



**TWO YEARS ON:  
CELEBRATING  
THE JOBS FIRST  
PROGRAMME**

If you are interested in hearing more about the Jobs First Programme and how to get involved, please contact:

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# WELCOME

Jobs First aims to provide people in a situation of homelessness with real job opportunities and ongoing support. At Social Bite, we strongly believe that like housing, work is a fundamental human need and 'good employment', besides being a fair and constant source of income, delivers on personal and societal benefits, including better health and well-being, as well as integration into the community.

We know that unemployment in Scotland has increased in the last quarter, according to figures released by the Office of National Statistics in September 2023. Data showed that from May to July 2023 the estimated unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over was 4.3%, the same as the UK wide rate. Compared to the previous quarter it rose by around 1.2%. Therefore, creating opportunities for meaningful employment and providing support that will assist with sustaining that employment is crucial.

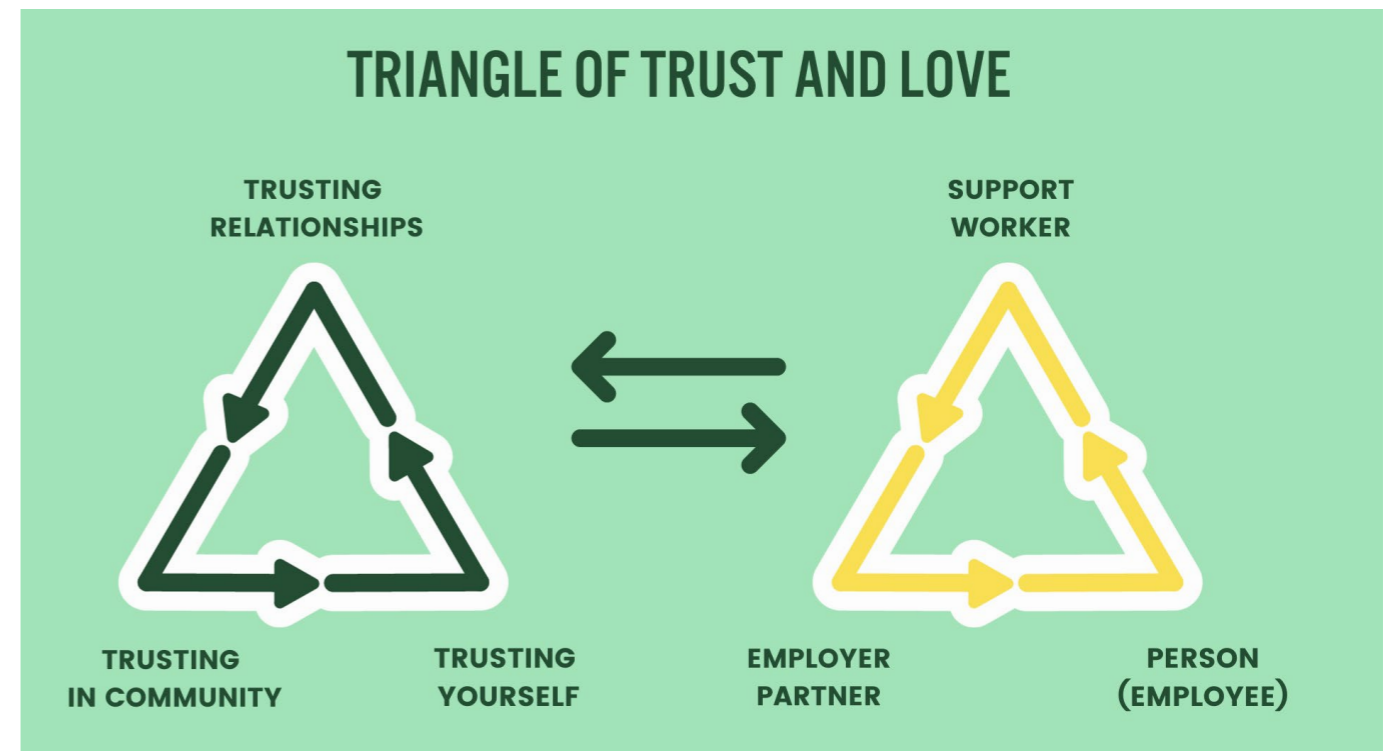
Content in this brochure marks the two-year anniversary of the Jobs First Programme. We spoke to employees, employers, charity partners and staff members who deliver support about the meaning of this programme and how it impacted on their lives, operations, referral process and ways to provide support.

The Jobs First programme is built on Social Bite's Triangle of Trust and Love, the invisible elements that allow all of us to create supportive relationships with others. Those relationships that are based on trust are the crucial element in providing support. The triangle is based on a

simplified version of human development, where we look at the ability to build relationships between a person and care giver and a person and the community. In the Jobs First model the support worker is identified as a care giver, the employee is the person and employers and charities are the community.

This brochure showcases the examples where trust building became crucial in the programme's development. We also present a typical pipeline of recruitment, where the job advert is presented to people and charities, support to prepare for the job interview is offered, an assessment to get to know the person and set up initial goals is offered, and this is the first step to build an ongoing support plan.

Jobs First is a programme which creates changes for all parties involved. It assists with overcoming the stigma of homelessness through its educational element and support of the employee and employers. Based on relationship building, it assists people to participate in making a long-lasting change on an individual and organisational level.



# CELEBRATING JOBS FIRST 2 YEARS ON



# PREPARING CANDIDATES FOR THE JOBS FIRST PROGRAMME

**Jobs First Development and Support Worker Alessio Leoni explains the importance of ensuring candidates are prepared for the Jobs First process.**

Less than two years ago, we embarked on the Jobs First Programme in London. Today in London, we are working with over 30 homeless charities that have joined our programme. Together, we strive to bring hope and transformation to the lives of people who have faced the hardships of homelessness.

