

Resource Pack

Modern Apprenticeships and People with Disabilities

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QPID

QUALITY and PERFORMANCE
IMPROVEMENT DISSEMINATION

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Department for
Education and Employment

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About this resource pack

This pack has been produced for TECs/CCTEs, careers services and training providers so they can help employers achieve best practice in the recruitment and training of Modern Apprentices with disabilities. It has been prepared for DfEE by SWA Consulting, in partnership with Minds at Work.

The pack includes not only a summary of experiences, but 20 real life case studies featuring the experiences of apprentices with disabilities, their employers and their training providers. Commentary is provided on:

- how young people opt for the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) route;
- how they are recruited;
- how to carry out their day to day duties and training despite the effects of their disability (if any);
- the effects of any adjustments introduced by employers and/or training providers;
- examples of the types of careers plans which apprentices have for their next and future steps.

This pack concentrates on the practical learning points to emerge from the study. A parallel research report, 'Modern Apprenticeships and People with Disabilities' will be published as a QPID Study Report.

Introduction - What is disability?

This publication uses the word 'disability' with great frequency. It is a term which is easily misunderstood, however. The definition used in the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) is "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

The point to stress, is that this publication is not meant to be altruistic. The apprentices featured in the case studies have been recruited to real jobs by employers who can see clear business benefits from doing so. Similarly, the qualifications gained by the young people are at precisely the same levels as their peers in each of the frameworks mentioned. There are no soft options.

The disabilities featured are very wide ranging. They include conditions which some readers might not readily identify as a disability. Nevertheless, for each individual, they have represented a difficulty to be overcome, a challenge to be addressed. The need to call into question everyday stereotypes of disability is a major theme of this publication.

Similar points apply to the adjustments which have been introduced to ensure that the apprentices with disabilities are able to undertake their work and training effectively. As the guide demonstrates, most adjustments have been simply a matter of common sense and effective human resource management. Cases where expensive equipment has been required have been rare, and in nearly every case, the employer has been able to draw on external financial assistance.

It is nearly always the young person with the disability who is the 'expert' when it comes to the identification of solutions to problems encountered in work and training. However, individuals may be reluctant to draw attention to their disability by highlighting their difficulties. The notion of shared responsibility is central. It is important that employers and training providers create an environment in which the young person knows they can access support, if required, in the same way that every employee or trainee is entitled to seek support for solutions that will increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Under these conditions, young people will feel confident to seek solutions and request support as necessary.

Using the pack

This pack has been designed to be used by people who want succinct, practical advice. The main material is presented in the individual case studies. These have also been included separately on the floppy disk attached to the inside back cover of this pack so that they can be used individually or in small sets, with or without the rest of the materials.

Table 1 (page 5) provides a summary of the case studies as a whole. This will enable readers to track down immediately those case studies which are of the greatest interest to them individually. For example:

- employers and training providers might want to look up examples from particular occupational sectors;
- careers advisers might want to look up examples of individuals with particular types of disability.

As well as the case studies themselves, the guide includes summaries of case study experiences and tips emerging from those experiences. These sections can only give a flavour of the material as a whole, but may well be the best place to start.

Both the case studies and the points of interest sections use a similar structure, following the process through in a chronological pattern from school, through transition to the MA, and finally looking briefly to the future. Perhaps one of the most telling findings is that young people with disabilities almost invariably have not followed predictable pathways! The outline structure therefore needs to be used very flexibly.

Inevitably, much of the material focuses on the experiences of individual young people. This is clearly central to understanding the rationale for the good practice presented. Nevertheless, the guide is intended to be useful to TEC/CCTE contract managers, training providers, careers staff and others whose interest lies more in the planning and quality assurance fields. Indeed, one of the case studies has been drafted specifically to highlight organisational aspects (see Case Study 20).

Summary of Case Studies

MA Framework	Case Study	Disability	Gender	Age	Report
Health and Social Care	1	Long term health problems (caused by Neurofibromatosis)	F	18	West Midlands
	2	Behavioural problems/borderline dyslexia	F	25	North East
	3	Hearing impairment	M	20	North West
IT	4	Hearing impairment	F	20	North West
	5	Visual Impairment	M	24	West Midlands
	6	Spina bifida	M	22	South East
Engineering Manufacturing	7	Epilepsy	F	23	West Midlands
	8	Dyslexia and partial hearing loss	M	19	East Midlands
Business Administration	9	Partial paralysis and epilepsy	F	22	South East
	10	Knee caps incorrectly aligned	F	18	West Midlands
Printing and Graphic Design	11	Osteogenic sarcoma resulting in replacement of tibia bone and knee joint	F	19	North West
Accountancy	12	Hearing impairment	F	25	North West
Customer Services	13	Visual impairment	F	19	South East
	14	Juvenile Chronic Arthritis	F	22	London
Retail	15	Brain damage (caused by abscesses on the brain and resulting operations)	M	22	South East
Hairdressing	16	Reduced mobility, constant pain and visual impairment (caused by road traffic accident)	M	23	East Midlands
Painting & Decorating	17	ME	M	17	North West
Motor Vehicle Engineering	18	Dyslexia	M	18	West Midlands
Floristry	19	Ankylosing Spondylitis	M	21	Eastern
Health and Social Care	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	London
Notes:	1	Case study No 20 is an organisational study of training provider specialising in work with young people with disabilities			
	2	The ages of individuals represent their age when interviewed; some may already have completed their MA			

Preparation stage - Prior to apprentices starting

For some apprentices with disabilities, the route from compulsory schooling into an MA has been complex, involving periods in other jobs and/or other training programmes. Important lessons can be learnt from their experiences.

The period to recruitment has been important for employers and training providers, too. Work experience placements have been one way in which employers have met young people with disabilities in 'low risk' situations.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Experiences of education and training

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Case Studies</i>
10,15 & 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some young people with disabilities experience disrupted schooling, but the reasons can differ greatly due to periods of hospitalisation or rehabilitation the side effects of medication, fatigue etc. |
| <i>Case Study</i>
11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a result of disruptions, some young people with disabilities may complete their school career a little later than their peers, one individual was deferred for a year. |
| <i>Case Study</i>
13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educational professionals can unintentionally give young people with disabilities the impression that expectations of their abilities are low. Some apprentices consider this to have had an impact on their academic achievements by reducing the number of GCSEs for which they were entered. |
| <i>Case Studies</i>
8 & 18 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The early identification of potential problems can be central to success within the school environment (eg. the provision of computer access and learning support at school for an individual with dyslexia, support with examinations). |
| <i>Case Study</i>
16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for their emotional and psychological needs during their education is as important for some young people as more tangible adjustments. |

Experiences of guidance

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Case Study</i>
5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In cases where a young person is unable to pursue their first choice of career specifically as a result of their disability, there is an enhanced need for sensitive guidance eg. when an individual's visual impairment made it inappropriate to pursue a career in engineering. Awareness of the full range of options is particularly important in such circumstances. |
| <i>Case Studies</i>
4 & 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Careers guidance is pivotal in helping young people identify appropriate career paths and in providing support and encouragement. |

- Case Study 3
- Young people can sometimes feel that the guidance they receive (whilst positively intentioned) limits their career choices unfairly. The easier route may not always be the most appropriate, and young people with disabilities, just like their peers, want and need to be able to make their own choices – and their own mistakes.
- Case Study 9
- The awareness of young people about MAs differs greatly, and they may not have absorbed information provided at school (eg. one individual only became aware of MAs through her training provider).
- Case Study 6
- The continued support of the careers adviser after leaving school can be influential in an individual's decision to enrol for an MA.
- Case Study 1
- Training in interview techniques is regarded extremely positively and is seen as beneficial in increasing confidence and performance when approaching interviews.

Employer and training provider experiences

- Employers' knowledge about MAs varies considerably. Whilst some are regular recruiters of apprentices, others have little or no experience either of NVQs and Key Skills or of working with young people. TECs/CCTEs, training providers and careers services, therefore, need to talk employers through the process, but in a flexible way (as some may already be experts). The bottom line is that prior knowledge should not be assumed.
- Case Studies 2, 8, 17 & 18
- Young people may have multiple difficulties, some of which may not be immediately apparent to those working with them (eg. where an individual has an "invisible" health problem such as ME or dyslexia). Employers and training providers were not always aware of these difficulties from the outset.
- Case Study 11
- Work experience placements are generally viewed positively by employers and individuals alike. Placements can also lead directly to recruitment.

TIPS FROM EXPERIENCE

Education

- The identification of potential difficulties early on in the education of young people is crucial for their success.
- Providing a range of support options, which can be adapted to suit the needs of the individual, was a feature of good practice. The need for emotional support, for example, should be given as high a priority as, the need for wheelchair access.

Guidance

- Careers advisers need to establish a high profile early on in the career of the young person, and seen as an independent source of information; in short, someone who is really 'on their side', from the young person's perspective.

- It is important to allow young people time and opportunities to prepare and plan their entry into work-based training. Information about a range of options is crucial.
- Frank discussions about the way in which an individual's disability may affect their career choices should be encouraged. However, it is essential to do this in a positive and sensitive way.
- Performing a structured assessment of the abilities of candidates, whether for a job or training, can help with the decisions about the most appropriate career route.

Employers and training providers

- Every young person deals with their disability differently; they may be happy to alert others to their disability in some cases, but not in others. Don't be afraid to ask the individual how they feel, or to discuss the implications with them. Where an individual may need assistance with lifting, for example, a discussion of why this is the case can help to limit any feelings of resentment amongst other staff. Similarly, with epilepsy, discussions with colleagues/peers about what to do if an individual has a fit can help everyone. Such information may also be a useful part of standard training for anyone who deals with the general public.
- It is important to monitor the progress of individuals after they have left school, particularly in terms of seeking and completing education, training and work. This allows on-going support needs to be identified.
- It is important for employers to be given information on all the options, allowing them to decide on the best training route for them and their employees.

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Recruitment of apprentices

Employers, training providers and young people can often be known to approach the recruitment process with some misgivings. For young people with disabilities, fear of discrimination can reduce confidence – particularly if they have had previous bad experiences of the workplace. For employers, investing time and money in the provision of training is a serious business, and finding the right person first time is extremely important.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Advertising and referral

- Case Studies 9 & 11*
 - Training providers, careers services and the Employment Service are common sources of information about vacancies or ways to secure interviews, although family members can also be useful.
- Case Studies 2 & 17*
 - Apprentices have often had prior contact with their employer (eg. through work experience, part-time or Saturday work) before being taken on permanently.
- Case Study 6*
 - Several individuals are not initially recruited as apprentices, but start with a more informal training structure, which is then converted to an MA.
- Case Studies 6 & 8*
 - A range of agencies can be involved in the recruitment process, in addition to the employer and training provider (eg. in one case the careers service was contracted to provide psychometric testing; in another, consultants performed the initial sift of applications).

Application procedures

- Case Studies 5 & 18*
 - Young people are often unwilling to declare their disability, even when asked specifically on an application form. Further, a number of young people do not perceive themselves as having a disability.
- Case Study 4*
 - The use of positive discrimination does not appear to be common (in only one out of the twenty cases). This confirms that young people with disabilities are being recruited only if they are the best person for the job. It is not surprising, therefore, that the case studies illustrate the range of skills and abilities that individuals have brought with them to the advantage of their employers.
- Case Study 13*
 - For individuals with visual impairments, application forms with large print are particularly important.

Interview procedures

- Case Study 4*
 - Employers often perceive young people with disabilities as more “mature”, “determined” or “committed” - qualities which are highly desirable.
- Case Study 4*
 - Some disabilities may impact on the way in which the individual appears at interview, (eg. deaf candidates may appear to give abrupt answers).

Case Study
16

- Most applicants will not object to a brief discussion of any implications of their disability for the job at interview. However, most people would find detailed discussions about their lives unacceptable and when that detail concerns the effect of their disability, it may be particularly intrusive.

Case Study
6

- Focussing on the specific requirements of the job is particularly important in order to ensure that talented young people are not overlooked as a result of limitations that are irrelevant to their role in the work place.

Medical procedures

Case Studies
8, 13 & 18

- Health questionnaires appear to be common in the recruitment process than a medical. The latter tend to be used only when the information disclosed in the questionnaire needs some clarification or further assessment.
- Generally, a medical is the last stage of the recruitment process, and is carried out only after the decision to appoint has been taken. The main purpose of a medical, therefore, should be to ensure that no health and safety problems exist.

Case Studies
8, 13 & 18

- The use of basic skills tests or other quantitative assessment tools often alerts employers/training providers to support needs that may otherwise have taken some time to emerge (eg. dyslexia). Care must be taken, however, that any tests are able to be adapted (eg. for the visually impaired).

Induction

Case Study
10

- It is common for the induction process to vary according to the needs of the individual. Young people with disabilities are at a particular disadvantage if they have to join a study or work group slightly late, for whatever reason, since informal social contacts within the group will have already been established.

Case Studies
5, 8 & 11

- Sometimes the young people themselves are instrumental in suggesting the MA as a possible or appropriate opportunity. Training providers often supply information on MAs for individuals/employers, although in some cases it is the employers themselves who are the 'experts'.

TIPS

Advertisement and referral

- Publicise the vacancy widely, across the whole range of the relevant community, to achieve the biggest pool from which to choose.
- State that you are an equal opportunities employer to encourage applications from people with disabilities. This will help to reassure candidates that their application will be treated fairly.
- Working closely with the careers service and schools is a good way to attract recruits. This may only be realistic on a large scale basis (eg. holding open days for young people and their parents) for larger employers with more regular patterns of recruitment.

- It is essential that you have a detailed job description to assist you on your selection criteria. The job description must be specific about the duties of the job, working conditions and what is required of the candidate.
- Prepare yourselves to be as objective as possible, before selection, about the characteristics you require for the job.

Application procedures

- Do respond early in the process to the particular needs of individuals (eg. the use of large font type in correspondence with a visually impaired applicant), including the adaptation of application forms to facilitate completion.
- It is important that applicants are given the reasons for decisions made during recruitment. Receiving constructive feedback is particularly important for young people with disabilities, as it will help to reassure them that their disability did not influence (either negatively or positively) the decisions taken.
- The use of testing is strongly recommended for certain sectors. For example, in the engineering sector, the ability to distinguish between an individual's mathematical and practical abilities, on the one hand, and their performance in arts GCSEs, on the other, would be essential in providing a fair assessment of their capabilities.

Interview procedures

- Ensure that all interviewers are properly trained in interviewing and equal opportunities issues.
- Make sure your applicants know how they will be selected and allow them the opportunity to practice tests or interviews.
- Look for evidence about each applicants suitability from as many sources as possible. Avoid assumptions about what the individual can do.
- Don't be afraid to discuss the effects of an individual's disability in relation to the job/training. However, speak to the individual before telling others in your organisation. The individual will have views about how much information about themselves should be disclosed to others.
- From an employer's perspective, medical screening can provide important reassurance but should be limited to aspects directly relevant to the post.
- Be prepared to make adjustments at the interview stage (eg. the provision of an interpreter or the use of a building that is accessible to wheelchair users).

Medical procedures

- Always consult an expert if in doubt about the way in which an individual's disability may be a safety risk (eg. epilepsy in an environment with moving machinery), for either themselves or the employer/training provider. It is essential that the apprentice is involved at all stages of the process.

- The inclusion of a health questionnaire can help the recruitment process, and the assessment of company practices. Be prepared to update medical records throughout the individual's employment, but discuss any changes with them first.

Induction

- Induction is particularly important for all young people. Be prepared to depart from normal policy (eg. allowing more time, or taking a different emphasis) for young people with a disability, but ensure they are not singled out or made to feel different from other recruits.
- In some instances you may wish to consider an enhanced induction process, at which an individual can express any concerns or ask questions in a private setting. Don't assume, for example, that a wheelchair user will not be able to attend a standard tour of the building at busy times: they may want to and the only way to find out is to ask them!

Making adjustments for apprentices at work or in training

When apprentices with disabilities start their job/training, there is sometimes a need for adjustments to be made in order to ensure that they can perform and develop with maximum effectiveness. The precise nature of these adjustments varies, of course, since they relate to individuals and their specific circumstances. Most are simply a matter of common sense and flow from good human resource management and informed consideration of health and safety issues.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Physical adjustments

- Case Study 1 & 6*

 - Individuals may require assistance with some of the physical aspects of their job (eg. lifting of heavy items or of people). The adjustments required, therefore, involve the need for other employees to be willing to help out.
- Case Study 6*

 - The provision of wheelchair access to buildings can be a costly adjustment. However, there are often benefits to a broad range of people in addition to the apprentice eg. people with pushchairs, the elderly, customers/users with disabilities .
- Case Study 9*

 - When purchasing equipment, employers and/or training providers often find it useful to consult with experts, particularly in relation to IT equipment. It is also important that the apprentice is consulted and involved, as for adjustments to work they must meet the specific needs of the individual concerned, and not be based on generalisations made at any level.

The need for flexibility

- Case Study 1, 10 & 17*

 - Flexibility is often needed over time off (eg. for health checks , medical treatment or simply fatigue). Individual's attendance records were in most cases excellent, however.
- Case Study 8*

 - The Key Skills element of the MA can cause particular difficulties. Additional support, or extra time, may be required for this component.
- Case Study 9*

 - The need to adapt the particular training programme to the needs of the individual is common, although training providers point out that this is a matter of good practice for all individuals, not just those with disabilities. The potential for flexibility is a particular strength of the NVQ system.
- Case Study 6*

 - Adjustments may be required on an ongoing basis, particularly if the individual has a progressive condition. This applies equally to employment and training.

Other adjustments

- Case Study 15*
- Not all adjustments require a financial investment. The ability to communicate and respond with flexibility to any needs, as and when they arise, is often more important.
- Case Study 9*
- Integration is as important as adjustments. Very small changes such as moving the desk of someone with communication difficulties more centrally, can help immensely with the social elements of the job.
- Case Study 5 & 14*
- Making adjustments to the job role may involve additions to the range of duties or a change in emphasis. It is far from accurate to assume that individuals with disabilities will be able to achieve less than other employees.

