

CHOICES

The monthly parent & carer guide to apprenticeships and technical education



INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

OVERCOMING PERSONAL CHALLENGES TO PROGRESS THEIR CAREERS THROUGH APPRENTICESHIPS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES



Access arrangements	Special arrangements, or reasonable adjustments, for public exams.
Access to Work	A scheme that provides personalised support to people with disabilities.
Apprenticeship standard	Guidance setting out the skills, knowledge and behaviours an apprentice will gain, by job role.
Assistive Technology	Products or systems that support people to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.
Disability Confident employer	An employer who is part of a government scheme aiming to help employers increase their understand of disability and challenge negative attitudes.
Disability Rights UK (DRUK)	The UK's leading Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) led by, run by, and working for Disabled people.
Disabled Apprentice Network	A network of current and past apprentices with disabilities.
EHC plan	A document that describes the special educational needs that a child or young person (up to the age of 25) has and the help and support that they will be given to meet them.
End-point assessment (EPA)	An assessment that is the final stage of an apprenticeship.
Functional skills	English, maths and ICT qualifications.
Health Adjustment passport	A document that helps people get support and reasonable adjustments at work.
Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA)	An evaluation that identifies and assesses learning difficulties to create support plans.
Reasonable adjustments	A change that removes or reduces a disadvantage for someone with a disability.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.
Supported internship	A programme for people aged 16 to 24 who have an EHC plan, to support them to move into employment.
Training provider	An organisation that provides the learning part of an apprenticeship.

PARENT INSIGHT:

How my son's apprenticeship has changed his life



Meet Sarah, whose son Max struggled at school but is now an award-winning apprentice.

Tell us about Max's education and apprenticeship journey.

Max's journey hasn't been easy. We know now that when he was at school, he was struggling with undiagnosed ADHD, autism and dyslexia, and not getting the support he needed. He was branded as the 'naughty kid' and ended up being excluded from school in Year 9. I managed to enrol him in alternative education, where he gained his level 1 qualification in joinery and brickwork, and also secured his functional skills qualifications in maths and English. This gave him a foundation to access the level 2 apprenticeship course in carpentry and joinery. While attending the alternative provision, Max also worked alongside his dad to gain valuable on-site experience.

How did you know that an apprenticeship was the right route for Max?

Max knew from his time at school that he wanted to take this approach. We both knew he would struggle in a college environment full time. Earning money at the same time as learning was the added bonus!

Did you have any reservations?

Like a lot of parents I had many, many reservations about this route for Max. He hadn't been in an educational setting for a number of years and I worried about how he would adjust to the different challenges he would be faced with daily, both in college and the work environment. My main reservation was that Max wasn't going to get the right support in his educational setting to achieve his end goal.

What benefits have apprenticeships had for Max?

Max's confidence and resilience have increased so much since his apprenticeship started, both in work and at home. The fact that he has been shortlisted for Apprentice of the Year by two different awarding bodies is testament to this and something that Max and I are incredibly proud of.



Max at the Construction Apprenticeship awards

What would your advice be to other parents and carers of children with SEND who are considering apprenticeships?

I would say to make sure you research the learning part of the apprenticeship, and the college or training provider delivering it, to ensure they can support any required SEND needs. With hindsight, I would have been more stringent with monitoring the support he received from the college to make sure they were completely meeting his needs regarding exams etc.

Also, share as much information as possible about your child with the training provider, so they can liaise with the employer about any specific needs and monitor what is happening. We've been so lucky that The Growth Company are really knowledgeable and supportive.

What's next for Max?

With the right support and his own determination, Max gained a distinction in his Level 2 qualification, which has given him the push to continue in education. He is looking to gain more knowledge and craftsmanship by continuing to a level 3 apprenticeship. Then he would like to go on to a different trade like a plumbing or gas apprenticeship.

Find out more about The Growth Company here:

[gceducationandskills.ac.uk/
apprenticeship-vacancies/](https://gceducationandskills.ac.uk/apprenticeship-vacancies/)



PARENT INSIGHT: SUPPORTING MY DAUGHTER TO REACH HER POTENTIAL



Meet Birgit, whose daughter Esme is a level 2 Production Chef apprentice with Sodexo

Tell us about Esme and what she did before her apprenticeship

Esme is 24, nearly 25 and she has Down's syndrome. She went through mainstream primary and secondary education and she always had one-to-one support provided for her throughout her schooling. When she was 16, she went to a Special Needs post-16 unit for three years, which was excellent.

What made her decide to go into hospitality?

A member of staff at the post-16 provision had her own hospitality company, catering for weddings, afternoon teas, birthdays etc., and Esme was invited to participate in cooking for and serving at the events.

She loved it so much that at the end of her time at the post-16 unit, we started to consider whether or not it would be nice for her to continue with that interest. She's always cooked and baked at home with me since she was small, so it seemed very natural for her to develop the interest into a career.

What did she do after her time at the post-16 provision?

When we were looking at what she could do next, we considered various options, and eventually we chose Foxes Academy, a specialist residential college for young people with learning disabilities who are interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry. They did all sorts of aspects of hospitality, including working on reception, front of house, cheffing and service. Life skills, housework, shopping, community awareness and travel training were some of the many skills they included in the training, as well as IT, maths English and catering. So she went there, and she did the course for three years.

We did have a bit of an interruption, because the first year she was there it was COVID. During that time, she had to do a lot of learning at home that we had to send in, which was challenging. While she was there she achieved her level 2 functional English and maths and started working towards level 3, which was brilliant.

How did Esme become an apprentice?

At the end of her time at Foxes, they wrote to employers who were affiliated to the college (hotels, and catering companies) based in the areas where the students lived, to seek employment/apprenticeships. In Esme's case, Sodexo replied and said they had a place for Esme which was close to where we live. We were incredibly lucky because not many of the others who left Foxes at the same time as Esme were able to secure proper jobs.

