

**Employment Opportunities project for young people with autism**



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**CareTrade**

- **CareTrade** strives to improve the life chances of school leavers and adults with autism within London by creating inspirational, sustainable and innovative opportunities that will help them achieve their potential and to live as independently as possible. **CareTrade** support young people living in London who are 18-25 years old.
- It is estimated that 1 in 100 people in the UK are on the autistic spectrum. Autism is a lifelong disability and this equates to 8,000 school leavers with autism every year in the UK. 830 of these young people live in London. Less than half have additional learning difficulties yet their chances of getting a job is only 15% (this compares to 74% of the general population and 48% of the disabled population as a whole) and just 4% live independently.

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**The Autism Project**

CareTrade believes passionately that all young people should be given the opportunity to reach their potential and lead fulfilling lives.

- **The Autism Project** was developed with and is now well established within Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust. The aim is to support young people with autism to gain confidence and skills to become work ready.
- TAP students will be studying for a **City and Guilds Employability** Qualification this year (Level 1 for most students) and those that don't have a GCSE in English and Maths or the equivalent will be supported on individual Functional Skills development.
- **We have just completed our fifth year, meaning we have benefited 50 young people.** Up to 25% each year have gone into employment within a month of the end of the course.
- **Two of our first year students have now worked for Ward Food Services at St Thomas' for 4 years now.**

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## Employment Opportunities

- In a response to our concern that not enough young people were able to become both work ready and secure employment within an academic year we developed **Employment Opportunities** specifically to address the needs of TAP@GSTT graduates and new students who are job ready and do not need to attend TAP@GSTT
- In our initial pilot (academic year starting 2013) **57% of young people that participated on Employment Opportunities gain full time paid employment or a paid apprenticeship within 6 months.** In 2015 with a grant from the Department of Health Autism Innovations fund we **repeated a study with larger numbers and 58% of young people were successful** in their endeavour to secure paid employment or an apprenticeship.
- CareTrade's Employment Opportunities** offers tailored employability training for young adults with autism. Employment Opportunities is a flexible mix of workshops, job search sessions, interview preparation and work placements. The programme is part-time and young people are expected to attend at least one day a week.
- We ran **work tasters** in 2014 and 2015 in partnership with Barclay Bank in some London branches and one young gentleman who was on the programme secured employment with a national employer shortly after.

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## CareTrade Figures

The table below shows the total numbers of young people CareTrade have supported on different projects. In total we have provided 104 work focused opportunities benefiting 77 different young people on their journey from education to employment. The majority of young people (58 to be precise) have either attended The Autism Project@GSTT or both TAP@GSTT and Employment Opportunities (EO).

Academic Years	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	totals
<b>PROJECTS</b>						
TAP - Oct no.	8	9	12	11	10	50
EO - (started 2013)				7	16	23
Sub Total	8	9	12	18	26	73
AZW				2	8	10
spa/BI Café	12					12
Spa Café Weekend Pilot					9	9
<b>total places</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>104</b>

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## Access to Work

**CareTrade currently provide Access to Work support for young people** who move into work from our projects and others referred by the National Autistic Society if required. This ensures there is a level of consistency for the young person and support for the employer. Our aim is sustained employment. We are currently supporting 8 people through this service.

**Companies we currently provide support for/have provided support for in the past:**

Sainsburys	Spice
Veolia	South West Trains
BIS	Croydon University Hospital
DEFRA	Axcis
GSTT	Marks and Spencers
Boots	Premier Inn

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## Work Trials and Employment

- Work trials rather than interviews will enable employers to better assess a young person with autism's abilities and suitability.
- Employing a person with autism can deliver improved attention to detail, improved corporate communication (need to be clear and specific), lower staff turnover, savings in staff recruitment, new opportunities for staff development, a more diverse workforce and will help develop a more equal society.
- Being in employment is the biggest single factor that will change the life of a person with autism. It is not just a job, it is a gateway to acceptance, approval and improved health and wellbeing. And it is employers and not governments or educationalists that can make this happen

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## An example of successful engagement – Barclays

- A relationship with Barclays was developed initially via Twitter.
- We met with a HR manager from Barclays and discussed the possibility of them offering work experience placements within the bank branches.
- We piloted our Employment Opportunities Programme in November 2013 and this included 5 young people doing a week long 'work taster' within a branch of Barclays.
- CareTrade attended each branch of Barclays that was offering a work taster and did Autism Awareness training with the staff and discussed the individuals they would be supporting.
- Young people spent the week learning about the various roles within a bank; they had a 'buddy' who they could go to at any time, and were encouraged to keep a diary of their learning throughout the week.
- We have continued working with Barclays and more young people continue to gain experience from the work tasters.
- Young people have said that the experience increases their confidence. It also enables them to improve their CVs and have real work examples to talk about in interviews.

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## Gloria

- Gloria was offered a job within a health records department of a hospital, she had been unemployed for a long time previously and she was really excited to have the opportunity.
- Gloria's manager was keen for Gloria to have Access to Work support and ensured that we had regular meetings to discuss any issues.
- There were some issues that arose at the start of Gloria's employment and we supported her and her manager through Access to Work to overcome these.
- We still support Gloria through monthly meetings with her manager and she has now settled in well, and regularly suggests how the department could streamline certain processes and reduce unnecessary work.

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- The first issue that arose was that Gloria was late on a number of occasions.
- Gloria was also struggling to meet her targets in terms of 'pulling' patient files. Staff are expected to pull 70 an hour.
- On one occasion, Gloria's manager rang me. She was concerned that Gloria had gone home sick, due to having a cold sore. Gloria had told a supervisor she was going home.

What support/advice would you have offered in these situations?

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## George

George was on our Employment Opportunities Programme and applied for an opportunity working as a Gate line Assistant for South West Trains.

George was shortlisted and offered an assessment to ensure he met the requirements for the role.

We liaised with South West Trains to discuss the support George would need in the assessment, SW Trains were open to our input and keen to support George as best they could.

It was agreed that CareTrade staff would support George in the assessment to ensure that he understood questions, and he was given extra time to answer questions as it was likely he would take longer to process them.




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- George passed the assessment and was then offered an interview. He requested interview support from CareTrade.
- George did very well in the interview but SW Trains and CareTrade agreed with George that it may be beneficial to do a work trial to ensure the job was suited to him.
- George had a successful work trial and on his final day, was offered a full-time, permanent role with SW Trains!
- CareTrade will continue to support George through Access to Work.

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### Some More Success Stories...

**Luke**  
Luke started The Autism Project in 2012. By the end of the first term he was shopping independently and cooking for his family. Luke took a summer break and started on Employment Opportunities in October 2013. After only two interviews, Luke secured a permanent full-time role as a Customer Assistant at Boots. He has been in the job for a year now.



**Andrew**  
Andrew completed The Autism Project in 2013. Following a successful work placement in The Post Room at St. Thomas' Hospital, he was offered a full-time position when a vacancy became available. Andrew has now been working in the role for 18 months and receives consistently good feedback.

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### Further Information

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