

Case study: Susan's smile lights up KFC!

Determined, hard-working, resilient, enthusiastic, positive....these are all words to describe one of WESC's amazing learners, Susan, who has just secured her first paid employment role at KFC in Exeter!

Despite her visual impairment Susan, aged 22, stood out to the managers at KFC during her year's work experience placement so much so that when a vacancy for Lobby Host came up Susan was their first choice to fill the position!

Susan, originally from Wales, has been a full-time residential learner at WESC Foundation for the past four years. She studies an NCFE Award in Occupational Studies, AQA Functional Skills, BTEC Work Skills, and AQA Art.

Throughout her time at WESC Susan also has successfully participated in a variety of work placements including Sainsbury's, WESC's own radio station and social enterprise charity shops, along with SENSE café in Exeter city centre.

Skills such as mobility and orientation, money handling, ICT, food preparation etc. that Susan has learnt at WESC have all helped her prepare for work and gain employment.

Talking about her new job Susan says: *"I am so happy to have been employed at KFC. I absolutely loved my work experience there and was so thrilled to have been successful with the interview."*

"I had to work on a few targets and complete my Health & Safety training online, with the help of my enabler, before I got the job but it was all worth it!"

"When I'm at work my main duties are replacing the serviettes and straws, cleaning the floor and tables, clearing the rubbish, emptying the bins and tidying up the leaflet displays."

"My enabler from WESC, Paul, comes to work with me and helps support me to complete my jobs."

"Although the role at KFC is similar to my previous work placements, it is much more challenging as it's very busy but this has taught me how to prioritise my tasks".

Rebecca Marks, KFC's Restaurant General Manager says: *"At KFC we are supportive of people with disabilities where we can be. We have many staff with disabilities who work here including people with hearing loss and learning difficulties. Susan is a valued member of staff at KFC. She arrives at work full of smiles and keen to work. It's lovely to have Susan as part of the team. She always makes an effort to talk*



to people. I think in every organisation there is always a job that people with disabilities can do with the right support.”

As part of WESC Foundation's vocational programme learners gain independence, communication skills and self-confidence through the work placements they do. WESC's aim is to set up as many work placements as possible for learners so they can push the boundaries of their capabilities, challenge and stretch their own perceptions of what they can do, as well as inspiring others along the way.

Linda Stafford, WESC's Employability & Work Placement Co-ordinator says: *“KFC have been brilliant in helping and supporting Susan throughout her work experience and also her employment. All the staff have really made her feel part of their team from day one. They have been excellent to work with and I would welcome any further offers of possible opportunities from other employers who might be interested in giving work experience placements to our students.”*



Susan loves the confidence and focus her new job has given her. Her favourite task is refilling the straws – KFC never run out while Susan's there! She works eight hours per week on a permanent contract and loves the fact that she's earning her own money.

She has made a lot of new friends and has really left her mark on the team. Well done Susan. What a fantastic achievement!

Case study: iPad changes Fiona's world

Ever since Fiona, 21, from Essex, purchased her first iPad she has been using it non-stop and says it has changed her life!

Fiona, a WESC residential student for three years, has an eye condition called optic atrophy, a Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) and cerebral palsy.

Having a visual impairment means that accessing normal activities that you and I take for granted is more of a struggle...until now! Having an iPad at her fingertips has opened up Fiona's world. She uses her iPad at College to help her access her lessons, for example, in her Art or Cookery lesson Fiona is given a picture option, through a programme called 'Choose it Maker', to identify the materials she needs for that particular session.



Another 'Choose it Maker' programme she uses displays pictures of her friends and WESC staff. Fiona is asked to identify who they are which encourages her to use her residual vision. When she correctly chooses the right option she is rewarded with a tune.

Having the iPad at her fingertips also means she can use it to Facetime her family when she's at home in the evenings. This helps with staying close to her family even when living away from them.

Fiona's teacher, Penny de Souza and enablers in her class are amazed at how Fiona's vision, memory skills, auditory skills, interaction and communication skills have all vastly improved since she started using the iPad.