So really it just landed on us, and I realised we had been very lucky, and grabbed the opportunity with both hands!

“Esme has a fantastic Vocational Trainer from HIT Training, Tori, who has been so positive about Esme. She's really supportive, and she's there on the end of the phone if you ever need her or you've got any worries.”



Tori, Esme's Vocational Trainer

What is her working week like?

She works three days a week starting at 8:00am and finishing at 1:00pm, and she has a lunch break at 11.30am because she's serving at 12:00pm. Esme is very routine-based, and she likes the structure of knowing when she is working and for how long. She occasionally goes in and helps on a Saturday evening if they have an event, but she's alright with that.

How has she found the working part of the apprenticeship?

She started and they were over the moon with her initially, because she went in with a great deal of positivity and enthusiasm. Then to be honest, I think the reality kicked in a little bit and things got a bit harder.

She's working in a professional kitchen where there are a lot of dangerous things. She's around fire, electrical equipment, people with hot pans who are rushing about, and it's quite a high-pressure job. They were really good and tried to think their way around it, but it was tough for them I think. They've moved Esme around the different kitchens to try and find the best environment for her and she's also been working in the front of house too, which has taken some of the pressure off. I think her apprenticeship has been really good for her. Yes, work has been a bit of a shock for her, but it's helped her to mature and take responsibility for different things.

How has Esme been supported by her training provider?

Esme has a fantastic Vocational Trainer from HIT Training, Tori, who has been so positive about Esme. She's really supportive, and she's there on the end of the phone if you ever need her or you've got any worries. She really helped with the portal for recording Esme's apprenticeship learning. There's no way that Esme could negotiate that learning portal on her own, It just wasn't appropriate for her, and Tori really helped with ways around that.

How have you supported Esme during her apprenticeship?

I do all her homework with her. I take her to the website, read it, write it down with her, and then explain it to her so that she can understand.

We spent a lot of time getting her functional skills qualifications and I got her a tutor too for extra support. I'm also doing some cooking with her at home and videoing it. It's been a lot of time and support, but I think you'll find any parent in this situation will be putting in a lot because their young people do need that support. You have to give time from home, because you need to be that mediator between the expectation and the reality of what they can achieve.



Esme with her mother, Birgit



Esme and the other apprentices from the 'This is my story' film launch at the BBC

What benefits have there been for Esme from her apprenticeship?

I think it's been a good experience for her overall, in that it's helped her evolve as a person. It's helped her understand what work is. I think it's strengthened her really well, and that if she did leave and go to another job, I think she would find it easier because of the experience that she's having there. She's been pulled right out of her comfort zone, and she's had to deal with different personalities. She's also very sensitive to noise and she's learned to live with working in a noisy kitchen.

Esme has learnt that the whole world can't revolve around her in different environments, having been used to people making things work around her, through no fault of her own of course.

I think her conversational skills have improved because she's hearing people talking all the time, and people are talking to her, and they're not downgrading their conversation. So she's learning more vocabulary.

What would you say to other parents whose children are considering an apprenticeship?

It depends on the level of the young person concerned. They're all different and every apprenticeship is different. I think the main thing is to try and make sure that that support system is there and ideally they need a buddy in the workplace.

Overall it has been a really positive experience, but a huge learning curve for everyone. I would say go in with a positive attitude and be prepared to support your child with the learning side.



Watch Esme's film to see her in action in her apprenticeship:

amazingapprenticeships.com/this-is-my-story-meet-esme



Esme at the 'This is my story' film launch at the BBC

10 reasons why the Tesco Stronger Starts apprenticeship could be right for you!

1

NO ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are no formal entry requirements - this isn't about previous grades achieved, the focus is on your potential.

6

A PERSONAL DEVICE

Every apprentice will be given a tablet device to complete their training.

2

GREAT SALARY

All apprentices will earn a minimum starting salary of £22,550 (full-time - 36 hours). Part-time contracts available (28 hours and 21 hours salary pro rata).

7

LUNCH MONEY

All apprentices will receive £4 per day to support with lunch costs for the first 4 weeks.

3

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Tesco are particularly wanting to hear from school leavers who are aged 16-18 years.

8

RETAIL QUALIFICATION

On completion, all apprentices will achieve a National Standard in Retail (equivalent to 5 GCSE passes).

4

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The recruitment process is simple and inclusive – being completely transparent about how it will work and what to expect.

9

RECRUITMENT SUPPORT

All applicants are offered coaching sessions to prepare them for the Discovery Centre, and teachers, parents and carers can join these too.

5

FANTASTIC SUPPORT

Tesco provide brilliant mental health and wellbeing support to all employees and their families which includes a virtual GP.

10

PERMANENT CONTRACTS

All successful candidates are offered permanent contracts of employment.

Find out more: amazingapprenticeships.com/tesco

Join the Stronger Starts webinar on 24th March from 16:00 - 17:00, register now: amapps.uk/tesco-webinar



APPRENTICE INSIGHT

Yssy's story of success



Find out what life is like for Yssy, a KPMG Apprentice with a long-term health condition

As a parent or carer, you want the best for your child, and that includes a fulfilling career path. But what if your child has a disability or long-term health condition? You might worry about them facing additional challenges during the recruitment process or finding a supportive working environment where they can thrive.

We've invited Yssy, an Audit Apprentice at KPMG to share her own experience of work with a long-term health condition and her advice for aspiring apprentices who want to get off to the best start. We also hear from Madeline from KPMG's Student Recruitment team who gives us her top tips for a positive recruitment experience.

