

Real-life story - Andrew Daffern

Andrew was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome ten years ago and is now working as an apprentice in the learning and development department at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust.



Andrew Daffern Learning and development apprentice

Employer or university Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust

Salary range Unknown

How I got into the apprenticeship

Asperger syndrome is a form of autism that affects my social and communication skills with others. I was unemployed for two years and had little success finding work. I feel that having Asperger and my lack of work experience may be the reasons for potential employers not employing me.

When I found out about my apprenticeship at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, I felt a mixed bag of emotions – excitement, thrill and amazement. I finally felt like I was part of a team and am thankful that the trust saw my potential and was willing to give me a chance.

What I do

I am a Talent for Care admin apprentice. My duties tend to vary but my main tasks include updating databases, typing up letters, designing posters for events, sending out reminder emails to colleagues and clients regarding training, booking or arranging meetings. My tasks also include photocopying and printing off worksheets, checking apprenticeship application forms, ensuring that they have been filled correctly and scanned.

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The best bits and challenges

Being an apprentice at the trust makes me feel I am in safe hands. Everyone there has been friendly, willing to listen and they also adapt to my needs – nothing is too much for me to ask.

Everyone is supportive of me, including coming up with ideas that can help me in my tasks. One of the ideas was, whenever I was given a task, to write it down straightaway so I will not forget it later and panic.

The trust has been accepting of me and I believe they are keen to learn more about Asperger syndrome so that the staff can understand future employees who are diagnosed with it and able to help them.

Asperger affects my confidence and causes me high levels of anxiety. I am also not comfortable talking to strangers, fearing their response, being misunderstood or, on some occasions, being ignored.

If I feel I am being criticised, I become upset, feel useless and feel fear creeping in which causes me to dread speaking to that person again. However, if someone gives me constructive criticism in a polite manner, I believe I can learn from it and build on it.

Life outside work

I enjoy watching football and occasionally playing it. I am also keen on travelling the country, visiting new grounds and places. I am an avid film lover – I find pleasure in watching and reviewing films. I am also interested in drama and acting myself. Health wise, I do like jogging and running.

Career plans and top tips for others

At the moment I am taking it one step at a time, making notes and learning things as I go along. I would love to stay on with NHS for a few more years as I believe I can learn much more. In the future, I would love to be in a position where I could help people out and organise events.

My tips for others are to ‘never say never’ – as nothing is impossible; you would not know if you are good at anything unless you have tried it and finally, if you make an effort and give it a go, people will appreciate you more.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes/real-life-story-andrew-daffern>