

Caleb's Project Choice Story

From sewing to coding. Experiences choice through internships.

Newcastle

Caleb was 19 years old when he joined Project Choice's Supported Internship course. Caleb has Autism and said that before Project Choice, he was very shy and worried about how he would cope in the world of work. He was particularly concerned he would not be able to work hard enough to meet expectations.

Over the year Caleb has been on the course, he has successfully completed two placements; the first in a bed factory after requesting to try a physical role and the second in the Clinical coding department at The Freeman Hospital.

In the bed factory, Homes Newcastle, Caleb's role was to assist in the refurbishment of bed frames and mattresses. Caleb's eye for detail and conscientiousness made him an asset to the team, particularly in the intricate work of sewing mattress covers which he excelled at.

In his final placement in Clinical coding. Caleb worked hard towards learning to do the full aspect of the Clinical Coding assistant role and to do so independently.

Caleb said he had learnt, "to never be slow; you need to work at an effective pace for employment. I also now feel more confident in talking to colleagues socially".

Caleb continued to show his excellent work ethic and willingness to learn in his placement and he was able to progress into a supported apprenticeship role within the same department.



Finding your way in the world of work

Portering Services at University Hospital of North Tees.

Stockton-on-Tees

Dominic was 18 when he joined Project Choice and felt that he needed some help to get into the world of work.

Being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and complex neuro-development difficulties, Dominic states that he finds social interactions difficult along with some co-ordination difficulties. Dominic said that he struggles with anxiety often caused by classroom environments which resulted in his attendance being below 20% during his time at school.



Since starting at Project Choice Dominic has completed all three of his work placements with Portering Services at University Hospital of North Tees. During his time, Dominic has developed and grown beyond everyone's expectations. Not only did he excel and not miss a day of work placement, his classroom attendance improved to over 90%.

Dominic said "I like everything about this job. I am really starting to feel like I know the role. I would definitely want to work here if given the chance."

Dominic continued to take on new duties and responsibilities and now works completely independently around the hospital, completing all jobs which are radioed to him by the Portering supervisors.

Andy, Dominic's Mentor said "Dominic has been doing really well. He keeps progressing. He's enjoying it and is now very much part of the team. All of the staff have taken him under their wing. I would certainly like to offer him a job here when the time comes."

Dominic secured permanent full time employment with the Portering Service and has been employed by them for 3 years now.



Health Education England

Jack's Employment Journey

Getting the dream job

Newcastle/ Durham

Since Jack was 13, he was a carer for his grandad and was until he passed away. "My grandad always wanted me to be a carer and it has always been a goal of mine. Now I am the best carer there is" Jack said.

Jack has a learning disability and hearing difficulties and needed some support to get into paid employment. He started a Supported Internship course with Project Choice in 2015. His first placement was at a care home working with older people, specifically with dementia. He started in the kitchen doing various duties preparing food, and the staff supported him to experience different roles around the care home including facilitating group activities with the residents.

After impressing management, he was asked to continue with the placement for the duration of the academic year. Towards the end of his Project Choice placements, Jack completed a 2 week *Get into Care scheme* with the Princes' Trust where he worked on developing his skills and experience in care, with Helen McCardle Care. "I enjoyed every single moment of it!" says Jack. The scheme involved additional learning including a Level 2 certificate and first aid training. Jack remembers that, as part of the Get into Care scheme he was required to present about his learning to the group and also run activity groups independently, without support from staff.

"My job means a lot to me. I just want to work and make sure that all the residents are happy, cheerful and have laughter every day."

Following the completion of his Supported Internship, Jack was successful in being offered a twoyear apprenticeship at Helen McCardle Care. After the first year, Jack was offered part time work as an activities coordinator and worked across two different sites. Now, years on, Jack works full time, supports other care homes who are understaffed and trains new staff starting in care. It is well known that Jack has a natural talent building rapport and engaging all the care home residents.

On reflection of his Internship, apprenticeship and work in the care home, Jack stated that it really helped him to have a routine. It helped him to be able to do his job and to be really good at it. "It helps to know where you are at and what is expected of you" said Jack.

Jack has now been asked to step up into a Care Assistant role. He has been offered additional training, and now completes care related duties including assisting residents with personal care, eating and ensuring that they are “comfortable and have a good day, every day” said Jack.

Jack said “My job means a lot to me. I just want to work and make sure that all the residents are happy, cheerful and have laughter every day. I want to make sure that their families are all happy with the care. That is all that matters to me.”

Jack does admit that getting work is not easy, and people need more opportunity to build more confidence. Jack said “you need to take it day by day, make a target for yourself and work towards that target.”

Jack succeeded to use his internship as a pre entry-level opportunity to help build his skills to enter the workforce. He is now a valued member of team, knowledgeable, a model worker, and has a true mind set for care and support.

Jack knows that this is what his Grandad would have wanted and he is so happy to be able to reach the goals that he said he would.