Yssy, who joined KPMG's Gatwick office four years ago, lives with endometriosis, a condition that causes debilitating pain every day. Despite this, she has not only excelled in her role but also found a supportive and understanding environment that has allowed her to flourish.

"Early in my apprenticeship, I was struggling balancing work with my exams," shares Yssy. Recognising her challenges, her manager took proactive steps to help. Private chronic fatigue coaching was arranged providing Yssy with valuable tools to manage her energy levels. "KPMG also got me a supportive chair for my back and arranged 25% extra study time. I no longer go straight to bed with exhaustion when I get home. It's great."

KPMG's commitment to supporting Yssy extended beyond her studies. "KPMG have also been really supportive with me requiring time off work for hospital appointments and surgeries," she explains.

"I do not, in any way, think this has affected my ability to progress within the firm or meant I have missed out on any opportunities."

Yssy's experience highlights the importance of open communication and an organisation's willingness to adapt.

"I think at KPMG, our differences are celebrated and supported rather than looked down upon!" - a sentiment reflected in KPMG's disability policy, and commitment to increase disability representation at partner level to 15% by 2030.

Yssy's advice to other students with long-term health conditions is clear:

"Be open and honest so that adjustments can be put in place as early as possible to ensure you are able to succeed. Through my personal experience, I have never felt like my endometriosis held me back in any way. KPMG have put everything in place to ensure I am able to grow, excel and succeed."

Top tips from a KPMG recruiter



Meet Madeline

From the moment a candidate applies to a KPMG apprenticeship programme, they are provided with comprehensive support. "I know that many young people with disabilities or other long-term conditions worry about what disclosing a condition might mean for their application. I can reassure you that it won't impact your application in any way" says Madeline.

KPMG assesses every application on its merits. Making adjustments to the application process isn't about 'making a special case' for an applicant or patronising them. It is simply about removing potential barriers so that all candidates can be assessed fairly.

"We've taken care to simplify our recruitment process to make it clear what to expect. We ask candidates before each element of the assessment process to let us know if there's anything we can do to help. They can contact us via phone or email to discuss their requirements with us."



And what are Madeline's top tips for students when making their applications?

"Number one is be yourself! It might sound obvious but we want to hire you as yourself. There's no single type of person who belongs at KPMG. After that, figuring out what your personal strengths are, giving yourself plenty of time to apply, paying attention to detail and doing your research about KPMG will help you stand out."

Here are some of the other ways in which KPMG are building an inclusive environment:



Flexible and hybrid working arrangements

Everyone learns and works differently. KPMG offer flexible working arrangements, such as hybrid working, adjusted hours and breaks throughout the day to provide colleagues with the support they need to work in the way that allows them to be at their best.



Personalised support plans

KPMG work closely with apprentices to develop support plans that address their specific needs. This might include providing assistive technology, mentoring, extra time when sitting exams or access to specialised resources.



Inclusive training and development

Training programmes are designed to be accessible to all, with a focus on inclusive learning methods and materials.



Employee support networks

There are over 15 employee support networks that bring people together and play a crucial role in making KPMG a more inclusive place to work.



Find out more about the support on offer at KPMG and how to apply here:
kpmgcareers.co.uk/apprentice/applying-to-kpmg/need-support-let-us-know

APPRENTICE INSIGHT: MY APPRENTICE JOURNEY WITH DYSLEXIA

Meet Amy, an Organisational Development Advisor at South Tyneside Council, who leads on apprenticeships. Amy is dyslexic and shares how undertaking her own apprenticeships supported her to thrive in her career.

Please can you tell us about how your dyslexia affected you?

I guess I always struggled with school because of my dyslexia and I just kept hiding it, thinking it was just something I wasn't good at. It wasn't until the final year of school that they thought I had dyslexia, but in their words it was too late for a diagnosis. I was offered extra time in assessments and exams, which I took.

I went from school to college to university and hid it the whole time. Lecturers used to ask me if I needed any additional support, but I always said no, because I felt quite embarrassed about it. It felt like, I'm at university now, I shouldn't need extra support.

What did you do after university?

I became a teacher and it was quite a struggle. I used to tell the students that I was going to spell things incorrectly on purpose as a test for them as a way to mask my dyslexia, because I was still really embarrassed by it. As part of teaching, I had to do small teaching sessions to other teachers. This was really stressful, because I was writing on the board in front of them, and I knew that I couldn't spell certain words.

Wishing to progress my career, I left teaching and became a lecturer for Northumberland County Council. I worked doing some English and maths tutoring, supporting people to get back into employment. I did that for about two years, hiding my dyslexia in the same way I did when I was teaching in schools.



How did your apprenticeship journey start?

I changed jobs and moved into an Organisational Development role, leading apprenticeships for Northumberland County Council. I'd started managing a team and I saw undertaking an apprenticeship as an opportunity to develop my leadership and management skills. I did a level three Team Leader apprenticeship. It was a great way to upskill and it made sense to have dedicated time away from work to do it, rather than doing it at nights or at the weekend. At the end of it I was like, wow, I can't believe I've gained all these skills. It definitely made me a better leader.

What was the learning part of the apprenticeship like?

Apprenticeships can work well for those that don't learn in the 'traditional' written exam way. For example, I would learn all this theory about leadership or management styles, go and put it into practice and then write about it. It wasn't so daunting because I could write in the first person, and it was such a better way of learning for me. I remember saying to my tutor that I find it hard to write. I asked if I could do professional discussions instead of everything I submitted being written, and that was really helpful.

When I think back to university the first time, it was very much case study based, and you didn't have that opportunity to practice what you do with your skills, knowledge and behaviours, which is brilliant in an apprenticeship.

How did you receive support for your dyslexia?

