HERITAGE
VOLUNTEERING
GROUP

PATHWAYS TO WORK AT BARNSLEY MUSEUMS

A HVG CASE STUDY BY BEN MARSH, BARNSLEY MUSEUMS

PATHWAYS TO WORK

BARNSLEY MUSEUMS HELPS PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

By Ben Marsh, Programme Development Manager: Volunteering, Barnsley Museums

The Pathways to Work program was launched after in-depth research showed that 42,300 people in Barnsley weren't in paid work, or looking for a job, due to their personal circumstances. Citing health, caring responsibilities and low qualification levels as reasons, it highlighted that if these things could be supported 7 out 10 people would happily be in work or actively looking.

Initial discussions between Barnsley Museums and Barnsley Council's Employment and Skills Team showed volunteering was a key part of the pathway but needed more investment, so the Council agreed to fund a Volunteer Coordinator post. This allowed the Volunteering Team to deliver a pilot project where the museum acted as a referral point for those who needed support to build their confidence and skills before continuing their journey into paid employment.

Born from this, Pathways to Work offers employment and skills support for individuals who are neurodivergent, have SEND needs or face health barriers that make it difficult to find work. Its ambition is to create better routes into employment, so that everyone has access to the benefits that good work brings.

Pathways to Work gained national recognition and our volunteers got to speak with then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall MP, highlighting the important role volunteering has had in helping job readiness and they were then invited tobe part of the national review of Pathways to Work, with Sir Charlie Mayfield, former John Lewis, Chairman.

Since the launch of Pathways, dozens of volunteers have been referred to Barnsley Museums to gain valuable experience, and Elsecar's volunteer hours are now at their highest level, having doubled since the programme began. Through this partnership we've been able to offer paid training opportunities, deepen internal relationships, and clearly demonstrate the power of volunteering in supporting people's development.