When a job vacancy lands in my inbox from an employer, I see it as a beacon of opportunity. I relay this opportunity to our dedicated network of partner charities, and if there's interest, they swiftly send over their CVs. It's the first glimpse of the journey that awaits.

My initial step is a simple yet profound one. I pick up the phone and call the candidate. I share the story of Social Bite and the Jobs First Programme.

**I want to know more about the candidate, to understand their dreams, and to discover why they applied for the job.**

Our initial meeting, often held in our cosy coffee shop on the Strand, or at times, at their referring charity, is not just an assessment. It's a moment to unravel people's stories, to understand their barriers, and to identify the support they will need on their journey to employment. Each person is unique, and their needs and aspirations vary, which makes this phase of the process immensely personal and heartfelt.

Checking people's right to work documents carries significant weight in this process. It's an opportunity to stand with them through potential hurdles, such as lacking a proof of address – a common issue for people who have experienced homelessness. Collaborating with the referring agency becomes vital in breaking these barriers and making dreams attainable.

Before I present the candidate to the employer, I embark on another significant journey – the transformation of their CV. I refine it, shape it, so that it mirrors the skills and experiences demanded by the job. It's about creating the best opportunity and giving people the best chance, a fair shot at securing the position they aspire to.

Then comes the moment of truth – the mock interviews. For many, it might be a daunting experience, especially if they've been out of work for a while or have only known the agency life. I weave real interview scenarios into our sessions, offering tips and guidance. For people with low self-esteem due to their experiences with homelessness, this phase is often the turning point, where they begin to recognise their worth and abilities.

And sometimes, there's a need for more than just words and preparation. I connect people with charities that provide interview clothes, ensuring they step into the interview room with confidence and dignity.

On the day of the interview, I stand by their side; a reassuring presence on their journey to a new beginning. I offer final words of encouragement and promise to be there to support them during the interview.

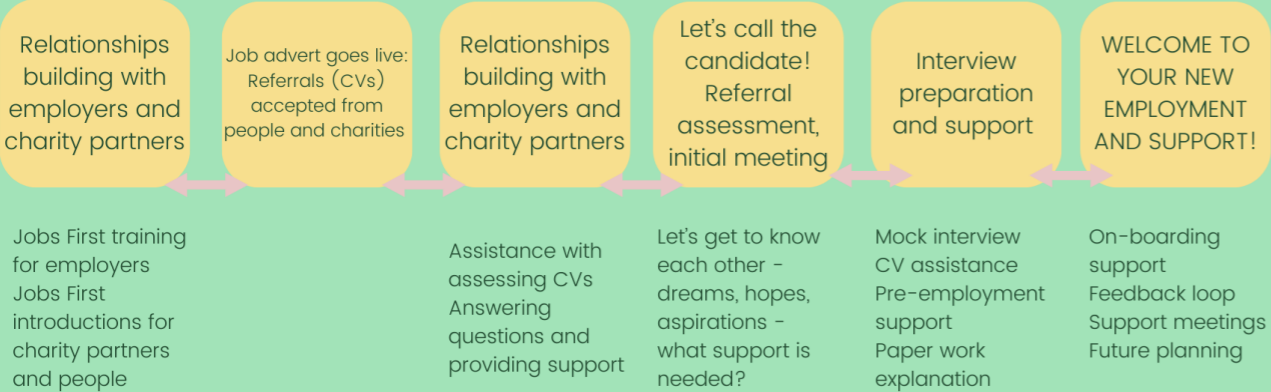
It's incredible how my presence can make a difference for people battling mental health issues. Knowing that they have a safe environment, one where employers are trained to understand and support their unique challenges, is often a source of solace.

In the end, the ultimate decision lies with the employer. Yet, it's heartwarming to recall moments when candidates shone so brilliantly during the interview that they were offered both the job and a renewed sense of purpose.

For people who may not find success in their first attempt, the journey continues. I might keep working with them, guiding them towards other vacancies in the Jobs First Programme, or referring them to different employment programmes. In some cases, we embark on a job search together, for up to three months.

It is amazing, emotional, and rewarding when the candidate gets the job, and sometimes tears of joy have run down a few faces. This is not just a programme; it's a journey of human stories, emotions, and resilience. We are here to transform lives, one hopeful candidate at a time, and to witness their success is nothing short of profound.

## JOBS FIRST PROGRAMME PIPELINE



# THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

## Jessica Cadd

Lead Worker – Coaching  
Crisis



### Why did your organisation choose to collaborate with Social Bite and the Jobs First Programme?

We wanted to link in with an organisation who would increase opportunities made available to our clients but were also understanding our client group's needs. We felt the Jobs First Programme was the perfect blend of this.

### What do you feel is unique about the Jobs First Programme?

In-work support is for a substantial period which has helped increase the individual's likelihood of sustaining work.

If someone is referred for one vacancy and it is not suitable, they can still be offered suitable support to access future job vacancies.

They share detailed information about upcoming courses and vacancies. This helps us have more informed discussions with clients and helps us ensure we submit suitable referrals.

We can continue our support even though the individual is on the Jobs First Programme (due to funding clashes, some programmes do not allow the client to work with two organisations).

The referral process is simple. It asks for all the relevant information but in a manner that is not overwhelming to either the client or referring organisation.

### What benefits have you seen for the people you support and for your organisation?

They have found the interview and in work support reassuring. This also helped with their confidence.