TIPS FROM EXPERIENCE

Physical adjustments

- Working with the Employment Service (particularly Disability Service Teams) can be useful when equipment needs to be purchased or premises altered. They will be able to help in applying for funding such as that offered through the 'Access to Work' initiative.
- It is best to consult an expert, in conjunction with the individual, before investing in equipment. What seems like an obvious choice may turn out to be inappropriate for the specific individual. It may be possible to have any assessments performed without charge by the equipment supplier, but ensure the advice you receive is at least partially independent.

The need for flexibility

- Always ensure that an individual is aware that support is available, but don't make assumptions about the level of actual support they will require. As with anyone else, people with disabilities need to be managed as individuals.
- Using training providers with a specialism in a particular disability can be particularly effective, whether as a regular arrangement or for a specific instance (eg. reducing interpreter costs by bringing deaf trainees together at one site).

Other adjustments

- Building the confidence of employees, both in their abilities and in the commitment of their employer, can be a critical success factor. Whilst this is a general point, it also applies to apprentices with disabilities. Encouragement and personal support can be as significant a contribution as training and assessment.
- Close liaison between employers and training providers is vital if the right support is to be offered; otherwise opportunities to share solutions may be wasted. One may remain unaware of developments the other has identified. However, the third (and most important) contributor to the process is the apprentice him/herself. All communication should involve them and be done openly - or it could be counterproductive.

- The provision of a mentor can help the transition into work/training and is most effective when introduced early in the MA. This is particularly effective where the mentor is able to offer 'independent' advice, whilst being perceived as being firmly "on the side" of the young person. If apprentices' expectations of either training or work are unrealistic, mentors are able to discuss this frankly with them, and assess the situation from both sides in a fair manner. **QPID Good Practice Guide: Workforce Development - Mentoring for Work-based training (April 1999)**
- For employers and training providers, accepting a person's disability is the most important element in working with them; this allows the individual to work to their strengths. Exaggerated attempts to empathise can be counterproductive.

Future career plans for apprentices

The case studies can only provide a ‘snapshot’ of where apprentices were at a particular moment in their MAs. Some were nearing completion or had just completed; others had only just started. But for nearly all the apprentices – and their employers/training providers – the experience was positive and plans were being explored confidently for the future.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE CASE STUDIES

*Case Study
2, 3, 5 & 15*

- Many trainees plan to go on to further study (eg. degree by correspondence, HNC, NVQs at level IV or nursing qualifications).
- All employers saw a future for their apprentice within the firm after completion.

*Case Study
12*

- Not all individuals plan to stay with their current employer; one or two feel they have outgrown either the role or the company.

*Case Study
5*

- Some apprentices have become the company ‘experts’ in their chosen area (eg. from data inputter to IT system controller).

*Case Study
14*

- Several apprentices are now involved in the training of other staff.
- The MA appears to offer enough scope for individuals to have a wide variety of career choices on completion.

TIPS FROM EXPERIENCE

It is difficult to draw out good practice in relation to the career development of apprentices as this is very much dependent on the circumstances of the individual. However, the following general comments are added.

- Be flexible about the way in which an apprentice progresses. Apprentices may develop in a direction you had not originally imagined.
- Take steps to identify potential sources of future funding for those who wish to continue their training. Funding from more than one source may be possible here.
- Guidance is useful at all stages of the MA, not just in making the initial decision to enrol. Achieving qualifications can raise as many questions as it answers by broadening the career choices of the young person.

Useful contacts for further information

This section provides a list of useful contacts for readers who require more information about MAs and people with disabilities. The contacts included here are by no means comprehensive, but should provide a useful starting point.

LOCAL CONTACTS

Young people seeking advice on MA vacancies are advised to go first to their local Careers Centre or Jobcentre.

For employers and training providers, key points of contact are:

- Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) or Chambers of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CTEs) for details of funding available to offset some of the costs of training;
- local careers services;
- the appropriate National Training Organisation (NTO) for details of the MA framework designed for your sector;
- the local Careers Centre or Jobcentre to advertise vacancies for MAs;
- the Jobcentre for details of funding available to help with the costs of buying specialist equipment for disabled employees. Ask for the Disability Service Team.

NATIONAL CONTACTS

If any difficulties are experienced in finding the relevant local contact, the following national bodies will be able to put you in touch with the right local office:

- for careers services, either Roger Little, Careers Service National Association, Tel: 0116 287 0813, or the Government Office for your region;
- for TECs and CTEs, either the TEC National Council, Westminster Tower, 3 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SX. Tel: 0171 735 0010, or the Government Office for your region;
- for NTOs, Adrian Anderson, NTO National Council, 10 Meadowcourt, Amos Road, Sheffield S9 1BX. Tel: 0114 261 9926;

- for Jobcentres, the Employment Service Head Office, Rockingham House, West Street, Sheffield. Tel: 0870 001 0171;
- Disability Service Team at your local Jobcentre, or Ms Scott-Parker, Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY;
- specialist advice on health and safety matters can be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive, HSE Infoline, Tel: 0541 545 500.

Case studies

Case studies

1. **Amy**
2. **Sarah**
3. **Brian**
4. **Karen**
5. **Jake**
6. **Jason**
7. **Caroline**
8. **Peter**
9. **Anna**
10. **Ella**
11. **Kathryn**
12. **Rosie**
13. **Trudy**
14. **Becky**
15. **Martin**
16. **Christopher**
17. **John**
18. **Marcus**
19. **James**
20. **Training Supplier (Smart's)**

MA Framework

Health and Social Care
 Health and Social Care
 Health and Social Care
 Information Technology
 Information Technology
 Information Technology
 Engineering Manufacturing
 Engineering Manufacturing
 Business Administration
 Business Administration
 Printing and Graphic Design
 Accountancy
 Customer Services
 Customer Services
 Retail
 Hairdressing
 Painting and Decorating
 Motor Vehicle Engineering
 Floristry
 Health and Social Care

Disability

Neurofibromatosis
 Behavioural problems/borderline dyslexia
 Hearing impairment
 Hearing impairment
 Visual impairment
 Spina bifida
 Epilepsy
 Dyslexia and partial hearing loss
 Partial paralysis and epilepsy
 Knee caps incorrectly aligned
 Osteogenic sarcoma
 Hearing impairment
 Visual impairment
 Juvenile chronic arthritis
 Brain damage
 Reduced mobility, constant pain and visual impairment
 ME
 Dyslexia
 Ankylosing Spondylitis

‘Amy’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Care
Gender:	Female
Age:	18
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Health Service Trust
Disability:	Neurofibromatosis (tumour affecting the nervous system)
Adjustment:	Help with heavy lifting, occasional periods of rest at work, support during extended period of sickness

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Amy enjoyed her school career. She had to be careful about taking part in strenuous activities because of a tumour on her lower body, but was able to participate in most things. She stayed on into the sixth form in order to improve her general education qualifications.

Employer context

The Trust has around 1,600 employees, split roughly 50:50 between full and part-time staff. They started taking on Modern Apprentices in 1997 with an initial intake of seven. The following year (1998), they decided to take on ten MAs, split between caring, catering, physiotherapy and business administration. Details were circulated through the local careers service.

RECRUITMENT

Application

It was a teacher at her school who gave Amy an application form for the MA. Amy had been intending to go to a local training provider to do a

full-time course, most probably in catering; her real ambition, however, was to work with children. Amy thought the MA sounded like a good idea, because it offered both training and a job (with money!)

Interview

Amy was pleased to be offered an interview. In fact, the Trust had received 65 enquiries and 40 completed applications. The Trust took the decision to interview everyone, partly because this seemed the fair thing to do. Another reason was that several of the applicants did not have their examination results and the panel felt they did not have sufficient information on which to short-list some and reject others.

Amy felt very nervous during the interview although she had had some interviewing practice at school which stood her in good stead. The panel adopted a structured approach, asking each candidate the same questions and scoring the answers given. Her chronic illness was mentioned but the implications were not teased out. Four of the ten opportunities were in Amy's selected framework of caring. The panel rated her the fifth best applicant and so she was unsuccessful. The Operational Manager for Education and Development telephoned her to give her the news and provide some feedback, as indeed she did with the other unsuccessful applicants. Amy was disappointed but "philosophical".

Medical screening

Just as the induction for the successful applicants was starting, the Trust learned that one of the four selected candidates for the MA in caring would not be taking up the offer. They immediately telephoned Amy to see if she was still interested. The point to stress here is that they neither favoured her disproportionately in the original assessments nor penalised her unfairly when a new opportunity arose: in short, they applied their criteria with consistency and fairness.

Amy was delighted. The offer was for a two-year fixed term appointment, subject to a medical assessment. Exactly the same conditions applied

to the others. She completed a questionnaire and was seen by the occupational health clinic. They talked through with Amy the implications of her health condition and agreed that she would be able to undertake the duties specified, subject to her not being required to do heavy lifting and being able to take periodic rests.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The MA

Amy joined the group of MAs immediately, as induction had already begun. She was a little nervous about joining a group which had already been working together for a few days, but she was made to feel welcome: “I arrived home exhausted but happy”.

Following the induction, MAs in caring do a series of ten-week placements in different departments in order to pick up a variety of experiences and insights. Amy’s first placement was in Out Patients where her duties included collecting patients’ notes, weighing patients and helping any who were distressed. Her biggest challenge, she says, was not the patients, but the doctors! According to Amy, it’s not only reading their notes which is difficult; even understanding their verbal instructions can sometimes border on the impossible!

Amy’s second placement was in a unit for patients whose specific medical or surgical condition has been addressed but who need time for rehabilitation before they can go home; most are elderly. Amy enjoyed this since there was more time to get to know the patients. The only drawback for Amy was that they needed help with lifting; Amy needed to seek help from colleagues quite regularly. In addition to her medical condition, Amy has a small build and lacks the strength to do heavy work.

Her third and current placement is in the coronary unit. She is enjoying this too. There are twelve patients in the unit at any one time and Amy is able to get to know them. She helps with teas, washing patients, taking chairs and commodes to them but, as before, seeks help with any lifting or pushing of patients.

Training

Amy is currently working towards an NVQ2 in Care. She needs nine units for this and currently has three. She is also doing Key Skills at Level 2. She was enrolled as a Modern Apprentice from the outset and is committed to move straight on to Level 3, for which she will need twelve units.

The MA in Care requires that Key Skills certification is completed up to Level 2. However, as there are MAs in the group who are on the Business Administration framework which requires Level 3, the Trust has decided to put all MAs in for the higher level. There is a mandatory half-day’s off the job training in the Trust’s training unit for all MAs, but they negotiate individual study time with their supervisors at each placement.

Adjustments

No adjustments have been required for the training aspect of the MA.

Turning to her day-to-day duties, mention has already been made of the fact that Amy is unable to do heavy lifting; help is readily available. She also gets tired quickly and sometimes has to take a short rest. This is cleared with her immediate supervisor as needed.

Amy’s general attendance record is very good. However, she did have six weeks off work over Christmas 1998 and into the New Year when, following a routine scan, she was told she needed urgent surgery on her stomach. The operation turned out to be complex resulting in Amy having to carry a “urinary bag” around with her. This is simply an inconvenience; it is not obvious to others, nor does it alter the type of duties she is able to undertake.

Amy is popular; when she was in hospital, several of her colleagues came to visit. Amy is happy with the way things are going. She says she does not like to be “wrapped up in a blanket”. “If I feel I can do something, I will; if I can’t I will say so”. She welcomes the friendly atmosphere. However, although she appreciates being asked if she’s OK once or twice, she gets a little fed-up if it’s repeated too often!

FUTURE PLANS

Amy should complete her MA in summer 2000. Both she and the Trust are confident she will get her NVQ3 and Key Skills Level 3. As MAs are on a fixed term contract, she will need to apply for a permanent post when one becomes available.

Her next placement is likely to be in the Paediatric Unit. She is looking forward to this; indeed, becoming a support worker with children is her current preferred career. The Trust have no doubts as to her ability to get and hold down a permanent job and think she has promotion potential.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

From an employer perspective:

- treat applicants with health conditions and/or disabilities with transparent fairness. Let them know the reasons for the decisions you take
- be sensitive as to when employees with disabilities need support and when they are perfectly capable of managing themselves. Treating individuals with “kid gloves” can be irritating when it’s not needed
- medical screening can provide important reassurance, but be careful to limit the examination to aspects directly relevant to the post

‘Sarah’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Health and Social Care
Gender:	Female
Age:	23
Region:	North East
Employer:	Nursing Home
Disability:	Behavioural problems at school (and borderline dyslexia)
Adjustment:	Flexibility and encouragement shown to powerful effect by employer and training provider

Transition to the MA

Sarah was interviewed by a careers adviser at school. She was informed that in order to follow her chosen career of nursing, she would need to get good examination results. Sarah accepted this but felt that the careers advisor was not completely independent of the schools influence. Sarah resented being told she would have to improve her attendance record and generally make more of an effort to fit in. She decided to make her own arrangements in terms of her future career.

Sarah did seriously consider the option of staying on at school to do a GNVQ course in Health and Social Care but the school refused to take her back. She also considered applying to do the same course at the local FE college but concluded she would prefer to get a job and earn some money. She applied to join the nursing home as a care assistant and was taken on for a three-month trial period.

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Sarah had a “chequered” school career! In her final years she was constantly in trouble with staff at her local comprehensive school. Her attendance record was 40% in Year 11 and she left with only 4 GCSEs at Grades E to G in Science (2), Mathematics and English. She puts this down to a lack of respect – in both directions, but bouts of poor behaviour are not in dispute.

About the only positive episode in her final year at school was two separate weeks on placement at a local nursing home. This had been arranged in part because her mother, to whom she was (and is) close, was employed there as a care assistant and in part because Sarah already worked there as a domestic at weekends. The work experience was a great success: staff at the home noticed that, whatever other problems Sarah may have had, she struck an immediate rapport with the elderly residents.

RECRUITMENT

Sarah was recruited initially for a job, not as an MA. She was willing to learn practical skills which had an immediate relevance to her duties, but was reluctant to undergo any off the job education and training, especially any learning in a classroom environment.

She did a Health and Safety course on day release and was subsequently encouraged, both by her mother and managers at the home, to opt into an NVQ 2 programme being run by a local training provider. This went OK but was not the “big breakthrough”. Sarah was enjoying her job more and getting on well with the residents but still found it difficult both to take instructions from managers and to be diplomatic with her peers. Her literacy skills were also in need of improvement.

The training provider went bankrupt soon after Sarah obtained her NVQ 2 in Direct Care and so there was no external pressure for her to progress. She did, however, continue to participate in job-related training (eg. kinetic system of moving and handling patients).

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The MA

Some two and a half years after Sarah had completed her NVQ 2, a new training provider contacted the home and offered its services. Sarah was sufficiently interested to go along to an initial day at which her portfolio was assessed and future options discussed. The outcome was that she was registered as an MA and enrolled onto an NVQ 3 programme.

Her new training provider assessed and accredited her prior learning, which included her on the job experiences as well as formal learning since the NVQ 2. Critically, she was encouraged to learn at her own pace and given customised support when needed. She attended sessions at the provider's premises on a fortnightly basis and undertook other course related work at the home.

The main problems to overcome were in relation to Key Skills, particularly literacy. Whether this weakness arose from her regular absences from school or whether she has mild dyslexia was not entirely clear. Her spelling in particular was very weak.

Sarah made swift progress however with job related project work. One assignment required her to explore stock control techniques. With encouragement from the home's matron, she not only studied this function but also took over responsibility for it, achieving a 40% saving in expenditure on incontinence aids.

Sarah achieved her NVQ 3 in Continuing Care in 1997 and, with the active support of the TEC, her employer and training provider, moved on to NVQ 4. She is currently pursuing this and has already achieved her vocational assessor award D32/D33.

Adjustments

Sarah's employers do not feel they have needed to make any adjustments as such. They did, however, make the critical intervention when Sarah was 16: they gave her a chance. It would be difficult to imagine a much less impressive school record, yet they were willing to trust their

judgement based simply on Sarah's enthusiasm during her casual employment and work experience, and on her empathy with the elderly residents. Since then they have done three key things:

- they have encouraged her to continue training but without putting on any pressure
- they have given her opportunities to develop her skills on the job. She now has the status of senior carer and is actively involved in the support and assessment of junior care assistants
- they have helped Sarah to develop her personal skills. Her first appraisal noted that she had "no respect for her peers". Her most recent appraisal commented that she has become a "smashing supervisor"

The training provider has also played a key role. Sarah's tutor for the first period commented that Sarah's body language was often distant, if not actively hostile. This reflected unease in the learning environment but also, perhaps, nervousness about Key Skills: for example, Sarah would never take up the pen when volunteers were required for flip chart work.

The training provider's key contributions have been in allowing Sarah space to develop at her own pace and providing constant encouragement. This was demonstrated recently when they entered Sarah for the regional MA of the Year Award. Having won the regional award for the Care and Public Services sector she went forward to the national award, not only winning in her sector but also being chosen as National MA of the Year. As a result of Sarah's success in the competition, she was invited to speak at a number of high profile conferences, and has met a wide range of interesting people and celebrities.

Current development work is focused on management skills, particularly those requiring written work. Now that Sarah is herself assessing younger trainees' work and writing action plans, it is essential that she has confidence in her spelling and grammar. This illustrates a recurring point in

this case study: Sarah is happy to work on weaknesses but only when she can see relevance and an end product.

Sarah has recently given birth to a son, but has still been able to continue with working towards her NVQ level 4. Speaking about the MA, Sarah said “apart from having my son, the MA is one of the best things that has ever happened to me”.

Another of Sarah’s achievements was receiving a letter from the school she had attended congratulating her on her success. This was something that gave Sarah great satisfaction.

FUTURE PLANS

Sarah is now a valued member of the home’s middle management. She is taking on increasing responsibilities and hopes to combine this with achieving her NVQ 4 later this year.