One day I was talking to someone, and I mentioned how I struggle with grammar. They asked me if I'd tried Grammarly, which I'd never heard of. I learned that it is software that runs in the background, reading everything on your screen, and picking up errors. Using this was transformational. Immediately, I was so much quicker at writing emails. Before using Grammarly, it could sometimes take me half an hour to write an email, especially if it was going to senior people in my organisation.

When I moved to South Tyneside Council two years ago, I didn't tell anybody I had dyslexia. In conversation with a colleague, Susan mentioned that their daughter who is a nurse has dyslexia, and that she uses other software to help and I may be able to access similar support at work. This gave me the confidence to open up to this colleague, and she told me that I don't have to be embarrassed. She encouraged me to speak to my manager, Katherine and that they would be supportive. So I did, and they were really supportive, helping me with reports, proof reading or just small things like communicating via Teams rather than lengthy emails. and put helpful software in place for me.

At the same time, South Tyneside Council supported me to apply for the level seven Senior People Professional apprenticeship with Teesside University, which meant going back to university. This time they asked me when I started if I had any additional needs and I was honest about how I struggled, but how I'd never been officially tested for dyslexia. So, they organised for me to go through the diagnostic test.

How did you find the diagnostic testing?

The tests I had to do for the diagnosis were quite challenging. The person who did it was absolutely lovely and couldn't have been more supportive. He got a bit of background information before the tests, and then about six weeks later, a report came back, and it tells you the areas where you struggle. For me, reading is fine, but not writing, and it identified that I struggle to retain information like names or times. When my partner Jeri read the report, she said 'that is you'! It has also helped her understand how I process things. The support I had to get the dyslexia diagnosis from both South Tyneside Council and Teesside University was absolutely phenomenal.

For me, reading is fine, but not writing, and the diagnostic tests also identified that I struggle to retain information like names or times.

What support do you have in place now?

The university has implemented such great support. I've got a dedicated learning support adviser to help and support me. When I'm doing an assignment, we meet and talk through where maybe my grammar isn't right, or my spelling. I also use self-help tools like getting Word to read back to me, so I can hear where it's wrong and I can correct it. Since doing the level seven Senior People Professional apprenticeship, it's really transformed how I work. I feel that I'm more confident because I'm being myself and not trying to hide.

In the workplace, my team are really supportive. Sometimes I have reports to present and presenting them as a written report is really not my thing, because it's black and white text. Even if I put on a coloured overlay, it just it's not my way of delivery and I can't read and deliver what is in front of me. I spoke to my Head of Service, Claire, and we agreed that I could use a presentation instead, with less text and just bullet points or images to trigger what I need to say.



Would you say that doing the apprenticeships gave you that confidence to open up about your dyslexia?

Definitely. I think because nobody at any point has seen it as a weakness. It empowers other people to come forward, but also it really makes people aware of how many people are affected by dyslexia. People sometimes think it's just in childhood but it's not. The apprenticeship has been transformational, having that opportunity to get support.

What would you say to apprentices coming into an organisation...should they tell their employer about their dyslexia at the start?

Absolutely, from having been an apprentice myself I know you can feel like you're at the bottom of the organisation and on the back foot. But what I would say is that apprentices don't always realise that they are the future and we're invested in you. But you've got to open up, be your authentic self, otherwise you're not performing to the best of your abilities and you won't reach your potential, which is what everyone wants.

What excites you about the future of apprenticeships?

I think the new government's initiative around mandatory work experience is great. There's some really good opportunities for those with disabilities to do supported work experience, so look out for these. Work experience lets aspiring apprentices get a feel for the industry that they might want to go into. And with apprenticeships, there is the opportunity to learn in more of a practical way. You've got the opportunity to really embed yourself in the work, rather than all textbooks or assignments.

You're involved with the Disability Apprentice Network (DAN). What's that like?

The Disabled Apprentice Network (DAN) is hosted by leading UK charity, Disability Rights UK (DRUK). Through the network, current and past apprentices of all ages and levels connect to share their experiences and views on how apprenticeships can be improved for disabled people. The support from the Association of Apprentices (AOA) has been pivotal in hearing the experience of disabled apprentices' voices too. This year I was lucky enough to represent DAN and the AoA at Westminster, sharing views of disabled apprentices



in a roundtable event with MP Andrew Pakes to really shape apprenticeships for disabled people. AoA is free to join, and the support is just phenomenal. You can join the AoA by visiting [associationofapprentices.org.uk](https://www.associationofapprentices.org.uk)



Association of
Apprentices

What advice would you give to parents and carers of children with additional needs who are interested in apprenticeships?

I'd recommend that they support their child to speak to the employer to see what support could be implemented. Nobody should ever feel that they've got a disadvantage because of a disability. It's about people making small differences that can really make that impact.



Visit the DAN [website](#) to find out more about the network, and to download the latest version of their Apprenticeship Guide.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF:

Sewa, a Level 6 Chartered Manager Degree Apprentice at Microsoft



Rise and shine, a new day awaits!

I usually wake up around 6:00 AM. I try my best to keep my routine structured to help me stay focused. I start my day by brushing my teeth, doing my skincare routine and a small workout. While doing this, I listen to music, which helps me not feel overwhelmed. Listening to music or just having my headphones on is a big part of my routine.

Getting set for the day ahead

Every day before work, I write a to-do list. I look at my calendar with all the meetings I have, go through my emails and messages, and prioritise my tasks to make sure I'm doing everything in the right order. I colour-code my tasks, and use AI to help me gather all the things I need to do. This helps me manage my ADHD by providing visual cues and reminders.