Meeting with the same worker each time was also useful for them. They felt they could build trust.

The employers you are linked in with help provide employment opportunities that are varied.

We can continue to work alongside the client but focusing more on the housing/welfare/well-being support areas. This means the client can have more of their support needs met in a sustained and more fulfilling way.

### How would you describe your relationship with Social Bite?

The relationship is a positive one – this has been helped by the effective communication between us. It has been useful to share updates and has helped each organisation identify support needs quicker and address them with the client. I feel both organisations have a good understanding of how each other works.

### What developments have you seen over the past two years within the programme?

We've got an increase in variety in job opportunities being advertised to the programme. Some of which are in more challenging to find industries e.g. security.

### Would you recommend the programme to other charities?

Yes, I would recommend the programme to other charities. It is a great opportunity to help someone seeking employment who would also benefit from extra support and guidance. The referral process is simple yet effective, the vacancies are varied, and communication has been really effective.

## Jonathan Active

Project Leader  
The Lennox Partnership



### Why did your organisation choose to collaborate with Social Bite and the Jobs First Programme?

Social Bite embodies one of the aspects of why the Fair Start Scotland programme was created in the first place, which is supporting people who have experienced homelessness or people who are currently facing this. We at The Lennox Partner continue to support a wide range of people that have barriers to gaining employment and Social Bite has been a pleasure to deal with.

### What do you feel is unique about the Jobs First Programme?

The Jobs First Programme focuses on a particular demographic and overcoming further barriers to gain employment. While there are many companies that work with people to tackle the issue of homelessness, Social Bite is a place where people in a situation of homelessness can not only get a free meal but also access training and employment opportunities.

### What benefits have you seen for the people you support and for your organisation?

The benefit our participants have gained is the support of a third-party organisation that we can signpost them to for extra support; taking away the worry and stress they have been facing for any length of time. Every participant is unique and has individual needs and with the experience of the Social Bite team, they are the first point of contact when we identify participants that come under the homeless criteria.

### How would you describe your relationship with Social Bite?

We at The Lennox Partnership always feel included and most welcomed when it comes to collaborating with Social Bite. Every interaction with Social Bite associates is friendly and very positive.

### What developments have you seen over the past two years within the programme?

We have recognised Social Bite's growth and range of support for people in need. There is always something exciting happening with their projects and special events that take place and it's great to see such a passionate company progress for a good cause.

### Would you recommend the programme to other charities?

We would recommend the programme 100% because there is a genuine care for the homeless demographic that is clearly visible and this is the type of service that is needed all-round. Social Bite can offer what's needed in this area and more.

## Marina D'Arco

Skills and Opportunities Coordinator  
The Connection at St. Martin's



### Why did your organisation choose to collaborate with Social Bite and the Jobs First Programme?

Social Bite's café is round the corner from the Connection and our missions are of course similar, therefore, the two organisations started working together shortly after the café opened its doors. I became aware of the Jobs First Programme when I was approached by Alessio Leoni, Social Bite's Development and Support Worker, to offer the people we work with the opportunity to access vacancies through the programme as well as ongoing support.

### What do you feel is unique about the Jobs First Programme?

Post-employment support is vital to clients with complex or additional needs to ensure their transition into work is successfully sustained: offering such support is, I believe, the unique selling point of the Job First Programme.

### What benefits have you seen for the people you support and for your organisation?

It has been great to refer clients to the Job First Programme knowing that the extra support was there for them. It meant that once the person secured the job, I was able to pass on the responsibility of continuing care to Social Bite. This freed up my time and gave me the opportunity to work with more people.

### How would you describe your relationship with Social Bite?

I would say we work very well together: we keep the channel of communication open at all times to exchange information and coordinate the support we offer clients. We share responsibilities, for example the Connection is able

to offer travel, clothes, PPE to clients when they first start working, which helps them overcome some of the practical challenges they would face.

Both of us work with people at risk of homelessness to get them ready for work (checking necessary documentation, CV writing, interviews preparation...). Alessio accompanies clients to meet the employers, liaises with them to smooth the path and ensures everything is in place before jobs start. If people are not successful, they receive valuable feedback;

I am also kept informed of progress at all times.

### What developments have you seen over the past two years within the programme?

Social Bite has been able to quickly establish meaningful connections with valuable employers thus widening job opportunities for our client groups.

### Would you recommend the programme to other charities?

Yes, without a doubt. The first person I have referred to Social Bite is still in work now and I have no doubt this success is down to Alessio's constant encouragement and careful interventions.

Thank you Social Bite and thank you Alessio!



## THE IMPACT OF A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

**Jobs First Development and Support Worker Ambreen Malik talks about the impact of a supportive environment as part of the Jobs First Programme.**

Homelessness has a devastatingly adverse impact on the lives of people who experience it, physically, socially, and psychologically. It leads to exclusion and exploitation and is a distressing outcome of unused human potential. When scary things happen to people affected by homelessness and their lives are turned upside down, it becomes challenging to feel grounded and know how to best support themselves. Regular routines are often disrupted in times of stress or crisis and routines offer opportunities for connection and help people with transition.

Our focus must be on creating a consistent emotional environment amidst major physical environment changes. These structures can help people regain a sense of control, predictability, consistency, and connection even when so much is out of their control. Routines create predictability, reliability and support a sense of security.

For me, a safe and supportive environment is a setting in which everyone can feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe and valued. It creates the framework for personal growth, leading to a more positive mindset. Creating work environments that support our three basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, benefits both the employer and the employees. I have seen firsthand that being in a supportive environment builds a strong sense of self-worth and confidence, which is invaluable as we face new challenges in life.