In the longer term, she hopes to manage a residential home (as opposed to a nursing home for which she would need nursing qualifications). Co-incidentally the home has been taken over by a company with more than 30 residential establishments of various types, so there should be further scope for career development.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from an employer perspective:

- be willing to give a young person with a poor school record a second chance

from a careers adviser’s perspective:

- take care to be seen as genuinely independent even if this requires a certain distancing from the school’s stance

from a training supplier perspective:

- allow trainees space to develop at their own pace and in ways which engage the individual

from the perspective of all the key players

- never underestimate the impact of encouragement and support

‘Brian’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Direct care
Gender:	Male
Age:	20
Region:	North West
Employer:	Private Residential and Nursing Home for the Elderly
Disability:	Profoundly deaf in both ears
Adjustment:	Ensuring close and face to face communications at all times; the use of a special pager which is linked to alarm/resident calling systems; willingness of staff to respond and adjust working practices.

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Brian attended a mainstream school where he successfully completed nine GCSEs, two of which were at grade C (English Literature and German). He first developed hearing problems at the age of 11 which progressed throughout his teenage years. Brian’s father and sister also both have hearing impairments. Brian was initially shocked and embarrassed at having to wear his first hearing aid - especially when he needed to use a bilateral aid.

Brian can hear quite effectively with his hearing aids but he sometimes mis-hears words (particularly on the telephone) and can sometimes get the wrong ‘gist’ of a conversation (a fact that he admits can be quite amusing). He has developed excellent lip reading skills, but at school he needed the support of a note taker. Flexibility was also shown in his aural German exam which he successfully completed by lip reading.

Careers advice

Brian received a careers interview in his final year at school and discussed his interests, primarily in care work, but also in catering. He was given helpful advice about training and employment in catering but was told it was unlikely he would succeed in the care sector because his hearing impairment would present problems in the work place e.g. hearing and responding to patient calls. Brian was very disappointed but accepted the advice.

Experiences of employment

Brian started working as a YT trainee in a restaurant but found his duties as a kitchen porter tedious, and the conditions poor. He left after three months. Brian’s next job was in a factory, manufacturing optical lenses. He planned to leave when he found a better opportunity in catering. Brian had expected the work (polishing glass) to be monotonous, but found the attitude of other workers difficult to cope with as they continually teased him about his hearing aids, treating him as if he were stupid. Brian left after only one month.

RECRUITMENT

Brian was pleased when he saw a vacancy in the newspaper for a kitchen assistant at an old peoples nursing home. He telephoned the home for further information but was told the position had been filled. Brian decided to enquire about a care assistant vacancy which the home had also advertised. The matron (and owner of the home) saw no reason why Brian should not be considered for the vacancy and so invited him to attend an interview for the job.

The senior matron (and other care/nursing staff) was immediately taken by Brian’s personality and enthusiasm. The decision was taken to appoint him on an initial six months trial. The senior matron disagreed with, and was somewhat angered by, the careers advice Brian had received at school. Based on his aural and communication abilities in the interview, she did not feel his hearing impairment would affect his ability to carry out the duties of a care assistant.

TRANSITION TO MA

Training and development is given a high priority within the nursing home and all staff are encouraged to complete NVQs and other professional qualifications in care. Brian first completed an initial six month training programme which covered all aspects of direct care before commencing his Level 2 in Direct Care. This is a practice the employer adopts with all staff (especially young people) who can initially find NVQs quite complex and daunting.

Following the completion of his Level 2, Brian was encouraged to continue his training and complete his Level 3 in Continuing Care as a Modern Apprentice. Brian saw this as a great opportunity to further his qualifications and increase his responsibilities within the residential/nursing home.

MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Training – on the job

Brian loves his job at the nursing home which involves helping residents wash and dress in the morning, helping feed and toilet them and generally looking after their physical well-being in the home. He thoroughly enjoys working with (and feels very much part of) the team of staff at the home who have been extremely supportive and willing to make adjustments in response to Brian's hearing needs.

Staff have learned to speak clearly and face Brian when they are talking to him or training him, and not to call out or give instructions from a distance. When practicing emergency drills (eg. resuscitating a resident) the team give consideration to Brian's positioning in order that he can clearly hear (or lip read) important directions.

There have been occasions when Brian has not heard one or more of the three internal calling/ alarm systems (eg. resident buzzers, the front door bell, and fire alarm). With financial support from the TEC (£350), a special pager has been purchased and linked to the internal calling systems. This vibrates and shows a light to indicate which calling system has been triggered.

A key element of Brian's work (and training) is taking the blood pressure of residents. This has proved particularly difficult for Brian as his hearing aids can get in the way of the stethoscope, but removing them significantly reduces his ability to hear a pulse. Advances in medical technology have helped to overcome this problem as a simple new wrist devise is now available (as used in all hospitals) to take blood pressure.

Training – off the job

Brian attends day release at one of the TEC's training agents to complete his NVQ theory and Key Skills. His tutors are aware of the need to face the class when talking and encourage Brian to sit near the front to facilitate his hearing and lip reading.

The option of having a note taker has been discussed with Brian but, as he has had few difficulties in his classes, he has not needed this support.

Achievements

Brian is extremely happy with the training and development he is gaining at the nursing home and feels his greatest achievements (to date) have been; passing his NVQ Level 2, organising a fund-raising barbecue for the residents Comfort Fund; and being interviewed for (and featured in) the TEC's Modern Apprenticeship Prospectus. Brian has also passed his British Sign Language Stage 1 exams, something of which he is justifiably proud.

His employer (and all staff at the home) have a high regard for Brian and are pleased with the progress he has made - the residents also adore him. He has grown in confidence (and stature), and is always keen and motivated to take on new responsibilities in the home. He has a good sense of humour and is extremely good natured, showing a great deal of sensitivity and tenderness towards residents – according to his employer, Brian is “a natural in the job”.

FUTURE PLANS

Brian is still in the early stages of his MA and expects to complete his Level 3 in Continuing Care in December 1999. He feels greatly encouraged by staff at the home to continue his training and study to be a registered nurse. He has recently learned that he will be accepted onto a course on the completion of his MA. Brian has also been proactive in seeking voluntary work during his days

off (the home operate a week on/off shift system) and hopes to start working in a hospital or in the community.

Brian is also planning to buy his own pager in order that he can respond to telephone calls from potential employers. Now that she has invested in equipment, Brian's employer is also keen to recruit more staff with hearing difficulties.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- new technology has the potential to overcome difficulties a disability might present in the work place. Experts in the field can provide assistance
- some disabilities require only simple adjustments in the work place or in training - additional support might not always be needed
- young people with disabilities are experts in knowing their strengths and weaknesses and will be able to help find solutions to any difficulties

‘Karen’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Information Technology
Gender:	Female
Age:	20
Region:	North West
Employer:	Charitable voluntary organisation providing services to the deaf community
Disability:	Profoundly deaf
Adjustment:	Forward planning; focus on job requirements; positive discrimination; multi-agency support; awareness of equal opportunities issues with respect to selection; mentor and tutor learning sign language; note-taker and interpreters available; access to minicom and video phones; provision of mobile phone with minicom facility

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Karen attended a mainstream school with a unit for the hearing impaired before going on to college to complete GNVQs (intermediate and advanced) in Information Technology.

Speech therapy from a young age has helped Karen to speak clearly and she has excellent lip-reading skills, as well as being able to use sign language. She communicates well with hearing people in most situations and Karen’s friends use her as an interpreter when they are out.

While at college she had the help of a full-time note-taker because she can’t take notes while she is lip-reading and she misses what is said if she cannot see the speaker’s face, for example when the tutor is writing on the blackboard.

Careers advice

Karen did think about going to University but was more interested in finding a job and getting work experience. She felt she had had enough of full-time study and found out about Modern Apprenticeships in a review meeting with her special needs careers adviser. Together with Karen’s mum, they discussed the type of work that would suit Karen and the possible implications of her disability. They also talked about equipment that might be useful, such as a minicom for telephone work. Careers guidance, together with advice from family members, helped Karen with her decision to pursue a career in IT through the MA route.

The local careers service and the Jobcentre have been able to advise Karen about the help that is available for people with hearing impairments and she has passed this information on to friends who would also benefit.

Employer context

When a vacancy arose, the employer - an organisation that provides support services to the deaf - assessed the job role and recognised that it could be carried out by a deaf employee. A large proportion of the organisation’s employees are deaf and many of the hearing staff can communicate in sign language. Existing resources within the organisation, for example minicom, video telephones and in-house interpreters, combined with a positive culture of support within the organisation, led to the decision that it was important to recruit a deaf individual to fill the vacancy.

RECRUITMENT

Positive discrimination

The employer actively set out to identify a young deaf person with the IT skills necessary for the job. The employer identified young people who were due to leave college and sought recommendations from their local careers service and colleges regarding potential applicants. The job was not advertised formally and Karen obtained the information about the vacancy from a friend. Positive recommendations from the Careers

Service and a very positive report from the college suggested that Karen was the best person for the job and she was invited for interview.

Focus on job requirements

The focus of the selection process was on determining whether Karen would be able to function effectively within the organisation and whether she had the technical ability to carry out the job. The selection interview was conducted 'slightly more sensitively' than it might have been with a hearing individual. The employer is aware that there is a tendency for deaf people to reply somewhat abruptly and be less forthcoming in discussions of wider issues and the job. The assessment of technical ability was based on Karen's college report which clearly indicated her achievements in relation to IT.

Karen was confirmed as being ideal for the job and the employer began exploring the Modern Apprenticeship options with two local TECs. It quickly became clear that one of the TECs was hesitant to take on the potential expense of Karen's training while the other was happy to work with the employer to develop a training package that would benefit all involved.

Training

The TEC contact is one of a team of human resource advisers involved in helping to place young people in employment and supporting transition and development within the MA. Through discussions with the employer and with Karen, the TEC adviser identified a training provider that was well placed to deliver appropriate training and accompanied Karen on an introductory visit to ensure that she felt comfortable with the choice.

Karen's employer was very keen to ensure that the training was right for Karen and that she would not have to repeat ground she had already covered at college. The TEC advisor was closely involved in the development of a NVQ framework that would compliment existing skills and support Karen's development within her job role.

The employer was angered when the training provider reported that Karen had failed an aptitude test and felt she was unsuited to pursue computer programming options. It was felt likely that the test instructions had not been adequately explained and the employer feels the provider was

trying to manipulate the training for their own purposes. The employer is keen to ensure the training is of a high quality and has worked closely with the TEC adviser in identifying and negotiating the best training package for Karen.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Forward planning

Time and effort spent in planning the MA and identifying sources of support prior to Karen's start has helped to ensure that she has been able to perform effectively from the outset. The TEC adviser reports that the high level of initial investment, particularly in negotiating training arrangements, has proved more effective than trying to make adjustments at a later date.

Communications

A mentor was appointed for Karen at work. He has had to learn to make sure Karen is looking at him before he speaks to her and that he remains facing her while he is talking. Otherwise her mentor reports that he never thinks about Karen's deafness as her speech and lip-reading are so good that there are no real communication barriers. He is currently learning sign language. Existing facilities, including minicom and a newly installed video telephone system, have also limited the need for communications support within the work place.

Karen sometimes needs an interpreter for meetings and her boss made sure he was available to interpret, if necessary, while she settled in and gained confidence in meetings. An interpreter (in-house) is available, if booked in advance. The Disability Service Team have helped to arrange communications support (eg. interpreters) for Karen that is funded jointly by the employer. The TEC is in the process of arranging access to a note-taker to support Karen whilst at the training provider, if this is required. The TEC is clear that, despite the potential cost (£18-£30 per hour), all apprentices are entitled to the support they need for their training to be successful.

Training delivery

Karen's training is mostly conducted in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and she has found that she doesn't really need the help of note-takers or interpreters. The training provider is helpful,

supplying Karen with notes in handout form. Karen's tutors also asked her for information about sign language courses and have now begun to learn to sign with the support of TEC funding.

Minor misunderstandings have occurred; for example, the training provider had not expected Karen to bring an interpreter for a session for which they were short of space, and the interpreter was asked to leave. The provider has no previous experience of working with deaf trainees but has demonstrated they are keen to extend their skills in this area.

The MA

Karen is progressing well in her work and training and her confidence has grown as she has become involved in a range of tasks. Her job covers all aspects of the development of the organisation's IT systems and resources, including building computers, installing software, developing software applications, installing video links and training others in the use of hardware and software. In addition to technical skills, communication skills, with both deaf and hearing groups, is an important requirement of the job.

Adjustments

Karen's employer and her work-place mentor continue to monitor her progress. In a recent incident, Karen's car broke down while travelling

between her employer sites and she was required to knock on someone's door to ask them to phone for vehicle recovery. The Disability Service Team at the Employment Service have since agreed to supply her with a special mobile phone which has the facility to communicate via minicom.

Karen's employer realises that she does not want to be singled out for special attention, but is keen to ensure that she has all the communications support she requires. Karen herself feels that she has access to all the support she needs and is enjoying the experience of being at work.

FUTURE PLANS

Karen is currently planning a career in IT. She enjoys problem solving and finds it easy to work with computers. She has not yet decided whether she will continue with her current employer when she completes her initial two-year contract but her employer has made it clear that the choice is hers.

Many of the organisation's senior members of staff are 'home grown', sometimes from volunteers, and development within the organisation will be encouraged. If Karen decides to pursue a career in IT, the organisation will only be able to offer limited progression and her employer recognises that many better paid opportunities will be open to her. There is, however, flexibility for her to progress into other areas of the organisation if she expresses an interest and chooses to stay.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- identify the skills and abilities required in the job and assess candidates against those requirements
- selection and assessment processes can unintentionally discriminate against young people with disabilities
- forward planning and prior preparation will help the young person perform effectively from the start and can save time and effort in dealing with problems at a later date
- every apprentice should be entitled to the particular support they require in order for them to succeed in their work and training. The cost of meeting support needs can often be shared
- careful selection of provider can overcome the need for classroom assistants and interpreters

'Jake'

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Business Administration and IT
Gender:	Male
Age:	24
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Manufacturing Company
Disability:	Visual impairment
Adjustment:	None

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

After his GCSEs, Jake decided to stay on at school for an extra year to complete a BTEC first certificate in Engineering. However, Jake became disillusioned with this career choice when it became clear that he would not be allowed to operate machinery due to his visual impairment.

Previous work experience

After working for four years in the administrative department of a small local employer, Jake decided he needed more of a challenge. He enrolled with his training provider to complete an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration whilst he sought another position. His training provider was able to help him find employment, and when this didn't work out, suggest that he apply for his current position which had more of an IT focus.

RECRUITMENT

At the time of Jake's application, his employer had just been bought out and the computer system needed a complete overhaul. It was important, therefore, to find an individual with the right level of computer literacy. After interview, Jake started work within a week.

TRANSITION

At this point he was completing his NVQ 2, and looking to gain further qualifications. Together with his training provider, Jake examined the options and decided that a switch to an NVQ Level 3 in IT would be most appropriate for both him and his employer.

In addition, as Jake was employed, an MA was suggested as a way to expand the scope of his training. Jake was happy to take on the extra work involved.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The MA

Originally taken on to input data into the firm's new computer system, it soon became clear that Jake was capable of a much more demanding role. Jake's employers have only a small number of office staff; employees therefore have to adopt a flexible attitude to their work. As a consequence, Jake has gained broad experience within his role, and is now the company's systems 'expert'.

Both the offices and the manufacturing staff rely on the computer system. Jake has responsibility for providing internal support to all staff, developing the way in which the company uses the system, and the maintenance of the system itself.

Training

Most of Jake's training, since his NVQ 2, has been either at work or through his own experimentation. The role of the training provider has been to support his learning by providing expert help when required, and monitoring the Key Skills element of the MA.

In addition to the core training for his MA, Jake has been working towards his HNC for the last two years at night school. His employers have provided support by covering his exam fees and by allowing him to take time off when necessary without the loss of wages. The training provider has also been supportive of this additional training by adapting the programme to take account of Jake's additional workload.

Adjustments

Jake is very clear that he does not consider himself to be disabled. His visual impairment has not affected his ability to do his job in any way, and his employer is quick to agree that no adjustments have been necessary. Apart from affecting his range of career choices, Jake's visual impairment has not had a major impact on his life.

FUTURE PLANS

Jake has just successfully completed the final exams for his HNC. He is confident of success and hungry for more training. Although he is not yet sure about what course he wants to take next, Jake is committed to furthering his education and enjoys working within IT.

His employer is very pleased with Jake's progress and hopes he will remain with the company. The company hopes to gradually expand over the next few years, and there are plans to enhance Jake's role still further.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from the perspective of the apprentice:

- comprehensive careers advice and guidance should be available at the earliest possible point in the decision making process
- be prepared to take the plunge into training, especially if you have a clear idea about what you want to do and are dissatisfied with your current job or training

from the perspective of the training provider:

- adapt the training programmes to incorporate any additional demands which may be placed on the apprentice
- whilst it may be possible to work with a range of disabilities without additional support (as in this case), be prepared to seek expert advice when necessary

‘Jason’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Information Technology
Gender:	Male
Age:	22
Region:	South East
Employer:	Secondary School
Disability:	Spina bifida, hydrocephalus (abnormality of the spine and water on the brain)
Adjustment:	Improving access to buildings, providing assistance with physical aspects of job.

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

After successfully completing his GCSEs, Jason decided to stay on at school to gain further qualifications. Choosing a vocational route, he first completed a GNVQ Intermediate in Business over a period of one year. For the next two years, Jason remained in school, in order to complete an Advanced GNVQ.

Towards the end of his GNVQ studies, Jason decided to begin applying for jobs, determined to find paid employment. Also at that time, the school that Jason attended began advertising for a part-time IT technician to maintain and improve the school’s computer network. Both Jason and his careers adviser, with whom he has a close relationship, felt it would be a good idea to apply for the position.

RECRUITMENT

Selection procedure

The post was advertised internally and externally, and an external specialist consultancy was hired to perform the initial sift of applications. Jason was delighted to be offered an interview on the basis of his CV.

The interview

The interview process took place on a single day, with unsuccessful candidates asked to leave at various stages. Jason was selected from six interviewees based on his technical skills and knowledge of both networks and stand alone PCs. His employer is clear that the interview process did not favour Jason in any way as an internal candidate.

