

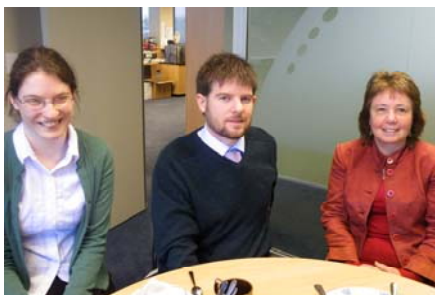


## IF IT IS TOO HARD TO COMPETE IN THE MAINSTREAM

For people who live with a condition which impacts on their ability to enter the workforce Mainstream could be the right programme to gain meaningful work. Mainstream is a supported employment programme run by the Ministry of Social Development. It creates employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities within State Sector organisations and schools.

Mainstream positions are jobs created above the normal establishment for the organisation. For the two-year period each Mainstream participant is employed on a temporary basis.

Rachel Winders, Ngaire O'Donnell and Michael Thian are three of the 'mainstreamers' working at Work and Income in the Canterbury region, and another client of Catapult, James, has since gained a position there. Michael, Ngaire and James were introduced to Work and Income through Ali Brown from Catapult. Catapult has experienced considerable success using the Mainstream programme, which boasts over 60% of participants going on to permanent employment.



From left, Mainstream participants, Ngaire, Michael, and Catapult Employment Consultant, Ali Brown

Rachel did her placement by herself. She emailed a manager within Work and Income who invited her over to have a chat. That sounds an easy way to get a job, but Ali wants to highlight that it is not that easy to get a foot in the door with employers.

"Particularly during a recession when most businesses are making cut backs, the employer will not think of hiring. They don't have the work available. It is not easy out there, when you have a disability, to find an employer who is willing to take you on. It is thanks to some forward thinking of the service centre managers who can see what a decent job Mainstream candidates can do and who gave Ngaire, Michael and Rachel a chance."

### LEARN AS YOU GO

Rachel: "I tried a few number of agencies, emailed my CV and details, I was trying to see if I could be placed within NZ Police as I would really like to work there, when finally the opportunity came up within Work and Income. It almost took me a year to get a foot in the door. After many thank you but no thanks letters I managed after another email to score an interview with a Work and Income manager. I like my job here but it took a bit getting used to the Work and Income community, all the acronyms they use, the amount of products and services they offer. I'm getting used to it now and I would like to expand my role, do more than the administration side."

"Although it may look easy, just making a phone call or sending an email to a manager and getting a job interview, it actually takes a lot of initiative, patience and sheer determination to get a placement, it took me almost a year", according to Rachel.

Ngaire is also involved in administration support; well that is her official job title. "I would describe my role as doing 'stuff', from boring stuff like sending boxes to recall to doing reception. With no official training the reception part of the job is really learning as you go. It was a bit hard at the beginning but now I'm growing into to it."

Michael is doing reception duty as well and he can relate to the 'learn as you go' attitude. "I had work experience for one week but besides that I didn't know much about Work and Income. When I started at the service centre I was not sure what I was going to do. Ending up behind the reception counter was common sense really; the greatest need in the service centre at the time was dealing with the queue of customers."

"It felt a bit like I was thrown into the deep, but the discussions about what kind of work I can do were quite informal, it has to be a job where your talent doesn't get wasted and it has to be something where you not get bored. Reception is certainly not boring."

With Mainstream the employer is refunded 100% of the salary for the first 12 months and 50% of the salary for the next 12 months. In this time the Mainstream participant will acquire relevant skills and experience, which will assist them to competently undertake the tasks required for a permanent position.

### FUTURE GOALS

While it is expected that employers will make every endeavour to place Mainstream participants into existing vacancies, either during or at the conclusion of the programme, no guarantee of permanent employment is expected.

When asked about future goals and aspirations Michael is not sure yet. "I have enough to deal with at the moment, also with other things going on in my life; I have a bit much on my plate. I've got a job and I would still like to have a job next year but it doesn't matter what kind of work it is."

Ngaire was also working on some case management jobs like helping people with their applications for a Special Needs Grant. "I love the interaction with the client, so I would like to do more case management."

