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**JONAS McCARTHY**

Jonas was a PAY intern at the Western Cape Department of Social Development from 2012 to 2013. He took some time to tell us about his story:

“My name is Jonas McCarthy I am 20 years old. I was born in Hanover Park, but was raised in Mitchell’s Plain by my wonderful adoptive parents , Thelma (aged 70) and Vincent (in his 80’s) and their 6 children.

“A victim of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), I was expected not to live very long after my birth, and if I did, it was predicted, I would have such an extent of brain damage that I would not be able to live a “normal” life.

“Well, both those predictions were shattered under the loving care of my adoptive family, and God’s grace. I enjoyed a normal school career and matriculated in 2011 from Southern Suburbs Youth Academy.

“After hearing about the PAY Project, and after a couple of nail-biting weeks, I was informed that I had been selected to be a PAY intern! I started my PAY journey at the Department of Social Development. Some of my duties included doing general office admin and data capturing. At the end of my PAY internship in March 2013, I was at home for about 2 weeks until the Pay Project coordinator contacted me and asked if I was interested in a learnership opportunity in the short-term insurance industry. She prepared me and took me for an interview. I was successful! That was for 12 months (2013 to 2014). One of the requirements of the learnership was practical working experience,which I completed at the Learning Cape Initiative (LCI).

“At the end of my learnership, and having identified my potential, the LCI offered me a position as an admin clerk. I accepted the offer. They took interest in my career fields and mentored me and I am currently still working at LCI. I am learning a lot and getting valuable experience. The staff in general takes a lot of effort to help mentor and guide me.

“This programme has not only given me direction, but also new meaning to my life. I am more marketable, thanks to the Jobs Fund via the Pay Project and Learning Cape Initiative. It has changed my way of life, not only financially but emotionally. I can now take care of my adopted parents and in a small way give back some of what they gave me.”