Whilst his disability was discussed at interview, Jason feels this was only where it was directly relevant to the job. When asked how he would perform the physical aspects of the job such as the maintenance of the computer hardware, Jason’s current employer was impressed with his answer that he would “continue to ask the pupils for help”, in much the same way as during his GNVQ studies. Neither employer nor prospective employee felt that the disability presented any barriers that couldn’t be overcome, and Jason was offered the position.

Transition

Potentially one of the most difficult aspects of the transition to employment was gaining the respect of other staff and students who had previously seen Jason as a student. His employer feels strongly that Jason was very successful at making this transition and his interpersonal skills enabled him to make the transition appear entirely natural.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Jason admits he was initially not convinced by the idea of an MA and would have been happy to undertake training in an informal way. His careers adviser, however, felt it represented the right combination of vocational training and work experience. She was very keen, therefore, to present the benefits to Jason. The last few months of his GNVQ, were extremely challenging, and it was only after completing this qualification that Jason felt ready to register for his MA.

The MA

The job itself has continued to expand since Jason first started work. In addition to maintaining the school's computers, installing software and controlling the stocks of computer equipment, Jason has now taken on some teaching and training responsibilities. The school is also expanding its IT department with the result that Jason's job will soon become a full-time role.

Adjustments

During his time at work, Jason has become less mobile. When he was first employed, Jason was able to walk using sticks, now he uses a wheelchair. It has, therefore, been necessary to make some adjustments to the premises to allow Jason full access.

Currently, the school has made some minor adjustments through their CDT department. Ramps have been constructed to allow Jason to access most of the buildings, although the upstairs areas are still out of bounds.

In conjunction with the local Employment Service, and funding from Access to Work, the school has plans to install lifts, ramps and trip switches on all internal and external doors. The plans are based on a thorough assessment carried out by consultants. The work will cost a substantial amount, but with the support of the local Disability Services Team, the school hopes that they will only be asked to provide a portion of the funding.

As his condition has worsened, Jason has been forced to reconsider his original career plans. He initially wanted to specialise in the maintenance of hardware systems, but this requires lifting and manipulation of heavy equipment. The training plan has therefore been redesigned to allow Jason to specialise in computer software, in order that his professional abilities are less dependent on his mobility.

Achievements

One major achievement has been the planning and execution of an IT course for the locally run 'Children's University' which takes place three or four times a year. Jason produced a detailed course plan which has now been picked up by the NFER who plan to use it as part of a national scheme.

Jason's skills and abilities have also enabled him to develop a role for himself as a classroom IT assistant, providing support to non-technical teachers in IT. He also runs a lunchtime computer club for students.

Those close to him have nothing but praise for his commitment, enthusiasm and personality, which shine through despite difficult and often painful periods.

FUTURE PLANS

Jason plans to complete his MA in September 1999 and is working towards his NVQ Level 3 in IT, having already completed an NVQ Level 2.

Ideally, Jason would like to develop his skills as an IT tutor, and is keen to maintain his awareness of technological developments. He has been involved in a range of training courses in addition to his NVQ, and has steadily developed confidence in his own abilities. His employer believes that Jason will be able to take on tutoring responsibilities under a new contract whereby the school will act as a training provider to employers during the afternoons.

POINTS OF INTEREST

It was apparent that Jason's careers adviser has been a particularly useful source of support. She has maintained a close relationship with both Jason and his employer. It was her recommendation that brought about the initial contact with the Employment Service. Jason also states that teachers at school have been helpful throughout his school life, particularly in encouraging him to continue his education.

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from the perspective of the employer:

- keep abreast of any changes to the individual's condition and be pro-active about making adjustments as a result
- adopt a multi-agency approach in order to access as much support as possible, the careers service can act as facilitator

from the perspective of the careers adviser:

- establish a high profile in schools
- develop close links with clients from year 9 as the "key" person to support transition from school to appropriate next steps
- maintain ongoing involvement until the young person is settled in their chosen career

Jason believes the MA has been an extremely useful learning experience. From the perspective of the employee, he suggests that:

- people with disabilities should not be grateful just to be employed. Employers will only take you on if you have something to offer them
- individuals shouldn't hide behind their disability and allow it to affect their confidence in their own abilities
- having a disability should not prevent individuals from developing realistic expectations about their earning potential

‘Caroline’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Engineering
Gender:	Female
Age:	23
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Engineering Company
Disability:	Epilepsy
Adjustment:	Minimal (particular attention to safety issues, but condition effectively controlled by medication)

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Caroline’s interest in engineering arose partly through her family (her grandfather, father, aunt, cousin and brother are all engineers) and partly through a three day course she attended at the local FE College whilst still at school, entitled “Women Into Engineering”. The careers adviser was supportive when Caroline mentioned her interest but suggested she reviewed alternatives as well. The Prison Service was one such possibility.

Caroline decided to enrol on a GNVQ Advanced Course in engineering at the same FE College that she had visited for the Women Into Engineering course. This time she was less impressed. The engineering department was being cut back and the teachers appeared to have low morale, with the threat of redundancies in the air. Several lessons were cancelled at short notice.
Experiences of employment

Caroline achieved the qualification, however, and found a job through the Jobcentre in a local engineering company. She intended to continue

with part-time training at the college, but there was a mix-up between her new employer and the college. Both blamed the other but the net result was that Caroline worked for a year without progressing her qualifications. Since the hours were long and the pay not very good, she looked around for another job with a training dimension.

RECRUITMENT

Caroline’s perspective

Caroline did not find any suitable job opportunities in the local Jobcentre and so travelled to one further afield. She noticed a vacancy in the toolroom of a medium-sized company which makes gaskets and washers. She completed an application form and was invited for an interview.
Company’s perspective

Caroline came over well on paper. They were impressed with the fact that she had been to college and already had some tool room experience. She also interviewed well, and came across as keen. The company does not recall epilepsy being mentioned at the interview.

By coincidence the other leading candidate also had a disability (hearing impairment). The decision in favour of Caroline was made on the grounds of her enthusiasm; the other applicant had more experience. Disability was not a factor in the decision.

As Caroline was keen to train, and the company was willing to support her but were unsure of the best path, they referred her to a local training provider for a technical assessment.

Training provider’s perspective

The training provider put Caroline through a number of practical tests and found her to be a strong candidate. They recommended that she should do NVQ 2 first, with a view to NVQ 3 and possible further progression. They did pick up on the epilepsy, however, and advised the company to seek medical advice.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The MA

Caroline has been based in the tool room since being taken on. She loves it. The duties involve use of a range of machine tools (eg. lathes, milling, grinding, boring). The company designs items to the specification of individual customers, as well as manufacturing standard parts. Caroline soon overcame any doubts from other (male) engineers about her abilities and commitment.

She is an enthusiast. The company has just bought a new CNC centre lathe and Caroline has been pressing both her employer and training provider to give her experience on CNC machines. The company is also intending to buy a wire-eroding machine and Caroline is already lobbying to do the relevant course.

Training

Caroline was not registered as an MA straightaway. Her progress to NVQ 3 has been mainly in the company, with periodic off-the-job inputs, and external assessment, from the training provider. She has just completed the NVQ level 2 which has taken about 16 months.

At the suggestion of the training provider, Caroline was registered as a MA in October 1998. In the view of her external assessor, the type of evidence

she was producing was more appropriate to a level three anyway. He puts this down partly to her maturity and partly to the fact that she has already done a GNVQ Advanced course.

Adjustments

This case study has hardly mentioned epilepsy. This reflects the reality that it has made hardly any difference to Caroline's experiences as an MA.

As mentioned earlier, the company was advised to take some qualified medical advice. Following a conversation with Caroline, the company wrote to her doctor who confirmed that she had been diagnosed with mild epilepsy at the age of 11, but that the condition was fully under control through medication. She takes two tablets twice a day and has periodic appointments with a specialist. She has had no seizures or blackouts for several years and has a full driving licence.

Although the works director took the precaution of alerting Caroline's supervisors to the potential risk, the company's existing health and safety procedures were deemed adequate. Qualified first-aiders were already in place.

In discussions with the employer, training provider and Caroline, epilepsy was mentioned far less regularly than the gender issue. To her colleagues, the distinguishing factor was that Caroline was a girl in a traditional toolroom, not that she was an epileptic.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from a training provider perspective:

- be aware of potential risks from health conditions and draw them to the attention of sponsoring employers

from an employers perspective:

- seek medical advice if any health conditions might pose dangers to the individual or her/his work colleagues

from a college's perspective:

- both good practice (convening "women into engineering" courses) and bad practice (letting internal difficulties impact on students) can both be very influential

‘Peter’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Engineering Manufacturing
Gender:	Male
Age:	19
Region:	East Midlands
Employer:	Engineering manufacturer
Disability:	Dyslexia and partial hearing loss
Adjustment:	Additional support during training

BACKGROUND

Deciding on an MA

Peter’s first career choice was to join the armed services, but his slight hearing impairment meant that he would not have passed the medical. Having found this out through his careers adviser at school, Peter was forced to look at other options. During careers lessons, Peter also received information about Modern Apprenticeships, which he thought sounded like a good option.

Work experience

Peter had completed his work experience at school with his current employer, and enjoyed his time there. His father also works for the firm and was aware of their reputation for high quality training provision. Whilst completing his GCSEs, he replied to an advertisement in the local press for Modern Apprentices.

RECRUITMENT

The process

Peter’s employers currently employ 170 Modern Apprentices, and operate a yearly recruitment process. Peter was one of 22 taken on that year. They employ a very thorough recruitment process which involves their local careers service in conducting psychometric testing with all candidates which helps to identify any potential difficulties.

This test is used to help to identify any additional needs for which extra support can be offered, and discussed with the applicant.

In addition to the use of advertisements in the local press, Peter’s employers also work closely, on a countywide basis, with their careers service to encourage applications. They hold regular careers mornings which involve parents and school age young people. These events are extremely well attended.

The interview

In Peter’s case, the tests identified his difficulties with reading and writing, but also that he had excellent mathematical reasoning – an important criterion for selection. Having progressed to the next stage of the process, Peter was offered an interview where his employer was impressed with his willing attitude. A medical questionnaire is the final part of the process, followed - if necessary – by a full medical. In Peter’s case the medical was not required.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Training

Peter’s employers also act as training providers to their apprentices. The first year is spent mainly in training, at a centre jointly sponsored by the company, the local TEC, FE college and council. The course lasts for 40 weeks and leads to an NVQ Level 2.

Peter's main concern, when starting his training, regarded settling in with his fellow students – he was not from the same area as most of the other trainees. He feels he has achieved this, however, and particularly enjoys the benefits of receiving training and a wage at the same time, something of which his friends are extremely envious!

Induction

Peter's employers have a commitment to ongoing support. All apprentices undergo an initial three-day induction at the start of the first year. During their first year in employment, all apprentices are required to visit the main work site at least once a week in order to collect their overalls (which are required for college). At the start of the second year, apprentices undergo a further induction session.

The MA

Peter has a very technical job, working as a skilled machinist producing precision engineering components. The work involves the use of a Computer Numerical Controlled machine tool and includes the use of computers and the editing of programmes. The ability to cope with complex mathematical concepts is central to the role. Peter has never required any specific adjustments to be made to his job role.

Identifying training needs

After the first year of training, Modern Apprentices at Peter's company go into the workplace and receive in-house training combined with day release at college. At first, Peter was able to cope well with the demands of his training, but he found the second year more of a challenge.

A mid term report from the college identified that Peter, whilst an able student, was having difficulties in producing the written outputs as required. Peter's employer then discussed with the college ways in which he could be offered additional and specific support.

Providing extra support

Peter experienced particular difficulties in completing his log-book. Whilst the entries would always be neat and complete, the process took Peter a long time, with the result that he began to get behind. His employers discussed the issue with the college who were able to provide additional support through their dyslexia counsellor.

The areas where Peter benefited from additional assistance included taking notes during lectures, and using the dyslexia counsellor to help with the grammar and spelling of his drafts of written outputs.

Achievements

With the additional support, Peter was able to go on to complete a number of further qualifications. He has completed his NVQ 3 in Machining, all his Key Skills at Level 3 and a BTEC National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering.

His employer is clear that Peter has never let his dyslexia prevent him from achieving; the road has simply been somewhat harder for him. In particular, gaining his Key Skills is a great achievement.

FUTURE PLANS

Peter has now completed his MA and has been taken on permanently by his employer. Peter recognises his achievements in completing his qualifications, but is still not satisfied! He is currently seeking support from his employer to engage on a HNC, which appears likely.

Peter's long term planning suggests he would like to stay with his current employer, although eventually he would like to become a manufacturing engineer. His employer also hopes that Peter's future will be with the firm, as he has both ability and commitment.

POINTS OF INTEREST

A commitment to training

Peter's employers are committed to the MA framework, particularly as it adds a clearly defined structure to the training they provide. The MA criteria set a standard for the employees to reach. The employers demonstrated their commitment to training for all their employees by rewarding the attainment of NVQ units with wage increases. In addition they are accredited and have 32 qualified assessors and 4 internal verifiers in-house.

This commitment to training is based on sound business planning, and the number of trainees taken on each year is closely linked to financial projections. Difficulties in recruiting engineers with the right skills lead the company to train their own. At the moment the number of apprentices they are recruiting is expanding, and since recruiting Peter the firm has introduced a mentoring scheme.

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from an employer perspective:

- use a thorough recruitment process; it can save time later
- working with partners can provide access to resources at reduced cost. The college already had a dyslexia counsellor and their time was provided at no extra cost to the company
- be prepared to offer help a number of times. Sometimes confidences have to be built up before it will be accepted
- for their part, individuals need to be prepared to accept help

‘Anna’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Business Administration
Gender:	Female
Age:	22
Region:	South East
Employer:	CCTE
Disability:	Paralysis to tongue, throat and one side of the body, and epilepsy - both following an illness during childhood
Adjustment:	Changes to workstation and nature of role, support during periods of hospitalisation, provision of written course materials to support lectures

Anna’s previous experiences of employment reinforced this view: she had been dismissed from her Saturday job in the staff canteen of a large supermarket chain, after having an epileptic fit at work.

Initial training

Referred onto a local training provider by a member of her family, Anna was delighted to be accepted onto their waiting list and was able to take up a place on a course leading to NVQ Level 2 in IT and Administration four weeks later. Anna was very happy with the way in which the training provider eased her transition into the new environment.

The training provider, after discussions with Anna, took the decision to alert the other students and staff to Anna’s epilepsy, in order to prepare them in the event of Anna suffering a fit whilst at training. Anna admits this was a nerve-racking time for her, as she was unsure how her fellow trainees would react and recalls her relief on finding that there was no awkwardness amongst her peers. Anna feels that everyone was very supportive, especially when she had a fit whilst at training. Anna is confident that raising the issue at the start of her course was the right move for her.

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

After a very serious illness, Anna began school again at the age of 13, attending a mainstream school for one day a week. Gradually she was able to build this up to full attendance over a period of around 6 months. Until the age of around 15, Anna used a wheelchair, although her mobility was continually improving. Anna gained 6 GCSEs and decided to stay on at the school’s sixth form to study for a BTEC in Information Technology which took two years to complete, due to a period of hospitalisation during the first year.

Experiences of employment

After leaving school, Anna was keen to enter employment, but had difficulties in being short-listed for jobs. Anna had a lot of support from her mother in making applications, but feels strongly that her epilepsy was off-putting for future employers and left her at a disadvantage when compared to others.

RECRUITMENT

Finding the right placement

Having completed her NVQ Level 2 in 4 months, Anna decided to stay on with her training provider and take the NVQ Level 3. At this point Anna had not considered the idea of an MA and had very little idea about the possible opportunities. Knowing that Anna ideally wanted to enter the world of work, her training provider had approached a local company with which they have strong links to see whether the company had an opening for someone with Anna’s technical skills. The training provider also felt that it was important that the company would provide the right kind of supportive environment for Anna’s first full-time job.

Once the company had agreed to interview Anna for the position of Operations Assistant, the training provider put the idea to Anna on a 'no obligation' basis. Anna was very happy with the idea of continuing training whilst being employed and two weeks later went for the interview.

Interview

A senior manager at the employing organisation was responsible for the recruitment procedure. During the interview, the senior manager and the manager who would become responsible for the direct line management of Anna, spoke frankly about Anna's disabilities and the kind of special support that might be appropriate. Anna is clear that this did not make her feel uncomfortable, and that it was a relief to talk about these issues up front. After the interview, the employers spoke to Anna's mother about the detail of the job, and an offer of employment was made and accepted.

Induction

Anna underwent a standard induction with the personnel department and discussed a range of issues about starting work for the organisation, including the possible implications of her disability. Anna was joining a department of eight employees, and as part of her induction was introduced to each team member and shown around the workplace. Anna admits that meeting the team was intimidating at first, particularly as she was afraid communication would be difficult. Overall, Anna recalls that she was far more nervous about the social element of the job than the role itself. In the event, however, people's reactions were very positive and communication was easier than Anna had expected.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Starting work

Anna registered for her MA in Business Administration in April 1996. The role that had been created for Anna centred on the need for a data inputter within the Operations Department of the organisation. Over time, however, the role developed according to the particular skills and abilities that Anna brought to the job. Anna continued her training with her previous training

provider according to an individually designed training schedule, involving training both on-site at her employer, and off-site at the training centre.

Generic skills relating to business administration and IT are taught off-site whereas more job specific training takes place on the employer premises. Anna currently receives a weekly visit from her assessor which not only reinforce the training sessions, but also provide support with specific issues; for example, for the last nine months Anna has received support with letter writing which has become difficult due to the effects on her concentration of her current medication.

Making physical adjustments

The original role was fairly repetitive and it became apparent that Anna was finding it difficult to input at the speeds required, due to the fact that she was only able to use one arm to type. At this point the decision was made to purchase a keyboard which had been specifically designed to be used with one hand. However, Anna had been trained to use a QWERTY keyboard, and the new keyboard had a different key layout, with the result that Anna felt she was being asked to learn to type all over again.

Anna became more and more frustrated with the new keyboard, particularly as she was now slower than she had been before. Both Anna and her employer agree that the first six months were not easy, and that the development of a suitable role for Anna took some time. However, resolving the issue of the keyboard was an important step forward.