Penny enthuses: *"Fiona has shown great enthusiasm for using the iPad which is widening her interests especially during her own leisure time. The iPad has helped make her world more accessible. Fiona is motivated by people and the programmes she prefers to use are ones which involve identifying familiar peers and staff from photographs. I am extremely proud of Fiona's achievements at understanding how the iPad works".*

Fiona is in the Dart Stream at WESC Foundation and studies OCR Entry Level 1 in Engaging in New Creative Activities and OCR Entry Level 1 in Communication; Providing Personal Information. She is also an All-Year-Round (52-week) boarder. At WESC all students have a care package to make sure their physical, mental and emotional needs are being met. Fiona's care package includes regular physiotherapy and hydrotherapy which helps to stretch and strengthen her muscles.

Being a boarder at WESC Foundation gives Fiona the opportunity to gain independence skills by living in a specially adapted house with her friends and learning valuable life skills such as preparing meals and using the washing machine.

WESC offers students a variety of placement options as well as specialist support, therapy, work experience, supported living etc. for visually impaired learners, like Fiona, giving them an individual package that caters for their needs, and of course making lessons accessible is integral to everything. Fiona's use of the iPad is a shining example of this. Well done Fiona!

Case study: Will scores a goal at Exeter City Football Club Shop

Will, 18, has an eye condition called Retinopathy of Prematurity and a CVI (Cerebral Visual Impairment) which means he doesn't see detail or recognise familiar faces. He also has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair to get around.

Will is a term-time boarder and has chosen to study NCFE Level 2 in Radio Production. His difficulties haven't dampened his spirit or lessened his determination to achieve his goals.

Last summer Will had a dream about working at Exeter City Football Club (ECFC), and with the help of WESC's Work Experience Co-ordinator Linda Stafford, his dream came true! His passion for completing his work experience at ECFC was ignited after watching his team play on numerous occasions at St James's Park.



Inspired and motivated to learn more about ECFC Will and Linda approached the club and were delighted when they said Will could complete his work experience in their club shop.

Having learnt valuable retail skills through WESC's own Social Enterprise Charity Shops including: labelling items, checking stock prices, recycling stock and working on the till, Will was able to put these skills into practice at ECFC. He even became so proficient at working on the till that he was able to undertake transactions independently.

Will's work experience at ECFC shop taught him all about merchandising. He was responsible for checking that the hangers displayed the correct sizes, confirming that the security tags were on all stock items and checking the price tags were accurate and matched the stock list.

His retail skills have grown from strength to strength, so much so that he even won the WESC Social Enterprise Award in recognition of the huge improvement in his ability to focus without becoming distracted at the Student Awards Ceremony last summer.

Will talks about the benefits of being a boarder at WESC: *"I have learnt a lot of skills boarding at WESC including learning how to dress myself, prepare meals and snacks with the help of aids such as a talking microwave and liquid level indicator.*

"I have been able to take part in lots of outdoor activities such as the Ten Tors Jubilee Challenge on a specially adapted trike, playing wheelchair football and socialising at community events.

"Being able to develop my retail skills and increase my independence at Exeter City Football Club shop was definitely the highlight of my year. It was great to work closely with the football team that I support. Because of this work placement I'm hoping to get a similar work placement at Tesco in the New Year!"

Lesley Mehigan, WESC's Teacher said: *"I am Will's tutor and am so proud of his achievements at Exeter City Football Club Shop and in our charity shops. Will is such a happy and sociable person who gets on well with everyone. Work placement opportunities in customer-based organisations are important so Will can interact with the community and further develop his social skills which he loves to do. Exeter City Football Club Shop and our charity shop are both placements which have complemented each other in terms of similar retail tasks. These tasks have led to Will increasing his skills and becoming more independent and completing activities on his own including working on the till. I am delighted with Will's fantastic achievements."*

Linda Stafford, WESC's Work Experience Co-ordinator said: *"Will excelled with his recent work experience in the Exeter City Football Club Shop. He was able to develop and improve upon his existing retail skills and the knowledge he had already acquired. I really would like to take this opportunity to thank Kelly in the Club Shop for all her help and support throughout and for making this such a successful placement."*

Will's long term goal is to live as independently as possible in one of WESC's supported living houses and hopefully get a job in retail. Well done Will!



