

**CS018**

**October 2010**

**Matthew gets his much-needed confidence boost**

Matthew Shaw, from Wolverhampton, was struggling to find a job when he heard about an employment course being offered by Zebra Access.

The 24 year-old, who is deaf, had volunteered previously at the Zebra Access' sister company in the media department and was keen to take any training that might boost his chances of finding employment.

Zebra Access, who received a community grant worth nearly £12,000 from West Midlands Councils' and Skills Funding Agency's regional European Social Fund programme, ran the course over a 12 week period and assisted 10 deaf learners.

"I found the course really useful because it was tailored specifically for British Sign Language users. I've found visits to job centres in the past very stressful, and not particularly helpful as there is often no-one there who understands sign language.

"People are often unaware that British Sign Language is an entirely separate language to English, so many deaf people struggle with reading and writing English. Zebra Access provided assistance with CV writing, application forms and explained what rights and benefits we are entitled to, and how to apply for them."

At the beginning of the course, all participants took part in mock interviews. At the conclusion of the course these were repeated in order to chart the participants' progress.

After the completion of the course, Matthew was offered a job at sister organisation Zebra Uno, a media company. Matthew is currently completing his 6 month probation as a technical assistant and is responsible for editing films.

Marilyn Bueno del Carpio, director at Zebra, said: "Matthew's confidence has really grown over the past few months, as has the confidence of all our participants. Deaf people can often feel excluded from

society and ignored. Zebra's role is to assist deaf people in any way it can, and to help boost their skills and, ultimately, their chances of finding work."

ENDS

For more information about the region's ESF co-financing programme, please call Bailey Lamburn, Laura Reid or Michaela Maryon on 0121 456 3199 or email [esfpr@smarts.co.uk](mailto:esfpr@smarts.co.uk).

## Notes to editors

### **European Social Fund 2007 – 13**

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.

The ESF programme forms part of the wider European Structural Funds programme running from 2007 to 2013, through which the UK will receive an anticipated £8bn of European funding.

In the West Midlands, the Skills Funding Agency, the West Midlands Councils and Jobcentre Plus are working with partners to deliver a wide range of projects designed to promote regional employment and skills objectives.

The Skills Funding Agency and the West Midlands Councils have over £200m to invest in:

- Improving the employability of inactive and unemployed people
- Tackling the barriers faced by young people not in education, employment or training
- Assisting offenders into work, education or training
- Providing small grants to the third sector to support the aims of ESF
- Supporting people experiencing redundancy to retrain and find new jobs
- Raising the qualifications and skills of workers to improve their job prospects and productivity

Government Office West Midlands

Jobcentre Plus

Skills Funding Agency

West Midlands Councils