Staying focussed at work

One of the biggest challenges I face during my workday is staying focused during long meetings. My ADHD means my attention span isn't always great, and not being able to focus can be frustrating. I've been open and honest with my team, and when I need a break, I take one. To stay organised and focused, which can be hard at times, I use a combination of digital tools and physical planners. I break down large tasks into smaller, manageable steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed. If I do get overwhelmed, I'm transparent with my manager and take a break to let my brain breathe.

Lunch time

If I'm in the office, I usually eat lunch with either my team or some other apprentices. If I'm working from home, I normally have lunch at my desk while watching a show to take a little break from work.



Support at work

My company has given me a few adjustments to support me, such as standing desks and noise-cancelling headphones. They've also made me aware of tools like speech-to-text, which helps with my writing and is actually what I'm using to write this article.

Winding down after work

After work, I unwind by shutting down my laptop, clearing my desk, and spending time speaking to friends and family. I like cooking, going out with friends, going to the cinema or theatre, or just hanging out with them at home. I try to go to sleep between 10:00 and 11:00 PM, but that's not always the case because my ADHD sometimes makes my brain overactive.



University days

On university days, I do my course online with my training provider, QA. If I can, I try to look at the PowerPoint before the session to have a decent understanding of what they're going to talk about. My lectures are recorded, so I watch them back to help me absorb the information. I also use noise-cancelling headphones to help me concentrate when writing my assignments.

A LOOK AT SPORTS APPRENTICESHIPS WITH COACH CORE



Coach Core is a national social mobility charity, using sport and apprenticeships to support young adults who may otherwise face discrimination, exclusion or lack of opportunities.

Working alongside their training provider and a network of employer partners, they deliver the Level 2 Community Activator Coach qualification, and in some areas, the Level 3 Community Sport and Health Officer too.

Apprentices on both programmes will learn how to plan, deliver and evaluate engaging physical activity sessions for their community, inspiring people to lead healthier, more active lifestyles. In addition, Coach Core provides a range of additional workshops, events and opportunities to support broader skills and development too.

For more information about the programme or to find out more about live (and upcoming) vacancies, visit the Coach Core website: coachcore.org.uk



We asked Nana for his advice to aspiring apprentices with additional needs and he said,

“My advice is just go for it because it helps you to gain employment and it’s very very good for you. You’re going to love it.”



Amazing Apprenticeships made a film about an inspiring Coach Core apprentice, Nana, who completed a Level 2 Community Activator Coach apprenticeship last year at Future Youth Zone.

Nana told us about his apprenticeship and the support he received, *“When I first started, I was a bit nervous, but once I settled in, I knew that the kids were going to love me! I do some learning online. I also do a development day every eight weeks and it helps me within my employment. My colleagues, they’re really, really nice people. My line manager, my employer, they’ve supported me so well. They have made adjustments to meet my needs. They give me good advice as well.”*

Nana’s colleague, Ray, told us, *“I’m the Volunteer Recruitment and Staff Training Manager at Future Youth Zone. Nana started off with the junior sessions, where it was easier to build a rapport with the young people. That’s what we’ve done to adapt to his needs, where he can build up that confidence in himself.”*



Find out more about Nana and watch his film here: amazingapprenticeships.com/meet-nana



NANA

WHAT SUPPORT WILL THE APPRENTICE RECEIVE FROM THEIR TRAINING PROVIDER?



Making the transition from education to employment can feel like a big step for many young people. We caught up with Claire Baranowski, SEND Specialist, and Jo Pountney, Director of Apprenticeships with Educational and Sporting Futures, an Ofsted 'Outstanding' training provider which offers a variety of apprenticeships and skills training. In this article they share what you can expect from an apprenticeship training provider and how they work to ensure that the right support is in place for each learner.

As a training provider, how might you know that an apprentice has a learning support need?

We have really invested in our organisation to ensure that our team are able to support all apprentices, whether they have diagnosed or undiagnosed needs. One of the ways we do this is by ensuring that all apprentices undertake an assessment before they start their programme which will inform us of any indicators of need, particularly with Dyslexia and Dyscalculia. We do not diagnose the condition, but it does mean that we can then work with the apprentice, their tutor and employer to ensure that any needs are supported.

How does this work if an apprentice already has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)?

If an apprentice already has an EHC plan, then it is our responsibility as the training provider to ensure that the plan is updated regularly. We will receive a copy of the EHC plan, and we can use this as the starting point to build a robust support plan. We will use what we know about their support needs from the EHC plan, and update this with any other support requirements to make sure that it really reflects the apprenticeship, and is adapted to bring in any workplace or learning support.

What kinds of support do you offer your apprentices?

The support plan will be completely personalised to each apprentice, and so the additional learning support will vary. Where the initial assessment identifies that there is an indicator of need, we can undertake additional assessments to really focus in on the areas where the apprentice requires the greatest support. We will also discuss any support needs with the apprentice and involve them in the planning, and ongoing review, of the support they are receiving.





What is the role of the apprenticeship tutor?

The tutor is the golden thread throughout the apprenticeship, supporting the apprentice, linking with the employer and bringing the curriculum to life. They are responsible for ensuring the apprentice is progressing well, and that support is effective. They lead progress reviews involving the apprentice and workplace mentor, celebrating success and setting targets for development.

How will the employer be involved in the additional support for the apprentice?

The employer is ultimately responsible for ensuring that any employee with additional needs is supported effectively, and this includes apprentices. We, as the training provider, are responsible for ensuring that the learning support is in place and effective. Communication is key and support plan effectiveness is reviewed as part of the ongoing review process. In addition, tutors are available to support apprentices and the workplace mentor on a 1:1 basis. This cycle of support ensures the apprentice stays on track.

How is the tutor involved in supporting the apprentice?

All tutors will give 1:1 support to their apprentice, and this is really crucial to the success and achievement of the apprentice. Tutors will also be able to adapt any of the learning materials that the apprentice is using. All of our tutors are ex-teachers, so this means we're really experienced in identifying and addressing any support needs, and to adapt this support as the apprentice progresses.