I never knew the value of a supportive environment. It wasn't until I started building relationships and meeting new people that I began to understand the power of having people who want you to succeed. To all the partner organisations who participate in the Jobs First Programme, our team values a deep connection with you, and we are honoured to walk alongside you as you step towards creating supportive environments.

It is extremely rewarding to see supported employees grow in confidence and the partner organisations that create life changing opportunities that some people thought were not possible until they participated in our Jobs First Programme. It takes courage, hard work, and perseverance to return to work especially given the barriers that many of our supported employees have. Such opportunities have given the supported employees the direction, purpose, and a goal to aim for. It's all about progression and finding a route to fulfil their potential.

These amazing organisations provide environments that are supportive and inspirational backdrops that motivate employees to learn, achieve and succeed. They have created opportunities for little wins and have given people with a homeless background the energy to tackle bigger changes.

Jobs First employees feel valued, supported, and find their work meaningful. A positive culture that values individuals and investing in their skills and development builds the trust and integrity essential to maintain commitment and productivity levels.

On a personal note, my team has been my rock throughout my entire journey at Social Bite. Social Bite operates on a people-centric approach that fosters healthy company culture. Our core company values emanate from each one of its employees to ensure a healthy working environment. A supportive work environment creates a culture where people acknowledge, respect, celebrate, and collaborate with each other. When people show kindness, you feel compelled to pay back or pay forward. When we show a sense of collaboration and kindness, this multiplies ten fold. How powerful!

They have been there to pick me up when things were tough, listened to my ideas and provided me with valuable insight and feedback. My team has been an amazing source of encouragement and strength for me over the two years. I'm eternally grateful for them and their unwavering commitment to empower people and me as a Jobs First Development and Support worker.

However, delivering the Jobs First Programme cannot be done in isolation, and it cannot be done without the right support.

**My job has taught me that listening and working with others collaboratively to lead change is the only way to tackle present and future challenges around homelessness.**

A prime example is the wrap-around support offered through the Jobs First Programme that helps lead the changes we need to make to end homelessness. It will take time, but I firmly believe that by working together with these wonderful organisations, we can deliver our mission to end homelessness.

My advice to others thinking of joining the Jobs First Programme – give it a go. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Everyone deserves a second chance and a safe workplace. Educate your workforce on why you're accessing this pool of talent. Let them share ownership and they'll also be sharing pride and honour.



**Ambreen Malik**  
Jobs First Development and Support Worker

# THE VIEW FROM THE EMPLOYER

## Grant Abercrombie

Head Chef  
Baxterstorey

Throughout the two year period we've been working with Social Bite through the Jobs First scheme it has been a very rewarding and challenging period. Starting off the process we were coming out of COVID and into the unknown with a lot of staff leaving the hospitality industry, so the Jobs First scheme was a win-win for us.

The first two people we had on were very different in terms of their backgrounds and their individual needs. This was a challenge initially figuring out what these were and how best to develop the working relationship. We have, throughout the process, had challenges. Some of the participants were shy and others struggled with English not being their first language, but this is common coming into hospitality which can be very daunting. Over the next few months, it was an eye-opening experience going through the feedback loops and helping with support where we could. This is where we really see not only the benefit of the scheme, but what is for me one of the most rewarding parts of the whole process where the colleague really starts to come out of their shell and start the development process.

There was one person who was I think exempt from this process. He was energetic, confident and very enthusiastic. He very quickly embedded himself as an integral part of the team, boosting the morale and being a very important link between front of house and back of house and was in no time running the fresh made-to-order pizza section by himself which was amazing! There have been some very rewarding points throughout



this process. It has taught me a lot about myself and my team – how we perceive people being a big one, but also the pride in seeing the people who come into this scheme and leave a totally different person, and that's a massive credit to all the help at Social Bite and the Jobs First employees. I'd be lying if I said there weren't low moments throughout this process, when the employees move on to pastures new and continue their development or if, for whatever reason, it doesn't work out because that is a possibility also. This process challenges everyone involved in many ways. I've found it's challenged my team in terms of how they integrate new people but also challenged them to ask questions to make sure the new members are doing ok which, in this day and age, is very important. There are so many high points through this process, too many to mention. The most important one is the pride this whole process gives you in seeing the next stage in the person's development and see them gain confidence and grow throughout the process.



Grant Abercrombie

## Gordon Smith

Sales Director  
Change Waste

As part of our partnership between Change Waste Recycling and Social Bite, we knew we wanted to support Social Bite's Jobs First initiative. This collaboration highlights our commitment to creating opportunities and fostering inclusivity.

The Jobs First initiative follows a recruitment process which includes supporting with CVs and interview skills, shortlisting candidates and highlighting their experience and aspirations.

After successfully completing a two-stage interview process, we employed our first ever Jobs First employee into our team. We welcomed the employee with an office tour and introductions to our leadership and management teams, fostering early connections and a sense of belonging.

To enrich the integration process, we organised a meeting day that combined professional activities and team-building exercises, allowing our team members to connect with each other and actively engage in training, accelerating onboarding and cultivating stronger relationships. This proactive approach aimed to create a supportive and inclusive environment and a swift "get-to-know" phase.



We maintain weekly catch-up meetings with Social Bite to ensure continued success and the employee's continued professional development.

Change Waste Recycling has had a positive experience with the Jobs First Programme and wholeheartedly recommends it.



"Change is inevitable for people who are part of the programme when they join us, if we do not support the candidates in changing direction then we are not doing our role for the candidates. We value all our team and when Social Bite candidates join us, they are no different. They are part of our team/family, and they are valued. We help create a sense of wellbeing, involvement and support network which helps contribute to the team feeling valued and welcomed. It gives candidates the encouragement and helps build confidence in their learning, coaching to gain new skills, not just in the workplace, but external day to day life skills too."

