

## Megan's key to success is a smooth transition!

From the first day at College WESC Foundation works with young people with visual impairment and their families to start putting together a plan for life after college. Whether the young person chooses to forge better links with their community, continue in education, move into a new home or enter paid or voluntary employment, individuals are supported and encouraged at WESC Foundation to make informed choices.

That's exactly what happened with Megan, aged 23, who has been associated with WESC for 14 years. Due to her visual impairment Megan started WESC Foundation's specialist school at the age of nine. She then moved up to the college and now she accesses WESC's Adult Day Services four days a week.



*Megan showcasing her independence skills by making a drink*

Throughout college life Megan's goal was to live as independently as possible in supported living accommodation in Exeter. In the last few years prior to leaving WESC's education a transition plan was developed with Megan and her family which looked at future aspirations including independent living as a top priority.

The planned transition process was essential in order to ensure a smooth transfer and minimise the stress and disorientation that can sometimes occur along with any changes.

The transition plan for Megan was set up through a variety of meetings with herself, her family, social workers, teacher and other relevant parties who all worked together and identified actions, timescales and responsibilities in order to achieve Megan's goal.

After much planning, discussions and visits Megan felt comfortable about living with her peers in supported accommodation in Exeter, through the Devon-based charity Rainbow Living. Her accommodation is adapted to meet her personal needs and includes communal space such as a lounge, kitchen and dining room which she enjoys with her five flatmates.

The planned transition process gave Megan the confidence and ability to step outside of her comfort zone and reach new horizons in a supportive environment. She has been living at Rainbow House for the past six months and now calls it 'home'.

**Megan** said: *"At first it was scary to leave home with my family and live on my own with my friends. After thinking it through a lot and with the support of people at WESC and Rainbow Living, who all helped make the process easy, I felt excited when the time came to move in."*



*"My family visit me regularly and they are really proud of what I have achieved. I absolutely love living in my new home and WESC has helped get me ready for this stage."*

*"I am really good friends with everyone in the house. We all make our own beds and keep our bedrooms tidy, as well as doing day-to-day jobs such as dusting, polishing, hoovering, washing-up, baking and making our lunches and dinners. My favourite dish I make is spaghetti bolognese!"*

*"During the evenings I like to relax with my iPad or watch a film with my friends. Sometimes Rainbow Living organise trips out such as going to the pub, walking, going to the cinema which I like to do...but by far the best thing is just hanging out with my friends."*

During her time as a border at WESC Megan learnt many independent living skills such as: cooking, meal preparation, shopping, planning a daily routine, money handling and personal budgeting. All these skills have prepared Megan to be successful in her move to Rainbow House and be able to live as independently as possible. Megan also participated in mobility training at WESC where she learned how to travel by bus into Exeter city centre and became familiar with all the various stores, learning which shops sold what products. This enabled her to make purchases independently.

Megan currently accesses WESC's Adult Day Services where she enjoys recreational activities with her peers on a weekly basis. She helps produce a radio show, gets involved with baking cakes and her favourite session in the Adult Day Service is 'Rhythm Sticks', a percussion workshop run by a former WESC learner.

**Megan** continues: *"The best thing about WESC's Adult Day Services are the people, my friends and the enablers who make everything possible."*

## WESC student Jack's passion for Braille!

Aspiring WESC learner Jack's ultimate goal is to be a Braille teacher and he's well on the way to achieving it by studying the Ascentis Level 3 Award in Education and Training, supported by work placements, at WESC Foundation.

Jack, 20, has an eye condition called Retinopathy of Prematurity and is registered blind. He has studied at WESC Foundation for the last three years and is a termly boarder. From his first day he always knew he wanted to be a Braille teacher and having the support from his teachers and support workers has enabled him to develop into the confident Braille user he is today.



*Jack helping Louis read his Braille news article*

The Ascentis Level 3 Award in Education and Training is an introduction to teaching course which explores the roles and responsibilities associated with a teaching position.