How do you support apprentices through the End Point Assessment of their apprenticeship?

End Point Assessment is conducted by an external organisation, although there are lots of ways that the apprentice can continue to be supported which are set out by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](https://www.esfapprenticeships.co.uk).

Do you have any advice for families who are considering how they can support their child?

It's really important that learning needs are not seen as a barrier. As the training provider, it's our role to help apprentices to become independent learners. We have found that sometimes it can work really well when families are also involved in supporting the apprentice. Of course, the apprentice needs to agree to this - but we have many learners where a parent is also involved in helping to support at home and it's been really effective.

"We don't want people to fail - we want to set them up for success, which means we need to know as much as possible, as soon as possible."

Many parents and carers are concerned about when to disclose additional support needs. What would your advice be to those families?

We would always encourage apprentices to share as much as possible, right from the beginning. It's really important that we understand their needs so that they're on the right programme, one that is appropriate for them. If we have these details, we can action support from the start, ensuring a positive experience from the outset. We want to avoid learners struggling due to us not fully understanding their learning needs. We don't want people to fail - we want to set them up for success, which means we need to know as much as possible, as soon as possible, so that we can ensure the right support is in place.



Find out more about Educational and Sporting Futures by visiting their website:
[esfapprenticeships.co.uk](https://www.esfapprenticeships.co.uk)

WHAT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES COULD MY YOUNG PERSON PURSUE?

BBC
BITESIZE
CAREERS

[BBC Bitesize Careers](#) has a range of accessible careers resources to inspire your child and help them consider their future journey into work. Here are a few examples:



MEGAN

[Read the story](#)

Having been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia, Megan struggled in school. She found drama classes were the perfect way to express herself and now facilitates drama classes that help children realise their full potential.



ISAAC

[Read the story](#)

Isaac is a vlogger and filmmaker who uses his films to document his lifestyle, which has included carrying the Olympic torch and skydiving in America.



LIA

[Read the story](#)

Crèche assistant Lia secured her paid job by doing a supported internship through the charity, Mencap. They helped her gain Maths and English qualifications and work on her employability skills.



DANIEL

[Read the story](#)

Daniel told Bitesize Careers he used to try and separate his disability from his dream career in order to fit in. He explains how he's now determined to become a human rights barrister to advocate on behalf of disabled people.



BBC



THE CAREERS PODCAST

BITESIZE

Watch, read or listen to BBC Radio 1's Katie Thistleton, young guests and career experts as they help to tackle the most popular questions teenagers asked about the world of work.

Available as a video with transcript, and as an audio podcast on BBC Sounds, each episode has a 'Takeaway Task' to try and adapt, and 'Key moments' sections so you can break it down and find exactly what you're looking for.



Help! What am I good at?



Help! How do I write a CV & cover letter?



Help! How can I set achievable goals?



Help! What should I do in a job interview?



Help! What do I do next?



Help! What is networking & how can it help me?

APPRENTICE INSIGHT

APPRENTICESHIP SUCCESS WITH A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Marc is a Business Support Officer at Newcastle City Council and a former Business Administration apprentice, who has embraced the opportunities apprenticeships offer. In this article, Marc shares his journey into a successful career and why he would encourage people with a disability to consider apprenticeships.

Please tell us a bit about yourself

My name is Marc Coulson and I have a visual impairment. My condition is called Achromatopsia, which is a form of colour blindness and is more of a struggle for me in bright settings. My goals are to try and progress as much as I can at work and to live a happy and chilled life enjoying what I like.

What did you do before your apprenticeship?

I did a course at college called New Venture, which aims to help people with disabilities get into the world of work. I feel this helped me massively. On the course, we all took part in different work placements around the city to help us get the feel for working life. My work placement was at Waitrose, which I really enjoyed. It gave me a lot of confidence to make the step up and investigate apprenticeships.

Please tell us about how you became an apprentice and why you chose to do an apprenticeship

I started by doing a pre-apprenticeship with Newcastle City Council, which lasted a year. I was then offered the chance to do an admin-based apprenticeship in the same department. I never thought that I would do an apprenticeship in this area as I was concerned I would struggle with using a computer and working at a fast pace. I feel the main reason I looked to go down the apprenticeship route is because I enjoyed my work placement – it really helped me get into and understand a place of work. An apprenticeship felt like the next best step and even just looking into apprenticeships was very beneficial for me as it really helped me understand the world of work even more.



What did you do in your apprenticeship role?

When I started my apprenticeship, I was doing more basic tasks like sorting files and scanning. Soon after I began with tasks on the computer. My main task was closing jobs on the system after they had been completed, including jobs relating to the waste and recycling team and the gardening team. As I got used to the role, my day would also include taking phone calls, doing stock checks for schools and answering phone calls and emails. I was also given other tasks by my team leader, such as making and printing posters to stick around the building for upcoming events.

Did you get support with searching and applying?

During my work placement college course, I was told by my tutors about the opportunity at Newcastle City Council. My tutors at New Venture helped me massively and I can't thank them enough for the support they gave me. I met the apprenticeship officer at the council, who gave me advice and helped me prepare for interview.

How was your apprenticeship delivered?

My team leader let me set aside a day a week to do study work. My tutor came to visit me once every couple of weeks to catch up and set my next tasks. We also had a day at college once a month.



What support did you receive during your apprenticeship?

During my apprenticeship I worked in a small team but had lots of support. I reported to my senior, who oversaw the team, and I had a team manager, who wasn't in the office as much, but I could also speak to them if I had any queries. I really appreciated the support of my team as they were aware of my visual impairment and that I was quite quiet, but they helped me hugely with any adjustments I needed, and they really made an effort to help improve my confidence and teamwork skills.

