing a long and harsh winter after she was made redundant seven months ago from her job as a care worker and her husband’s seasonal job as a gardener was coming to an end.

But now, armed with a set of new skills, she is looking forward to a brand new career with Newcastle based Dimensions (UK) Ltd as a full time support worker, helping 23 year old Kayley McHugh, who experiences autism, to live independently in her own home.

“I am over the moon,” Anglea said. “I’m just about bouncing off the walls! This is the kind of work that I have always wanted to do and I’m delighted.”

Angela’s new career is the result of training she received through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded six month unemployed training package, which provides job focused training to enable those who have been out of work for six months or longer to get back into employment.
Angela, who has two grown up children and a granddaughter, first heard about the support from Jobcentre Plus and was interested straight away.

“I had always wanted to work with people with learning disabilities,” she said. “When I was at school, I had a placement working with children with learning difficulties and I knew then that this is the kind of work I wanted to do. I have never had the opportunity until now so when I got the chance, I grabbed it!

“The course was really good and a real eye opener, learning about the difficulties that people with learning disabilities face on a daily basis doing everyday things that most of us take for granted. Although I have worked in the care sector before, this is a complete change of direction for me as I have never worked one to one with clients before or with someone experiencing autism.”

Angela, who is due to start her new job next week, needs eight weeks intensive training with the company before she can begin working with Kayley. Her job will involve supporting Kayley with her personal care, cooking and cleaning, shopping, housework, helping her find and take advantage of any learning, employment or leisure activities, helping her manage her finances and with travel and holiday arrangements.

“I have spent some time with Kayley and we got on straight away,” she added. “When we first met, I felt as though we had a real connection and I can’t wait to spend some time with her and help her live the life she deserves. I know that my new job will be challenging and I will have a lot to learn, but I know it will also be fun and rewarding.”
The training that Angela received, through Gateshead College in association with ID Training, which provides specialist training in health and social care, led to Angela obtaining a Level 2 Learning Disability Qualification (LDQ).

Of the nine people who have received the training, eight have now been employed. A further 32 people are currently doing the training, with more due to start in the next few days.

Dimensions (UK) Ltd supports 133 adults with learning disabilities and/or autism live independently in their own homes across the North East.

Angela’s on-the-job training over the next 12 months will be ongoing and intensive and she will be working towards an NVQ Level 2 Health and Social Care, funded through the LSC’s Train to Gain.

Dimensions Service Manager Vickie Gill said: “Angela will have a steep learning curve ahead of her as she begins to learn how to support Kayley. Her training and development with the company will be ongoing and as well as working towards her Level 2 qualification, she will also be receiving service specific training, such as Autism and communication training.

Vickie said that when she interviewed Angela, she was impressed and it was obvious that she had benefited from some specific training for the role. But it was also Angela’s personality that helped her get the job.

“When I am looking for staff, I have to match the candidate with the person that they will be supporting. I’m not just looking for what the company needs, I’m looking at what the client needs – and Angela ticked all the right boxes.”
Dorothy Smith, Regional Director (interim), LSC North East, said: “The six month unemployed training package was introduced in response to the economic downturn and, as Angela’s story highlights, is helping those people worst affected by the current economic climate gain the essential qualifications they need to get back into work.

“The company that Angela will be working for obviously believes in developing their workforce and I hope that Angela will have a fulfilling and successful career as a result of this support.”

ENDS

Editor’s notes:

Picture caption: Pictured (left to right) are Neil Weeks, Angela Howes, Vickie Gill and Kayley.

The six month unemployed training package will deliver of an additional 75,000 extra places in FE for people unemployed for six months. It was announced by the Prime Minister at the Employment Summit on 12th January 2009 and is part of a package of four measures aimed at ensuring that individuals reaching sixth months of unemployment are offered continuing and relevant support to get back into work quickly. The options making up the package are:

- A recruitment and training subsidy of up to £2500 for companies that take on new recruits, made up of £1000 recruitment subsidy and typically £1500 of training through Train to Gain once in work
- A self-employment package, developed by DWP and BERR based on an enhanced offer via Jobcentre Plus and Business Link.
- A new approach to volunteering, which is likely to be supported by specialist brokers.
- A new training package building on the existing IES approach that will offer a more intensive type of tailored support for those whose skills levels have proved to be a barrier to a quick re entry into employment. The provision will have a strong labour market focus and will be promoted as the gateway for people to take a significant step up in their skills levels, thereby opening up previously inaccessible career opportunities.

Train to Gain is a service from the Learning and Skills Council, helping businesses get the training they need to succeed. An important element of the Train to Gain Service is skills brokerage that offers free impartial advice, and helps find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training providers to meet business needs.
Train to Gain is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies. Train to Gain aims to encourage all businesses and individuals to value and realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to invest appropriately.

To find out more about how Train to Gain can help, employers should call Business Link on 0845 600 9 006 or visit businesslink.gov.uk/traintogain. Alternatively, individuals and employers can access the information they need on skills via 0800 100 900 or by visiting direct.gov.uk/careersadvice

**Learning and Skills Council:**
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Its vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. It works nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

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