**Melanie Robertson,**  
General Manager at Mitchells & Butlers - Harvester



## Caroline Bacigalupo

Head of Operations  
Heritage Portfolio



Recently joining Heritage Portfolio, we joined forces again with Jobs First Programme Coordinator, Emma Colgan-Blair, and Jobs First Development and Support Worker, Joanna Burns, to launch the Jobs First Programme within the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh.

This wonderful programme has had a number of individuals work with us across both front and back of house roles allowing them opportunities to get back into work while in a supportive environment. The Social Bite team on the ground are extremely patient, informative and engaging with the candidates and also the teams working with them, day to day, across the organisation.

I have had the pleasure of working alongside Social Bite and the Jobs First Programme since it launched two years ago while I was working with Mack and Neil at Baxterstorey and also with sister brand Holroyd Howe.

We had a wonderful opportunity to also launch this unique opportunity, in London, when we opened the Social Bite Café on the Strand.

# BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IN THE WORKPLACE

## We spoke to David, a Jobs First employee, on the importance of building confidence and self esteem throughout employment.

For me to connect to Social Bite wasn't an easy something that came around fast. First of all, I was homeless and I happened to go to the Baptist Methodist Church where they have meetings where homeless people meet. And then there's this lady who got interested when I told her that I'm homeless due to the fact that there was a COVID situation that came around. And so from that instance she asked me a question and said if I'm willing to work. I said yes, and this is when I happened to meet with Alessio [a Jobs First Development and Support Worker at Social Bite] and other organisations as well. But Alessio was one of the people that was actually advising on how to find jobs and things like that. So for me, Social Bite is not just a charity that is just helping people from the background of being homeless, but it's also an organisation that is helping people to find confidence that they can make it back again to their feet.

So it tells me that Social Bite is not something that is should be taken lightly. The job that Social Bite is doing is something very preferential that it... it helps a person to gain their confidence back on the road.

*"You see, people don't understand that people who are homeless out there, they're still good people."*

It's just because of situations that have found them in that state of life. We have people who are engineers, people who have been builders. I've spoken to these homeless people several times, especially when I was in that situation, and you could tell they have the desire, but because situations caught them in a state that they can't find where to sleep and stay. You know in this country if you don't have an address, you can't have a job...so bad. Some people get help when an organisation like Social Bite comes out and tells them you can still make it.

When you're homeless, you're desperate and at some point you don't even know where your next meal is going to come from, not even knowing how you're gonna get through the day. And sometimes you don't even know that there is somewhere that you can get help, like for example benefits if you are a resident in

the country or if you're not. And so at some point there's that desperateness that captures your mind that in the process of it, you fail to think straight.

But once I started, there's a tendency of a person when you feel this is not where I should be. I can rise up from this situation. I can do something better. And as you're doing that and then you find help. So this is how Social Bite comes in. So confidence, let me just let me say this,

*"you can never build confidence on your own. You need someone to talk to."*

You open up to someone, you speak to them how you feeling and how... how things are going on in your life and if they have advice to give to you, they will tell you, you can do this, you can do that, you can get better, you can connect to this before you can have friends. You see one of the things that when you're in that situation, you have lost trust to anybody. But when it comes to building confidence, this is when you need people. You cannot avoid it because anywhere any progress you still need someone to talk to you. So this is how I've built up the confidence of knowing that even though that has happened, I can still find people who can believe in me. That's one thing, someone believing in you, you can do it. It builds your confidence.

My current employer is Andron Facility Management. I've been there since last year and I've worked with them for, yeah, I think 16 months now as we speak, 15 months actually. Yeah. Challenges have been there, but, um, because you've had adjusting through building confidence into interacting and working with people who are not of your same origin and who, you know have their, you know...every company that's what they call a culture conversation which encourages speech in their place. So you have to learn how to interact with those people in order to work with them. So those were lessons that I had to learn. So I had to make sure that my communication is up to standard and how to understand how they communicate too. Because this is how it helped me to build even more confidence to know that in every environment you have to learn to understand, to interpret how people speak and even, you know, understand their body language and everything that is going on so that they don't have to misinterpret what is being said. So these are things that have kept me



# PATRICK'S STORY

growing confidently and knowing and of late now they just like to see me around because they know that I'm becoming more of an excitement for them to work with.

During the period of time while working you also work on yourself as an individual in order to see the working environment and all the aspects that involve working with colleagues in different places. So at some point I wouldn't say I would depend on the employer to build my confidence because of one reason for the employer what he needs is the job getting done and much of the interaction with the employer has been minimal actually but they usually come and check on us to see whether we're doing well. So it's basically the individual yourself as a person who's employed with the company to... to make sure that everything you're doing and interaction with your colleagues is up to standard whereby everything is working to the best. That's how I understand it.

**During our conversation with David, we asked what advice he might have for someone starting the Jobs First Programme for the first time.**

Yeah, what I would say, much of the things is to try to try and build their confidence into understanding they're entering society. Because you know when you're entering, when you're out on the streets, you're not talking to nobody. But now when you're in employment, you're getting into a society of people from different walks of life. So you have to adjust to feed into that environment in order to grow your confidence. Otherwise, if you come from the streets with the attitude that they have had from the streets, you won't be able to manage it to fit the society you're coming into. Because every work environment has got people in their society, their cultural wealth, behaviour, their cultural speech. Some people are good at, you know, they like jokes and you're from the street you don't like jokes. Passing the joking with you means something else, so you have to adjust to fit and then learn way of communication. That's number one, way of communication and then displaying your attitude in how to face challenges that can come around. It's never easy to fit a society. Every workplace has... I don't know how to call it... It's a society of people that are working in that very environment. So, at some point you just have to learn to see it. So, it means that lessons as you start, they don't end. You just need to adjust. That's the main word I have in my head is to adjust from what you've come from, into what you're entering into.