My apprenticeship tutor was also a huge help as he helped me develop my skills not just in my apprenticeship, but also in my writing skills and how to look and be more professional in the world of work.

What adjustments were made for you at work?

The adjustments I have had put in place to help me in my role include a black desk, which makes it easier for me to see, as well as bigger monitors. I have also had the settings adjusted on my computer to help me see things better.

How did your apprenticeship help you?

I feel my apprenticeship helped me massively as it pushed me out my comfort zone and improved my confidence so much. It also helped me develop a range of new skills and improved my computer skills a huge amount, which has helped me get to where I am today.

What has been your proudest moment – in or out of work?

I feel my proudest moment was renting my first and current property. This was a proud moment for me as I am low in confidence and didn't think I would ever have my own place. With my visual impairment, I have had a few challenging times in my life, but I have always had the best support around me from my family and at school and getting into the life of work.



I really appreciated the support of my team as they were aware of my visual impairment and that I was quite quiet, but they helped me hugely

What's your advice to aspiring apprentices with a disability?

I would urge people who are in the same position as me to find out as much as they can about apprenticeships as I feel it is a perfect way to start your working life. I would also say - be honest. Don't be ashamed to ask for help and for any adjustments that will help you at work. Anyone out there can do anything they want, as long as they have the right support around them, and adjustments put in place to help them work to the best of their ability.

T LEVEL FOUNDATION YEAR *EXPLAINED*

Bridging the gap to a T Level course

What is the T Level Foundation Year?

The T Level Foundation Year is a new type of study programme, specifically designed to develop the skills, experience, knowledge and behaviours to support progression onto, and success on, a T Level. It provides a high-quality route onto T Levels for students who would like to do a T Level, but don't feel ready to start straight after their GCSEs.

Should my child complete a T Level Foundation Year?

If your child would benefit from additional study time and preparation before starting their T Level, the T Level Foundation Year could be for them. It enables students to address barriers to accessing a T Level – for example due to prior attainment, pastoral issues or personal development needs. It is also suitable for students who need more time to develop their English and / or maths skills.

Who can complete a T Level Foundation Year?

The T Level Foundation Year is available to students aged 16 to 19 and for young people with Education, Health and Care plans up to age 24.

Do you have to pay to do a T Level Foundation Year?

The T Level Foundation Year is free if you start when you're under the age of 19 and have not already enrolled in another type of post-16 education.

How long is the T Level Foundation Year?

The T Level Foundation Year is delivered as full or part time study. In most instances it will be a full-time study programme lasting up to one standard academic year.

Where can my child complete a T Level Foundation Year?

The T Level Foundation Year is available at schools and colleges offering T Levels across the country. Visit this link to find a school or college offering T Levels near you: tlevels.gov.uk/students/find

Find out more about what the T Level Foundation Year is like by hearing from students here:

amapps.uk/tlevel-foundation-year



HTQS: TROY'S STORY



Troy graduated with Level 5 HND Computing, an approved HTQ, at Solihull College and University Centre. Having been diagnosed with autism and ADHD in primary school, Troy wanted a learning environment and course that would support his learning style and allow him to follow his passion.

What were you studying before and where are you now?

I did my Level 2 Technical Diploma in IT, followed by my Level 3 General Extended Diploma. I was then recommended the Level 5 HTQ and graduated in the summer of 2024. I am now working at Solihull College and University Centre in a full-time capacity! I got offered the job while I was still doing my HTQ. I finished my HTQ one week, then started the role a week later. I literally walked into a job because of this course. I've passed my probation now and am feeling settled into my role.

Why this course?

I live and breathe tech. I have very vivid memories of being in Year 4 in primary school and having access to the classroom computer and being so passionate about it. My interest with computers has only grown. I would notice errors on my school computer systems and report them myself – by knocking on the IT department door!

I wanted to get an IT job straight after my Level 3 diploma, but I didn't have enough experience. I wanted an option that would give me a taster of what it would be like to be a technician in the sector, rather than going to university. My tutor recommended this course to me, and I saw it had everything I wanted.

A college setting was also my preferred learning environment. On my course, everyone is studying what they want to do so there is a lot more passion.



What was your course like?

I studied the course full time over two years. It was two full-time days on campus every week with a mix of assignments and independent work. There were lots of relevant topics and I got the opportunity to do projects I was interested in.

I was initially worried about the potential costs, but student finance was available. I took out a student maintenance loan for additional costs, but I was eligible for a grant so didn't have any tuition fees. The tutors and the college were really supportive with this.

Alongside the HTQ I also had a part-time job at McDonald's so the course fitted into my routine well. I even got to bring my tech skills from the course into that job! I fixed spreadsheet data errors, ensuring resourcing calculations were done correctly for different branches, and fixed the hardware if the digital screens went wrong.

“My tutors were so supportive and helped me become an independent and successful student. It was because of this support that I settled in so well and loved the HTQ experience.”

Can you tell us more about your additional needs and your learning journey?

I was diagnosed with autism and ADHD in Year 4 in primary school. I would say I have certain learning patterns meaning teaching staff really affect how easily I can take something on board. Some teachers I really understand, others less so. To use a computing metaphor – certain operating systems only understand certain executions. So, I need the right input for me to learn. The tutors here know my ways of learning and my needs and have been incredibly supportive and compassionate.

I had a Learning Support Tutor (LST) throughout my Level 2 qualifications which helped a lot when I was younger, but by the time I got to my Level 4 qualification, I had evolved beyond needing an LST and felt more confident in my independence.

