

careermag

FOR INCLUSION

Get inspired to offer work experience to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)



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In this issue

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CareTrade - The Autism Project transforming lives

DFN Project SEARCH - finding solutions

British Dyslexia Association - celebrating 50 years

LNSEN - neurodiversity in the workplace

Top tips for employers on supporting young people with SEND into work

.....and much more!



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Issue 4 | January 2023

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'Working with a SEND school frankly filled me with fear! Like most, I had preconceived ideas about what this entailed. Once you start working in a school and can see the difference you are making, there is no better reward.'

Richard Osborne, Enterprise Adviser & CEO of Business Data Group Ltd



Issue 4 January 2023

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About

A free publication, Careermag for Inclusion is published by Careermag Ltd and supported by the Careers & Enterprise Company. The target audience is employers who do not currently work with young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These publications are designed to show it can be done, give inspirational examples of success and support to get started.

Design

We use **OpenDyslexic** for the headers and Helvetica for the body copy as recommended by the British Dyslexia Association to ensure we are inclusive for the 10 per cent of the UK population that are dyslexic, and for visually impaired readers.

Subscribe

Subscribe to Careermag for Inclusion to receive regular free issues.

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We welcome your input! Please get in touch if you have any questions or something to contribute.

Contact the Editor at info@careermag.co.uk



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Welcome.....

...to this, the fourth issue of Careermag for Inclusion.

This issue is packed full of inspiring articles and case studies from organisations working tirelessly to promote and facilitate inclusion in the workplace and equip, inspire and support people in their journey into work.

We take a look at the work of CareTrade, which gives young people with autism opportunities to develop their skills through hospitality and arts projects. Worcestershire makes a welcome addition to the magazine, with a feature about their Passport to Retail and Passport to Hospitality schemes.

This issue delves into the world of construction with Wilmott Dixon Construction. We also hear from leading national organisations Disability Rights UK, DFN Project SEARCH, Ambitious About Autism, ERSA and the British Dyslexia Association, whilst LNSEN (the London Neurodiversity SEND Network) highlights the benefits your business can expect if you become autism friendly.

Finally, in an important feature, we hear from a member of the CEC Youth Advisory Group. Emma Berwick, who identifies as having dyspraxia, gives you her top tips for employers on better supporting people into jobs.

I hope you find something in this issue which will interest and inspire!

Marion Fleetwood
Editor - Careermag for Inclusion



Contents

- 02 **Become an Enterprise Adviser**
- 04 **Foreword - David Forbes Nixon OBE**
- 05 **Ambitious About Autism** Helping employers recruit and retain autistic talent
- 06 **Worcestershire Careers Hub** Passports to success
- 08 **Disability Rights UK** Luke's story - accessing work through an apprenticeship
- 10 **CareTrade** Developing skills and confidence
- 12 **DFN Project SEARCH** Showing internships work!
- 14 **London Neurodiversity SEND Network** Why your business should be autism friendly
- 16 **Wilmott Dixon Construction** A disability confident employer
- 18 **Emma Berwick (CEC YAG member)** gives her top tips
- 20 **British Dyslexia Association** Marking 50 years of campaigning
- 22 **ERSA** Celebrating disability confident businesses
- 25 **Access to Work with the DWP**
- 26 **Useful links and resources**

Foreword

I was driven to set up a charitable foundation 8 years ago and then DFN Project SEARCH 4 years ago due to the lack of employment opportunities for my son Charlie.

I now spend every day engaging with businesses and organisations about how they can diversify and improve their workforce.

Though the UK has made welcome progress on the diversity agenda in recent years, disability feels like the final frontier.

There are approximately 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK. Yet only 5.1% are in secure, full time paid employment, compared to 80% of their peers.

There are so many young, ambitious young adults who can offer employers so much yet are being prevented from accessing jobs due to stigma, prejudice, or inadequate support.

We must find ways to support and promote this talent in the workplace.

Employing people with a learning disability is not just the altruistic thing to do, it's good for the economy and its great business practice.

The young people we support can help address today's skills shortages. Indeed, with the opportunity and the right training, the 1 million disabled adults of working age could easily fill a lot of the 1.4 million unfilled jobs currently in the hospitality, care and hospital sectors among others.

At DFN Project SEARCH we have launched the #InclusionRevolution campaign to encourage organisations to be higher-aiming and diversify their recruitment practices. We are also part of a consortium, alongside the National Development Team for Inclusion and British Association for Supported Employment, commissioned by the Government to double the number of Supported Internships per year by 2025.

I dream of the day when Charlie, and all others with a learning disability or autism spectrum condition, are not shaped by their disability but their skills and experience. They have so much to offer the workplace. Let's stop wasting their talent.



David Forbes-Nixon OBE
Executive Chair and Founder
DFN Project SEARCH



Supporting autistic young people into the workplace

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people. We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions. We started as a school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Only 29% of autistic people are in full or part-time employment, one of the lowest rates of employment of all disabled groups. Yet our research has found that the vast majority of autistic young people – over 70% - want to work.

This is a big waste of potential and talent and it also means businesses, and the wider economy, are missing out on the huge benefits that autistic employees can bring to the workplace.

Autism affects the way a person communicates and experiences the world around them. It is often described as a 'hidden' disability because you can't tell someone is autistic just by looking at them. Every autistic person is different, so to enable each person to thrive in the workplace it's vital to get to know the individual. By finding out your autistic employee's unique strengths, or understanding situations they may find challenging, you can make small adjustments that will enable them to thrive.

Ambitious about Autism's Employ Autism Programme is helping employers recruit and retain autistic talent. The programme offers young autistic people the opportunity to undertake a paid work experience placement, enabling them to gain valuable insight into work environments. Simultaneously, we work with line managers and recruitment teams to increase their understanding of autism and show them how to make adjustments to working practices that will support autistic employees.

We've also developed a free Transition to Employment toolkit to support those working with autistic young people to understand their needs and help them onto the job ladder, or into further training or education. It includes resources for employers, careers professionals and young autistic people themselves.