Case study: Tom's radio skills earn him a place on Radio One's Youth Council

Hardworking, passionate and budding radio producer, Tom, is helping to shape the future for visually impaired people everywhere through his work on the BBC Radio One's Youth Council. Tom is elated with his new position which enables him to give specialist advice about accessible technology to the radio station. Read his story below where Tom explains in his own words how it all began.

"My name is Tom, I am 23 years old and I live in Supported Living at WESC Foundation. In my spare time I volunteer at one of our many social enterprise charity shops and also alongside the reception team at Head Office where I assist with the day to day running of reception.

"I have been at WESC Foundation for 18 years. I enjoy using the Radio facilities here and have my own radio shows which are aired twice a week. This was the start of a huge passion of mine, which has progressed onto larger things. I have been given a number of opportunities to expand my knowledge and expertise by attending regular sessions with external organisations such as Tower Sounds, Newton Abbot Hospital, BAY FM and The BBC.

"The first visit to the BBC Broadcasting House in London was organised by my best friend here at WESC, who emailed the BBC to request a tour of their studio. It was an inspiring visit and as I was leaving the building I was approached by Angie Pitt who works within the Outreach department for BBC One/One Xtra, she was our tour guide for that day. She asked me whether I would consider being a member of the Radio One and One Xtra Youth Council; this would enable me to voice my opinions and to help shape the two stations.

"Of course I happily obliged to her proposal and agreed to join the Youth Council, there was no hesitation! She later advised me I would be solely representing the South West, which is a privilege for me. Since becoming a member of the council we have discussed many issues and subjects. During one of our sessions, we were given the opportunity to help design the new Radio One app for Iphone, Android and similar devices. I made the suggestion that the app needed to be accessible for the visually impaired. I asked whether the app could be compatible with screen readers such as voice over on Iphone/Ipad to help myself and other visually impaired young people. I gave a short demonstration on my personal Iphone with certain functions/apps which are already installed, to which they have adapted and installed in the latest version of their app.



Radio One Presenter Greg James and Tom posing for a selfie!

"I really enjoy my time on the Radio One and One Xtra Youth Council. It has taught me a lot and not just about radio but how Radio One and One Xtra use social media to create new ideas and reach a wider audience."

Case study: Judo enthusiast Anna represents her country at European Championships

WESC learner Anna, 17, is visually impaired, has autistic tendencies and learning difficulties.

Starting WESC Foundation in this academic year Anna has already impressed her tutor and peers enormously by her fantastic personal achievements in Judo.

When she first started her Judo lessons, at Westerleigh Judokwai in East Sussex two years ago it wasn't all plain sailing. Anna would sometimes freeze at the sound of her coach's voice and not want to participate. She courageously overcame these obstacles with the help of a 12 year old female athlete, Amelia, who volunteers for the club. Amelia became Anna's instructor, supporting her to train and giving additional advice so that her visual impairment wasn't a barrier to learning the technique.

Gradually Anna began to build trust with Amelia and now trains with her and other athletes and coaches.

Having the dedicated support of Amelia led Anna to successfully getting to grips with the technique and therefore passing her first grading. Since then Anna has gone from strength to strength, gaining independence, and has represented her club and country at the Pan Disability European Championships in Holland where she was awarded a bronze medal.

The glory doesn't end there! Anna clearly impressed the Judo directors at her club who decided to nominate her for a Spark Sports Achievement Award. She battled it out to win the award and came away with the prestigious title of second, despite her visual impairment.

The Spark Awards took place on 10 May 2016 at the Winter Gardens in Eastbourne.

Spark is a group of voluntary and community organisations all working together to improve the lives of young people in East Sussex. The Spark Sports Achievement Awards are a fantastic opportunity to showcase and celebrate the work of the groups.

