

## STAFFORD CENTRE OPEN DAY

A couple of days before the Open Day, I was going to phone to say that I wouldn't be coming in because of my nerves. When I came up to help with the salad prep in the kitchen, I soon relaxed and got 'into the zone' – the 'Stafford Centre zone'. I thought "there's nowhere I'd rather be, than helping at the Open Day."

When Michele said that it was only half an hour to go, I started freaking out a bit. I started thinking about how many people might turn up, so that was on my mind quite a lot. I was a bit scared about showing people around the place because I'd never done anything like that before in my life – it made me feel a bit odd. But once the people started coming in and mixing, I calmed down again and didn't feel so stressed and anxious. Once I started showing people around the place, I got into the zone again and 'got the hang of it'. I could have done it all day!

Some of the people who came in looked as if they didn't know anything about the place. They had come in to see what we did – as far as I'm concerned, the focal point of this place is the people, that's what makes it tick. If I didn't have the things that I'm good at here, it would be like a car without an engine. I showed people my artwork – one woman was totally gobsmacked, but in a nice way – she said I had a hidden talent, especially my sketching. I was shaking with emotion when she said that, and her son said my work was awesome. She said she wants to come back and see some more of my work. When I work, it's like having a premonition – I have to get it down on paper.

As soon as I come in to the Centre, it's like a switch goes on. I deal with things better, and have a lot of positive energy. I feel I am capable of doing things – I feel that I have accomplished a lot, and it's like I'm a different person. I feel part of a family in here now – I am very comfortable although I have had to push myself when I've been down. I'm a fighter, and the Stafford Centre makes me feel that I will continue to be like that. The staff are always here to help and support me to achieve this. I want to thank Michele for giving me the opportunity to be a volunteer at the Open Day – it feels like a real achievement, and something that I can build upon in the future.

statement from Jackie W.