

## **Dyslexic locality worker is a high flier with support from North Lanarkshire Council and iansyst Ltd**

Christine Docherty is a Locality Worker for North Lanarkshire Council. Officially diagnosed as dyslexic only five years ago whilst studying through the Open University, Christine has coped with the condition, unsupported for over 40 years. Affecting her confidence and self-esteem, Christine's dyslexia historically prevented her from achieving her aspirations and goals. Since being diagnosed in her current role, and with full support from her employer and help from iansyst Ltd ([www.iansyst.co.uk](http://www.iansyst.co.uk)), she has been able to realise her potential. iansyst delivers a range of advice, software and computer technologies to enable dyslexic people to achieve their potential.

As Christine's form of dyslexia means she struggles particularly with spelling, she left school at 16 to work as a data processor at a bank, manipulating numerical data. She then spent time in various social care roles before joining North Lanarkshire Council in 2006. Christine, comments: "I became aware I might be dyslexic as long as 15 years ago, but there was very little support available and I was just keen to get on and succeed in my career. I tended to go for jobs that didn't involve a lot of writing as I really didn't have the confidence to tell employers about my difficulties with words."

When studying for an *Introduction to Line Management (I.L.M.)* qualification through the Open University, Christine's tutor picked up on the fact she might have a form of dyslexia. He expressed concerns about the quality of her essays, particularly the spelling and grammar and arranged for her to have an initial phone screening with the university. Christine then approached her employer, North Lanarkshire Council for a full diagnostic assessment. The council contacted iansyst and arranged for a specialist consultant to come and see her at work.

As a Locality Worker, Christine's day is predominantly spent supporting people with disabilities and helping them become part of their local community. However, her job also involves taking minutes at meetings, typing reports and taking messages, all of which can often be very challenging for her dyslexia. iansyst's consultant came and spent time with Christine, observing all aspects of her daily job role. They talked about areas of the job she thought she needed more support in and potential solutions. iansyst's consultant made recommendations about suitable readjustments and assistive technologies the council could put in place to help. These technologies included a laptop, digital recorder and text-to-speech and speech-recognition software to enable Christine to process information sent by colleagues and check the accuracy of her own copy. Christine comments: "Writing to-do lists is the main way I remember everything and previously I scribbled these on bits of paper which were often hard to read and disorganised. I now have my own laptop to make sure all the information I need is to hand and a digital recorder so I can record my to-do lists anytime, anywhere."

The council has offered continual support to Christine. Working as part of a 30 strong team, Christine is now able to fulfil her job role with confidence. Connie Johnstone, Temporary Locality Manager at North Lanarkshire Council works with Christine and oversees the team. Connie comments: “Christine is a valued member of the team and simply needs to receive information in an alternative format to enable her to do her job and we fully support that.”

North Lanarkshire Council continuously works to make sure employees with disabilities are properly supported. A disability forum has recently been introduced to enable employees to collaborate and share their experiences. Connie Johnstone, comments: “As an organisation working to ensure disabled people are properly integrated into the community, it is incredibly important to us that our employees are properly supported.”

The Disability Discrimination Act has been introduced to prevent disabled people being treated less fairly than their able-bodied peers, so it is more important than ever for employers to provide the correct support. Christine is keen to stress that there are lots of other ways that companies can show their support of any disability: “In other organisations where my condition may not have been recognised or understood, I might have been perceived as slow or incompetent; however, my manager and team understand that in order for me to do my job well, I sometimes need to go about things a little differently, and they are fully supportive of that. They allow me to set my own deadlines and are very accommodating if I need points repeated whilst taking minutes from meetings, all of which enables me to do my job well.”

Christine is very open about her dyslexia and has this advice for employers: “Experiencing dyslexia can be difficult enough but if it isn’t recognised and supported then it can have a huge impact both on the individual and the organisation. Companies should encourage their employees to speak out if they are experiencing dyslexia-related difficulties, as with the right diagnosis and help, they can dramatically improve the quality of their work and ultimately become a greater asset to their company.”



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