Anna's mum Joy Wilkinson said: "Anna came into this country 8 years ago with no English and limited skills and I am so proud of the enormous progress she has made. Anna has been partaking in Judo for two years every week. The club caters for mainstream and special needs children. It's a fantastic place and Anna has really enjoyed her practice. Westerleigh Judokwai is an absolutely brilliant club. It's great to see



A representative from Wave Leisure, who sponsored the Spark Sport Achievement Awards, presenting Anna with her certificate for second place. Well done Anna!



Anna receiving her yellow belt (4th mon) from her coach at Westerleigh Judokwai

children and adults with difficulties mixing with their more able peers on a completely equal footing. Her confidence since being at WESC and doing Judo has increased by leaps and bounds”.

Paula Everest, Director of Westerleigh Judokwai & Rother Olympics GB said: *“Anna is an amazing young lady who with the support of her mum and her club is showing that no matter what your disability it doesn’t have to be a barrier to sport. Anna is a true inspiration.”*

Anna’s teacher at WESC Foundation Marie McMahon said: *“I am absolutely thrilled that Anna has achieved so well in her Judo lessons. She is such an inspiration to us all.”*

Case study: Nina gains specialist visual impairment skills through a split placement



Nina, 14, is sight impaired and studies Entry Level Maths, Science and English and a full Key Stage 4 Curriculum at Dawlish Community College three days a week. She also attends WESC Foundation on a split placement for the remainder two days a week.

WESC Foundation supports Nina with her Maths, Science and English and also specialist skills to help increase her confidence and live independently with her visual impairment.

Nina's split placement is set up through WESC Foundation's Outreach Services. The role of this service is to liaise with learning support staff, tutors and the student in the mainstream setting to identify any potential barriers to learning and resolve any visual issues including negotiating a suitable plan to meet the student's needs.

At WESC Nina is learning touch typing, access technology, food technology, swimming etc. along with therapies such as Speech and Language, Occupational, Physiotherapy, Mobility, etc.

Nina elaborates on her WESC experiences; *"I really like going to WESC and my favourite activities are music, maths and mobility."*

"I have met some lovely friends here, especially in my tutor group. At WESC I can study different subjects to those at Dawlish Community College, such as rebound (trampolining), swimming, mobility and speech and language therapy."

"I really enjoy going to the art club and design technology club at WESC in my lunch break. I'm working on an art competition at the moment and making origami shapes to stick onto cards to sell in the design technology club."

Nina is becoming a whizz at technology and uses her tablet regularly, together with a touch screen computer and keyboard which makes computer work accessible.

Karolyn Olive, Nina's teacher at WESC said; *"Nina has been much more independent during her two years at WESC Foundation and now makes her own way to each lesson. Her mobility sessions are teaching her how to travel into Exeter City Centre by bus. She uses her long cane, shows the driver her bus*

pass, is learning when to press the bell to stop and takes her own money to go shopping. She is currently learning money handling skills in maths which will help her to increase her independence even further. I am very proud of Nina!"

Shelagh Hillyard, Dawlish Community College, talks more about Nina's split placement;

"Nina's split placement is giving her the 'best of both worlds'. Nina does not have a special friend at Dawlish, although she interacts with other girls in her tutor group, and therefore we are glad that she is getting the social interaction and making good friends at WESC. She always looks forward to her days at WESC.

"Academically Nina is making progress. She has a bespoke timetable, working at times with whole class groups, small groups and one-to-one and always tries her best with everything. The split placement has given Nina the opportunity to take part in work experience with WESC, which may have proved difficult here and will also give Nina more opportunities at post-16."

Nina's future plan when she leaves college is to go to Durham University and study science. Good luck Nina!

Case study: WESC learner Susan experiences working for one of the UK's biggest supermarket chains!



When WESC learner Susan, 21, secured her work experience placement at a local Sainsbury's store in Pinhoe, Exeter, she was over the moon!

As part of WESC Foundation's vocational programme learners gain independence, communication skills and self-confidence through the work placements they embark on. WESC's aim is to set up as many work placements as possible for the learners so they can push the boundaries of their capabilities, challenge and stretch their own perceptions of what they can do, as well as inspiring others along the way.