Rigid recruitment processes can be a major barrier preventing autistic people from showcasing their skills to potential employers. For example, differences in how some autistic candidates communicate can make it difficult for them to maintain eye contact during interviews – or answer unexpected, open or figurative questions. We work with employers to help them adapt the process so they are able to get the best out of their candidates, such as offering more time during interviews or providing questions in advance.



Nicole Curtin, Employ Autism Programme Manager at Ambitious about Autism

Since Employ Autism began, we've seen fantastic results, both for our young autistic candidates and employers. Often adjustments put in place to support autistic employees have a positive impact on the entire workforce – with other employees feeling more confident and comfortable disclosing personal needs at work. Increasing understanding of people with different needs can help foster an inclusive culture that ensures all feel welcome and understood.

To find out more about Employ Autism visit:
www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Download our free
[Transition to Employment toolkit](#)

Inspiring Inclusivity in Worcestershire

Worcestershire LEP Careers Hub have been working tirelessly to develop and support meaningful and creative resources that will support the teaching of sector based hard and soft skills through their very thought out and extensive Passport 2 Industry series. So far the Worcestershire Hub have created resources covering two industry sectors with the intention to develop further sectors covering a wider range of entry level employment opportunities.

Following a heartfelt conversation with the assistant head and careers lead at Wyre Forest School, Rebekah Thompson stressed there was a lack of routes into employment for students with additional learning needs and asked if there a way as a Careers Hub we could support this.

Working with the resources and facilities which the school has in place, the Worcestershire LEP concluded that Hospitality would be a great sector to look at initially. The SEND Enterprise Coordinator Hannah Strong took the lead on developing and crafting together a set of 'Plug and Play' inclusive lesson plans and resources. A small working group was created to look over the roles within hospitality and how the skills needed within these roles could be covered in a school environment and support students to enable them to progress into work experience, volunteering and hopefully employment.

The following 4 areas of hospitality were covered in the resource to allow for a wide range of student preference and ability, this also allowed for links to other career opportunities. Housekeeping, Front of House, Grounds and Maintenance and food and beverage. Minimal equipment is needed to deliver the 4 areas of learning allowing teachers to deliver with minimal preparation time.



Quotes from Wyre Forest School - Passport to Hospitality

'I liked the virtual tour of the hotel, it brought back memories of living in Bristol' Ashley Student

'The Whole class were really engaged in the learning about different hospitality skills, we linked it to our work experience at our own Blossom Tree Café' Rosie Staff member

'The virtual tours were good and very valuable for further discussion' Jo staff member

'I liked the photos of the different job roles as it showed different jobs you can do in hospitality' Justin Student

Quote from Joel Whitehouse previous Recruitment lead at Farncombe Estate:

'I have been involved with the Passport to Hospitality after being approached by Hannah. The hospitality industry has so much to offer and frustratingly, people with additional needs are often overlooked and I wanted to change this perception.'

The Passport to Hospitality is essential to make students aware of the opportunities in the industry, but also to give them the employability skills and confidence to pursue opportunities once they have finished their studies.

To ensure the information covered was up to date and relative to current roles within the hospitality sector. The Worcestershire LEP had the delight of working with Joel Whitehouse, People and resourcing manager, from Farncombe Estate. Joel shared his expertise, knowledge, and provided feedback throughout the development of the resources. He also pledged Farncombe's continued support, agreeing to allowing students to visit and develop their skills through observation and taster sessions. Worcestershire LEP continued to reach out to local businesses to join the growing list of employers pledging to give students a real-life interaction by working within the Hospitality sector.

Following on from the success of Passport to Hospitality Hannah went on to create the Passport to Retail, this resource was launched in September 2022.

Realising the potential of the project feedback was obtained by a variety of end user who felt this resource could be utilised further as a formal qualification. Kelly Dillon from the Careers & Enterprise Company introduced the Inspiring Worcestershire Careers Hub with NOCN to explore the possibility of mapping their resources to NOCN's current 'Preparing for Learning or Employment' entry level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications. The ability to allow this learning to be registered as a qualification would provide students with much needed and essential access to a sector qualification supporting their preparation for leaving school

Worcestershire LEP are pleased to be involved with the continued development of resources which allow students to gain valuable knowledge and skills. Resources like these provide students with a head start and support their preparation for a Life Beyond School. Worcestershire LEP and Worcestershire County Council are continuing to explore further opportunities to develop activities and programmes which ensure inclusive employment opportunities are available across the county.

Useful Links:

Passport to Retail
[resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/
resources/passport-retail](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/passport-retail)

Passport to Hospitality
[resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/
resources/passport-hospitality](https://resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/passport-hospitality)

Case study

Summer 2021

Wyre Forest School

Working at Blossom Tree Café | 9 students



Hospitality Aims

- To allow students to learn about the hospitality sector prior to working in a hospitality (café) setting BM4
- To gain work experience and develop skills in hospitality BM6
- To gain employability skills - teamwork, health and safety at work, following instructions and enterprise BM4 and BM6

Hospitality Activity Details

- To apply for job roles in the hospitality setting
- To experience these job roles in a work setting: Cook | Cook's Assistant | Cashier | Waiter | Kitchen Runner
- To run a community café one day per week
- To interact with the community

Impact

'I have got better at listening and remembering customers orders'

'I enjoyed making drinks at the café because it was a challenge'

'It has helped me to be more independent and to cook different food for customers. It's real life and it's not pretend because you have to talk to real customers'

'I have learnt what it's like to get a real job and how easy it is to get one'

'I have followed instructions well at Blossom Tree Café and I now have a job in a café where I live'

'I love serving customers as a waiter and making the cafés spotless and COVID free'

'I think the cafe is good at building up your confidence to speak to new people'