Eventually, Anna approached her employer, requesting that she be allowed to return to her old keyboard, and it was at this stage that an external assessment was carried out, by a large computer supplier and manufacturer, to try and find a better solution. The assessment revealed that Anna would benefit from using a keyboard designed with the same key layout as a QWERTY, but on a smaller scale, allowing one hand to access all the keys without stretching or large movements. Other adjustments involved teaching Anna the correct posture for typing (including the use of a foot rest), changing the height of Anna's desk, and the purchase of a special fan to increase humidity and reduce heat near Anna's work space.

It has also become necessary to provide Anna with a large monitor since the drugs she is currently taking for her epilepsy have resulted in some loss of vision. Anna's training provider is very positive about the adjustments that have been made; he believes that the organisation is "keen to ensure that all the necessary resources are available for Anna".

The most minor physical adjustment was by no means the least important, and involved moving Anna's desk more centrally into the office area, lessening the communication barrier between Anna and other staff. Inadvertently, Anna's original desk was in an area slightly away from other staff members, making it difficult for her to join in conversations. The resulting move had a very positive effect, drawing Anna more and more into the team.

Other adjustments

Anna was finding her role as data inputter increasingly difficult. The difficulties were not only due to problems in finding the right equipment: Anna's medication for her epilepsy resulted in occasional lapses of concentration, which were exacerbated by the repetitive nature of the role.

Anna and her manager sat down together to work out how the role could be tailored to Anna's requirements. Anna was encouraged to talk about her ambitions, and how she would like her role to develop. Together, both Anna and her manager then set out to bring in measures that would be beneficial to them both. As a result, Anna took on a role as a general assistant within the department, with specific responsibilities for handling the post and diaries for the rest of the team. Anna uses the office IT systems to book meetings and confirm the attendees for a range of events, in addition to more general support duties such as typing and photocopying. Other members of the team are also careful to take time to think about the tasks they ask Anna to complete, as some tasks are physically difficult for her (eg. manoeuvring paper work and lifting heavier items of post).

Flexibility has also been required from the training provider in order to provide Anna with the right support. Whole day courses, for example, can prove difficult for Anna due to the length of time for which she is required to concentrate. Both Anna and her training provider feel it is important for Anna to attend the courses, but measures are taken to ensure that Anna has full notes of the sessions provided by her tutors.

With the help of her employer, Anna was able to gain access to subsidies for her taxi fares to and from work and training, through the Employment Service. Anna is required to pay 50% of the fares for each journey, but is able to claim back the rest.

Her attendance has been excellent throughout the MA, but Anna's health has dictated her progress a great deal. Anna's employers need to be flexible about her workload as the medication she takes for her epilepsy can have serious side effects. Overall there are ups and downs in the amount of progress that Anna can make. Currently, she is concentrating on the Key Skills elements of her MA, which will be used as a base for further learning.

FUTURE PLANS

Anna has now been on the MA for three years and it will be at least another year before she will be able to complete. She admits having considered leaving her post due to the length of time it is taking to complete the MA; the role has been challenging and often frustrating. However, Anna is now very definitely planning to complete and hopes to stay with her employing organisation into the future. Anna's long term ambitions involve a move to a role with a larger IT component, the part of her job which she particularly enjoys.

Her employers are hopeful that Anna will stay on and are certain that there will be a role for her well into the future. Plans are currently underway to set up a mentor for Anna, to assist her for the remainder of her MA.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- be very aware of the individual's needs from the start
- take the time to ensure that the role is right for the individual and try to see things from her/his perspective
- If possible appoint a mentor early in the MA

Anna feels that the main thing she has learnt is to be proactive about the nature of her job. She believes that it is important for the individual to have the confidence to talk through problems with her/his employer, even though this may seem difficult at first.

Whilst all parties agree that the transition period was a difficult one, the progress to date has been significant. Anna has not only built up good relationships with others throughout the organisation, but has also become a valued member of the team. The highlight so far for Anna has been winning a local award for trainees in the category "success against adversity", an award that her employer and training provider believe she certainly deserves.

‘Ella’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Business Administration
Gender:	Female
Age:	18
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Training and Enterprise Council
Disability:	Knee caps are not correctly aligned resulting in difficulties with walking
Adjustments:	Flexibility in allowing time off for periods of hospitalisation, opportunities to complete training at home, work and college, employer support with securing car parking

BACKGROUND

Background

At the age of 12 years old, Ella started to experience discomfort and pain in her knees which at times made it difficult for her to walk. Her knees also started to give way at any time causing her to fall, and sometimes injure herself – on two occasions she broke an ankle.

It was some time before Ella’s condition was diagnosed. Her own GP could not find anything wrong with her, and suggested that she “take more care and not be so clumsy”. Ella resented this and struggled to get her doctor to take her seriously. It was only after she had left school that a private knee specialist discovered that her kneecaps were out of alignment and were rubbing against her cartilage. Corrective surgery was a possibility.

Education Prior to MA

However, attending school on a daily basis had become a real struggle for Ella, particularly in her final year. She suffered from stress and periods

of depression as she tried to adjust to the discomfort she was feeling and the possibility that she might not ever get better. Painkillers offered her some relief but these either ‘knocked her out’ for the day or made her feel sick.

With the advice and support of her Headmaster, Ella transferred to a Hospital Tuition Unit. The LEA supported the move and paid for a taxi service to transport Ella to and from the unit. At the unit Ella was able to continue with her studies on a half-day basis, with the support of one-to-one tuition. Ella thoroughly enjoyed her short time at the unit feeling it was instrumental in helping her achieve her 8 GCSEs, grade A to C.

Career Planning

Ella had ambitions of becoming a teacher and was looking forward to her placement. It was also the one she considered to be the best in the area. However, following her GCSE exams, Ella became concerned about attending college and pursuing a career in teaching. She did not think she would be able to access classrooms easily at the college as these were split across two sites and some needed to be accessed by stairs. She believed teaching would present similar difficulties for her and so started to explore different options.

Having been told about NVQs at school, Ella saw work-based training as a good alternative. Picking up on her interest in computers she decided to start as a YT trainee and complete NVQs in IT.

RECRUITMENT

Ella sailed through units from NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3 in a record 9 weeks! She was offered a placement with her training provider but soon found herself seeking more challenging IT work.

She approached the local careers service for advice about new opportunities but ‘didn’t want to be tied down to a scheme’ and so decided to look for work herself. She applied for two vacancies advertised in the local paper - one of which was an MA with a local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

Ella was one of eight young people offered an interview for the MA position. The TEC called upon the services of a managing agent to help with the sifting of applicants and with the interviews.

Ella had not wanted to appear different on her application form and so did not declare her disability. However, she decided it was important to be 'up front' about the trouble she had been having with her knees in the interview. She found the interviewers sympathetic and supportive, particularly the managing agent who suffered from arthritis and understood the problems Ella was experiencing.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Ella was recruited as an Administration Officer by the TEC in December 1996, attending college on day release to complete her NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration. Few adjustments were needed to the workplace as most were already in place. Foot and wrist rests were standard issue in the TEC, and a Stena stair lift was at hand to carry Ella up the stairs - although Ella found this pretty slow and tended to make her own way up.

Travelling to work was a little arduous for Ella as it was some distance away from where she lived and required several bus changes. She found the winter period particularly tough as she would often be left standing at bus shelters for long periods at a time. Her manager would offer to give her a lift home, but Ella, determined to be independent, would decline and make her own way home.

Shortly after completing her NVQ Level 2, Ella underwent an operation to correct her kneecaps. The operation left her in even more pain and with severe tendinitis in both knees. She was off work for a total of 11 months. The college encouraged Ella to continue with her training at home, and her tutor made regular visits to set and assess her assignments. This continued even when Ella was eventually signed off her training.

Adjustments

Ella returned to work but had been re-employed by a different TEC as a result of a merger. Ella required additional time off (a further 6 months) which was supported by both the Chief Executive's personal assistant and the personnel manager. Both visited Ella at home to explain her sick pay and reassure her of her job. The TEC also pay for Ella to having a parking space outside of the building, which is not something available to all staff.

Her workstation has been assessed by the TEC's health and safety inspector - again a standard practice within TEC. Ella has learned to make her own adjustments to her working environment and has been encouraged by her manager to say when she is experiencing any discomfort. The TEC is providing Ella with remote access to the IT system, so that she can work from home when she is in too much pain to attend work. The TEC have also shown flexibility in their willingness to let Ella continue her training on day release at the college, as the other apprentices are completing their studies in- house.

FUTURE PLANS

Ella has now completed her NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration plus the five Key Skills. She is now interested in completing a degree in Business Administration or Management or furthering her IT skills. However she is unsure how she will be able to fund these courses.

Ella's managers consider her a joy to work with and someone who is happy and keen to take on new responsibilities. She has become a real asset to the team and the TEC, showing particular expertise in IT. They feel there are opportunities for Ella in the TEC but also recognise that many opportunities are open to someone with Ella's skills and abilities.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from the perspective of the apprentice:

- be prepared to consider more than one post-16 option or career route, as your first choice might not be possible

from an employer perspective:

- show support and flexibility in allowing time off for periods of hospitalisation and recovery, as trainees might feel under pressure to return before they are ready

from a training provider perspective:

- show flexibility in when and where training is delivered – and encourage apprentices to continue with the training during period of recovery or hospitalisation

From the perspective of the careers service

- It is important to focus on the full range of possibilities that are open to a young person
- Be sure that the young person is exposed to the full range of options

‘Kathryn’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Printing and Graphic Design
Gender:	Female
Age:	18
Region:	North West
Employer:	Graphic Designers, Printers and Photocopying
Disability:	Osteogenic sarcoma (bone cancer) which resulted in the replacement of the tibia bone and knee joint in one leg
Adjustment:	General awareness of physical needs, taking account of any fatigue and avoiding tasks which involve standing up for long periods of time

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Kathryn was diagnosed with cancer during her second year at secondary school. Her schooling was subsequently disrupted, and she took her GCSEs at the age of seventeen, after having to retake a year of school due to periods of hospitalisation. Kathryn performed well at GCSE, however, and had a number of options open to her on leaving school.

Work experience

Whilst at school, Kathryn’s mother contacted a work colleague in order to set up some work experience for her during the school holidays. Kathryn had applied to college, and was interested in becoming a graphic designer. She was, therefore, very interested in the offer of work

experience in a commercial graphic design, photocopying and print shop. The employers were so impressed with Kathryn that the offer of work experience soon became an offer of paid employment. All that remained was for Kathryn and her employers to work out the best way to involve training in her role.

TRANSITION

Deciding on the MA

Kathryn and her employers both wanted to be sure that the employment structure they selected would be the most appropriate for everyone. Kathryn was therefore in post for a month before registering for her MA. Her adviser at the Employment Service referred Kathryn onto her current training provider, and an MA was agreed as the most appropriate route.

The training provider subsequently met with the employer and together they laid out the terms and conditions of Kathryn’s employment, which involves one day a week training at a local college.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The “job”

Kathryn has a dual role within the shop, as a Graphic Designer/Counter Assistant. She has, however, been given increasing responsibilities in customer care. The manageress of the shop has been on sick leave for three months and Kathryn has taken on many of her duties.

The shop was burgled just before Kathryn joined, and again a short time afterwards. A serious fire burnt out the shop print room just before Christmas, requiring the business to move to new premises. All these incidents have tested the staff and Kathryn has shown her commitment by taking on extra work. Her employers are very impressed with her progress and believe her to be a real asset.

The training

Having a formal training plan is very important to both Kathryn and her employers. Whilst much of the training takes place on the job, Kathryn is already well on her way to the completion of an NVQ 2. Her employers believe that she has shown the progress they would have expected over 2 years in just the last 8 months!

Adjustments

Whilst it is important for them to show common sense and awareness, Kathryn's employers have not had to make any adjustments as a result of her disability. They have been careful to ensure she does not have to stand over the photocopier for long periods, and to allow her (and often make

her!) sit down when she suffers fatigue. Kathryn also needs to take time off occasionally for health checks, and she does this without any loss of earnings.

FUTURE PLANS

Kathryn knows she has to make a decision on completion of her MA, which will determine whether she becomes a professional designer or manager.

It is perhaps too early for this decision to be made, but Kathryn's employers are clear she has a future with them. Over the next few years, Kathryn's employers are hoping to expand and they have her firmly at the centre of their plans.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

from the perspective of the employer:

- take time out to explore the options before deciding on a particular training route

from the perspective of the training provider:

- provide the opportunity for employers and trainees to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of the situation

from the perspective of the apprentice:

- be prepared to be flexible over your precise job role, but make sure you continue to learn and progress within it

‘Rosie’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Accounts
Gender:	Female
Age:	25
Region:	North West
Employer:	Local Authority
Disability:	Hearing impaired and special learning needs
Adjustments:	Provision of special equipment (Minicom), funding for a private interpreter, additional learning support, and on-going encouragement from a number of people

Transition to the MA

Rosie was recruited as a YT trainee by the Local Authority in 1991, and became a permanent clerical officer in the Education Department in 1995. Rosie was somewhat unclear about how the appointment came about but recalls the careers service having an input. As a YT trainee Rosie attended college on day release where she completed a BTEC first certificate and then a National Diploma in Business Administration.

With the support of Social Services, Rosie received a grant of £5,000 from the Employment Service Disability Service Team to pay for the services of a private interpreter for a period of five years. In addition, Rosie’s employer made it clear that additional funding would be made available should Rosie need the services of a private interpreter in the workplace.

Rosie recalls the college having some trouble finding suitable interpreters and decided to find her own. The special school she had attended, with advice from the RNID, put Rosie in contact with a number of different interpreters. It took Rosie some time to find an interpreter she felt she could communicate with effectively, who understood her work and training sufficiently to interpret for her and who could give her a wide range of language support at work and at college.

In addition to her BTEC qualifications, Rosie commenced an evening course at college in British Sign Language (Stages 1 and 2). This course, she feels, greatly helped develop her language skills, increased her confidence to communicate with others, and brought her into contact with new interpreters.

Rosie established a very good relationship with an interpreter who became an important mentor for her. With the encouragement of her interpreter and support from her employer, Rosie pursued her interests in accounts and achieved distinctions in her Pitman accounts qualifications Levels 1, 2 and 3. Wanting to progress further, Rosie started to work towards an accountancy technician (AAT) qualification. This she found too demanding, as it required a high level of language development which Rosie still did not have, and so she

BACKGROUND

Education Prior to MA

Rosie completed her education at a special school, where she achieved two GCSEs in Art and Maths. Rosie found her GCSE years difficult and ‘depressing’, due in part to poor language development in her early years, following a sheltered up-bringing and with English as a second language within the family. Rosie recalls struggling with a number of aspects of school, particularly reading, writing, and language comprehension.

Taking the advice of her parents, Rosie attended the local FE college where she completed a pre-vocational training course. Rosie recalls her on-going difficulties in understanding language used by tutors and students, and in written hand-outs. In addition, she recalls feeling confused by overlapping and unclear voices in training rooms and having difficulties when taking notes and concentrating on assignments with a lot of ‘noise’ in the environment.

transferred to an NVQ Level 2. Rosie had little difficulty completing this course but recalls a degree of frustration with the college who kept delaying the start of her Level 2 while they tried to sort out funding for a private interpreter.

RECRUITMENT

Following her Level 2, Rosie wanted to progress onto her Level 3 accounts which she hoped would give her the qualifications she needed to be promoted at work and to move into a pure accounting role. Rosie, her interpreter, and manager recognised that she would need special support with her language to enable her to complete Level 3. Negotiating this support with the college proved difficult and Rosie's interpreter contacted the Chamber of Commerce to see what help or advice they could offer.

The Chamber were very supportive, agreeing to fund Rosie as part of the MA Framework. The Chamber arranged a meeting with a number of key people, namely Rosie, her interpreter, her manager, and the local college, to discuss how Rosie could best be supported to complete her Level 3. The Chamber acted as the key negotiator with the college who agreed to an ESF budget.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Qualifications

With a number of work and learning adjustments, Rosie successfully completed her Level 3 in accounting in 1998.

Learning Adjustments

Additional support was provided by the college. This included 5 hours of one to one tuition and guidance with her NVQ 3, the completion of GCSE English to help her language development, and a private interpreter (two hours per week) for classroom support.

Rosie also came to depend on her partner, a professional interpreter, as her original communicator moved from the area. Rosie was thankful that her boyfriend could step in, knowing he understood her work and college needs.

Work Place Adjustments

Rosie had become quite shy at work, and in her initial role as clerical officer, preferred to work alone, thus avoiding having to communicate with anyone. A move into the finance team required more frequent communications with team members, and with schools. Rosie had initially been uncomfortable with the move, feeling somewhat insecure in her new working environment. However, working practices within the team necessitated daily discussions about managing workload and, with encouragement from her new manager, Rosie slowly became more integrated within the team.

The appointment of a finance officer of a similar age gave Rosie a 'buddy' at work with whom she could communicate more easily – the majority of the team being older women with whom she shared few interests.

A minicom system was introduced at work allowing Rosie to communicate with schools. Schools were briefed on how the system worked by Rosie's manager, but some schools were reluctant to use the system. Finding written communication difficult, Rosie had difficulty conveying information, and some schools had difficulty understanding her communications, or preferred to speak more directly with someone else in the team. The organisation is currently introducing e-mail to all PCs as part of a rolling programme. It may be that this facility will be particularly for Rosie.

Team meetings were planned to include an interpreter of Rosie's choice. This was normally left to Rosie who, when given a weeks notice, was generally able to secure interpreters she knew well. Minutes of meetings would be provided if an interpreter was unable to attend, but Rosie often found these too technical and difficult to read relying on her partner to break down the language used.

Rosie's transition in to the finance team was not easy, either for Rosie or her colleagues. Rosie often had mood swings when she felt others lacked deaf awareness or when she felt excluded from conversations. Similarly, colleagues were somewhat resentful of the amount of support Rosie was receiving at work and with her training.