**And finally, we asked David, what does the future look like for you?**

*"I want to give back to society because of what I have had"*

What I have gained from Social Bite and turning me into a person who's resourceful right now. I could give back to society to show that life never ends when everything has gone wrong. You need to revamp your life to understand if you have people to talk to. That's the main point. Because if it wasn't for this, I wouldn't...I would have lost my mind.

But I want to give back and show people that there is always a chance to improve your life in any form. It doesn't have to be that you give up and think that's it. You need, you need to know that there are chances of reviving your life again and putting yourself back on your feet and starting over and even going ahead. We are, by association by, you know, getting into the groups of people that believe in you. Except for me. My future holds this, I need to give back to society as well.

I'm just encouraging Social Bite to stretch out, just stretch out into things like getting recruitment companies under them. Because I...I have a belief when you're nurturing someone from the streets to bring them over and if you have a company that has jobs and it's under Social Bite, I have a belief that people can get better. So for me that's the main thing actually because I've been with Alessio, we talk, I don't even know how many times and I ask questions. But I'm saying Social Bite, as big as it is now, I think it's time for us to have position. Better to have its own recruitment company where it can send people for jobs, that's for sure.



**David**  
Jobs First Employee

**How did you first become aware of Social Bite, and involved in the Jobs First Programme?**

I first became aware of Social Bite through another support worker.

I just came out of long term homelessness. Some jobs are impossible to do when you're in a hostel. Like if you've not got washing facilities or anywhere to cook... When I had somewhere to go back home - then I could focus on looking for a job. That's when I got in touch with Social Bite, because things weren't going too well for me job-wise and I was getting stressed out with the Job Centre.

But as soon as I go with Social Bite and go on the Jobs First Programme - I don't even think I was on the programme a month or two, and I had an interview for the parking attendant job.

**How would you describe the support offered by Social Bite during this time?**

It was on a weekly basis to start with - I was seeing Ambreen. When you've got somebody like Ambreen as your support worker, it just makes you feel like, I didn't annoy anyone about anything work-wise. When I'm at work I try and just focus on what to do when I'm there. And then any anytime I had anything that I was worried about, Ambreen would say just call me and I'll see if I can help you.

Social Bite, everything to do with them and work has been brilliant. If I didn't have Social Bite on my side, I'd probably be out of a job right now, or in one I don't really enjoy. I'm glad I got through the programme and it's got me into a job that is helping me. I'm living my life again.

**In your role now how would you say the support offered through Jobs First differs from any of the places you've worked before?**

When I joined as a parking attendant I felt like it was good that Social Bite were so supportive at making sure that the role or the job suits you, and if you're happy doing it, if your bosses are happy - just make sure everything's all working and fitting together. It's better than going somewhere to start the job and then you're there a week and you're depressed already.

**What advice might you have for anyone who was starting their own journey with Jobs First in any type of employment?**

I would get them to tell Social Bite about everything you've done in the past, what experience you've got, or what you want to learn or be part of. I feel like Social Bite try their best to get people into the role that would suit them.

Jobs First is so much better than a Job Centre. It helps talking. The more that Social Bite is aware of, the more they can help with. Even if you've not had a lot of jobs in the past, you might not be that confident going into a job interview and I feel like Social Bite could help give you confidence.

I feel like I've probably rambled on, but also Social Bite needs to become bigger, helping more people. Because it's a really good advantage to get people into the right role that they need, or what they're looking for.

**What would you tell an employer who might be interested in partnering with Social Bite in the Jobs First Programme?**

I would tell them that it's better going through Social Bite because you've got a good rapport with people you help. You kind of know what's going on in people's lives. I would say to employers I would try and get staff through somewhere like Social Bite because of the support you give people. I just feel like you find things for people that suits them better rather than you need to go for this job because there's nothing else going for you in life and that's it.



**Patrick**  
Jobs First Employee



# CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY IN JOBS FIRST

## Jobs First Development and Support Worker, Joanna Burns, talks about the importance of connection and community within Jobs First.

I believe that connection and community is something that every person looks for. I think that everyone can agree that if we can get better at creating this within our society, the world would be a better place. It might be that a lot of us take for granted the community that we have around us, whether that is family, friends, colleagues, or neighbours. These relationships give us love and support. For people that have experienced homelessness, a loss or absence of these relationships can be a cause and/or a symptom of that experience.

### **A lack of support system and community can impact every aspect of someone's life including their ability to maintain work.**

My favourite part of my job as Jobs First Development and Support Worker is the relationships I get to build with the people that I support. It is an honour to be allowed into someone's life, learn more about them and their experiences, and empower them to make positive changes. The trust that person puts in us is huge and it can take a long time to build the relationship. What makes Jobs First special is the time we are able to put in to make that happen. As the relationships with the support worker and the employer grows, we want the person to be able to carry that past the programme and build their community outside it.

Jobs First is built on the triangle of trust and love and support between the employee, the employer, and the support worker. I see the relationship the employee

builds up over the fifteen months as a net that can hold them when things are tougher. It's also there to celebrate the wins with the person and reaffirm their faith that there are people out there that care about them.