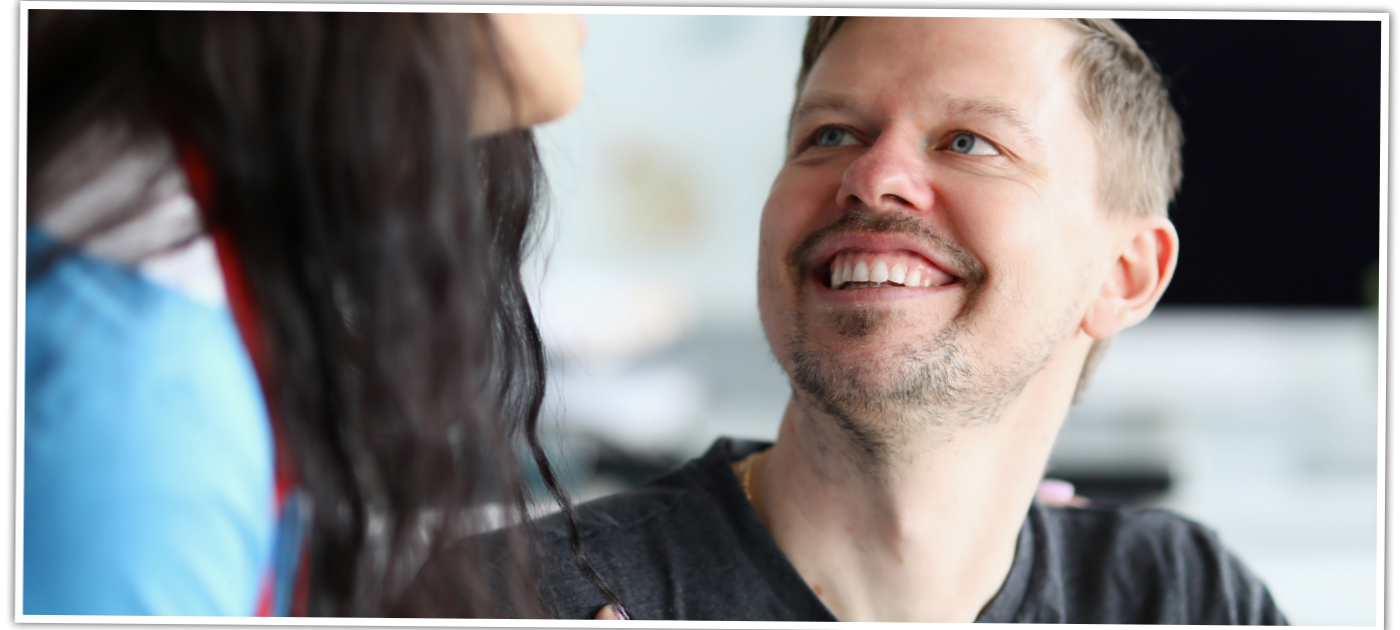
Doing an apprenticeship is a great way to gain work experience and learn new skills. Apprentices earn a salary, get training and work towards a nationally recognised qualification.

They are available for a wide range of job roles across many different industries. Almost any type of apprenticeship can be made accessible, and support is available while you learn and work.

Luke did a Junior Project Management apprenticeship and now has a full-time job as a content researcher in the same company. Working for a company that specializing in disability technology, Luke says “I can use my disability as an advantage” Luke uses Access to Work, which allows him to be as independent and do the best job possible.

Disabled individuals often still face barriers to work and can therefore feel anxious about joining the job market, but there is support.

“I can safely say that without the Access to Work grant, I would not be where I am today in my career. It has given me the freedom and ability to be judged solely on my ability to do my job and not because of my disability.”



Here are some further resources and services for supporting disabled young people into work

Disability Rights UK Helpline for students, apprentices and trainees: Offers information and advice on topics including applying to college, university, and apprenticeships; telling people about your disability; financial assistance; how to resolve any disagreements.
0330 995 0414 (11am-1pm Tues and Thurs),
Students@disabilityrightsuk.org

Get Ahead: An online toolkit produced with and for disabled young people to help navigate post-16 pathways.

The Disabled Apprentice Network Report with quotes and experiences from Disabled apprenticeships.

Factsheets: A range of free guides to help you learn about what support is available in the workplace.

Disability Rights UK’s **Into Apprenticeships 2022 Guide** deals with common questions such as how to find an apprenticeship, whether the training will be accessible and what support is available in the workplace. There are several inspiring stories written by disabled apprentices about their own experiences and the challenges they have faced. It also contains a useful resources section. It’s important to have faith in yourself and celebrate how far you’ve already come.

Access to Work is an employment support grant scheme. This is for support above and beyond a reasonable adjustment from an employer.

Useful Links:

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/get-ahead

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/careers-and-work-disabled-people

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/Getting%20it%20right%20for%20Disabled%20apprentices%20WEB.pdf

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/civicrm/IntoApprenticeships_2020_04_LowRes_Bookmarked.pdf

www.gov.uk/access-to-work



Applying for work is hard. Don’t feel like you have anything extra to prove when you start a new job as a disabled person.

For more information please visit www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Transforming lives - and creating opportunities for neurodiverse people

CareTrade is a London based charity which was established in 2009. Our aim is to transform the lives of autistic and neurodiverse adults through innovative projects to increase employability opportunities

We passionately believe that employment is the biggest single factor that will transform the life of an autistic person.

- We deliver training to give autistic people the tools for employment
- We create employment opportunities for autistic adults

I used to think, when I was first diagnosed – that there are all these things that I can't do. Now, I know that being autistic doesn't mean there is something wrong. It means that there is something different. CareTrade Participant Dec 22

Neurodiversity is a viewpoint that brain differences are normal, rather than deficits. It is a group of conditions that are under the same umbrella and include autism. We value that everyone thinks differently and that everyone is different. It's about seeing the advantages of building diverse teams and appreciation and acceptance of all.

It is believed that 1 in 100 adults in the UK have autism. Just 29% of autistic people are in work, compared to 52% of disabled people and 81% of non-disabled people (Office of National Statistics employability figures released 18 February 2022)

We offer a range of support to our participants to enable them to reach their potential. CareTrade has continuously evolved to meet the needs of our participants and is always looking at how we can enhance our offer to autistic adults and employers. We offer a holistic, person-centred approach with our participants at the centre of all we do.