Rosie's interpreters have played a key role in her development. Rosie's previous interpreter played a significant role in supporting her training, assisting with interpreting training sessions, note taking, and 'breaking down' language used in handouts. She also became an important mentor for Rosie, encouraging her to continue to develop her accountancy qualifications. In addition, Rosie's interpreter was responsible for initiating contact with the local Chamber of Commerce who helped fund and negotiate learning support for Rosie at the college. Rosie's current interpreter has developed a good understanding of her work enabling him to interpret written or spoken communications in ways that are easy for Rosie to understand.

FUTURE PLANS

Rosie's future plans are unclear at the moment. She feels there is limited scope for her to develop or progress further with her current employer. She

has attained a number of qualifications but, following a recent promotion interview, recognises she does not have the written or verbal communications skills to take on a higher level administration job. While Rosie and her employer believe she is well suited for a 'pure' accountancy role, the minimal requirement for such work is an AAT qualification, which has proved too demanding for Rosie in the past.

Both Rosie and her manager believe she has the potential to work in a special school. This is something Rosie is considering but about which she is also apprehensive, given the demands of gaining a teaching qualification.

While Rosie's future plans are uncertain, the Chamber has indicated that further funding might be available for Rosie to continue with her Level 4 Accounts qualification.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- through a multi-agency approach, Rosie was able to secure funding for training over some years, and also to gain access to additional funding that ensured she could pay for the services of a private interpreter as she needed
- it should not be assumed that all interpreters are the same, or that they will work well with a young person. Allowing young people to choose their own interpreter is a positive step; also having the opportunity to develop a relationship over time with the same interpreter clearly helps. Coincidentally, interpreters can become effective in a mentoring role
- the need for deaf awareness in the workplace is vital, both to understand the needs of deaf people, and for Health and Safety reasons, eg. flashing lights for fire alarms

‘Trudy’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Customer Services
Gender:	Female
Age:	19
Region:	South East
Employer:	Training provider, followed by contract Cleaning company. About to move to Utilities company
Disability:	Visual impairment
Adjustment:	Provision of large monitor and software solutions, use of large type face or enlargement for key Documents, use of personally owned magnifier, extended health and safety induction.

Instead, Trudy undertook a GNVQ (intermediate) in Health and Social Care at a mainstream sixth-form college where she was given the loan of a lap top computer and had access to a classroom assistant. The small size of her tutor group proved advantageous and her tutors were supportive, for example by enlarging written materials. Starting at a mainstream college was nerve-racking for Trudy but she feels it was an important step in relation to her career.

Uncertain about what to do next, Trudy opted to take 3 ‘A’ levels at a special college but found it hard to keep up with her studying. She was not happy at the college, fell behind with the work and decided to leave after a couple of months. Training

Trudy then undertook an NVQ Level 1 in Business Administration. While she found the NVQ work easy, the experience was different compared to college and school and provided her with her first experience of telephone work. Despite a ‘fear of telephones’ she soon came to find that she enjoys this type of work.

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Trudy attended a school for the visually impaired as a boarding pupil, when she was of secondary school age. During her time at the school, Trudy feels that the academic standards deteriorated. She was only entered for 4 GCSEs, although she would have liked to do more, despite finding academic study difficult.

When Trudy left school at 17, she wanted to work with children and hoped to undertake an NNEB at a mainstream FE college. At school she had helped to care for younger pupils with special needs during lunch times and had a good reference from the school. The college tried to push her towards business administration courses on the grounds that she would be unable to gain employment as a nursery nurse. When Trudy insisted that she wished to pursue a career in care, the college stipulated that she would have to come and work in the nursery during the summer holidays in order to prove her ability. This made Trudy very angry and she refused to be ‘tested’, when the same would not be required of other applicants.

Careers Advice

Trudy has received careers advice, both during and since leaving school. However, she does not recall being informed about the MA route and only found out about this option after gaining employment. In Trudy’s experience, careers advisers are only helpful when you know what you want to do. She feels she would have benefited from advice and guidance from a specialist adviser with knowledge of her disability, particularly in relation to the range of jobs that might be suitable for her; for example, no-one ever suggested telephone work as an option.

RECRUITMENT

Finding the vacancy

On completing her NVQ in Business Administration, Trudy attended a Job Club and an interview was arranged for a tele-sales job with a private training provider.

Selection and induction

The Job Club informed the employer of Trudy's visual impairment and the implications were explored during the interview. Trudy was happy to discuss the limitations imposed by her visual impairment, preferring to get the issues out in the open. Trudy used to think she would not tell anyone about her 'bad eyes' until she had got the job, but now believes that this can make matters worse and can be embarrassing to have to explain at a later date.

Trudy underwent the same induction process as any other employee or trainee, with the exception that additional time was allocated to Health and Safety to ensure Trudy was familiar with the environment. She reports that it took some time to find her way around the employer premises, partly because it is "a bit of a rabbit warren", but also due to the uniform grey and blue decor. The use of contrasting colours for doors would have facilitated Trudy's movement around the workplace in the early days.

ADJUSTMENTS

Starting the MA

Trudy started work on a part-time basis and, after a couple of weeks in the job, her supervisor encouraged her to register as a Modern Apprentice, although to begin with she was unclear about the difference between MAs and NVQs.

As a provider of IT training, her employer already had several large computer monitors, two of which were made available to Trudy at her two main workstations. Trudy also uses her own magnifier at work and this, combined with access to a photocopier, has provided solutions to many potential barriers. Enlarging sales scripts and other frequently used information and instructions are ways in which Trudy can help to ensure her work is carried out efficiently.

The NVQ system

Trudy feels the NVQ system is an excellent way for her to gain qualifications as there are no traditional 'exams' and she can work through in her own time. However, the NVQ paperwork was not easy as Trudy cannot see to tick the self-assessment boxes and it takes her a considerable amount of time to check what has been completed. In her portfolio she uses large print on A3 paper to help her to review the work she has produced.

Transport

Travelling to work can present problems as Trudy has difficulty in distinguishing between buses (particularly at night) and locating the correct train, often relying on other people for information. The use of taxis is sometimes necessary, with her disability living allowance helping towards the cost of this.

Progressing in employment

After only a few weeks, Trudy obtained a better paid part-time position following a referral by her employer/training provider. In both jobs, Trudy's primary task has been telephone sales, in addition to which she has undertaken the management of a data base and a variety of administrative tasks. In her search for full-time employment she has turned down an offer from a high street bank, realising the 'close work' involved would have created significant difficulties.

FUTURE PLANS

Securing a new job

Trudy has recently secured a new, full-time post and will continue to work towards her MA. Early contact with her new employer has been very encouraging. Trudy declared her disability in her application and, when invited to undertake an aptitude test, telephoned to check that the test papers would be enlarged. Her request was granted although, due to the test papers being printed in grey and light blue, she still had to seek help and felt slightly embarrassed when working with oversized test papers. Without further prompting, the employer subsequently used a large type face in all written communication with Trudy.

Employer taking the initiative

In her new job, Trudy will be required to use the telephones and computer screen simultaneously for the first time. Working with several different and, therefore smaller 'windows' on the screen at the same time is a concern. Prior to interviewing Trudy, the employer contacted the Disability Service Team at the Employment Service and arranged for an assessment to identify the best IT solutions, software and hardware, for Trudy's needs. Trudy talked positively about the forthcoming assessment and was clearly excited at the prospect of software solutions that will help her in her work.

Unfortunately, a delay in the assessment process has resulted in Trudy's start date being moved back, although she is hopeful that this will only be by a week. Her employer has also indicated that they will obtain enlarged versions of the paper-based forms Trudy will use in her work.

Settling in to a new job

Trudy is a little nervous about starting her new job and anticipates some difficulties in settling in. She laughed about being unable to locate her own desk because her new office is so big, and about the need to paint her work station a really bright colour. Social integration is also an issue and Trudy is concerned that people will be offended if she fails to recognise or acknowledge them. She hopes that, without making a big deal of it, her colleagues will be made aware of her visual impairment at an early stage.

Achievements

Trudy considers that achieving her new job on her own initiative and in the 'open market' has been her greatest career achievement to date. She sees the biggest hurdle she has faced in relation to her career is herself. She has found it difficult to get used to telling people that she has 'bad eyes' and used to feel awkward using her glasses and magnifier. Counselling has helped her to overcome this and she is no longer embarrassed, feeling it is much easier when it is out in the open.

Ambitions

Despite the challenges she faces, Trudy is hoping to complete her MA within a year or so, after which she would like to travel, starting in Europe and possibly going on to do VSO in future.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

for careers services:

- it is important to focus on the full range of possibilities that are open to a young person. Expertise in relation to specific disabilities may help the adviser to identify suitable types of work

for training providers:

- the selection of appropriate teaching methods and the use of small group work can negate the needs for expensive additional equipment and support

for employers:

- taking the initiative in seeking positive solutions can boost the confidence of the young person and forward planning can minimise delays in acquiring necessary equipment
- social barriers may present as much of a challenge to the young person as task-related aspects

for employers and training providers:

- young people are not seeking to undertake work or training that is beyond their capabilities. People with disabilities should not be required to provide additional evidence of ability compared to non-disabled applicants
- individuals are well placed to develop personal strategies for overcoming difficulties that often require minimal equipment or resources. Experimentation with solutions should be encouraged
- the young person is well placed to identify minor adjustments that will facilitate progress, but may need encouragement to share their ideas

‘Becky’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Customer Services
Gender:	Female
Age:	22
Region:	London
Employer:	Day Nurseries and Playschemes, and Training Provider of NVQs in Early Years Education and Care
Disability:	Juvenile chronic arthritis, leading to stiffening and intense pain in all major joints, restricted movement and difficulties walking bending, and lifting (following a bilateral hip operation, the MA’s mobility was significantly improved)
Adjustment:	Employer and TEC flexibility in allowing time off for an operation, and a transfer within the NVQ framework; willingness of employer and staff to make adjustments to the work environment to facilitate wheelchair access; provision of special IT equipment to complete written assignments

Becky left school aged 16 with 8 GCSEs (7 at grades C or above). She attended a careers interview at school and was advised to go to college to study for a GNVQ. Her parents also encouraged this as it gave Becky the option of going on to university. However, Becky had ambitions of becoming a qualified playworker having worked for two years in a children’s play centre as a volunteer on Saturday mornings. She completed an Advanced GNVQ in Health and Social Care, plus three Key Skills at FE College.

Prior training

Becky was a little apprehensive about starting college, as her mobility had become more restricted and she needed to use a wheelchair when it was too painful for her to walk. The college suggested that she enrol early and explore the facilities freely in her wheelchair “before the mayhem of induction week!” Becky saw this as positive action on the part of the college, and felt less intimidated about starting as a result.

Following her GNVQ, Becky attended a careers interview at college. The discussion seemed to focus mainly on a university option which proved to be unhelpful because Becky had already decided that she wanted to take time out from full time learning and was keen to start working in a children’s nursery.

Finding work

Becky visited the Jobcentre to check out job vacancies, although she was unable to make a claim for any allowance as this would have affected her disability benefits. Becky had little success in finding suitable vacancies for six months.

Becky’s experiences at the Jobcentre were not totally positive, however, as she found the attitude of some staff off putting. One particular example occurred when Becky was asked to climb the stairs in the Jobcentre to attend an interview with an adviser. When she reached the top she was greeted with the comment “you don’t look very disabled now”. Whilst the intentions behind this statement may have been positive, the effect certainly wasn’t!

BACKGROUND

Education Prior to MA

Becky began her education in a special school but was moved into mainstream education. Becky considered this an important move, encouraging her to become more independent and competitive, and “to do all the things any other teenager would do”.

RECRUITMENT

Finding out about the vacancy

Becky found out about MAs and met her current employer, by chance, at an open day at her old secondary school. Becky's determination to work in a nursery impressed the employer, who asked if she had ever considered a Careership [National Traineeship] or MA.

Becky could not recall hearing about this option from any other source. On reflection, Becky feels GNVQs and university may have been considered the safest option for someone with her disability.

Becky agreed to telephone the employer and arrange an interview to discuss work-based training further. This was a major challenge for Becky who "hates using phones" but she forced herself to do it.

The interview

Preparations for Becky's interview started some time in advance. Becky checked out the location of the employers premises two weeks earlier to plan her journey needs. As the main offices were based on the first floor, and accessed only by a side entrance and a flight of stairs, the offer was made to hold the interview at a sub-office. However, Becky did not think this necessary, as she was quite able to climb the stairs unaided.

On her arrival, Becky found staff very supportive, and they were able to help – by carrying her wheelchair up the stairs for her.

Becky was initially recruited as a trainee in January 1996, completing her Level 2 NVQ in Child Care and Education at one of the employer's own day nurseries.

The interview fully explored Becky's physical restrictions. This was facilitated by a number of factors including the completion of a detailed health questionnaire, which helped initiate discussions, Becky's willingness to discuss her condition and physical limitations, direct and up-front questioning by the employer, and positive discussion about adjustments and support.

Health and safety issues

The decision to offer Becky a training position and place her in a day nursery was not taken lightly by the employer as walking, lifting and bending were difficult for Becky. Whilst this was less of a problem when working with children aged 5 years or more, it presented a number of Health and Safety issues with the age group Becky was so determined to work with. Handwriting was also difficult and painful, although Becky had overcome this by learning how to touch type at the age of nine.

Ensuring the health and safety of children is a major concern for the employer. As a result, a key message throughout the initial interview and induction process is one of openness and honesty in discussing any health problems that might possibly put a child at risk. This is particularly important when an applicant has a less obvious condition.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Adjusting the framework

Life in the day nursery was becoming very hard for Becky who was advised to stop working by her doctor. This was devastating news for Becky. However, after discussions with the TEC, the employer suggested that Becky should continue her Level 2 on a part-time basis, but transfer to Level 3 Customer Care.

Becky was enthusiastic about this option as it offered her the opportunity to achieve her ambition of gaining a childcare qualification, as well as giving her a 'fall back' career should she not be able to continue working in a nursery. Becky and her employer agreed to an initial trial period to see if Becky liked the work and wanted to continue.

Becky's employer had been concerned about influencing Becky away from her chosen career but their reservations were ill founded as Becky thoroughly enjoyed her new area of work, becoming a real asset to the employer.

Access to the premises

Becky's transfer to Customer Services was encouraged by staff at the employer's training office, who were keen for her to continue working within the organisation. Wheelchair access, however, became a real issue, given the location of the office and main training rooms. Becky was given the choice of working and completing her training at a nearby office with wheelchair access. With the support of staff who were willing to help her access the building, make her drinks, and do lunchtime errands, Becky decided to stay in the main offices. This she feels helped her feel more integrated within the team.

The use of IT

Becky discovered a hidden IT talent, and soon computerised all her MA assignments and documents. Wrist rests and special keyboards were purchased, although she did not find these comfortable or easy to use.

Transportation

Becky needed to be transported by taxi to and from work everyday. Her employer suggested applying for additional funding from the TEC but Becky, already in receipt of a disability allowance, did not think this necessary.

Further treatment

Shortly after commencing her MA, Becky was signed off her training for 4 months to undergo a bilateral hip replacement operation. In fact she had made a very fast recovery, as the initial estimate was that Becky would be off work for 18 months.

Becky clearly remembers her first day back at the office, minus wheelchair, and the happiness she felt in being able to walk with no pain. Her first task on entering the office was to make everybody a cup of coffee!

A developing role

Becky's role with the employer continued to be developed throughout her MA. She was encouraged to develop her IT skills further, setting up the employer's website, transferring the accounts system to computer, and producing marketing and training materials. She is currently the employer's Year 2000 IT co-ordinator and manages the development of IT systems across all the employer's nurseries and training sites.

Her experience as a trainee in a nursery encouraged Becky to support other trainees. She has initiated a new role as a trainee liaison officer, acting as an impartial sounding board for new trainees to express and discuss concerns or worries they might have about their training. Becky has also been instrumental in featuring trainees' achievements in the employer's newsletter.

The biggest challenge Becky feels she has faced in her MA is overcoming her fear of telephones. She recalls how initially she would let the phone ring, hoping someone else would answer it; but over time, with encouragement from her manager, she has gained greater confidence.

FUTURE PLANS

At the time of the case study, Becky had completed her Level 3 in customer care and was awaiting the results of the internal verifier. She was about to commence her NVQ Level 3 in play work and also planned to develop her IT skills further. Becky was both positive and excited about her future with her employer and having the opportunity to pursue her career interests in childcare, IT, and customer services.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- present independent advice about the range of post-16 options available to young people to ensure they have equal access to opportunities
- allow young people time and opportunities to prepare and plan their entry into work-based training
- be flexible over the time allowed to complete work-based options to accommodate time needed for treatment or recuperation
- ensure adjustments made for young people help integrate, as well as support, individuals' access to employment or training
- encourage open and honest discussions of health conditions that might affect an individual's training or potential to gain employment in the relevant sector or area
- provide an understanding and safe environment in which the trainee can access support and achieve their potential
- It is valuable to discuss contingency action in the event of setbacks

‘Martin’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Retail
Gender:	Male
Age:	22
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Home improvements retailer
Disability:	Following a routine operation, the development of abscesses on the brain resulted in the need for a series of operations, causing some brain damage, constant, painful headaches and occasional mood swings
Adjustment:	Flexibility over any time off required, including having to leave work if headaches become too painful, adapting the nature of the role to exclude heavy lifting

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

After a routine operation, Martin developed abscesses on his brain, which required three further operations. At this point, Martin was only eight months away from taking his GCSEs and was still in hospital during exam time. Martin was able to take a reduced number of GCSEs whilst in hospital, but his performance was well below the expectations prior to his operations.

Martin took the decision to continue his education by taking further GCSEs, and then A Levels. However, despite his best efforts, Martin was unable to complete his studies, due to continuing disruption to his education caused by further periods in hospital. After re-starting his A Levels three times, Martin decided to seek full-time employment.

RECRUITMENT

From the age of sixteen, Martin had worked for his current employer on a part-time basis. Throughout his employment, he had found them very understanding about his illness; they had allowed him to take unlimited time off but still held his job for him. His relationship with his managers was so good that they had even taken time to visit him in hospital. Martin’s application for full-time employment in the same store was therefore welcomed.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Entering training

After six months in post, Martin – as recommended by his doctors – had established a routine, thus allowing the healing process to progress. During this time, he had also improved his attendance record and registered his ambitions to move into management within the store. A new manager at the store encouraged Martin to set his own targets and, as a result, he enrolled on an NVQ 2 in Retail with a local training provider which had considerable experience of working with trainees with disabilities.

