



## Darren Murphy's Story

Darren had just left School and was wondering what to do next when his social worker recommended him for the Northern Trust's Day Opportunities Programme. Attending an adult centre was never an option for Darren who wanted a varied and active life.

The Day Opportunities Programme was set up with The Northern Trust following recommendations in the Equal Lives Report of the Governments' Bamford Vision and the Trust's "Widening Choice and Day Opportunities Strategy". The Day Opportunities Programme covers four areas of opportunity: recreational, vocational, volunteering and further education. The Day Opportunities coordinator works with individuals and their families and provides named workers to tailor the programme to individual needs and aspirations.

Jennifer Johnston, Day Opportunities Coordinator for the Newtownabbey area said, "We looked at Darren's particular needs alongside his family and his social worker and developed the right mix of day activities for him. Darren has always had a good work ethic, so he was particularly interested in progressing towards paid employment."

To help Darren with the transition into the work environment he was first placed with Alternative Angles, a partnership the Northern Trust has developed with Triangle and the Dpt of Employment and Learning. Alternative Angles is a Social Enterprise that provides support to people, helping them to gain experience and to develop new vocational skills. The social enterprise environment helps build confidence to improve individual employment opportunities and thereby helps fulfil individual potential.

At the same time Darren successfully completed a two-year City and Guilds course entitled "Wider Choices" entry-level one qualification, through the Day Opportunities Programme at the Northern Regional College. The course helped Darren to prepare himself to further develop the skills he would need for work. He said, "I studied English and Maths. I also took a separate course in Art, as I get a lot of enjoyment from painting and drawing and I have lots of ideas."

Once Darren was ready to progress with Triangle's "Progression To Employment Service" he was placed with Lavender Cupcakes. The "Progression To Employment Service" is a partnership with Triangle, the Northern Trust and the Department of Employment and Learning. "Darren has now been with Lavender Cupcakes for over a year. Working there suits



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Darren as he is very creative and enjoys working with his hands,” said Jennifer.

Darren spends two days a week at Lavender cupcakes. “In the mornings I crack eggs into the bowls and beat the mix together, I also cut shapes out of the icing to decorate the cupcakes. In the afternoon I make up the boxes and pack the cupcakes into boxes ready to be collected by the customers. The best thing about being there is the people I work with and getting to eat cupcakes. It was my ambition to work in a bakery and I have now fulfilled it.

Darren attends The Base (Drop-In) Centre in Newtownabbey when he is not in college or working. The Base is one of eight such facilities developed by The Northern Trust to enable people to meet and make friends and to become actively engaged in leisure pursuits in their local communities.

The Day Opportunities programme has given Darren the opportunity to become a fully integrated member of the Newtownabbey community. He now has a vocational life, socialises at the Base and has just started his City and Guilds entry-level two qualification at his local college. As Day Opportunities Coordinator Jennifer said, “Darren has both an active social and working life. He is just like any other young man. He is now a more confident, independent person with a lot to offer the community and through the Day Opportunities Programme he has now been given the chance to do so.”