'Well Grounded is an award-winning social enterprise, providing technical coffee training, accreditations and employment support to people aged 18+ who are not in education, employment or training, supporting them into work in the coffee industry..



We were lucky to meet Josiah through the wonderful Care Trade team who referred him to our 8-Week Specialty Coffee Traineeship programme.

In partnership, we tailored our approach to match his individual needs through an initial and ongoing assessment process, with tools and resources provided to maximise his learning. Examples included utilising-coloured thermometers for steaming milk and easy read guides for key workflows and processes. Key throughout was that adaptations made in the training room would be able to progress into the workplace to ensure Josiah wouldn't just complete a course, but be ready for his chosen career in coffee.

Josiah was incredibly committed to his learning and development and through the strong partnership with his trainer and CareTrade, Josiah graduated from the programme with an internationally recognised qualification, completed a work placement and is now due to start work as a Barista where he will continue to be supported by Well Grounded and Care Trade in partnership with his employer, so he is able to thrive in work'

Aashifa Hussain - Senior Coffee Trainer | Well Grounded



Our flagship programmes

The Autism Project is a 2-year employability programme for 18-25s.



In the 2021/22 academic year we supported 69% of our TAP graduates into employment. We run this in partnership with Guys and St Thomas's NHS Trust and The Whittington NHS Trust.

'The professionalism and care taken by the support team to their students is inspirational and clearly one that the students enjoy. We look forward to continuing our working relationship with the project' Manager GSTT

'Job Seekers Plus' is our over 25s programme and we have a 36% success rate. This programme offers IT skills training, tailored workshops, mental health support, group and 121 sessions and cooking sessions in our Working Kitchen. In addition to this we run a weekly job club, this is open to all alumni and current participants.

care-trade.org/autism-support/job-seekers-plus

Participants on all projects can access work experience at the weekend café we run at the School House Café in Bermondsey.

Once someone has found employment, we can also offer support in the workplace via the Access to Work scheme. We also offer this to any autistic employee within London. care-trade.org/in-work-support

'Being an atypical person isn't easy. When you have autism, it can be extra difficult. Just catching the bus can be hard because I must pay attention to so much and then I have to pretend that I am not really paying attention. CareTrade is one of the places where I don't have to think so hard. I can just be' Job Seekers Participant December 22

*'As curator of GCDA's community shop, **Made in Greenwich**, I see first hand the pride and personal investment that comes from creating something by hand. The students really came together as a team*



to devise, make, launch and sell their products in a quality retail environment and it was incredibly satisfying to see them succeed and interact with customers. I think creative opportunities whilst vital for personal development are often presented as being separate from 'real life'. Our collaboration with TAP shows that creativity and work experience can go hand in hand.'

Mary Jane - Baxter Press and PR Lead, Curator, Made in Greenwich

For employers and other organisations, we offer training and consultancy. This can be general autism awareness training to bespoke training covering inclusive workplaces, inclusive recruitment, and reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This is something we feel is very important to offer, as building an inclusive workplace is a goal employers want to work towards. It brings with it wider recruitment opportunities and staff who feel valued and want to contribute to the success of the company. We also promote career choices within organisations which traditionally and wrongly people think are not something an autistic person would consider. <https://care-trade.org/for-employers/>

We have some amazing partnerships with other organisations which offer our jobseekers learning and training opportunities that are both creative and enterprising.

For more information please visit www.care-trade.org

SEARCHing for solutions

Everyone deserves the right to aspire to the very best future.....

...yet nationally only 5.1% of people with a learning disability and/or autism spectrum condition known to local authorities in England transition from education into secure paid employment, compared to 80% of their peers.

That is a resounding gap. Given the proven impact that secure employment has on physical and mental wellbeing, it means these young adults are more likely to be socially isolated, live in poverty and poor housing, and have a shorter life expectancy.

There is also a negative economic impact on society and business. With around 1 million people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) out of work, many of whom are keen, ambitious, young adults with an array of talent to offer employers, UK businesses are missing a huge pipeline of talent simply due to societal stigma and prejudice.

One organisation looking to reverse this trend is national charity DFN Project SEARCH, who coordinate a one-year transition to work programme for young adults with learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions, or both. The charity works in partnership with Local Authorities, education providers, families and host employers ranging from NHS Trusts to some of the UK's biggest businesses such as DPD, GSK and Marriott Hotels. They provide real work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills delivered in a business setting to help young people make successful transitions to productive adult life.



Claire Cookson, CEO of DFN Project SEARCH said: “As a society we are too low aiming for people with a learning disability because there is a fear factor among employers of getting it wrong in hiring young adults with SEND. We need to change that. There is a huge untapped talent pool of brilliant young neurodiverse people who will make some of the best employees, but just need the opportunity. Our experience shows that businesses will really benefit from their skills and talent as well as the huge positive social impact they will generate at a societal level.

“Our unique programmes around the UK have been established with various prestigious employers including several private sector businesses. At the end of the programme, on average 70% of DFN Project SEARCH graduates gain jobs and 60% of DFN Project SEARCH graduates move into full-time permanent roles and in total – a 55% improvement on the national average,” **said Cookson.**

Earlier this year, DFN Project SEARCH was awarded a government contract from the Department for Education, as part of a consortium working in partnership with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) and British Association of Supported Employment (BASE), to double the number of supported internships to 4,500 per year by March 2025. We see this as a testament to our collaborative, results-driven work.

Their role within this partnership, called **Internships Work**, is to lead on employment engagement, providing support and training to Local Authorities and creating over 800 Employer Champions within the timeframe. Their ambition is to eradicate the postcode lottery so that everyone with an Education Health and Care Plan can access high-quality transition-to-work support and training in their local area.

“I encourage organisations to consider how their recruitment processes could become more inclusive to people with learning disabilities and autism”

Claire Cookson, CEO of DFN Project SEARCH



There are several benefits of hiring from a diverse talent pool with significant positive social and economic implications. Studies show that people with a learning disability stay in their jobs 3.5 times longer than their non-disabled co-workers. A high proportion of employees with a disability have their job performance rated as average or above and have been rated higher than those without a disability in terms of attendance and being on time. And they are great culture carriers for an organisation - productivity goes through the roof in most roles occupied by their graduates as they are absolutely determined to succeed and bring real energy and commitment to their work.