I work well when listening to music, so receiving headphones in secondary school was a good intervention. I still listen to music now when working. My writing is hopeless, so I use computers for everything. I also use AI as an assistive tool which can be helpful if used responsibly.

One challenge for me was transitioning to higher education. There is a really clear idea of what is expected of students. But my tutors were so supportive and helped me become an independent and successful student. It was because of this support that I settled in so well and loved the HTQ experience.

It's another reason I love that my job is here. Due to my autism, I am used to this environment, I have adjusted to it. Plus, I still see my previous LST and HTQ tutors – they are proud that I am here on campus as staff now.

What was the highlight of your HTQ?

I won the Mayor's award at Solihull College and University Centre for a project I did in my own time. The college has a cyber lab, but the setup wasn't optimal and only ran on local networks. I identified a way to connect these computers to a new server, a virtual lab I had set up at home, and then set it up physically in the lab. I made the theoretical real. The legacy of that work is still there.



What skills did you learn on the course?

We covered all sorts of topics, including databases, website creation, programming and repairability of devices. Repairability is really important and that is something I bring into my daily work now. It's important to make technology sustainable and for me, it is reduce, reuse, repair, recycle.

We also learnt programming and my current side project is maintaining a website for my old driving instructor. I designed it from scratch and maintain the responsible system hosting the site.

I have also gained a lot of confidence. I got to follow my curiosity, play with some tech, likely break it, then fix it and learn something new. I find that so exciting.

What would you say to other students with additional needs about HTQs?

For students with additional needs, I think an HTQ is a great option. If you know what area you want to work in, it's a great focused course, so you learn what you want with other passionate people. If you're looking for that next step, an HTQ will sharpen your skills. I am also confident that HTQ tutors will be supportive wherever you are, even if it's not Solihull College and University Centre! Although my tutors are especially great.



Discover more about HTQs

To find out more about HTQs and understand the range of options, please visit:

amazingapprenticeships.com/higher-technical-qualifications-htqs/

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



As part of the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools and Colleges programme (ASK), Amazing Apprenticeships are offering parents, carers, careers staff and teachers a schedule of fully-funded webinars throughout the year.

This series of informative webinars will provide an abundance of advice, information, hints and tips from expert speakers across the apprenticeships and technical education world. Each webinar lasts for 30 minutes and will take place on Zoom. Participants are required to sign up before the session and will receive an email confirmation and a reminder one hour before it begins. The webinars will be recorded and shared with all registrants after the session.



Book your free place and catch up on recordings of all previous webinars here: amazingapprenticeships.com/workshops-webinars

Date and Time	Title and Description
Monday 17th March 2025 15:30-16:00	<p>Sharing information about HTQs with your school/college community Watch this webinar to hear how to share information with students, parents/carers and colleagues about HTQs to ensure good knowledge and awareness of these fantastic qualifications and support your school's work in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks, as well as how to support students during the research and application process.</p>
Thursday 20th March 2025 15:30-16:00	<p>How to impress in the apprenticeship application process Hear directly from employers and apprentices sharing their advice on the best ways to impress in the apprenticeship recruitment process.</p>
Thursday 24th April 2025 15:30-16:00	<p>Preparing for Apprenticeship Assessment Centres The apprenticeship recruitment landscape is constantly changing, with many employers now utilising different methods to assess candidates, including assessment centres. Join us to hear from employers about how they work, what they're really looking for and their advice on how students can prepare.</p>
Tuesday 29th April 2025 15:30-16:00	<p>T Levels: Everything you need to know Join this webinar to hear directly from employers about their T Level programmes, including how they are structured, the matching process, linking the curriculum to the workplace and the benefits of T Levels.</p>



Date and Time	Title and Description
<p>Monday 19th May 2025 15:30-16:00</p>	<p>Apprenticeships for individuals with additional needs Many students have additional needs and may feel unsure about the support that will be offered by employers and training providers. Join us to hear about the flexibilities that can be offered and the support that apprentices will receive.</p>
<p>Thursday 12th June 2025 15:30-16:00</p>	<p>How to research and apply for HTQs If your child is looking for a post-18 qualification that is flexible, job-focussed and an excellent way to progress to a higher/degree apprenticeship, a full degree or a highly-skilled job, join us to find out more about HTQs.</p>
<p>Thursday 19th June 2025 15:30-16:00</p>	<p>How students can use the summer to start their apprenticeship research It's never too early to start researching apprenticeships and the summer can be a brilliant time to help to get ready. Join us to hear from experts explaining how to help students to get ready for when vacancies open up in the autumn.</p>
<p>Monday 7th July 2025 15:30-16:00</p>	<p>Finished year 11 or year 13 and want to find an apprenticeship? If you've just finished your course(s) and taken your exams, but aren't sure what you're doing next, or may want to change your mind about what you are planning to do, join us to find out about what to do right now to start finding an apprenticeship. You haven't left it too late!</p>

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT: SEND RAPID READS

Amazing Apprenticeships have released two new Rapid Reads, which form a series of four with two existing Rapid Reads, designed to answer key questions and help you support your child through their apprenticeship journey.

Finding an inclusive employer: Highlighting some of the ways companies demonstrate that they welcome applications from students with a disability, learning difference or health condition.

Apprenticeship application support: Looking at some of the questions frequently asked by aspiring apprentices and those supporting people with additional needs when applying.

Functional skills qualifications: Explaining the requirements for apprentices aged 16-18 regarding functional skills.

Support for apprentices: Looking at some of the questions frequently asked about the support available for apprentices with additional needs.



You may also be interested in visiting Amazing Apprenticeships' new SEND zone: amazingapprenticeships.com/send



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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

If you have a story to share about apprenticeships or technical education - we would love to hear from you.

Please reach out to the Amazing Apprenticeships team below:



hello@amazingapprenticeships.com

