

how my life changed

“Redundancy at 55 was so scary, but now I’m looking at a whole new future that feels exciting”

Christine Maskill, 55, is divorced and has a son at university. She lives in York.

When I received a letter saying I’d been made redundant, I was shocked. I couldn’t imagine not working, and with bills, a mortgage and a son at university, I couldn’t afford not to. I’m divorced, so I didn’t have a partner to fall back on. I’d always worked, but at 55 and with the economic downturn, I was worried about finding another job.

I loved the job I’d lost, too. I’d been an executive director for a government-funded company called Providers In Partnership and I was responsible for 24 training providers in the north Yorkshire area. Every day was different – I travelled around the county on meetings, assisted on training days, and was in charge of budgets. Then, last Christmas, the company lost its funding and couldn’t afford to operate without it.

It was a scary time. I lost weight and often woke up in the night worrying about where the money was going to come from. I was willing to put my hand to anything, but was limited to what I could apply for because of the set outgoings I had each month. I cut back as much as I could, but my mortgage was a constant worry. A friend suggested going self-employed and, because I was desperate, I agreed to look into it.

I contacted Business Link and was amazed at the level of support they offered to people setting up on their own. I didn’t have large amounts of savings and had only got statutory redundancy, but I discussed this with a Business Link advisor and they gave me a list of viable options. Selling a service instead of a product was the obvious option, and meant I could work from home with just the cost of setting up a website and printing business cards. I decided to offer a review service for companies’ customer service, and would provide advice on how they could improve – crucial for boosting business during a recession.



WHERE I AM NOW

I went on free Business Link workshops to brush up on marketing and finance, and also went to my local Job Centre Plus to see if I could claim any funding. I never realised there was so much help out there. I probably would have done it sooner if I’d known! I’ve been attending networking events to publicise my service, and I’ve had a lot of interest. I miss the security of a monthly salary, but I’m excited about my future and am determined to make it a success. customerfeedbackservices.co.uk w&h

PHOTOGRAPHS LIZ McAULAY HAIR & MAKE-UP IAN McINTOSH, CARLOS PALMA STYLING JILLIE MURPHY CHRISTINE WEARS DRESS, KALEIDOSCOPE, CARDIGAN, NOUGAT, HEELS, MARISOTA, GOLD BANGLE, KLESHNA