DFN Project SEARCH graduate **Emre** is a good example of this. Like his peers he tried various roles on the programme after his studies. Emre successfully applied for a position at Blackpool Council, his hometown. He proved himself to be quick to learn and a great support for the small team running Carleton Crematorium. **Emre says:** “DFN Project SEARCH helped me with my communication skills and help build my confidence”. He adds: “Doing different placements helped my employment skills, especially when I was able to apply for a post with the Council.” He continues to be a valued member of the team at Carleton Crematorium and he has since developed his skills into the wider variety of the role that he chose for his career.

DFN Project SEARCH driven by a desire to reach a point where employment young people with a learning disability or autism spectrum condition becomes normalised and mainstream. To help

spread this message, DFN Project SEARCH has created a campaign where they are calling on UK businesses to join their **#InclusionRevolution** and recognise the social and economic value of employing young adults with SEND. The campaign aims to support 10,000 young adults with a learning disability or autism spectrum condition into full time paid employment by 2030.

Another recent programme graduate, **Charlie Forbes Nixon**, said: “DFN Project SEARCH has a family atmosphere and sense of belonging. It has changed my life. I have done things I didn't think were possible and it has improved my confidence. You'd be surprised how capable you are regarding what job you find yourself in.”

“I encourage organisations to consider how their recruitment processes could become more inclusive to people with learning disabilities and autism”, said **Claire Cookson**. “Not only is it morally the right thing to do, but it's also good for business and society.”



For more information visit
[DFN Project SEARCH](https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org.uk)

NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

THE PROBLEM

1. High unemployment or underemployment rates among neurodivergent people

- While autistic adults have a desire to work and contribute, they are often disadvantaged by traditional recruitment and hiring processes
- Between 15-20% of the population are estimated to be neurodivergent.
- Analysis by Deloitte shows that in the United States, around 85% of individuals on the Autism spectrum are unemployed, compared to 4.2% of the population
- Just 21.7% of autistic people are in employment within the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

2. Invisible barriers created by employers

Recruitment processes, including job descriptions and interview processes, may eliminate neurodivergent job seekers from the selection pool before they have got the chance to showcase their skills and talents.

3. Limitations of the education system

4. Lack of awareness and social stigma

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that, worldwide, autistic people are often subject to stigma, discrimination and human rights violations. Globally, access to services and support for autistic people is inadequate.

WHY YOU SHOULD INVEST IN NEURODIVERSITY INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Hiring neurodiverse employees can provide companies with a competitive edge that brings **measurable benefits, both financially and in terms of workplace culture.**

Some of the benefits include:

- Neurodiverse employees bring **unique experiences and skill sets** to your office, helping you **build effectiveness and diversify your outlook** on your engaging audience.
- Diversity of all kinds contributes to **creativity, innovation and competitiveness** – the greater the diversity of your staff, the more unique ideas and perspectives you'll be able to bring to any given problem and that includes neurodiversity.
- Neurodiverse companies have been proven to out-think and out-perform heterogeneous spaces.
- People with dyslexia often have average or above-average intelligence with excellent creative thinking skills. They tend to have **strong problem-solving and spatial reasoning capabilities.** This allows them to see a variety of solutions to a problem.
- People with Autism tend to excel in areas like **rule-based thinking.** Many organisations are experiencing benefits from including individuals with these strengths in their workforces.

**NEURODIVERSITY IS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
GET IN TOUCH AND BECOME A NEURODIVERSITY FRIENDLY EMPLOYER!!!**

www.Insen.org E Insen@smmathecourtyard.org

LNSEN 'let's create a more neurodiverse future together'

HOW YOU CAN BECOME AN AUTISM FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

LNSEN (www.Insen.org) offers different types of training courses. Please visit our website and get in touch with us if you are interested in becoming an Autism friendly employer. We can help you to attract and retain neurodivergent talent.

1. Book our Autism Awareness/ Neurodiversity training.
2. Offer a work experience placement,
3. Receive the Autism Friendly Employer certificate and start advertising your company as an Autism Friendly Employer.
4. Book training two – 'Steps to successfully employ people with Autism: Learn how to make an application form to attract neurodivergent/SEND candidates.
5. Book training three – 'Strategies to support and retain autistic talent in the workplace', how to create welcoming and supportive workplace.
6. Book consultations: a safe space where employees with Autism, employers and job coaches can book one-to-one or group wellbeing sessions. A personalised wellbeing programme can be created to implement strategies or address existing difficulties.
7. Create a pool of coaches.

One of the most popular training courses is the 'Neurodiversity/Autism Awareness training' – 2 hours:

- What's neurodiversity?
- Types of neurodivergence.
- Why is neurodiversity a competitive advantage?
- Understanding Autism: what it is and how it affects our students creatively, the importance of creating Autism Friendly Employers.
- Neuro-inclusive job interviews.
- How can I be an effective manager or ally to autistic colleagues?

TESTIMONIALS

'The content of the introduction sessions was wide ranging and comprehensive, as well as presented in an impactful way that flowed well and really landed the key points about the benefits of making sure neurodivergent people are able to participate fully in the workforce. It was hugely valuable that you took the time to look at existing adverts and career pages from both the Civil Service and FCDO Country Based Staff, and were able to give us very clear examples of how we could improve as well as celebrating the things that we already do well. This sort of specificity is exactly what we need to make a strong case for change within our management structures. We look forward to continuing to work with you to raise awareness of the benefits of neurodiversity in our Mission and becoming an Autism Friendly Employer.'

The UK Mission to the European Union, British Embassy and NATO

'The training was entertaining, informative and engaging. We liked the examples used and the fact Autism was put in a positive light.'

Google UK

'Thank you so much for the training, your passion for deepening awareness about Autism was evident and contagious. The course was informative and useful, thank you.'

