



Empowering futures with West Lea

West Lea is an organisation dedicated to breaking down barriers and improving life opportunities for children and young adults with special educational needs.

West Lea offers individuals aged 16-24 the chance to gain work experience through their Supported Internship Programme with partner organisations. These internships focus on enhancing participants' work and life skills, as well as improving their proficiency in English and mathematics.

As an inclusive employer, we were keen to support this programme and became a partner organisation with West Lea in 2023.

Since the beginning of this partnership, we have welcomed three interns via the Supported Internship Programme – Mehrajul, Ellie, and Bradley.



Supporting Mehrajul with his confidence in an office environment

Mehrajul, a 21 year-old native Bengali speaker, joined our London office as an intern to provide invaluable administrative support to our team. Mehrajul is on the autism spectrum and, despite his capabilities, faced challenges with low self-esteem and confidence. Expressing a keen interest in gaining experience in an office environment, he sought a placement that would help him feel more assured in meeting and interacting with colleagues, as well as navigating independent travel to work.

Prior to Mehrajul joining us, we learned about his sensitivity to noisy environments. To ensure his comfort in our London office, we adjusted the seating plan to minimise noise around him.

Additionally, we made a point to introduce him to every team member so he could feel familiar with everyone, including any new faces. Mehrajul is encouraged to take his lunch break away from his desk to promote inclusivity and improve his confidence in interacting with others. We also ensured that Mehrajul had two dedicated team members as his points of contact in the office for additional support or conversation. These individuals were also involved in his interview process, fostering a strong relationship from the outset.

Over time, Mehrajul's confidence and initiative flourished. He now engages more comfortably with colleagues who have witnessed and praised his growth since joining our London office.

Reflecting on his experience, he shared:

“

Churchill Group has been incredibly welcoming and accommodating. They have ensured the office environment suits me, and the team is always supportive.

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Tailored support to empower Ellie to achieve her goals

Ellie joined our team as a cleaner in our London region. Ellie faces challenges with dyslexia and global developmental delay. She also has epilepsy and experiences absence seizures where she may appear to be daydreaming, but she cannot listen to what is being said. Despite these obstacles, Ellie aspires to attend university in the future and we were delighted to support her with gaining experience in a professional setting to equip her with the necessary skills to achieve her academic goals.

Djanila, Ellie's dedicated job coach, was instrumental in tailoring our support to ease Ellie's transition into this internship. Djanila conducted personalised travel training sessions which equipped Ellie with the necessary skills and confidence to navigate her daily commute to and from work independently.

When Ellie initially joined our cleaning team, she shadowed Djanila to gain a thorough understanding of the tasks and expectations. Through observation and guidance from Djanila, Ellie gradually grew

more comfortable and familiar with her duties, gaining the confidence needed to execute them independently. Our team ensured that Ellie had extra time to learn new skills and patiently explained things to her, empowering her to work to the best of her ability and reassuring her that she's fully capable of doing the job, even if it takes a bit more time.

We're delighted to confirm that upon completing her Supported Internship Programme, Ellie is now employed by us, working at our client site in London. Ellie's confidence has grown significantly since she started, and she is about to commence her Level 2 Cleaning Hygiene Operative Apprenticeship which she is really excited about.

Watch Ellie's development story here 

This tailored support was appreciated by Ellie and empowered her to excel in her role:

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Churchill has been incredibly supportive, particularly in accommodating my epilepsy and understanding my absence seizures. My dyslexia and global developmental delay may mean I don't pick things up right away, but the team has been patient with me. They have been exceptionally welcoming and friendly, making me feel like an integral part of the team by introducing me to other team members.

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Supporting Bradley's confidence and independence at ASOS

Bradley, who has a diagnosis of Down's Syndrome, global developmental delay, and a hearing impairment, was eager to gain work experience and build his confidence in a professional setting. He first visited our client's ASOS site as part of a group of West Lea interns, where he immediately stood out to both our team and the client. We were delighted to offer him an internship within our ASOS housekeeping team.

To help Bradley feel at ease, we arranged for him to spend time getting to know our team before officially starting the internship. On his first day, Bradley received a warm welcome from our team and the ASOS client, who arranged a team lunch after learning that Bradley is a big foodie.

Bradley currently works every Friday for two hours at the ASOS site. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays can get quite busy, and it was important for us to ensure an environment where Bradley was comfortable and had the space to focus on his tasks. Bradley supports our housekeeping team by

clearing waste, keeping kitchen points and walkways tidy, and disposing of cardboard. Despite the challenges he faces, Bradley approaches each task with pride and a strong work ethic.

Marvin, Bradley's dedicated job coach, and our team supervisor played a key role in Bradley's transition into this internship. Marvin supports Bradley with travel to work and guides Bradley through his assigned tasks. As Bradley's self-belief continues to grow and when he feels comfortable,

we will look to increase his hours and gradually reduce support. This will support Bradley with strengthening his confidence and developing independence whilst still ensuring support from our team when needed.

Bradley's infectious energy and positive attitude quickly made him an integral member of our ASOS housekeeping team. Bradley's work ethic, enthusiasm, and ability to engage with colleagues allowed him to build strong rapport with his colleagues, who all speak very highly of Bradley.

Reflecting on his internship experience so far, Bradley shared:

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I like working at ASOS. I clear the rubbish away and keep the place tidy. I enjoy working with my team, as they make me happy.

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Our partnership with West Lea underscores our commitment to fostering inclusivity and providing opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to support Mehrajul, Ellie and Bradley with overcoming their challenges, building confidence, and gaining valuable skills that will benefit them in both their personal and professional lives. By working together with our clients and organisations like West Lea, we can create a more supportive and inclusive society where everyone has the chance to thrive and succeed. We look forward to continuing this partnership and welcoming more interns into our business.