Throughout his course he has learned how to: plan and deliver sessions in an engaging and motivating way, how to teach young people with autism, ADHD, sensory impairment and physical disabilities, and also how to prepare lesson structures for people with disabilities, in particular, the routine and about planning the class around their special interests.

As well as completing his course Jack has weekly work experience sessions with WESC's Braille Teacher Jenny Langley. Jack helps Jenny in her classes to teach Braille and by doing this it gives him the knowledge and experience of how to teach and support visually impaired learners. After a couple of years shadowing Jenny in her classes Jack was proficient and confident enough to take on his own classes. He now enhances two WESC students' Braille knowledge by teaching them on a weekly basis in his own time to gain more teaching experience.

At the end of each of his lessons Jack likes to reflect on how the lesson has gone. He does this by recording the lesson on his Victor Reader Stream and then plays it back to himself. Jack finds this system incredibly useful for being able to monitor and improve his future sessions – he says he is well aware that teachers are 'reflective practitioners'.

**Jack** commented: *“It’s great to be able to study the Education and Training course as well as gain work experience at WESC. I have learnt a lot about how to teach from my Braille teacher Jenny. She has supported me a great deal along with my tutor, Nicola. What I particularly enjoy about teaching my peers at the moment is setting tests for them. I do this as part of my lesson preparation which helps me assess and support them with improving their Braille contractions.”*

**Jenny Langley WESC’s Braille teacher** said: *“I’ve really enjoyed having Jack for work experience and seeing him develop his skills. I find having Jack help teach in my classes invaluable as it motivates his peers to improve their Braille skills. The learners that Jack teaches alongside me aren’t so confident with Braille but by having Jack in the class it helps inspire them to achieve as they are his friends and they want to impress him. I love his enthusiasm for teaching – he always tells me what he has learnt on his course and it’s really great that he can now teach independently.”*

Jack is just about to embark on a new work experience placement at Countess Wear School, along with Jenny, to introduce basic Braille including the alphabet and pre-tactile skills to the students. They will be going once every half term which will help expand his teaching skills further.

Jack is currently a boarder at WESC Foundation. He has learnt mobility skills at WESC so he can navigate around campus independently and he is continuing his mobility lessons on public transport which will mean that he will be able to travel into Exeter city centre independently. He has also learnt living skills at WESC including cooking, washing and keeping his house tidy.

**Nicola Smith, Jack’s tutor at WESC Foundation** said: *“I have been extremely impressed with Jack’s focus and passion for his braille teaching qualification. He works very hard and is always eager to develop his skills. His timetable this year covers a range of subjects, from his core skills, mobility, occupational therapy and work skills, but it is heavily led by his teaching qualification and work experience. He is coping fantastically well and can prioritise his workload independently. He is a kind, patient and friendly young man, putting him in great stead to becoming an excellent teacher of braille. Well done, Jack!”*

Well done Jack for all your hard work – you certainly are an inspirational young man!

## George's work experience is no wash-out!

Charismatic, sociable, dedicated and hard-working are just a few of the words that Mark Blatchford Manager at Station Garage, Topsham, used to describe WESC Foundation learner George who has been completing his work experience with their organisation for the last three months.

George, 18, from Devon has been at WESC for three years, has an eye condition called Leber Congenital Amaurosis, a condition affecting the retina, and is a full-time day student. He studies NCFE Level 1 Music Technology, OCR Entry Level 3 Life & Living Skills, along with other mandatory courses in the Exe Stream at WESC Foundation.



*George making the cars sparkle!*

George has always had a keen interest in cars. This became apparent during his OCR Life & Living Skills course when the class started to work on identifying their skills and qualities and what skills employers are looking for. There was no doubt George wanted to work with cars!

Throughout his course George showed a good understanding of what employers are looking for and did an excellent job in his mock telephone interview. The next step was for George and his Work Experience Co-ordinator Linda Stafford to find him the right placement working with his passion...cars!

George and Linda approached Station Garage and he was offered an interview to see if he was suitable for completing his work experience with them. George made such a good impression at his interview that they were delighted to offer him a work placement and enthused about what a positive young man he is.