Susan, originally from Wales and is partially sighted, has been a full-time residential learner at WESC for the past three years. At WESC she is studying an NCFE Award in Occupational Studies, AQA Functional Skills, BTEC Work Skills and AQA Art. She also has successfully participated in a variety of work placements in WESC's own radio station and social enterprise charity shops, along with SENSE café in Exeter city centre. She enjoyed all her placements but her three months at Sainsbury's proved to be an experience she would never forget!



Explaining about some of the jobs she was tasked with at Sainsbury's Susan said; *"I was treated like any other member of staff. I was required to sign in and out every time I was there in order to comply with fire regulations. I rotated the stock, which involved moving the older dated items to the front of the shelf. I travelled down each aisle and removed all the cardboard, breaking it down for recycling. I filled shelves including the crisp displays and tidied them. I also helped customers who needed directions."*

She continued; *"I really enjoyed my time at Sainsbury's as there were lots of other young people there who were very helpful, friendly and made me feel very welcome."*

Being able to work in a team is essential to feel part of any organisation. Susan explained; *“I really felt part of the Sainsbury’s team, not only because they gave me my own uniform to wear, but also because I was invited to the staff team meeting where important issues were discussed such as the arrival of the Christmas stock!”*

Susan’s work experience wasn’t just something she could be proud of but also her family could join in and share the excitement. Susan’s mum was so proud of her achievements that she travelled from Wales to go to Sainsbury’s and see Susan at work.

Susan’s tutor at WESC Foundation Tom Bass said: *“The experience Susan gained from her placement at Sainsbury’s, has in all probability, furthered her skills set for any future work placement. Susan’s smile as she left on the first day demonstrated the pride she felt wearing a uniform”.*

Linda Stafford, WESC’s Work Experience Co-ordinator, who set up Susan’s placement said: *“The staff at Sainsbury’s were extremely helpful and very pleased to be able to accommodate Susan with such an invaluable placement. They didn’t have to adapt anything in particular to assist with Susan’s visual impairment with the tasks they set. The HR department were brilliant in making sure that everything was done to ensure Susan’s experience was as positive as possible. It has proved to be very successful and I sincerely hope the first of many.”*

WESC Foundation, a school and college for visual impairment, helps learners like Susan reach their full potential and teaches coping strategies to minimise disruption from visual impairment.

Throughout Susan’s time at WESC Foundation she has made lots of friends and is acquiring the skills to keep in touch with those who have left. She plans to keep in touch through the use of emailing facilities, and is learning to use the voice activated software ‘Dragon’ and the symbol based writing software ‘Widget’ – which makes emailing more accessible to her. Being able to learn these skills makes visually impaired learners more employable when they leave college.

Susan’s experience at Sainsbury’s has undoubtedly been the highlight of her year and one that she wants to remember for a very long time. She’s even been allowed to keep her uniform as a souvenir!
Well done Susan.

Case study: Laura's work experience triumphs!

Laura, 20, is registered blind with various eye conditions including Optic Atrophy and Homonymous Hemianopia. Laura is a weekday boarder studying a BTEC in Animal Care at WESC Foundation.

Laura's long term goal is to live independently with minimum support and work or volunteer with animals. To achieve this goal Laura has joined a variety of organisations to complete work experience that will give her the relevant skills.



A five-week placement at Crealy Adventure Park gave Laura a taste of what it is like to work in animal care. She has always wanted to work with animals and started at Crealy by cleaning out the guinea pigs then moved onto feeding the animals. Laura said; *"I really enjoyed looking after the animals, making sure they were fed, had enough water and were clean. It was good to take care of them."*

Laura's work experience allowed her to meet her personal targets: experiencing opportunities to work in areas she's interested in, doing things for herself, making her own choices and expressing her feelings.

