

The Autism Project@ Guy's and St Thomas'

Supported Internships for Young
People with Autism



Guy's and St Thomas' 
NHS Foundation Trust

Autism

- **Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.**
- It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying [learning disabilities](#) and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience [over- or under-sensitivity](#) to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.
- [Asperger syndrome](#) is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.



A recent longitudinal study reported that an estimated 30% of young people who had a statement of special educational needs when they were in Year 11, and 22% of young people with a declared disability, were not in any form of education, employment or training when they reached age 18 in 2009 compared with 13% of their peers. Current figures from the Labour Force Survey show for quarter 1 of 2011 that 41% of men and 43% of women designated longer-term disabled were economically inactive.

Progression post-16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities- OFSTED 2011



An Overview

- CareTrade's mission is to improve the life chances of school leavers and adults with autism by creating inspirational and sustainable work experience and special apprenticeship schemes to increase employment opportunities; developing innovative live/work solutions and services that meet the needs of individuals. CareTrade also works to make society more aware of the needs of adults with autism.
- CareTrade was established in 2009 by Katharine Doré OBE and Karen Edwards both parents of teenage autistic sons and Founders and Trustees of TreeHouse, which grew from a very special school for four children in 1997 to a state-of-the-art school for some eighty children today and built the foundations for Ambitious About Autism a leading national educational charity, of which Katharine and Karen are Vice Presidents.



- In November 2009 CareTrade formed the Southwark Partnership and won a government bid (Office of Disability Issues) to run one of 14 national sites to evaluate Project SEARCH, an employment –focused education programme that began at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, Ohio USA. It is designed to give students with learning disabilities the opportunity to develop employability skills and gain real work experience by working 5 days per week at the host employer’s premises, combined with on-site classroom sessions.
- Ours is the only autism specific site in the UK. Our first eight students started at St Thomas’ Hospital in September 2010 and graduated in July 2011. All students made extensive gains and were awarded their City & Guilds Personal Progression through Employment Entry Level 3 Certificates. Two of our students went on to gain full time work within the Hospital. We are especially proud of their achievement as there were 184 applicants for 14 jobs and they continue to enjoy their new careers. The pilot was so successful we extended it for a further year and we had a new intake of 9 students start in September 2011.



How the project works?

- It is unique to London and as it grows and evolve we would like to see it become a centre of excellence for how work place training for young adults with autism should be and be able to showcase our work and lead by example to others NHS Trusts and organisations who are positive about employing and supporting people with disabilities.
- It is a unique transitional educational programme aimed at young people (18-25) with autism who may also have additional learning difficulties and would like to work. The majority of learning is active and vocationally based within departments working alongside staff supported by mentors and the core project team (Senior Job Coach, Tutor and Assistant Job Coach). The aim over 40 weeks is to take young people on a unique learning journey where they can experience the relevance of what is taught in the classroom in real and practical terms in their work placements.
- The learning for a young person with autism can be as much about finding their hidden skills as these are as much barriers to employment as qualifications, vocational skills and experience. Travel training and social skills are an integral part of what we do.



Quick Quiz!!

1. The current statistics show that 1 in 100 children in the UK have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). How many young people leaving school each year in the UK have an ASD?
2. How many departments (clinical and non clinical) do you think a large London teaching hospital has?
3. Name 5 departments you think a young person with autism could have a placement in?
4. How many staff does Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust employ?
5. Name three reasonable adjustments you would make for a young person with autism on a supported internship?



Where we are now...

- The project is entering its third year this month. It has been able to build on the initial two-year pilot and learn and develop further so that it can continue to be a positive project within GSTT.
- We are now in partnership with Orchard Hill College, they provide our academic provision and some staff to support this.
- The project hopes to develop more working relationships with other departments and expand the work placements it is able to offer. We have 12 students in the new academic year.
- We are also looking at future development of the project both within the trust and externally to enable us to support more young people into employment within London.
- The lessons that we have learnt over the last two years will enable us to strengthen the project and add to it.
- We would also look at increasing the length of the programme from 35 weeks to 40 weeks and have a longer “working” week.



Things we have found difficult...

- Funding
- Fitting in with the hospital's way of doing things
- Recruitment (but has been positive as well)
- Educational partners' objectives
- Dealing with restructure and building work
- Staffing



Positive Outcomes

- Jobs
- Work Experience 'in-house' opportunity to try more than one job out
- Transferable skills
- Student Confidence
- Continuing education
- Hospital staff awareness
- Hospital buy-in
- Travel skills
- Changes at home



Jodie- A case study

I came to Project SEARCH after attending a work preparation course with Prospects, the National Autistic Society's Employment Service and I also attended a NAS school before that.

I wanted to get more experience of working and build on my skills of working in retail. I was able to go on three work placements. They were in Information Governance, The Central Production Kitchen and Food Services.

I really enjoyed the work in Food Services and would never have thought about a career in catering before I went on Project SEARCH. In my final term there were some jobs advertised for work in Food Services and I applied for one with the Jean, the Project SEARCH tutor, I was offered an interview and a job offer. I honestly think the entire course was excellent and was so excited when I got the job.

I started working at the hospital in October 2011 and am very happy in my job and love all parts of it. I have even trained other staff and new Project SEARCH students. I am also now able to travel to and from work more independently with minimal support from my mum, which was something I was not able to do before I came on Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH has really changed my life into a working life and that is the way it should be.

Further Information

Karen Edwards

Director

Karen.edwards@caretradeuk.org

Judith Kerem

Projects Director

Judith.kerem@caretradeuk.org

<http://www.care-trade.org>

info@caretradeuk.org

