

Case Study: Heather's Journey to Starting Her Own Business

From Employment to Entrepreneurship



Heather had spent 10 years working in the hospitality industry before deciding she was ready for a new challenge. Looking for a change of direction, she moved into a security role at The Glass Works in Barnsley. Whilst employed, Heather felt the role was not her long-term career goal and wanted to start looking to building a long-term career.

In January, Heather met Supported Employment Officer Alex by chance whilst working at the Lightbox within The Glass Works. During a conversation, Alex introduced the Supported Employment Team and explained that support was available not just

for people seeking work, but also for those already employed who wanted to develop their careers.

Heather disclosed that she has ADHD and wanted to explore opportunities that would allow her to progress and find work that aligned with her interests and ambitions. Following the conversation, she self-referred to the service.

Exploring Career Options

Over several meetings, Alex worked with Heather to explore a range of career opportunities. Initially, discussions focused on progression within the security sector, including potential town centre warden roles, as well as management opportunities in hospitality.

Despite exploring several avenues, Heather felt that none of these options truly excited her.

Reflecting on her skills, interests and strengths, Heather realised she wanted to work for herself. Through conversations with her partner Luke, friends and her circle of support, she began developing an idea that combined her passion for skateboarding with a business opportunity. Luke has a strong knowledge of this industry and has been and unwavering source of support for Heather, throughout this entire process.

Having regularly used the council's town centre skatepark and being part of the local skating community, Heather identified a gap in the market and began developing plans

for a café and skate shop that would provide a safe, welcoming environment for all members of the community.

Developing a Business Idea

Just weeks after the idea was formed, Heather had developed a detailed business plan and arranged to meet with Coordinator Alex Simon and Employer Engagement Lead John North to discuss her proposal.

The business, named *Stake & Bake*, would operate as a café and skate shop, providing a welcoming community space alongside products and services for local skaters. Heather's longer-term vision includes offering workshops for young people, introducing skateboarding instructors and using the sport to build confidence and resilience.

Heather explained:

"I knew I needed to work for myself. I thought about what I knew and what I liked. I spoke with my friends and then I saw the new skatepark, which I use a lot. The idea just came to me."

Support Provided by the Supported Employment Team

Recognising Heather's passion and determination, Alex and John provided advice, guidance and encouragement to help her move forward with her plans.

The team's support included:

- Reviewing and discussing Heather's business plan.
- Signposting her to specialist business support through Enterprising Barnsley, Launchpad, Tech Town and Ignite AI programmes.
- Introducing opportunities for AI and digital skills development through Tech Town.
- Advising on potential funding routes and business support available through council services.
- Exploring how her business could support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Discussing opportunities to engage volunteers and work alongside existing council programmes such as Pathways.
- Providing guidance on business compliance requirements, including:
 - Public liability insurance.
 - Fire safety requirements.
 - HMRC registration and tax processes.
 - Company registration.

Throughout the journey, the team's role was to provide advice, connections and encouragement, while ensuring Heather remained in control of driving the business forward herself.

Taking the Lead

A key feature of Heather's success has been her own ambition and determination. While the Supported Employment Team provided guidance and practical support, Heather remained firmly in the driving seat.

She independently:

- Developed her business concept.
- Produced her business plan.
- Explored potential premises options, including units within The Glass Works.
- Registered her company with Companies House.
- Engaged with external business support providers.
- Continued to develop her plans for future growth.



The Supported Employment Team maintained regular contact through check-ins, ongoing advice and links to other council services, including support from Communications and Marketing colleagues.

Heather reflected:

"Supported Employment has been really helpful. Alex has suggested a lot of things and it's been good to run ideas by someone. It was nice to know they thought it was a good idea. They've supported me with looking at business loans and understanding what to do next."

Looking Ahead

Heather's vision for *Stake & Bake* goes beyond simply operating a business. Her ambition is to create a safe, inclusive community space where people can connect through skateboarding.

She hopes to develop:

- Workshops for children and young people.
- Skateboarding coaching and instruction.
- Community events and activities.
- Opportunities that support confidence building and resilience.

Heather believes skateboarding offers valuable life lessons:

"It's such a great sport for teaching resilience, and it's an amazing community. People are excited for anyone who is ready to learn."

Outcome

Heather's journey demonstrates how early intervention, personalised guidance and access to the right support networks can empower individuals to pursue ambitious career goals.

What began as a conversation in a library has developed into a promising new business venture, with Heather turning her passion into a potential career while creating opportunities that could benefit the wider community.

The Supported Employment Team continues to provide ongoing guidance as Heather progresses her business, helping her access opportunities, overcome barriers and realise her entrepreneurial ambitions.

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