Laura expanded her work experience at Dawlish Garden Trust where she harvested and potted plants, helped to make a bird house and worked in the kitchen preparing fruit and vegetables. *"This was a really interesting placement where I learnt more about plants and what's involved with working on a nursery. Working with animals at Crealy and at Dawlish Garden Trust gave me the opportunity to try out some of the things I'm interested in. I've now realised I love to work outside and with animals and hopefully one day I'll be able to work or volunteer in an environment like this".*

"I typed up my work experiences for my tutor Tom Bass by using specialist software on my laptop called Dragon which scribes for me as I talk into a microphone. I can also use Dragon for other social activities like keeping in touch with my parents on email."

Laura can discuss any issues, concerns or goals in the tutorial session held every morning but her tutor, Tom Bass, and he also ensures he is accessible for Laura to talk to anytime throughout the day.

Laura's other long term goal is to live independently. At WESC Foundation Laura has learnt independent living skills through doing her own laundry, cooking and cleaning. *"I enjoy living at WESC. I have learnt how to use the cooker with the help of the big buttons and the washing machine with support from my care worker. I love socialising and talking to people in the evenings. One of my favourite activities to do in the evening is to go to the disco at Starcross with my friends. I also love singing in the Wren Choir too!"*

Tom Bass, Laura's tutor, said: *"Laura is a pleasure to teach. I have been Laura's tutor for four years and have seen her grow in confidence during her time at college and successfully complete her work experience. Everyone who comes into contact with Laura says what a remarkable person she is, not letting her visual impairment hinder her. As her tutor I make sure Laura receives the correct adaptations to cater for her visual impairment such as size 36 font for all her course work instructions. Laura has shown real*

determination and commitment to achieving her goals which has allowed her to flourish into the young lady she is today."

Case Study: Harryot gains independence

Harryot, 18, has been at WESC since she was 7 years old. She was born prematurely and has optic nerve atrophy, nystagmus and a squint. As a result, she finds judging distance, speed and depth very difficult.



Harryot boards at WESC on Tuesday and Thursday nights. She said: *"I really love boarding at WESC because I can socialise with my friends."*

She is currently studying a Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) course in Performing Arts, an NCFE in Art, a BTEC in Jamie Oliver Home Cooking, and Functional Skills.

Her visual condition makes it hard for Harryot to look at a computer screen because it hurts her eyes. She compensates for this by using Easy Reader, a computer programme which comes on automatically and reads to her. She can also use Talk Back on her

mobile phone which reads the screen to her so it's not such a strain on her eyes. And that's not it! Harryot has learnt how to use access technology on an iPad, use magnifiers to read, and how to navigate a computer keyboard.

She deliberately chose to study Drama and Performing Arts as a way of building her confidence. She absolutely loves acting and recently played the part of Maria, one of the servants, in Twelfth Night at the Phoenix Theatre!

Harryot is a very mature, eloquent young lady who is determined not to let her visual impairment stop her from doing the things she wants. She is very grateful to all the staff at WESC who help and support her on a daily basis.

Harryot is also studying Food Technology and looks forward to cooking a different dish in the lesson every Friday. She also cooks tea for herself and her other flat members on a Tuesday evening. In Food Technology her favourite recipe is sausage and mash, but when cooking for her flatmates she likes to treat them to gammon, egg and chips! She does have some support with this, but is able to make a full English breakfast without any supervision! Harryot said: *"I learnt how to do this from my Grandad who was a chef in a hotel!"*

Harryot is currently undertaking work experience with one of the college tutors and is working as an enabler for Fiona, another learner, for a couple of hours every week. She supports Fiona with absolutely anything she needs help with on a 1:1 basis, for example during lessons she guides Fiona's hand when she's trying to paint or make something; she makes Fiona a drink; she helps her make decisions and encourages Fiona to self-propel which, in turn, helps make Fiona more independent.

Harryot is a popular and sociable young lady who has lots of friends. During her leisure time she likes to spend time with her friends listening to music and chatting.

As part of her ongoing mobility training, Harryot is currently undergoing an assessment to travel to the local garage shop independently and into the city centre independently. She commented: *"I can't wait to be able to go into town with my friends!"*

The thing Harryot loves most about WESC is the warm, friendly environment. *"It's like being in one big happy family", she said.*

When Harryot leaves WESC she would love to move into one of the independent living houses on the campus. Ultimately she would like to return to WESC. *"I'd love to work at WESC as an enabler to prove that I've learned something and so that I can give something back"*.

