



BBO Herefordshire
BBO Shropshire
where will **your** journey take you?



The project is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund.

BBO Shropshire: Supporting People living in rural communities

About BBO Shropshire

The BBO Shropshire project, led by Landau, is part of the national Building Better Opportunities programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund.

Landau is a local supported employment and training organisation and leads a partnership of 20 organisations in delivering BBO Shropshire. In the first three years of delivery the project supported 1,588 unemployed or economically inactive people, helping 310 of them into employment

The project aims to help participants gain skills and develop confidence through intensive personalised support that will equip them with the abilities needed to move towards and into employment.

The project focuses on those who are furthest from the labour market, helping them engage in activity to move towards and into employment. Employment is one measure of success, as is work readiness, but so too is the confidence of participants to progress onto other training, education or volunteering opportunities.

In 2019 BBO Shropshire was awarded an extension by the funders and will now continue to deliver for a further two years.

This case study paper focuses on how BBO Shropshire has supported people who are rurally isolated.

About the support

Two of the delivery partners provide support to people living in rural or isolated communities; Wem Town Hall and Beechtree Community Centre in Whitchurch. Both these organisations are small local charities providing support in small market towns, which both experience significant problems in terms of public transport and lack of local job opportunities. At Wem they provide intensive 1-1 support and volunteering opportunities within the Town Hall, and at Beechtree they combine 1-1 support with a weekly group-based job club. The job club in particular is a good way for participants to meet each other, discuss successes and challenges and provide each other with peer support.

“ At the job club we share information – that’s useful. We bring lists of websites, adverts we’ve seen, and we find out how to apply for jobs and how to find jobs online. It really guides you to places for where to look for jobs and the skills you needed. It’s good to see people in similar situations, and then you see them getting a job.” (participant)

“ I feel more confident and we get to know each other and I know I’m not on my own. We support each other.” (participant)

At Wem Town Hall, participants are facing barriers such as age, lack of IT skills and transport issues. They find the support useful in building confidence and resilience, particularly when dealing with knockbacks.

Case Study 1

Millie* was out of work due to ill health. She was referred to BBO by the Job Centre, but was initially quite reluctant as had found previous similar projects unhelpful. However, she felt the key worker sounded nice on the phone so decided to attend.

“ I wasn't getting out the house or doing anything, I was just sitting around doing nothing. I came along and we had a chat and I was set at ease straight away, and I thought it felt different. So I kept coming along. I had one thing a week that I had to look forward to. But the main thing was having someone to speak to.

When I came here it was about me – I was 'Millie' for that hour. You don't get that at the Job Centre. When I used to go to the Job Centre, she'd be faced away from me looking at the computer and would never get my name right. That just smashes your confidence even more – if they can't even get your name right. You just want someone to notice you – that you are wanted and needed."

She received support with her CV and started to volunteer, supporting other people on the project.

“ It's nice to tell other people that I've been there and I know what it's like. They feel like someone understands."

She has also been successful in finding paid employment, but continues to volunteer around these two part time jobs.

“ I would still be sitting at home if I hadn't come here – my confidence was lower than low, I wasn't leaving the house. It's so nice just being in this building. Coming here makes such a difference to the rest of the week – I started going to the shop by myself, which was a massive deal for me. And that was just from coming here for an hour. I was being a person again and being noticed and even though I wasn't being paid I felt part of the Wem Town Hall team, I felt part of something and that's important when you want to move on. I'm a completely different person to what I was 12 months ago."

Case Study 2

Joyce* has been looking for paid employment for over two years; applying for many jobs but often not hearing back. She feels that the older you are, the harder it is to find work, with many opportunities going to younger people who can be paid less. The lack of public transport in Wem is also a barrier to finding work, particularly for people who don't drive.

“ About 2 weeks ago I went into Shrewsbury and I put my CV into a café, and they haven't got back to me – it's demoralising. Also I don't drive. The transport is a bit of an issue – trains on Sundays and bank holidays are non-existent, makes it difficult for shift work."

She saw the sign for the project in the window and was keen to see if they could help her.

She has received a lot of support with her CV, creating covering letters, and even help with housing. She feels the support has helped build her confidence.

“ It's built my confidence up – when you've been out of work for so long and the only person you've got to talk to is your dog.... It's built up my confidence. Especially if you are feeling down – they make you laugh. I went for a job interview – they said sorry you haven't got the job but said I'd done well, which was nice.

I'll keep coming till I get a job!"

* Names have been changed throughout to preserve the anonymity of participants