

Koestler Arts

Ex-Prisoner Exhibition Host Testimonial

In the year prior to being hired as a Koestler Exhibition Host I had applied for around 1400 jobs with no success. I was low on confidence and disheartened; I thought things would never change. I had never heard of Koestler and didn't have any experience in the arts when I applied for the role, but thought I might as well give it a try. I was grateful to get an interview and was taken aback by how kindly I was treated by staff. For the first time in a long time, a potential employer looked beyond my past mistakes. When they offered me the job it felt amazing.

Having been out of work for two years, and with no experience or knowledge about art, I was extremely nervous attending training, but the warmth shown by everyone at Koestler immediately put me at ease. The training was excellent and delivered at a pace which was manageable and understanding of the fact that this role was new to all of us. We were given a lot of information about the exhibited artworks, which made the job so much easier. The lack of knowledge I had about art no longer seemed to matter. The whole delivery and content of the training was different in that so often, having been through the criminal justice system, you feel employers and society are setting you up for failure. Koestler was unique in setting you up for success!

As the exhibition went on my confidence grew and I developed skills which I had both lost and never had. I was able to speak to the public about the artwork, drawing on my life experiences and those of the artists themselves. It was truly moving to see I had made the public have an emotional connection with the artists and their artwork, something I would never have imagined I could possibly do before I got the job.

For so long, it felt like my life would not change; that I would never make my family or friends proud of me again, that wider society would never give me a second chance. Through working at Koestler this has all changed. I was able to show my family and friends the skills and confidence given to me by working for Koestler, as well as the public enjoying my tours and giving me positive feedback and warm wishes for success in the future. I see myself differently; I have gained some pride back in myself, and some of the faith my family and friends had in me has been restored.

As a result of working for Koestler I was able to get another job and have hope for the future. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity that it has given me as finally my life is going in the right direction. It has meant everything to me.

- 2018 Ex-Prisoner Exhibition Host