Case Study: Otis' passion for poetry

Otis, 18, has a real passion for poetry! A weekly broader at WESC Foundation who lost his vision due to a condition called Optic Atrophy (which affects his optic disc nerve fibres) has had tremendous success by getting his poems, written in Braille, published thanks to his increased confidence.



Otis is studying Entry Level 1 English and an NCFE in Radio Production at WESC Foundation. His creative writing skills were developed during his English lessons which led to his love of poetry. Impressing his college tutor and support workers with his poems he decided to enter three of them into the 'Seeing Ear Poetry Competition' for visually impaired youngsters. Otis and his family and friends were delighted to find out that all three of his poems had been chosen to be featured in their poem anthology which will be published later this year!

"It's great to get recognition for my poems – my family are so proud of me", Otis comments.

Having his poems published was a big step forward for Otis' in terms of him achieving his long term goal which is to develop effective communication skills. During his six years at WESC Otis has struggled with conversation but, with the help and support of his one-to-one support worker and tutor he has worked hard to listen and can now

communicate his needs effectively.

Helping Otis to achieve his goal is at the heart of his tutor and enablers. They ensure all his activities at college enable him to do this, such as, following a core and specialist personalised curriculum to meet his individual needs including literacy, Braille, Speech and Language therapy, living skills and mobility.

His lack of vision means that Otis needs all areas of learning presented in a tactile manner. He has mastered Grade 1 Braille as a way of effectively communicating and is currently working towards and making good progress with Grade 2.

"At college I use a specially adapted keyboard with Braille labels to do my college work which makes the letters on the keyboard accessible to me". Otis said.

Otis' communication skills are in full bloom in WESC's VI Radio station! As part of his Radio Production course Otis is 'on air' for a couple of hours every week, during which time he plays music and chats to people who phone in. During his time in the radio station Otis has seen a big improvement in his confidence and ability to communicate with wide range of people. Being part of the radio station has given him an enormous opportunity to develop his social skills.

"I love my time in the radio station; choosing songs, chatting to people, finding out how all the equipment works. I feel more able to participate and join in on conversations now where I didn't have the confidence to do that a few years ago. All the support I have been given at WESC has helped me grow in confidence, from getting my poems published to being a regular radio presenter".

Otis' tutor Marie McMahon said; *"Otis has been a pleasure to work with throughout the year. His enthusiasm for the subjects he enjoys is infectious. His positive attitude towards new experiences and new people has enabled him to establish a wide range of constructive relationships with both learners and staff.*

"Otis's confidence in his communication skills has been rewarded with his poetic achievements and his radio broadcasts. I know that Otis would like to develop this area further and hope that next year he will be able to extend his communication repertoire with his choice of work experience placement. Well done Otis".

Case Study: Meet college learner Tyrone

Tyrone, 20, is registered blind with congenital Microphthalmos and Sclerocornea and requires a non-visual approach for all his teaching and learning. Tyrone is a weekly boarder and has chosen to study a Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) vocational course in Radio Production and Music Technology to gain the appropriate skills to achieve his long term goal to work in a supported music technology or DJ role.



Tyrone also studies a core and specialist curriculum which is personalised to meet his individual needs and includes core skills such as literacy and numeracy, and specialist skills such as mobility and Braille.

He is a very sociable and charismatic young man who has increased his independency and confidence through mobility training, learning how to use specialist equipment such as Braille, gaining employability skills in WESC's charity shops, hosting his own radio show, making new friends and getting fit!

He comments: *"During my time at WESC I have learnt, through mobility training, how to get myself around the campus and off campus all on my own by using my cane. I am a competent Grade 1 Brailist and am now working towards Grade 2 which is much more complex but gives me with another way to access text for my college work, for example reading the course work instructions. I also use Braille as a way of reading books for pleasure."*

Being sociable is something that comes naturally to Tyrone. His social skills well and truly come alive in WESC's own VI Radio station where Tyrone hosts his own show every week. He says; *"I love working in the VI Radio station. I have learnt mixing skills and enjoy synchronising records together so they play more harmoniously"*.

