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*Annie Hickling – Placement Testimonial*

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In my first year at college I did a placement at the adventure service centre where I did a range of different activities with the service users. This included going canoeing, hill walks, bush craft activities or fire lighting skills. I ensured the service users remained safe, supported them when they needed help and had conversations with them, supporting them to socially interact. This was to last for 10 weeks, however after my placement I continued to volunteer with the company throughout the summer. Then when returning to college for year 2 I used the same placement.

On placement I had an induction and was shown around the building, informing me about how the day service ran. Then we went through different policies and procedures relevant to the workplace. They made me feel very welcome and part of their team from the day I started, always offering me a drink and making sure I was alright.

From doing my placement at the adventure service centre, not only have I gained confidence within myself, it gave me reassurance that I enjoy working in this environment. I also got a broader understanding of different learning disabilities and how people like to be approached. I also had the chance of being able to pick up a few key sign language gestures. During volunteering in the summer the company gave me MAPA training. I spent two days learning all about aggressive behaviour and what to do if I ever I was in a situation where I'd need to protect myself or the service users. I believe by attending placement it helped me write my college assignments as it gave me a live perspective of what I was writing about within my assignments and I found it easier to relate to legislation and provide examples within my work.

I also enjoyed spending a day away from college and being able to gain experience. Not only did I think this helped with my college work, but it helped me gain more life experience by making my own way to placement and being in an adult environment. I felt by having one day at placement a week was a way of relaxing from college and not worrying about assignments. One barrier I had to overcome was struggling to understand some of the service users, however I soon realised it was ok to ask them to repeat what they said or ask somebody else if I couldn't work out what they were trying to tell me.

I would definitely recommend the chance to go on a work placement. The balance of having three days of college, one day on placement and one day at home to be able to catch-up on work is a good balance. The adventure service centre would be recommended to anybody who is interested in the outdoors and has a passion to aid people with learning difficulties.