



Simon Henry & Louise Reid

Simon and Louise were both ready for a change. Louise had been attending Antrim Adult Centre and Simon had attended vocational training with The Bridge Association in Antrim and they were now ready for new opportunities that would give them greater independence and variety.

The Day Opportunities Programme was set up by the Northern Trust for adults with a learning disability following recommendations in the Equal Lives Report and the Northern Trust's "Widening Choice and Day Opportunities Strategy". The Programme covers four areas of opportunity: recreational, vocational, volunteering and further education. The Day Opportunities Coordinator works with individuals and their families and, following a professional assessment of need from the individual's named worker, tailors the programme to the individual's needs and aspirations.

Gemma Agnew, Day Opportunities Coordinator for the Antrim area said, "We looked at Simon and Louise's particular needs and developed the right mix of activities for them. They both wanted to be independent and have flexibility in their weekly routine.

"Louise spends two days at the Base ("Drop In") Centre in Antrim (a Northern Trust facility in partnership with InVOLve) and two days in a supported employment work opportunity (facilitated by Triangle's Progression to Employment Services), while Simon spends three days at the Base and two days working.

Simon's work training placement is in Clonlee Nursing Home, he said "I work at the nursing home one day a week. I set the dining tables and clear away and wash dirty dishes. The best thing about working there is the people I work with."

Louise's work training placement is at Jolly Tots Day Nursery, she said "I enjoy working; I work in the kitchen and help Cook. The Day Opportunities Programme is better for me than the adult centre, as there is more flexibility for me. At the Adult Centre time was always limited as we relied on the bus, but now I am more independent and it's good getting out and about."

When not working Louise and Simon attend The Base ("Drop In") Facility in Antrim. Gemma said, "They get to meet up with friends, watch DVD's, and go shopping in the town; go to the leisure centre; etc. At the Base Louise and Simon got involved in the different activities that were being offered. Michele Laverty comes in from the Northern Regional College (Big Lottery "Live &



Day Opportunities

Learn” Project and works with the clients on different projects. We have a dietician who talked about healthy eating and provided the group with information packs. Our service users also organise their own daily activities and have previously planned outings to different places, such as, the Ulster Folk Park, Ulster Museum, Belfast, Portrush and Derry. These trips have been supported by the Base Coordinator, Shirley O’ Keeffe”.

The Day Opportunities Programme has given Louise and Simon the opportunity to become fully integrated members of the Antrim community. They both have work placements and attend the Base - Antrim. As Day Opportunities Coordinator Gemma said, “Louise and Simon have both an active social and working life like many other adults. They are now more confident, independent people with a lot to offer the community and through the Day Opportunities Programme they now have been given the chance to do so.”