### **In being there for someone for fifteen months, we are assisting them to see that community and trust in others is possible.**

The relationships I have built working on Jobs First have had a profoundly positive impact on my life as well. Every day, I get to witness the unwavering good in people and the passion they have for making change in themselves and their communities. As we celebrate two years of Jobs First, we celebrate the network of relationships that have been created through the programme and the impact those have on all of us involved.

### **We hope that these relationships can help us on our mission to end homelessness.**

## DANNY'S STORY

### **How did you come to take part in the Jobs First Programme?**

OK, so I found out about social bite through my support worker when I was in the hospital and she got in contact with Social Bite, and then shortly after that I met with Emma. And then she was going through the options where, how, to get employment and what kind of job would suit me and what I was kind of looking for, after, it wasn't even that long, I think it was like a few months or something, after that we found something at the Waverley Gate, which I was quite eager to do because I was just looking for a job that I could just get started off with after no longer being at the hospital. So, I found that having just a job as a cleaner would be ideal for me to get something to start off with. I've been working there for just over a year now.

And then I got introduced to [Jobs First Development and Support Worker] Joanna, who's been helping me for, it's been about a year now. She's really good. She's really good at her job. She's really nice to me, and she comes in and helps me and asks me questions about what I want to gain for like the next part of my life and stuff like that. And we've just talked about like possible future goals that I might want to achieve, just stuff like that. And then the programme's been really helpful to me because like I said, like the kindness of strangers, people I've never met before. It's nice to know that there's people out there that will just help you, like, get back on your feet and try and like, become a productive means in society and get yourself, your foot in the door, so to speak. So, I mean, I'm really grateful to everything that they've done for me so far.

### **You mentioned kindness. What has that meant to you over the past year?**

Kindness is really important to me because, like I grew up in an area where kindness can be rare, like it's quite a tough neighbourhood where I'm from, and kindness, like I said, it's very rare. Like you never really see it. So, when we do get kindness, especially for people who are growing up in the neighbourhood, and like being in hospital as well, like I mean there was kindness in there as well. But I think kindness is one of the best things you can get someday in life, especially if it's somebody you don't know. (It) restores your faith and humanity and people that you know. People who are kind to people and who do things without asking, they just do what they believe is right.

I had a really, really nice moment where Joanna, a couple of weeks ago we were sitting there talking, and she was saying that my story would maybe be worthwhile to write some of it down. Then, like, who knows, I could maybe write a book? And she was just being really nice to me about everything I have overcome with my time in hospital and getting into the programme and then like working with you's and like how far I've come and stuff like that. She showed me a great deal of kindness and support and encouragement like possible future goals that I might be able to achieve. And even if I don't you know I'll always take the kindness that I've had from Social Bite for the rest of my life, you know, and whenever I feel doubt that there's no kindness in the world that I always remember that I was shown kindness in my life, you know.

### **How have you found adjusting to the workplace and the support within it?**

Andron are really great. They are a great company I work for, and I'm really blessed to have, really good. And coworkers and the members of the team, and they've all been really welcoming and a lot of them know about my reasons for being in hospital and about my mental health and stuff like that, and now they're completely supportive. I felt that when I was in hospital that people treated me a certain way because of my mental health and it's not like that at Andron. They just treat me like a regular Joe, you know, just like everybody else. And that's quite, that's basically all I've ever wanted.



Joanna Burns  
Jobs First Development  
and Support Worker

# MK'S STORY

## How did you come to know about the Jobs first Programme?

Well, I was going to Social Bite. Then Babs [Social Bite's Innovation Lead] asked me to go around to Vesta now and again. So, I was in the restaurant Vesta one day and Babs come across and said is anybody looking for a job. And I went: "me". And then next thing I ken, I was up having an interview with Scotia's CEO Gordon and then I got took on. Well, basically I went straight after Babs to see Gordon. I think it was a day or two later I spoke to Stuart on the phone on like video call and then started.

## How long have you been with Scotia UK?

That would be about a year and eight months. It's brilliant. Aye, I'm loving it – to get a job, learn new things, travelling, making a decent wage. Some weeks I can be away, like sometimes months, like five days come back for the weekend, five days come back for the weekend. Then maybe no go travelling for about two weeks. All depends. (Was just) down in Cardiff at the weekend, stayed in a Premier Inn. They (the organisation) pay for it. They pay for meals and that. I've seen London that many times in the past years – London, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, up north.

## So now that you've been on the programme nearly two years, what does the future look like for you?

It's a small company but I'm hoping to progress by getting my driving sorted. It's been good just being able to save and look forward to doing new things.

## And what's the big thing you've been looking forward to and working towards?

Oh, my boat! My boat, aye. My wee boat to live on still in the canal. I've been looking for some boats just lately like. I don't think I could ever save up for a boat before. Because I was always spending money here, there and everywhere, I mean. But now aye, with money, enough money for the boat and enough money for probably the berth as well, yeah.

## What is a typical week in this new job like?

It all depends if I'm in the workshop or not. So, if I'm in the workshop I'm building up mobile trolleys, making up orders, checking orders. If I am away, it is installation. It's just basically putting up the cameras, wiring things up, vital signs, boxes and things like that. It's medical observational training, that's really SMOTS. SMOTS stands for Scotia Medical Observational Training Systems.

## How would you describe being in this role?

Brilliant. Probably amazing.

## How have you found the support you have received from Social Bite through the Jobs First Programme?

Oh, it's been brilliant. I mean, it's really if I did have a problem Ambreen would have been there, or somebody would be there. I think it was every week at one point and then two weeks. When I was away I could get support by a phone call or over like a video call or something.