Savills

'Great orange description, you definitely sold it', 'Very useful and interesting', 'Very clear strategies about how to support people with Autism', 'Enjoyed it 100%. I have a better understanding now'

Quantum Black

**FIND OUT MORE ON OUR WEBSITE AND
GET IN TOUCH TO BECOME A NEURODIVERSITY FRIENDLY EMPLOYER!!!**

www.Insen.org E Insen@smmathecourtyard.org

Making a difference

Willmott Dixon is a privately owned family run construction company founded in 1852 that makes a difference to the communities in which it builds. It is in our DNA, and we pride ourselves on leaving a positive impact through our core activities as well as via specific programmes and initiatives.

I have been carrying out social value activities for Willmott Dixon in the West Midlands for over 20 years. Willmott Dixon is a disability confident employer, however that's not necessarily the case for everyone. In the UK, the percentage of working age adults with a learning disability that are in employment is just 5.9%. In Birmingham it is 1.3%. As a parent of a young adult with SEND, I think these statistics are shocking and I really feel passionate about playing my part to make a positive change.

In my capacity as a parent, I have seen first-hand that not all schools provide SEND students with the right support. Good careers education is something that every student should have access to regardless of ability or disability, but it wasn't really promoted to my daughter. In my role at Willmott Dixon, I found myself in a fortunate position where I could make a difference, and so I set about adapting our careers programmes to meet the needs of every student. It wasn't difficult and before long we had a whole suite of readily available activities.

With the activities sorted I then carried out training for those people at Willmott Dixon who had volunteered to help deliver. Many were anxious and not familiar with the SEND environment. This anxiety soon faded, and I could see the warmth of feeling when our people had taken part in a delivery session.

The thing is with SEND students - they want to learn, they want to explore new things, learn new skills and they want to succeed. We make our sessions relaxed and fun whilst still covering important messages such as time management, communication, negotiation, planning, budgeting, taking turns and working out of comfort zones (this goes for both students and Willmott Dixon people!).



I think work experience is vital as students look to build on the skills they need for life. These young people are often furthest from the job market and it is critical that they get the support that they need. We are very proud to offer work placements both on our sites and in our offices. For those who are unable to leave the school or college environment, we take the world of work into the classroom for a five-week programme called The Enrichment Programme. Students meet four professionals from Willmott Dixon to hear about what they do in their roles. Students then create their own construction company, adopt these different job roles and have to plan, design, cost and build a model village. All students taking part in this receive accreditation from Industrial Cadets, a valued certification that can be included on their CV.

We have delivered this programme to over 250 SEND students this year and our diaries are almost full for next year, too!

Marie Wilkes CIHCM
Head of Social Value (West Midlands)
at Willmott Dixon Construction



Case study

I met Josh through our relationship with a local SEND school. Josh had taken part in other activities we had run with the school before, so was familiar with the business and some of the people before his placement started.

What initially started as a one-week placement in our administration department quickly turned into a year-long internship for Josh. After seeing the step-change in his confidence in just one week, we asked the school if we could extend his placement to an internship so we could continue to support his development. Josh's work experience placement also supported him to pass his employability ASDAN qualification.

Over the year, Josh's confidence has grown significantly, so much so that he has managed to secure a place at catering college in September.

Josh's school says "The change in Josh over the past 10 months has been astounding. His time management, organisational skills and confidence have come on leaps and bounds - everything that he needed to work on! This is a perfect example of why these work experience placements and internships are invaluable to our students."

A final word from me. Everybody has a skill and everybody is good at something, but you sometimes have to think a little differently about how you unlock it. The overall approach to SEND careers is vastly improving and the quality of careers education is something we at Willmott Dixon are very proud to contribute to.



WILLMOTT DIXON

SINCE 1852

Sign up to Disability Confident [here](#)

For more information about what we do, visit our website at
www.willmottdixon.co.uk

The CEC's Youth Advisory Group's response to: What are your top tips for employers in better supporting young SEND people into jobs?



Emma Berwick, 21 from London, is a student studying International Business with French, currently doing a year abroad in France. She identifies as a person with dyspraxia.

#1 Application process

Having applied for a number of jobs and schemes, those who have provided a simple application process stick out in my mind. For one insight scheme, I was asked to answer just 2 questions, rather than to provide examples of our previous experience - which can be a huge barrier to those just starting in their career. I was asked to explain:

- why I thought that the energy sector is important and
- what I wanted to get out of the programme.

This simple format gave me a different way of explaining myself and showcasing my potential rather than through a cover letter and interview.

Now, I tend to look specifically for firms or companies who are visibly using inclusive recruitment methods, as I know I will have more of a chance to gain employment with them and also to succeed once within employment.

#2 Mentoring programmes

Running a mentoring programme helps young people to gain insights in a sector and build meaningful connections. I've been on a couple of mentoring programmes, such as with Deliveroo, ITV and Circl, which have given me an insight into different industries and given me the time to reflect on what I want out of a career.

Partnering with organisations, such as Creative Access, who provide access to students or young people who are seeking placements or experiences, can help employers to reach those who really need the connections the most - the untapped potential. By partnering with organisations, this helps to broaden reach and the talent pool. This avoids only offering opportunities to young people who already have a network and relevant connections. The brilliant bonus for employers is that they can let those organisations do the groundwork, building a ready-made pool of talented young people who are ready for employment or placements. Employers should look to give something back to these organisations by delivering workshops or webinars, to build skills or sector insights in a wide pool of young people.

#3 Adjustments

Adjustments are such an important measure that employers should be open to going above and beyond to provide them to prospective employees. When I've applied for things in the past, I've had to actively seek out the right person to request extra time to do an assessment day or to put adjustments in place for an interview. You often get through to someone who may not know how to redirect you, or who may not be that familiar with the adjustment procedure. From the moment the person starts their application with you, that applicant should feel informed about the support on offer from a specific person or team, should they need to ask a question or to ask for support. Creating a welcoming culture which takes requests like this in their stride can make someone feel a lot more comfortable in explaining what would work for them, which will aid them to go on to do their best work for that company. It might be a small thing, such as a desk in a certain place in the office or the flexibility to change their working from home days. These small things can help so much.