Developing the job role

Martin’s current role involves both customer care and stock control. With responsibility for an area of the store, Martin is required to monitor any gaps, and check that the items on display match the figures held at the warehouse.

Martin is currently in line for a promotion, and has already extended the scope of his role to include extra administrative duties normally reserved for management (eg. running the cash office in the absence of senior staff).

Physical adjustments

Whilst the physical effects of his illness were extensive for Martin, he has “learnt to live with (his) limitations”. The main difficulties for Martin, in relation to his job role, include a weakness in

his left side which makes heavy lifting difficult, and headaches which are treated with strong pain killers; when taking these pain killers, Martin is unable to work. In an attempt to reduce the effects of medication, Martin has explored natural pain remedies, but he still suffers greatly and there is no solution currently in sight.

The main adjustment on the part of his employers has been a positive attitude. Staff at the store help with lifting heavy items, and management have been understanding about any time off needed. However, Martin's employers and colleagues definitely do not see him as being 'disabled'. His employers are clear that Martin has never used his medical history in order to reduce his workload.

Finding the right training package

Having successfully completed his NVQ 2, Martin decided to continue onto NVQ 3, with a different training provider. Completing the course work for the Level 3 qualification, in addition to taking on more responsibilities in-store became too tiring for Martin and he needed to take stock. However, Martin was still determined to complete some form of formal qualification. He decided to seek some advice.

The local careers service were particularly helpful, referring him onto the local Disability Service Team at the Employment Service. After taking advice, Martin has decided to enrol on a modular degree course by correspondence. He feels that studying subjects that are related to his job, but do not duplicate aspects of work, will be important to maintain his interest and commitment. The degree also allows the student to set the pace at which they study, in much the same way as the NVQ system.

FUTURE PLANS

Currently, Martin is planning to enrol on the degree course in September. Management at the store have been supportive of his decision, providing honest advice and encouragement. Negotiation is underway with the company for the payment of course fees, but a support group for head injury victims has offered to assist Martin with the fees if the employer is unable to.

In addition, Martin hopes to be promoted to a management position soon. His employers believe that Martin has the potential to succeed in management and that his disability will not affect his chances of promotion.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Martin feels that the major difficulties for him have been overcoming the ignorance of others in relation to taking time off work. With constant disruptions due to painful headaches and hospitalisation, it has been very difficult for Martin just to hold down a job. It has been a major achievement for Martin to progress to the level he has, although he still has a way to go to fulfil his ambitions.

At the centre of Martin's success has been his willingness to actively seek out responsibility. However, his employers have also had a major role to play. Their commitment to training and management development has resulted in Martin being able to access support from them as and when he has needed to.

Martin also feels that it is important to be proactive in seeking support from other sources, although this can often be a difficult task. His own experiences suggest that the careers service and Employment Service can be a useful starting point, particularly in exploring all the options.

‘Christopher’

KEY POINTS

Sector:	Hairdressing
Gender:	Male
Age:	23
Region:	East Midlands
Employer:	Hairdressing Salon
Disability:	Permanent injuries resulting from a car accident, including loss of colour vision and partial sight in one eye, difficulties in straightening knee joints, rheumatoid arthritis in knees and hips, moods swings and attitude change
Adjustment:	Personal coping strategies

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

Christopher was never happy at school and was first referred to an educational psychologist at about age 6. He achieved little in the way of exams results.

Experiences of work

After leaving school, Christopher had begun to train as a hairdresser some three months prior to being involved in a serious car accident at age 18.

After spending four months in hospital he was told he would be unable to return to work for several months; indeed, he remained unemployed for about four years. During this time, he moved away from the area he had been living in to settle in a rural area in a different part of the country. He tried to register as a disabled person but was told that his disabilities were not severe enough. He has also pursued a compensation claim that has recently been settled.

Finding a career direction

It took Christopher a long time to make up his mind to go back into hairdressing. He knows that, in some ways, this will be a difficult career to follow given the nature of his disabilities, but feels it is important to do something enjoyable and creative.

He did not find careers guidance at school very helpful and, while the Jobcentre helped to point him in the right direction, he feels he had to push to get the information he wanted.

RECRUITMENT

Finding a job

Once having made up his mind, Christopher set about contacting all the hairdressing salons (using the Yellow Pages) within travelling distance. He found out about his current job through an advert in a local newspaper and was invited for an interview. He explained that he had been in a car accident that had left him with difficulties in bending and unable to lift heavy objects, but did not focus on his disability, seeing the interview as his chance to sell himself. The employer did not ask for any further details and Christopher is clear that he was not made to feel uncomfortable in any way.

Christopher was one of about ten applicants for the post and was offered the job because of his obvious determination and commitment. He was given a week's trial and was subsequently offered the job. When recruiting trainees, Christopher's employer concentrates on job requirements. Disabilities involving upper body, neck and back problems might impact on an individual's ability to perform key tasks and the employer has had to let one trainee go who was unable to master the level of manual dexterity required. He was satisfied that Christopher would be able to perform all the tasks required of him.

Starting on the MA

Christopher had not been aware of MAs prior to obtaining his current job, but was informed about them by his new employer, who has a history of

involvement in training. He has worked closely with the training provider responsible for organising Christopher's MA.

Prior to his commencing the MA, an assessment of Christopher's skills was carried out by the training provider, with existing qualifications taken into account. Christopher achieved high scores in all key areas of reading, writing and numeracy. On the forms he completed during induction, Christopher indicated that he has a disability. It was important that the training provider was aware of the special circumstances, both to be able to provide support, and to ensure health and safety issues were addressed.

ADJUSTMENTS

Coping at work

No adjustments have been required in the physical work environment or in the way work is organised. While Christopher is unable to drive, he always arrives at work on time, despite the problems of using public transport in rural areas. He occasionally has to use taxis (at his own expense) when unable to get a lift or catch a bus home after work. He also describes himself as "dealing with the pain when he gets home", and prefers as little mention as possible of this and other aspects of his condition while at work as he does not want to be reminded of it all the time.

Christopher has never been known to complain or to use his disability as an excuse in relation to work. Other staff in the salon are aware that Christopher may need to take a short rest occasionally, and that bending and lifting are difficult. They are supportive both in helping with tasks and in accepting that Christopher is 'not faking it'. At one point, Christopher was suffering severe knee pain and thought he might have to stop work. However, his doctor recommended adjustments to Christopher's posture that have resolved the problem. His colleagues have again been supportive, reminding him to correct his posture and encouraging him to rest as appropriate.

Christopher finds it frustrating not to be able to take on all possible tasks but at the same time recognises his limitations and operates within them to the best of his ability. He is admired for his

determination and his employer "would hate to think that the potential of young people such as Christopher would be overlooked on the basis that they have a disability".

Training – off the job

The college-based element of the MA has proved more problematic. Being in a rural area, the training provider is always careful to arrange training with providers that are accessible to the young person. However, Christopher reports that he "hates education" and is only prepared to participate because of his ambition to become a qualified hairdresser. He finds it hard to motivate himself to complete assignments and finds the course itself "humiliating and patronising". His fellow-students are primarily 16-year olds who see their training as an extension of school and Christopher is unhappy with both the content of the course and the way it is delivered.

He has developed a good relationship with tutors and an open and honest dialogue has been established. Christopher is nevertheless sceptical about the chance of improvements being made in the training delivery in the short to medium term. The training provider has close communication with the college and attempts are being made to adjust the programme. A recent decision to drop the Key Skills element for the time being seems to have resulted in a very positive response, with the college describing Christopher as a "changed person" in recent weeks.

Achievements

Christopher's training provider and employer clearly perceive Christopher as having achieved considerable success within the MA, have seen his confidence increase, and recognise his many strengths and considerable potential. Christopher himself feels that his greatest achievement so far has been in getting himself back into work, a process that required that he overcome significant motivational and emotional barriers. This has been an important step in terms of putting the accident behind him and getting on with his life.

It is the personality changes and mood swings that Christopher feels have been hardest to come to terms with, particularly as other people find these difficult to accept. However, he has

developed strategies for managing his moods and dealing with the pain: he uses 'professional detachment' in his contact with customers and owns up to occasionally "letting off steam" in the presence of other staff. In general, he has learned to deal with his moods away from the work place, feeling it is inappropriate to burden all but a few close friends and family members with his problems. His employer confirms that emotional and psychological difficulties have not impacted negatively on Christopher's work in any way.

Christopher's own definition of good practice in relation to dealing with employees with disabilities is for people to demonstrate acceptance without attempting to understand his disabilities and experiences. Understanding is neither possible nor necessary, whereas acceptance allows him to focus on his strengths rather than his limitations.

FUTURE PLANS

Christopher reports that, if he completes his NVQ Level 2, this will be one of the first times he has finished something and he sees this as a very positive step forward. He intends to pursue his NVQ Level 3 eventually but plans to take a break

from studying and gain some experience while he addresses other issues that are important in his life. After a year he will return to the NVQ training, paying for it himself if necessary.

Returning to work was in itself a major achievement for Christopher and obtaining the job, despite being several years older than most trainees, demonstrates his determination and commitment. His longer term plans are to run his own business. However, he feels that it is important to learn a trade and that, with his hairdressing training behind him, he will always be able to find work.

Christopher accepts that his condition is unlikely to improve and that, short of a medical breakthrough, the rheumatoid arthritis is likely to become progressively worse.

He is working hard to put the accident behind him and he resents the need to keep reviewing the accident and its impact. Requests from medical and insurance professionals (and researchers!) require him to look back and focus on the negative, rather than concentrating on moving forward.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- focus on the abilities required for the job to ensure that potentially talented young people are not excluded on the basis of irrelevant limitations
- focus on developing strengths. Apprentices do not wish to be reminded constantly of their difficulties and limitations and are looking for acceptance rather than understanding
- off-the job training that is dominated by 16-year old school leavers may not offer the best learning environment for more mature apprentices with a focused attitude to their work and training.

‘John’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Painting and Decorating
Gender:	Male
Age:	17
Region:	Yorkshire & the Humber
Employer:	Painting and Decorating Contractor
Disability:	ME
Adjustment:	Flexibility in delivery of off-the-job training, holistic approach to assessment of progress

BACKGROUND

School

John’s ME first developed while he was at school and he had difficulty in completing a full week of attendance during the two years leading up to his GCSEs. The school were supportive, accepting John’s need to take time off. Despite the challenges he faced, John achieved eleven GCSEs - five at grades A-C.

Careers advice

John’s ideal job would be as a paramedic and he has undertaken first aid training as a member of St John’s Ambulance. While at school, he arranged one of his work experience placements in a hospital casualty department and received very positive feedback on his performance. However, through contact with the careers service while at school, he learned that he would have to wait until he was aged 21 to enter employment in this field and decided to learn a trade in the meantime.

Work experience

John developed an interest in painting and decorating and, when the school was unable to offer work experience in this field, John arranged his own successful placement, following which the employer indicated he would be happy to provide John with a good reference.

RECRUITMENT

As he approached the end of his compulsory schooling, John was keen to pursue training in painting and decorating. He wrote to his work experience employer, passing on information he had received from the careers service concerning the CITB MA framework. The employer subsequently telephoned to tell John that “a job was his if he wanted it”. Obtaining this job represented a significant achievement as, for six or seven years this employer had refused to take trainees, following a negative experience in the past.

Appropriate employer placements are viewed, by the college, as crucial to the success of young people’s training as well as maintaining employer commitment. If the young person can sell themselves to the college, through a positive and motivated approach, then the college will ‘sell’ the young person to an employer. This system can help young people to get a foot in the door that enables them to demonstrate their abilities much more effectively than an interview process.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Flexibility of training delivery

John currently works with his employer from Monday to Wednesday and attends college on Thursdays and Fridays. This helps him to maintain a good attendance record at work but he often needs time off from college, as he tends to be extremely tired towards the end of the week. It is often his mother who has to “put her foot down” as John is inclined to push himself further than is good for him. He does, however, recognise that over-tiring himself has repercussions.

There were some early concerns on the part of the CITB liaison contact, due to John's poor attendance at college. However, once John's case was examined in detail, it was agreed that he was performing effectively, even though rigid adherence to assessment procedures would have excluded John from the MA on the basis of his attendance record.

John had not declared his health condition on the original CITB paperwork but this was altered when the CITB became aware of his ME. Despite these issues being resolved satisfactorily, John still has some reservations over 'the system' and how it is administered.

The college tutors have few concerns about John's absences and report that the breadth of experience he is gaining at work makes it less critical if he is unable to complete practical college-based elements of the training. The normal college policy of recording absence as unauthorised if not reported before 10 a.m. has been relaxed for John (his mother also has ME and is often unable to phone in until later in the day). John and his parents have been reassured by the supportive approach of the college as, in the past, they have experienced scepticism about the validity of ME, including from a GP who put their symptoms down to laziness!

John enjoys college and his tutor reports that he is doing well and is close to completing his Level 1 qualification. When able to attend college, he works hard and is progressing faster than many of his fellow-students. His tutor describes John as being "a joy to teach" and, in many ways, perceives his ME as less disabling in relation to securing work than the negative attitudes and lack of interest exhibited by many other young people on the course. When he is unable to attend, he completes work at home and, to date, there are no signs to suggest that he will fall behind with his studies.

Attitudes of others

The other students on the course at college are unaware that John has ME and they sometimes tease him about his frequent absences - calling him a 'part-timer'. They are curious about the reason behind his absences but he is not inclined to tell them or his colleagues at work. This is a policy respected by both his tutors and his employer.

Work mates often tease him about being slow but John takes this in his stride, aware that if he pushes himself too hard it will result in the need to take more time off.

Focus on potential

It is clear that John is perceived as an asset to his employer who focuses on what he can contribute, rather than on the difficulties that may be encountered. While a small firm would normally find it difficult to afford to employ an individual with an attendance record like John's, his exceptional attitude and approach to work and learning are seen as outweighing the potential difficulties.

THE FUTURE

On-going flexibility in off-the-job training

John has concerns that his position may be under threat if he cannot sustain full-time attendance. His main concern is that in his second year, off-the-job training will take place at the beginning of the week and he is unsure if he will be able to maintain his work attendance levels once the flexibility to take time off at the end of the week is removed by the change of routine. The college will look at this situation as it arises, with the possibility of changing John's study day, if necessary. This has been possible in the past for other students.

There are many resources available within the college to support individuals but these have not been required to date. John's needs are being monitored and his concerns will be discussed during tutorials.

Aspirations and Achievements

As John moves towards the end of his first year as an MA, he remains determined to complete his apprenticeship. It may be difficult to continue in the profession, however, due to the physical demands of the job. Some members of his family have suggested that an office-based job may be more suitable but John has no interest in this type of work, preferring to take on the challenge of a physically demanding job. His biggest achievement to date is managing to stay at work against the odds. He hopes his employer will keep him on and is intending to continue working hard

whenever he is well. John does not want special treatment but feels it is important to gain acceptance that he is working to the best of his ability

The company John is working for has both domestic and commercial sides to the business. He is currently working on commercial contracts, and he finds there is pressure to work fast and cover large areas quickly, making demands on his stamina. In future, he hopes to work on the domestic side which he perceives as potentially less strenuous and in which careful work is more important than speed.

Future prospects

John's tutor sees his potential to progress to a management role in future, although this is not something John is considering at present. In the meantime, he intends to complete his training and remain in work. While John hopes he will eventually be free of ME, he is realistic about the chance that it could continue for several years, if not indefinitely. His main hope at present is that it will not get any worse. He has, however, had to give up his ambition to become a paramedic as they require a good health record. It is unlikely that John will meet the criteria even if his ME subsides in future.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- rigid adherence to specific performance criteria in assessing progress may be misleading. Judgements about performance should be withheld until the wider picture has been examined
- it is important to respect the young person's choice not to disclose their disability to colleagues and fellow students, but disclosure to employers and providers may help to avoid misunderstandings
- flexibility in the delivery of off-the-job training can facilitate effective performance in work without impacting on achievements in training
- where stamina is an issue, pressure to maintain full attendance is likely to have longer term consequences for health that will outweigh the effect of short-term absences

‘Marcus’

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Engineering – Light Motor Vehicle Mechanic
Gender:	Male
Age:	18
Region:	West Midlands
Employer:	Car dealership/garage
Disability:	Dyslexia
Adjustments:	Extra tuition; one to one support with NVQ evidence requirements; learning support in group training sessions e.g. consideration of language used by tutors and the use of hand outs; the provision of a reader and writer for exams; moral support and encouragement

BACKGROUND

Decision to start the MA

Marcus didn't really have any ideas about what he wanted to do when he left school, and was contemplating going to 6th form college to re-sit his GCSE exams. This would also give him a bit more time to think about his options. He decided to go to a Careers Fair at his school for some 'inspiration' - and found it! This is where he met his training provider and discovered his interest in mechanical engineering.

RECRUITMENT

Selection process

Marcus completed the training provider's application form with the help of his mother who read out those sections he found a little confusing. The form asked about his medical history and for details of any disability that might affect his training or work. Marcus did not think his dyslexia applied

to the question and so did not enter it on the form. His dyslexia was openly discussed in his interview, however; he felt fine about this as it did not seem to be a problem as far as the training provider was concerned.

The training provider believes in giving all young people a chance to demonstrate their motivation and potential and so has a policy of interviewing all interested applicants. This can be a costly exercise, since 650 applications are made yearly for a possible 80-90 training places.

Assessment

All candidates complete a Basic Skills test (ALBSU) and a Mechanical Comprehension test a week before their interview. These are used to determine any learning difficulties a young person might experience in training and to plan appropriate support and assistance.

The training provider shares a site with an FE college and uses the expertise of the college's Special Needs Units to administer and feedback on tests, and to give advice on resources and approaches they feel will best support trainees.

Health problems are also identified and closely monitored through medical screening which all trainees undergo once a year.