All three Mainstreamers would like to say to possible employers within the State Sector to go for it. Use the programme as it creates jobs. Rachel: "People with disabilities can display real empathy to others with various physical and emotional challenges." Ngaire wants to add: "It is there, use it! My disability doesn't mean I can't work. We're wasting talent out there. I have a double degree, that looks great on my CV and so I was getting the job interviews but I could see the look on the employers' faces change when I walked in to the interview. Employers don't want to discriminate but they still see a disability as a barrier."

For further information

**Phone 0800 MSTREAM or 0800 678 7326**

[www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream](http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream)

**[www.catapult.org.nz](http://www.catapult.org.nz)**

## Richard's Job Success

Our client, Richard is employed at the Strait Freight depot in Hornby. He started working there two and a half years ago after thirteen years working at Kilmarnock Enterprises. Strait Freight is a line haul operator with branches in Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington and Auckland. At Strait Freight, Richard cleans the trucks, keeps the depot clean and tidy, and helps out on deliveries around Christchurch.

Richard was fairly apprehensive about starting a new job after such a long period at one work place and understandably he missed the familiarity of Kilmarnock Enterprises and the friends he had made so arrangements were made with the management of Kilmarnock Enterprises for Richard to visit when his day working at Strait Freight had finished.

After about three months, Richard had settled into working at Strait Freight and now over two years down the track, Richard is an integral member of the Strait Freight crew. I asked Richard what he likes about the job and he replied it is the people. "They are a great to work with, we have a lot of fun joking with each other". For Richard the variety of the job keeps him interested. "Each day is different, I may help with deliveries, clean trucks, help unload trucks, help sort things that need delivering. I do all sorts of jobs".

Richard has proved himself to be a reliable, flexible and cheerful worker who is happy to help out wherever he can. The result of his great attitude has been a steady increase in the hours he works and recognition from the Manager, Graham Rule, who sees Richard as a great role model and ambassador.



*Richard at work, looking after one of the Strait Freight trucks.*

**Catapult recognises the fantastic support given to Richard by Graham and the staff at Strait Freight, and congratulates Richard for his great work.**

## New Radio Show

### Sponsored by Catapult & Blue Star Taxis

An exciting new outlet for people with disabilities is about to take place. A radio programme at Plains FM called Special Access is due to kick off soon with four 25 minute shows planned. A core group of twelve people are involved with the running and governance of the radio show with the majority experiencing disabilities.

Special Access will showcase the interests, skills, talents, and creativity of people who have experienced a disability, with an emphasis on youth transitioning from school to work.

The students in the core group will learn invaluable skills including team building, time management, how to use radio equipment, conduct interviews, as well as presenting and performing roles while flexing their creative muscles. All those involved will increase their job skills.



*Volunteer, Melissa, prepares recordings for the show*

The radio show will cover a wide range of topics relevant to people with disabilities, their family and supporters, and will be a fun and informative addition to the airwaves.

Initial meetings with the core group have gone well with lots of ideas being generated for possible inclusion on the radio show.

Some topics to be tackled include

- Tips to combat the recession
- How a Student has overcome barriers to succeed in their work experience
- Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Sesame Street with an enthusiast
- How to survive a relationship

The blend of everyone's skills is an essential ingredient in our project and we are lucky to have people involved from a wide range of backgrounds. Some of the group members have previous experience with TV and Radio Production.

Summing up the project Susie, one the students involved, said she is very excited about the opportunity to be on the radio, and James another student commented, 'I think you can't just wave a magic wand and walk into the job you want. It's important to work on real life skills that will help you on your way.'

*Article written by Melissa.*

**The first show goes to air Monday 14 September at 12.30pm on Plains FM**

## Formal Announcement

Catapult Employment Services Trust wishes to formally announce the resignation of Trevor Cattermole from his position of Co-Director here at Catapult. We would like to thank Trevor for his six years of service to Catapult and the contributions he has made towards establishing and securing our relationships with funders, employers, clients, and staff.

**The Board of Trustees and Staff here at Catapult wish Trevor all the best in his future endeavours.**