#4 Regular review and open to learning

It's important to consider that just because a young person has landed a job, or you've been impressed with their talent, it doesn't mean that they are good to go from day one. It's important to regularly check-in with all employees throughout their employment, to see what more you can be doing to adapt, include and support, whilst building a culture for listening and learning from employees through open dialogue on better ways to do things or what would work better for them. It is very challenging for individuals who have conditions or barriers to feel comfortable enough to share what they need time and time again, as it is likely that they have already faced systemic barriers throughout their education, employment and across society, such as discrimination and stigmatisation.

In my experience, it's often hard to get reasonable adjustments and it is often harder to navigate the world of work. I think this has made me a lot more resilient and a lot more persevering, which has definitely shaped me as a person. What has really made the difference for me this year is mentoring, particularly being on my year abroad, as I've been able to get specific support on the application process and get more clarity on what roles actually entail. As an employer, it's incredibly important to seek regular feedback from employees and be open to change.

Fostering a culture of kindness and willingness to listen and learn from employees is a huge way to ensure that staff feel valued and supported.



Useful weblinks

- www.circl.org
- creativeaccess.org.uk
- head-up.org/mentoring
- beleveuk.org



Promoting inclusivity for over 50 years

Chief Executive Officer **Chivonne Preston** reflects on dyslexia in the workplace as the **British Dyslexia Association** celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Over the past fifty years there has been significant progress in our understanding of dyslexia and other related specific learning difficulties and our charity has led the campaign to promote a dyslexia-friendly society for all. Where once our Helpline received a majority of calls from parents seeking support for their children, now approximately half of our calls relate to supporting adults with dyslexia, either in the workplace, in training or with life skills. Whilst it is very positive that some employers take a proactive approach to inclusivity, unfortunately we also regularly hear from employees who do not get the support they need or who feel afraid to disclose their challenges and who need advice on how to tackle this.

As well as meeting obligations under the Equality Act 2010, being dyslexia-friendly makes good business sense. Recruitment and induction are expensive activities, and stress-related illnesses can account for significant staff absence, so supporting and retaining existing staff can reduce employment costs. Given that an estimated 15% of the population have dyslexia and/or other specific learning differences, embedding a dyslexia-friendly ethos within a workplace benefits everyone, enabling employees to reach their full potential as well as anticipating the needs of dyslexic customers and clients. Effective changes don't have to be expensive or time-consuming, but they may well require a shift in organisational culture to promote an open and safe space to discuss these issues. Some simple steps include talking about differences, raising staff awareness, a flexible and supportive approach to individual needs which may involve small changes to standard procedures and the introduction of assistive technology, much of which is already built into commonly used software.

We also emphasise that each individual's experience of dyslexia is unique. Dyslexia is a life-long condition which can range from mild to severe and which can co-occur with other learning difficulties. As well as difficulties with reading, spelling and writing, employees with dyslexia can also have co-occurring difficulties with time-management, organisational skills, multi-tasking and a shorter attention span. They may also experience greater fatigue and dyslexia may also impact their self-esteem and mental health. As such, we recommend that employers engage in open dialogue with their employees to aim to deliver tailored, practical solutions to encourage an inclusive workplace. More recently, scientific studies have investigated the abilities and talents that dyslexic employees bring to their workplaces, such as problem-solving skills, strong oral skills and creativity and it is great to see these strengths increasingly recognised and celebrated.

We will continue to work with all organisations and relevant bodies to raise awareness and share best practice for employers as well as advising employees on how to access the support they need. Whilst there is still a very long way to go to ensure that all workplaces are dyslexia-friendly, the UK at least has a legislative foundation and a growing body of good practice from which to engage with employers about their responsibilities which is not the case in many other countries. We recently contributed to an Erasmus funded research project, Dyslexia@Work, to publish guidebooks for employers across Europe, and we continue to call for more research to ensure that every employee has the opportunity to reach their full potential at work.

Chivonne Preston joined the British Dyslexia Association as CEO in October 2022. An experienced charity leader, she is passionate about using her skills and experience to create a more inclusive society that welcomes and empowers everyone with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties. In particular, Chivonne is looking forward to ensuring the British Dyslexia Association delivers greater impact for beneficiaries today and improves outcomes and opportunities for generations ahead.



50 years



Employee spotlight

Rebecca Ryman

Communications Manager at the British Dyslexia Association

I'd always been a bad speller and my Mum had asked my school about dyslexia but because I was performing well academically they didn't investigate it further. I was only diagnosed with dyslexia two years ago, aged 25, when my then CEO spotted some of my difficulties. As well as spelling, I get really tired and can't always concentrate for long periods. I would never volunteer to read out loud or take notes.

Since my diagnosis I have learnt to be really proud of my achievements. I managed to complete an undergraduate degree and a Master's in English-based subjects and am now Communications Manager for a national charity! I might take a bit longer to do things because of my dyslexia but it doesn't alter what I'm capable of. I've learnt to rely on Grammarly and spellcheck and asking colleagues to proof my written work. I'm lucky to work for a really supportive employer and hope that my story can show others that just because you have dyslexia doesn't mean you can't be good at English and communicating!



British Dyslexia Association

Our vision is for a world that embraces and promotes people living with dyslexia. We aim to influence government and other institutions to promote a dyslexia-friendly society that enables dyslexia people of all ages to reach their full potential.

To learn more about supporting employees with dyslexia in your organisation:

Visit our website www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Call our Helpline on **0333 405 4567**

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn

Topping the table

ERSA Awards recognise exceptional employers supporting disadvantaged jobseekers.

Forward thinking employers from across the UK were recognised for their outstanding commitment to recruit and retain disadvantaged people as part of the recent ERSA Awards. **The Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)** is the membership body of the employment support sector. Its members help businesses – usually fee-free – to recruit and retain people with a range of traditional barriers to work. And they nominated proactive employers in their droves for the coveted Employer of the Year title!