## How would you describe the Job's First Programme to someone who knows nothing about it?

Well, it got me a job. I don't think I'd actually be doing what I'm doing because I had, like, I knew about cameras and things that I've done security in the past, but it was like a totally new thing to me. They actually showed me how to pick up no problem. I mean, they're really good that way.

Before that I was in a hotel at back there, around St John's Rd before that I was like, sleeping in a tent for about 8 months a year. But I was working at the same time. I was going in building sites, putting show houses and things like that and building sites and everything, so I was about, travelling as well. I was coming home everyday for that though. To explain it (Jobs First Programme) if somebody asked me what I thought about it, I'd just say just go for it. [It gives] stability, learning new skills, everything.

# FRANNY'S STORY

At the time of writing this I have successfully completed the Jobs First programme with Social Bite and have now been in employment for over a year and been in my own tenancy for the past two and a half years. The hope is that by writing down my thoughts and experiences of my involvement with Social Bite it might help somebody who's in the position I was in and hearing my story might help them find their own path.

I first became involved with Social Bite when I'd just come out of a Christian rehab the second time. I'd been in rehab and if I'm honest I had no idea about what I was meant to do next. I felt a bit lost but I was working with Glasgow City Mission and one of the guys there told me about Social Bite, I'd heard of them and used their drop in to get fed when I was homeless but I'd never engaged with them. I was lost and I needed some kinda direction so I said aye, I'll go see what they've got to offer. So I made the appointment and went to see them and told them where I was at in life and that I needed some direction and they told me about the Jobs First Programme they run. If I'm honest I just showed up when I was meant to and they got me a job in a restaurant which was something I'd never done and I'd no idea how to get a job never mind work in a kitchen! But here I am, more than a year later still employed and doing most of the jobs in the kitchen and I live in one of the employee flats. As much as life might not be exactly how I want it I've managed to get this far without ending up homeless or back in prison and I know if I never had the job, the home, then I definitely would have ended up with my life in a mess again. All it took was to see the people in Social Bite. As for the future like I said, there's still a lot in my life I'd like to change but stuff I don't want to change is having the job and I've got the people at Social Bite to thank for that.

# BEHIND THE JOBS FIRST PROGRAMME

## Emma Colgan-Blair, Jobs First Programme Coordinator, explains how the Jobs First Programme was built and what it might look like in the future.

When I saw the advert for Jobs First Programme coordinator, I could see the importance of employability within homelessness and really wanted to get my teeth into that. I understood the trauma-informed approach and had put that into practice with relationships and people throughout my career, but not in terms of being able to walk side-by-side with employers.

What was so often readily available for people accessing employment was things like employability workshops that run for a set number of weeks. These support people to create a CV and practice interview skills but don't look at participants as a person and the barriers they face, or at confidence and self-esteem.

To me, the most important part of getting back into work is the ongoing support whilst in work. What sets the Jobs First Programme apart is providing support throughout employment to ensure sustainability in the workplace and the value that will bring to the individual. I knew I wanted to be a part of shaping that.

It's brilliant to be able to walk alongside the employer, the people involved in the programme and the charity partner. You get to be educated about that industry and see what Jobs First might mean for them and their workplace. It's helped me to think differently and understand what I need to build for myself to properly support potential employees.

It can be challenging to manage multiple relationships and expectations at the same time across the people we support, employer partners and charity partners. But it's also what makes the job so exciting. You go along with each participant on their journey and ride each wave of emotions with them, as well as your own. That can include joy, sorrow, frustration, contentment and excitement – sometimes all in the one day.

Jobs First is all about collaboration and I think that's what we do particularly well. What really gave this a kickstart in the beginning was all the great relationships that existed in Social Bite through the everyday work and previous support received through campaigns, projects and programmes.

The collaborative process has allowed us to make sure that we're getting the right criteria for the programme, engaged charity partners, and the right employer partners. We focus on what it might mean for someone who's experienced homelessness and for your team as well.

It's not just about me and the support worker, it's about how the team work together. What I love about our team is that it's so diverse. Our job takes so many different

skills, whether that's preparation with candidates, building relationships, or creating supportive environments. I know the team can focus on that one-to-one support with people, which has allowed me to focus on our employer partners and setting that up right, as well as engaging with more charity partners.

I really want the team to be empowered and grow – grow in their own way, but also grow for the programme. So I reflect with the team and I'll ask, what's your take on the situation? What help do you need? How are we going to move forward? What's great about the employer reviews every six months is we've got that space to talk about the highlights but also what's been difficult and what might be improved through the relationship between the employer and Social Bite and the candidates as well.

I think the goal has always been to get the government to recognise the Jobs First pipeline. And I do believe it's achievable. We'd love it to be common practice that we're taking people who've experienced homelessness and starting to really understand what they might have been through. Sometimes people think "those doors are closed to me" and they're very much not. I'd say, "the doors are open. Come and listen to what the programme does." We can link you in with people that are involved in the programme to hear success stories.

For employer partners, I say really think about your recruitment. You've got people who are keen to work, they're ready to work and they're work ethic is second to none. For me it's a no brainer, but you've got to make sure that you have the right line manager who's ready to drive the programme forward and that you've got the right resources. Because I think if you put it in time and effort in the beginning, and make sure that the training's right and the people are right, it's going to come back for you tenfold.

In October 2023, Jobs First celebrated its second anniversary and all the wonderful things that we have achieved together throughout the last two years. Huge congratulations and a massive thank you to all our strong and resilient Jobs First employees, past and present, and to our wonderful employer and charity partners, the team at Social Bite and to the most amazing Jobs First team.

Cheers to two years!

*The Social Bite team*



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