Tyrone regularly meets his tutor every morning in tutorial sessions where any issues can be discussed and further support can be identified for example it was discussed in tutorial that in order for Tyrone to successfully gain work experience in WESC's charity shop he needed to learn how to use a note detector to help him recognise which note he was being given. Tyrone elaborates on his new skills; *"I'm learning money skills at the moment with the help of a specialist note detector which means I can distinguish if I have a £5, £10 or £20 which makes working in the Exmouth Charity Shop and shopping so much easier"*.

As part of WESC Foundation's commitment to identifying appropriate support for the learners and reviewing their progress there are a number of meetings with tutors and learners where issues can be discussed, objectives monitored and problems solved. These include small tutor group meetings every morning and regular access to tutors throughout the day. Also tutors meet other WESC staff including key care workers, enablers, therapists and health professionals, to monitor learner's progress every term.

Living at WESC allows learners to easily make friends and increase their independent living skills. Tyrone boards at WESC which means he has his own room in a very spacious and comfortable residence with his peers. He receives support in his home which helps him gain independence and vital living skills. *"I love boarding at WESC; it's cool! I have very good relationships with all my flatmates in Powley House. I have learnt how to make my bed and I like to make a game of it where I time myself and see if I can take the sheets off and re-make the bed faster than my friend!"*

And that's not all of Tyrone's new skills! He has become a whizz at technology. He uses his iPhone and iPad to research topics that he's studying and the voiceover system on his phone helps him locate the apps with his finger. He's adept with the Siri voiceover software enabling him to dictate a story or report onto his iPhone. Having this knowledge at his fingertips has helped him grow in confidence.

The future's bright for Tyrone; his long-term goal and ambition when he leaves WESC is to have supported work in a radio station and everything he does at the college goes towards achieving this goal such as his work experience, djing at the onsite disco and when he goes home he also has showcased his DJ skills at a disco near his home.

Well done for all your hard work and determination Tyrone!

Case study: Kirsty talks about her first-hand experience with split placements

Kirsty, 23, is registered blind and studies entry level Maths and English at Cornwall College. She also attends WESC Foundation on a split placement three times a year.

Kirsty is supported at WESC Foundation in specialist activities to help increase her confidence and help her live independently with her visual impairment.

Kirsty's split placement is set up through WESC Foundation's Outreach Services. The role of this service is to liaise with learning support staff, the tutors and the student in the mainstream setting to identify any potential problems and resolve any visual issues including negotiating a suitable plan to meet the student's needs.

The support offered by WESC's Outreach Services is delivered either at their mainstream setting or, like Kirsty on a split placement at WESC's campus.

At WESC Foundation Kirsty learns independency through mobility and orientation, access technology, life-skills, cooking, swimming, plus many more activities.

Kirsty says; "When I first started at Cornwall College I couldn't get around on my own, go to the shops on my own or cook on my own; I used to be really shy. Then I started at WESC Foundation and stayed in their transition houses for two weeks and learnt how to cook, clean and wash my clothes which helped me gain control and confidence in my life. The mobility training I received is fantastic and now I can move around freely and independently on-site and off-site.

"I joined the choir at WESC which has really helped me gain confidence and has made me not so nervous when performing in my drama group at Cornwall College. I have had a lot of support at WESC Foundation and now know how to deal with my visual impairment so it doesn't stop me doing things I want to do".

Ros Osborne, Corporate learning Support Co-ordinator at Cornwall College said: "Kirsty has transformed from the young lady we first met. Through a successful partnership with WESC and Cornwall College, Kirsty has grown beyond expectations and is a very happy, motivated, more independent learner who has new found confidence in aspirations and life".

Kirsty's plans for the future include staying on at Cornwall College and studying a childcare course as she would like to work in a nursery when she leaves college.