“With skills shortages and high levels of long-term sickness vying with unanticipated labour market growth, employers are embracing the support our sector offers,” comments Elizabeth Taylor, ERSA CEO. “This is the tenth year of the ERSA awards, and the level and quality of entrants has been outstanding. Having been nominated by ERSA members, these are the very best of the best employer examples, those with the innovative approaches and unstinting determination to help provide jobs and brighter futures for people – many among the most disadvantaged in the country. Simply to have made the shortlist is a massive achievement.”

“These are the very best of the best employer examples, those with the innovative approaches and unstinting determination to help provide jobs and brighter futures for people.”

The ERSA Employer of the Year award 2022 was sponsored by **Successful Mums**; mums supporting mums to achieve their career goals.



The best of seven

These are the super seven employers applauded at ERSA's November awards for showing exceptional commitment by partnering with providers in their area, supporting disadvantaged and long-term unemployed jobseekers. The shortlist, judged by an independent panel of experts, produced a winner and two commendations.

Spectrum Service Solutions Limited

– nominated by **Capita**
Taking a person first approach, Spectrum snapped up the chance to talk to jobseekers at digital recruitment days. With five minute ‘speed dates’, Spectrum found 14 new colleagues. They reviewed locations, hours, start dates, and adjustments required for people and say they will never return to traditional recruitment methods.



Greggs – nominated by the Down's Syndrome Association

The Down's Syndrome Association's WorkFit employment programme has worked with Greggs since 2016. The retailer has welcomed WorkFit training across its shops with managers and HQ staff attending and have adapted recruitment and training processes to be truly inclusive. WorkFit candidates are part of the Greggs family!

Michael Page – nominated by Genius Within CIC

Michael Page is committed to help match the unique talents of neurodivergent people to the needs of both its own business and its employer clients. Led by a consultant with an acquired brain injury, Michael Page has adapted its recruitment methods to make them more neurodivergent-friendly.

Diageo – nominated by ENABLE

Diageo has developed a ‘We are All Able’, six-month fully paid internship programme offering young people with disabilities the opportunity to gain paid work experience. It has instigated bespoke disability awareness training to promote an inclusive workplace culture and ensure disabled colleagues are confidently supported.



Matrix – nominated by Hackney Council

Partnering with the council's employment support service, Matrix connects unemployed Hackney residents with temporary council opportunities. Adjusted support for clients with learning disabilities has resulted in more than 50 residents accessing work; good routes to more permanent employment.

NSL – nominated by The Growth Company

NSL and GC have helped more than 100 unemployed people secure lasting work, many progressing within NSL. With a focus on supporting individuals from priority groups, NSL has joined the Disability Confident Scheme and participates in sector-based work academies, guaranteeing interviews to all interested candidates.

SOCOTEC – nominated by Fedcap Employment

SOCOTEC has hired several people with complex health needs and disabilities, working with Fedcap Employment's Intensive Personalised Employment Support service. The first employee to benefit from the partnership is set for promotion, and SOCOTEC has declared a target of hiring two Fedcap customers each month.



Established in 2005, ERSA works to ensure the employment support sector delivers the best services for jobseekers and learners. Its members span the private, voluntary, and public sectors, ranging from large delivery providers to small specialist charities operating in their local communities. The scope of their collective reach includes employment support, training, skills provision, self-employment, offender related services, youth employment services, welfare reform and disability-related issues.

Employers are a large part of that landscape and in 2020 the **ERSA Employer Engagement Forum** was formed to improve business engagement and drive policy around employers' vital role in employability and skills programmes. Exploring and mapping good practice sits at its heart. If you're an employer interested in benefiting from this expertise please **join us** or contact **Events@ersa.org.uk** for details of the next forum.

Previous issues of careermag FOR INCLUSION



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Access to Work

Your employees may be entitled to financial support if they have a disability or health condition.



Access to Work is a specialist disability service from Jobcentre Plus that gives practical advice and support to disabled people, whether they are employed, self-employed or looking for employment

The support will depend on your employees needs. Through Access to Work, they can apply for:

- a grant to help pay for practical support with their work
- advice about managing their mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

They may also qualify for funding to manage their mental health at work and communication support at a job interview.

It does not matter how much they earn. If they get an Access to Work grant, it will not affect any other benefits they get and they will not have to pay it back.

Access to Work could give them a grant to help pay for things like:

- BSL interpreters, lip speakers or note takers
- adaptations to their vehicle so they can get to work
- taxi fares to work or a support worker if they cannot use public transport
- a support worker or job coach to help them in your workplace

Further information

If you think any of your employees may be eligible for financial assistance from Access to Work, you can direct them to [Access to Work](#) for detailed information to check their eligibility and how to apply.

Become a Disability Confident employer

Information about employing disabled people and how the Disability Confident employer scheme can help your business.



As an employer, being **Disability Confident** means thinking differently about disability and taking action to improve recruitment, developing and retaining staff.

It might just help you discover amazing new talent!

Visit the Disability Confident employer scheme on gov.uk to find out:

- How to become a Disability Confident employer
- Guidance on employing disabled people and people with health conditions
- Guidance on renewing/updating your Disability Confident status



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Helpful Resources for Employers

Employers are vital to help bridge the gap between education and employment. We have pulled together useful resources to inform your thinking about offering experiences of your workplace for young people.

[Supporting Employers: Working with Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Resources for Employers](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Experiences of the Workplace \(BM 6\): Step by Step guide for Employers](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Employer engagement in careers education: Insights 2020/21](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[An employer's guide to supporting STEM careers education in England](#)

STEM Learning

[Linking Careers to the Curriculum: A guide to engaging students and supporting progress by embedding teaching in the context of the world of work](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Ambitious about Autism Toolkits](#)

Ambitious about Autism

[DMA Talent: Dyslexia Employers guide](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company & DM Trust

[DMA Talent: Autism Employers guide](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company & DM Trust

Get in touch

If you are an employer and interested in working with young people with SEND, contact the **Careers & Enterprise Company's Business Partnerships Team**.

If your organisation has resources that you feel would benefit other employers, please get in touch with Marion Fleetwood, Editor of Careermag for Inclusion on info@careermap.co.uk.