

Amy's Story.

Amy came to the Village Centre as a young person with barriers to employment on a work experience programme from Skills Exchange, who have offices in our buildings. They asked if we would take on Amy as a placement for 6 months. She was terrible!

She could not turn up on time...when she turned up at all! She was obnoxious. She was rude. She was a terrible worker. You would not have hired this girl because she was an absolute disaster in every sense of the word.

But Joanne was Centre Manager and Myra was the Café Manager, both of whom were full of God's love and wanted to share that love with Amy. So together they started giving Amy a mixture of tough love, straight talking and encouragement, and gradually she began to open up and talk about her background.

Amy was born in the greater Glasgow area but was sent into care by her mother when she was just a little girl. Her mother kept her older and younger siblings, but Amy was given away! Amy was taken to the other side of the country and put into a foster family in Fife. This little girl was distraught. She wanted her Mum and her brothers and sisters. For the next 15 years Amy grew up in Fife being moved from care home to care home, foster family to foster family, batted around the care system. Then at 18 she was considered an adult and given a flat, not in Fife where she knew people, but in East Kilbride. She was now in a town where she knew no one. She was in a flat on her own and had no idea how to look after herself, never mind her new home!

She didn't know how to work her washing machine. She didn't know how to cook for herself. She didn't know how to clean properly. Her life had been organised for her, but now there was no one to tell her when to get out of bed or have a shower. All the ordinary things of everyday.

And she was frightened living by herself because she had lived all her life in Group accommodation. She'd always lived with a number of people and was surrounded by people who always did things for her.

Myra and Joanne stepped in. They cleaned her flat and showed her how to keep it that way. They taught her how to use the washing machine. At the

Café, the Chefs taught her how to cook, and each day would give her a meal away to heat up for dinner at home.

Amy began to change! She was now surrounded by people who loved her and cared about her. She was learning new skills. She became a star in the Café. People were amazed at the miraculous transformation in Amy. Staff and Customers really liked Amy. She was so good that Joanne secured government funding to keep her on the staff for 2 years.

Joanne thought, 'If Amy has changed so much in 6 months, if we can hire her on a funding scheme for two years, then think how much more of an improvement there will be and how massive that will be for her life.' And so it was. An amazing 2 years for Amy and for the VC!

Amy herself began to realise that she was someone of worth; that an employer would see her as a good candidate for a job. She realised that she was so good that the VC wanted to employ her because she was such a great employee.

She had come to us with no qualifications at all, not even a Standard Grade from school. Nothing. So during her 2 years with us we put her through an SVQ in Food and Beverage Service and we also sent her on a Barista Course to become a Certified Barista. So that when she left here and went on into her next job she had an SVQ and a Barista qualification.

That was not just for Amy. It is something that The VC does for all of the people who are employed in the Cafe. They go to Kirkcaldy for the Barista training, and the SVQ's are done in-house. We have a training company who come in and take the people through the SVQ, free of charge. It gives staff skills, knowledge and something to put on their CV. We put our more experienced members of staff through advanced SVQ's through this training scheme. So again, we're equipping people for life. We are not equipping people to keep a hold of them at the Village Centre. We are blessing them with free training courses that can take them on into the next chapter?

As it came towards the end of the two years for Amy the VC didn't have the finance to enable her to continue and the government scheme was not available. However, Joanne helped Amy think about what she wanted to do with her life. She helped her identify vacancies and fill in applications. She prepared Amy for interviews. Amy got interviews and secured a position in

a company. Now she was in a real job, not supported employment. However, she didn't leave the Village Centre behind, she continued to come back and see us and let us know how she was getting on. And we were still very much in contact with her.

She called Myra her mum because Myra was like a mother to her. She was the one who was there for Amy. The one who disciplined her and told her, 'You cannot behave like this'. Amy still needed that because in many ways she was still a child, because she had never had that adolescent phase where her behaviour was being corrected and she was being moulded into a mature responsible adult. Myra was taking on the role of a Mum.

Amy was settled in her home and doing well in her job. And now she met this lovely boy Stephen, and they started dating. They were going out for a while and were very much in love and so decided to move in together. Not long after, Amy fell pregnant. She told her Mum, Myra, of course, and all her friends at the VC. She brought in her baby scans. When the baby was born the first person she called was Myra, and said, "Mum, it's Amy, I've just had a baby." And Myra said "O, that's amazing. When was the baby born?" And she said, "10 minutes ago."

Myra had started off as her boss as Café Manager in the Village Centre Café, but she had become far more. God's love flowing through Myra had worked a miracle in this young woman's life. A young person who was terrible at a job. Who was difficult, argumentative, undisciplined, and thoroughly unpleasant. But Myra had taken the time to get to know that young person, get to understand her, why she was the way she was, and help her to become a wonderful person.

It is now a few years since Amy first came to the V.C. She now has a second child. When the baby was born, once again she phoned 'Mum', Myra, and said, "Mum I've just had another baby!"

Amy is thriving. She has her partner, Stephen. He works through the week and Amy works at the weekends, so that they've got enough money. They bought a little house together, so she is no longer in council accommodation. She keeps her home pristine, just as Mum Myra taught her to do. She cooks the family dinners every day of the week, just as the VC Chefs taught her.

Amy keeps in touch with Myra and gives her all the news about what is going on in her life and family. She's now back in touch with her birth family as well. And things are going really well.

Amy's children are growing up in a wonderful loving home. One of them is at school, the other at the nursery. She's a great mum and her kids are always turned out beautifully and so is she. She is doing well in her job. All because the Christians in the Village Centre took time to get alongside her, get to know her and hold her hand through a difficult time.

