

Katie is a shy but pleasant woman in her early 40s who was referred to Bury EST in 2002 as a result of her family moving to the area. She'd had only one week off sick in 21 years in her previous employment as a restaurant assistant. She is fairly independent and used to maintaining this with the support of her family.

How Bury EST helped Katie:

Katie has a mild learning disability which means she needs support with numeracy, literacy and more complex tasks. She was looking for a different job but we soon found that Katie would need support to get through any recruitment process. An interview would test her communication skills rather than her practical ability to do the job advertised.

Katie's skills and support needs were assessed at a sandwich outlet over a couple of months. She was very successful in this role but her paid work came to an end due to an internal re-organisation of the outlet. Her manager said, "I've had much more difficulty employing some people without disabilities doing a similar role." Katie had been looking for a role in the retail industry and her placement officer worked very closely with her to find a suitable job. It was felt that her communication skills were not sufficient at the time for a front-line role.

It had been noted that Katie had an aptitude for caring for others and so Bury EST looked for a post that would allow Katie to use her existing skills and experience in a caring environment. After an informal interview at an elderly persons home, she was offered a two week **working interview** as a kitchen assistant. It soon became apparent that Katie valued the caring aspect of her job above everything else.

Katie was offered support throughout the working interview process by Bury EST staff working in liaison with staff at the home. We encouraged a mentoring system where Katie was buddied up with an experienced member of staff through induction.

Katie Today:

Two years later Katie has increased her hours and is thoroughly enjoying it. Everyone at the home is very pleased with her progress. In fact her manager said that Katie is working "**above and beyond the call of duty**". As in her previous employment, Katie has shown herself to be extremely reliable and dependable.

Learning disabilities and autism can impact on people in many ways. Having a learning disability does not mean that a person can't learn but it may mean that they need a different approach to learning new skills.



Best Practice:

Throughout our many years of working with disabled workers and employers we have developed considerable experience of what works and what doesn't.

These tips on 'best practice' have helped other companies to successfully employ workers who have a learning disability.

Make reasonable adjustments and apply a **flexible approach** to both recruitment and working practices. If necessary seek advice from a supported employment organisation that has experience of placing people with learning disabilities into employment. Telephone and group interviews often don't work for disabled people.

Use working interviews where possible. They allow a person to try a vacant job and the evidence gained from observing the worker can be used instead of a formal interview. Working interviews allow employers the opportunity to assess whether the person is suitable for the job and also allow the worker the opportunity to see whether they would like to do the job on a permanent basis. Information about working interviews and how they can aid recruitment can be obtained from Bury EST.

Are qualifications always necessary? Make sure that qualifications and required experience on job specification sheets or advertisements are *absolutely essential* for the post. Be clear what can be learned on the job and what is a pre-requisite.

Provide appropriate training and induction in accordance with a person's skills/abilities and learning style. For example, use of visual materials instead of written materials, when employing a person with a limited level of literacy, may be more effective. Be aware of individual needs when conducting any group activities such as induction or training.

Provide mentoring support within workplaces. This helps a new worker to feel part of the company, learn the ropes and know where to turn if they want assistance. It really helps teamwork if a new employee can develop friendships by taking part in social activities and this has a positive impact on workplace culture.

Allow additional time and support for people who have a learning disability to learn job related skills and build up to their productivity. The additional support can be funded through the Jobcentre's Access to Work scheme.

Develop close working relationships with disability related employment services such as Disability Employment Advisors (DEA) who are based at your local Job Centre. DEAs can be a very useful source of advice and information on disability employment issues.

Factsheet 04 ◀

Embracing Diversity

is a project working to support disadvantaged people into employment and achieve greater diversity in our workplaces to reflect the communities in which we live.

If you are an employer or potential client who would like further details about what we could do for you please contact us.

Bury Employment Support & Training

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