Marcus found the tests straightforward as they were mostly multiple choice. However, they were effective in highlighting his dyslexia, which the college was able to follow up with specialist testing.

TRANSITION TO MA

Training – on the job

Marcus was appointed as a YT trainee with a large car dealership/garage. The employer was planning a three year business expansion and saw it as an ideal opportunity to train two young people with the view to taking them on as permanent mechanics. The Service Manager of the company approached the training provider for suitable candidates and recruited Marcus on the basis of his positive attitude to the job and his training.

Training – off the job

Marcus attends the training provider on day release to complete his City and Guilds and NVQ in Light Motor Vehicle Mechanics and Key Skills. He was transferred to MA status after successfully completing his NVQ Level I.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

Marcus finds that his dyslexia causes him difficulties in a number of ways, eg. keeping up with the speed at which information is delivered in training sessions, understanding technical or complex language (spoken or written) and reading and spelling words.

Additional learning support

Flexibility in the training schedule has enabled Marcus to access two hours of additional support on his day release. This is being funded by the training provider and is used to provide extra tuition and one to one support with his NVQ evidence requirements. The training provider is committed to continuing this support and has the potential to increase the hours available by extending the apprentice's training day.

Extra tuition has had the benefit of covering work in more depth, and at a pace that facilitates Marcus's understanding and learning. This is delivered by his tutor after his group training sessions to reinforce key learning points and address areas he is having most difficulty with.

With advice and guidance, Marcus has also been able to complete his NVQ portfolio work. His tutor helps simplify the process of recording evidence as the format and language used in frameworks can make it difficult to differentiate between units of competence.

Marcus is also supported with his City and Guilds examinations. He manages to complete multiple choice questions independently but requires a reader and writer (or additional time) for written exams.

Working closely with special learning needs experts from a college has enabled the training provider to plan appropriate support for Marcus. In addition Marcus's tutor, who is also dyslexic, has a good understanding of the learning difficulties Marcus is experiencing and can anticipate and respond to his needs.

Marcus recognises that he needs support but does not necessarily want others to know of his difficulties. His tutor respects this and ensures his support is provided in ways that minimises questions or curiosity from the rest of the training group.

Training delivery

Note-taking is difficult for Marcus and it also disrupts his concentration in his group training sessions. Hand-outs of OHP slides and board work at the start of a training session provide useful summaries of key learning points and help remove the pressures of writing.

Marcus's tutor also gives consideration to the language he uses in training sessions; for example, he uses American text books for their use of simple language. This he feels is good practice with all trainees.

Support and encouragement

Marcus is working hard to keep up with his training programme. This has not been easy for him and at times he has lacked confidence in his ability to manage and cope with the demands of the course. Positive reinforcement and feedback from his tutor and work based assessor, together with good examination results are helping him maintain his confidence and motivation in training.

Marcus is thoroughly enjoying his job and has no problems learning or completing practical work. He is demonstrating good practical and diagnostic skills and is now working independently on a number of routine service and repair jobs e.g. changing oil filters and exhausts, checking accelerators, testing new cars.

Induction

An initial three week induction period helped Marcus adjust to his new working environment and he has overcome his initial shyness in the work place. It also enabled him to take on board important work practices and health and safety regulations in the garage and establish himself within the team of mechanics.

Practical training

Regular communications with the training provider and work based assessors has enabled the employer to plan Marcus's on the job training in ways that supplement and help consolidate his off the job training. This has greatly facilitated Marcus' technical learning as he finds it easier to comprehend and learn mechanical theory on his day release if it is first explained to him in the work place in practical terms.

The employer's practice of placing new apprentices with experienced mechanics in the garage is also helping Marcus develop his technical understanding and skills. This ensures he receives good instruction and opportunities to watch, learn and practice a range of mechanical procedures.

Support and encouragement

A supportive environment in which apprentices are encouraged to ask questions and seek advice about their work is also important. This has given Marcus the confidence to practice and develop new skills and take on greater responsibility in the secure knowledge that support will be on hand, should he need it.

Areas of difficulty

Marcus does report having some difficulties with written tasks (e.g. filling in job cards for cars), and needs extra time to think of words and their spelling. His employer, however, has indicated this is not an issue and that he is satisfied with the standard of Marcus's work.

Marcus does have some concerns about work he will need to complete in the reception area of the garage in his final year. This will involve more form filling and writing out information for customers. He is not looking forward to this but feels confident that, with support and understanding, he will be able to manage the work.

Achievements

Marcus has passed a series of City and Guilds examinations and is progressing well with his NVQ Level 2 units. He is extremely pleased with his achievements, and passing his driving test has been an added bonus. He is working hard to gain his qualifications and, with additional support, he is succeeding.

FUTURE PLANS

Marcus is extremely positive about his future with the garage and is keen to further his qualifications and increase his skills and his earning potential.

The employer is in no doubt about employing Marcus full-time as his performance, development and attitude on the job have been outstanding. He has gained the respect of the other mechanics in the garage and has become a valued member of the team.

Marcus's efforts and commitment have been rewarded by the employer. A new ramp has been installed in the garage to create a permanent work station for Marcus and the employer has also arranged a loan to help Marcus pay for his own set of tools. This, the employer believes, is important as it gives young people hope about their future with a company, and encourages them to continue with their training.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- every young person deserves the chance to demonstrate their potential and motivation to train and work
- initial and continuing assessment can help identify learning difficulties which young people might not raise themselves - either at the start or in later stages of their training
- ensure additional support is appropriate and effective by accessing expert advice, or by developing an in-house understanding of a disability
- an integrated programme of on and off the job training can greatly increase young people's potential to achieve qualifications
- show consideration, and flexibility when delivering additional support as the attitudes of fellow trainees can discourage young people from accessing it
- give young people the encouragement and support they need to overcome difficulties they might be experiencing and to help them develop confidence in their own abilities
- show young people you are committed to their development and reward their efforts and achievements

'James'

KEY FACTS

Sector:	Floristry
Gender:	Male
Age:	21
Region:	Eastern
Employer:	College Florist Shop
Disability:	Ankylosing spondylitis (a form of arthritic pain in the joints)
Adjustments:	Raised work bench; assistance with heavy lifting; short breaks as necessary; flexibility in working patterns to allow time off for treatment

BACKGROUND

Education prior to MA

James achieved nine GCSEs grade A-C at Key Stage 4. In his last year at school he developed back pain and went to the doctors, expecting a quick diagnosis and treatment. His initial appointment triggered a series of tests that eventually identified him as having Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS) - a condition that causes pain and stiffening in the joints. In James's case this occurs particularly in his back and knees and was aggravated by the fact that he has one leg slightly shorter than the other; he now wears a permanent heel-raiser in his shoe.

James receives regular physiotherapy which is very effective in keeping the AS under control and minimising the pain he suffers, although he does take painkillers on occasion. Diagnosis at an early stage has enabled James to make adjustments to his behaviour that might otherwise have caused things to get worse - for example he no longer carries heavy rucksacks. He continues to participate in sports such as tennis and hopes that, with care and regular exercise, his condition will remain fairly stable.

Careers advice

James received careers advice whilst at school and found this very helpful in deciding on his next step. The careers adviser was able to help him explore options and to identify career directions that would not aggravate his condition and that he could continue to pursue in the event of further deterioration. He wanted work that would allow him to move around and not cause any stiffening up but did not involve heavy lifting and other strenuous activities (although he continues to help out on the family farm).

James's family were keen for him to do 'A' levels and go on to university but he did not feel this was the best route for him, preferring something more practical. He wanted to do something involving art and considered Graphic Design until he found out how computer-based this tends to be. Instead he chose to pursue floristry and undertook a two year full-time BTEC National Diploma in Floristry. He admits to keeping quiet about his chosen career while at school in order to avoid being teased although, when his friends did find out, they didn't give him too much "stick"!

RECRUITMENT

Finding the vacancy

The college floristry department had decided to establish a shop in the college grounds, primarily to supply materials to students, and identified half a dozen students who would be suitable for a Modern Apprenticeship post in the florist shop.

On completing his BTEC, James described himself as 'clueless' with regards to his next step. When he was approached about working in the college florist shop, he jumped at the chance of doing an MA.

Recruitment and selection

James was not sure if his condition counted as 'having a disability' but declared it on the application form, along with an explanation. He also raised it at the interview. While he found it hard to bring it up - after all an interview is about

selling yourself - he felt it was important to be 'up front' about his condition and the limitations it imposes. He wants people to understand that he is not being lazy. He was pleased to find that the interviewers did not appear concerned about the AS in relation to the job.

ADJUSTMENTS

Starting the MA

James started his MA just as the shop was being set up. He was unsure about how the work would affect him and how hard he would find it. He was also concerned at the start about the possibility that he would need time off. However, he feels the biggest challenges were around starting a new job, rather than anything to do with his disability.

Minor adjustments have helped to ensure James does not aggravate his AS at work; the highest of the benches in the workshop was allocated to James from the start to prevent him from stooping (he is quite tall). Time off to attend physiotherapy was agreed from the beginning and this is more than balanced by the extra time he puts in when they are working on displays and shows at weekends.

There is a significant amount of lifting involved in the job, particularly carrying buckets of water and heavy trays of flowers. He finds that, as a male working in this field, it is expected that he will do the heavy work. Whilst his colleagues are aware of the reasons, others such as delivery drivers don't understand why he does not help with unloading.

James seeks assistance with carrying heavy items and, when emptying buckets of water, makes more trips with partially filled buckets rather than emptying them into one another for a full load. His employer can find this frustrating but acknowledges that this is because it is not how she would do things and that she has had to learn to stand back and allow James to develop his own methods. She also feels it has been good that her teaching commitments result in James being left to manage the shop on his own for one day a week. Again, this allows him to develop his own strengths and methods in ways that are different from his manager's.

Apart from the need to avoid heavy and awkward lifting, the adjustments required have been minimal. James has been taught to lift correctly by his physiotherapist and passes this information on when he is involved with training other students who spend time in the shop. Regular breaks are a part of the routine for all staff and James can take additional rests as required. He also has a series of simple exercises that he sometimes does at quiet times to ensure his joints don't stiffen up. He feels comfortable to do this at work, despite odd looks from customers! His attendance record has been good, although there have been occasions when he has strained his back and been laid up for a day.

Progressing in the MA

James has completed his NVQ Level 2 and is on target to complete his NVQ 3 before the two-year MA post finishes. He has clearly demonstrated his artistic and practical talents in floristry, taking first prize in two out of three categories of the professional floristry competition at the county show, while still in the first year of his MA!

He has been with the florist shop since it first opened and has enjoyed seeing it grow and develop from scratch. He loves his job and his employer reports that she and James make a good team and that he has progressed well in the time he has been with her. He will be sorry to leave but recognises the need to move on; his employer is encouraging him to apply for jobs that will help him to make the most of his strengths in the future.

FUTURE PLANS

Future ambitions

In the longer term, James would like to work on a freelance basis, building on his interest and strengths in design and displays. In the short term, he is hoping to find work that will involve a significant element of design. He has been very happy at the college shop and is not keen to work in a local florists as he believes that this will not offer sufficient opportunities for his development.

He is confident that he will be able to find work and does not feel his disability will present much of a barrier to his career plans. He states that he will declare his disability on application forms and raise the issue during job interviews - even if that

means he doesn't get the job. It is more important to him that people understand the limitations imposed by his AS and accept him for his strengths.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

- careers advice can provide important help in identifying career paths that minimise the extent to which work aggravates a disability
- open discussion of the limitations imposed by a disability can help to avoid misunderstandings and ensure that the young person does not feel obliged to undertake tasks that may exacerbate their condition
- young people should be allowed space to develop their own strengths and methods and should not be forced to do things a particular way just because that is the status quo
- individuals with disabilities may be well placed to pass on information to other trainees, for example correct lifting techniques as part of health and safety training

Training Supplier (Smart's)

KEY FACTS

Organisation: Smart's: a training supplier delivering NVQ services at Levels 2 and 3

Sector: Early years care and education

Region: Mainly London but with coverage as far afield as Portsmouth and Manchester

Disabilities: Significant percentage of MAs with dyslexia. Other examples include rheumatoid arthritis and back problems

Adjustment: Several, including use of audio tapes and lap tops with voice recognition software

OVERVIEW

Training supplier

Smart's began trading as a training supplier five and a half years ago. Originally it was a nanny agency but this side of the business was phased out in 1997. It offers NVQ services to employers in the early years care and education sector. Currently it has 520 trainees of which around 90% are on government funded training. The balance is funded by individual learners or their employers. NVQs are offered in childcare and management, but the former accounts for more than 90%.

It has very wide geographical coverage, ranging from Portsmouth in the south to Manchester and Leeds in the north. It enjoys a high profile in its sector, providing services to more than 200 different workplaces in the London region alone. There is one main management and administrative centre in Kingston, (Surrey) where a team of 6 training advisers is based. There is also a network of 25 tutors and assessors who are self-employed and widely dispersed geographically.

Experience with MAs

Smart's policy is to enrol all NVQ trainees as MAs, unless there are overriding reasons for supposing the young person will not progress beyond NVQ 2. At present there is only one National Trainee on their books.

The reason for enrolling trainees as MAs is partly to encourage young people to reach their full potential, but is also influenced strongly by employers and other key players in the child care sector (eg. Social Services Departments). The industry is pushing for NVQ 3 to be the norm, since nursery nurses, nannies, child-care assistants and similar posts involve a degree of supervision, almost by definition. Increasingly young people are not recruited into such posts until the age of 18, or alternatively are taken on younger but not put through training until they are 18. Another major factor is the wages paid: typically hourly rates for junior posts are very low and this acts as a further stimulus for young people to seek supervisory posts.

Experience with MAs with disabilities

Smart's has built up a reputation for providing specialist support for MAs with disabilities. These include young people with a range of health conditions and disabilities (eg. back problems, rheumatoid arthritis), but by far the largest group (estimated to be around 10% of the cohort) is young people with dyslexia. These range from borderline cases, where the only symptom is poor spelling, to severe cases where major adjustments are required.

RECRUITMENT TO MAS

All MAs are recruited initially by the employers. Smart's have precise criteria for taking young people on for training. These are that they must:

- have a job in child care, working with children up to the age of 8
- have been in their present post for a minimum of 3 months
- be recommended by their employers

Provided they meet these criteria, all young people are taken on for MA training, irrespective of their school record and/or any disabilities they may have.

Young people are required to complete an application form on which a question is asked about health but Smart's experience is that few young people declare any problems. The reasons are less about nervousness about their training provider and more about concerns that their employers will be told of any difficulties and that this might prejudice their job.

Difficulties tend to become apparent either when MAs attend their first training session (typically in groups of up to 15, once a month on a Saturday) or when the first unit is handed in. When severe problems with dyslexia arise, trainees are referred for assessment by the Dyslexia Institute (at a cost of £230). These take around 3 hours each. Often, the training adviser from Smart's will go with the trainee, in order to provide some encouragement and support.

THE MA AND ADJUSTMENTS

The MA

For the MA in Early Years Care and Education, the Lead Body is CARE (Council for Awards in Childcare and Education). The NVQ 2 has 10 units and NVQ 3 14 units. In addition, for the MA, young people are required to achieve Key Skills at Level 2. This involves a further 5 units.

The typical length of stay for Smart's MAs is between 2.0 and 2.5 years, but longer periods, especially for MAs with disabilities, are common. The only upper limit is the age of 25.

Smart's stress that the MA is about skills and competences in the work situation, not excellence with the written word. They try to build up a momentum such that MAs achieve one unit per month. Strictly speaking for the NVQ, poor literacy skills are not a major drawback provided that evidence of competence is provided. For MAs with dyslexia, this may well involve use of audio-tapes.

Adjustments

Smart's stress that adjustments are good practice. All MAs have particular strengths and weaknesses, which need to be taken into account if the best results are to be achieved. Young people with disabilities are treated no better and no worse in this respect.

For MAs with dyslexia, typical adjustments might include:

- more one to one support. One candidate recently had between two to four hours per unit personal supervision by their tutor. The total cost of this was estimated at £1,500
- use of audio tapes to record evidence instead of the written word. The cost of mobile tape recorders was estimated at £40
- use of laptops with voice recognition software. Each unit here costs about £1,800

Smart's made an interesting comment on use of voice recognition software by dyslexics. Apparently some packages require the user to dictate as many as 400 sentences, involving several complicated words, in order to set up the system; in practice, this can be a major barrier, since even reading the script aloud is a problem for dyslexics. Dragon Dictate has been found to be more user-friendly than Via Voice for this type of use.

Sometimes, assessors transfer the questions onto audio tape as well, thereby reducing the need for reading as well as writing.

CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

Smart's acknowledge that they have been fortunate in receiving both encouragement and (limited) financial support from SOLOTEC. The model adopted has on-programme payments of between £100 and £120 per month and outcome payments of £460 per point. The weighting towards outcomes places a clear incentive for Smart's to provide continuing support to achieve NVQ and Key Skills targets.

Over the last few years, Smart's and SOLOTEC have been in continuing discussions on how the criteria for additional payments (in respect of MAs with disabilities) should be defined and how much money should be made available. There appear to be 3 stages:

- first, there may be a need for additional assessment and/or longer induction
- second, there may be a need for additional equipment
- third, there may be a need for additional tutor support.

SOLOTEC has already made funds available to fund assessments by the Dyslexia Institute and the purchase of laptop computers. The latter (6) cost c£11k and legally are owned by the TEC but lent on a long-term basis to Smart's for use by their staff and MAs. These have been funded from a variety of sources, including a discretionary budget held by the District Manager and an 'Aids and Adaptations' budget used to provide additional support for training suppliers (and their trainees).

POINTS OF INTEREST

The key points to emerge from this case study are:

for TECs:

- make additional funds available to support MAs with special training needs. Support of three types was identified

for training suppliers:

- assess the individual needs of all MAs, irrespective of whether they have disabilities or not
- keep entry criteria as open and inclusive as possible. Since MAs are employed, ability to do the job should have a higher priority than prior qualifications
- building the confidence of MAs with disabilities is often the major breakthrough. Encouragement and personal support is often as significant a contribution as training and assessment

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