At Station Garage George has responsibility for valeting the cars. When he arrives he makes sure he has the right equipment to do the job. He collects the buckets, hose, cloths, soap, wax...in fact any specialist equipment needed to make the cars sparkle George is on it. George always

impresses his team by his work ethic and commitment to doing such a good job and getting the cars spotless!



*George hard at work making sure the cars are spic and span!*

Work placements are so important for the students at WESC Foundation as these placements prepare students for the world of work. They can practise their communication skills, consider other people's points of view, learn how and where they can make their contribution in a commercial environment, plus the travelling to and from work allows the students to improve their mobility skills.

These are all skills George is learning at Station Garage along with getting used to working as part of a team which are all helping prepare him for adulthood.

**Station Garage's Manager Mark Blatchford** said: *"I am particularly pleased by George's attention to detail and am constantly impressed by his vast knowledge of vehicles."*

**Simon Hindle, George's teacher at WESC Foundation** said: *"George's work placement at Station Garage is proving invaluable to George as he is learning many additional skills including working as part of a team and communication and mobility skills. Also I've seen a massive increase in his independence and confidence since he has started working at the garage which has made a huge impact on his quality of his life. I am very proud of George."*

**Linda Stafford, WESC's Work Experience Co-ordinator** said, *"George has fully embraced his work experience placement wholeheartedly. I am extremely grateful to Mark Blatchford and his team for giving him such a worthwhile productive opportunity."*

Well done George for all your hard work and commitment!

## WESC ex-student Ben embarks on new internship!

Hard work, determination and charisma are just a few of the qualities that have helped secure an internship placement for WESC ex-student Ben, 19, from Exmouth, within WESC's very own Social Enterprise department for this academic year.

WESC's Social Enterprise consists of a registered online eBay shop, five retail charity outlets, West Hill garden centre and a horticultural development.

An internship is usually undertaken by a student or graduate and is a period of work experience, offered by an organisation, lasting for a fixed time period. Internships are focussed to allow the student to gain the relevant skills and experience in a particular field. Ben's internship is based around gaining skills in e-commerce and retail.



*A happy eBay team!*

Delving into more detail Ben tells us in his own words what he gets up to on his internship!

*"I work three days a week. On Mondays I work in the charity shop on Sidwell Street in Exeter City Centre. I get the bus completely independently from Exmouth to Exeter, having learned the route during my mobility training at WESC, and when I get there I help stock shelves, work on the till and serve the customers. I'm the shop manager Sarah's second hand man!"*

*"On Tuesdays I work in the eBay shop at WESC's campus. I dress the mannequin in the clothes that people want to sell and take photos so they are ready to be uploaded to the website. I use the iPad as I can adjust it to my own height and enlarge the screen to suit my visual needs. I then upload the photo I have taken and put details about the price, size, any special brand name onto the advert template. Before the advert is approved my manager Mark double checks that all the details are correct."*

*"On Thursdays I work in the eBay shop again but I get involved in different tasks such as writing copy for the Social Enterprise blog including information on what's going on in the charity shops and what's selling on eBay."*

**Ben** continues: *“WESC is a lovely place to have gone to school, college and now work. It has given me so many skills including; mobility, confidence, independence and academic skills such as numeracy, that I can now use in my workplace.”*

**Mark Vandenberg, WESC’s eBay Manager**, said: *“Ben has started well, is very keen and picks things up quickly. I look forward to seeing Ben develop professionally and socially during his time with us. I have no doubts that by the time his internship ends he will have an array of transferable work skills that will benefit him for the future.”*

## Where there's a Will there's a way!

WESC Foundation learner, Will, aged 19 has been taking part in a weekly work placement at Tesco's in Exmouth for the last month. Will, accompanied by his enabler Suzanne Bushell, goes into the store every Thursday, working in the grocery section from 11am to 2.30pm. During that time he helps re-stock and tidy shelves and break down boxes once produce has been put out on the shop floor.

Will said he has very much enjoyed his placement so far and particularly likes destroying the empty cardboard boxes. Will has cerebral palsy and numerous eye conditions including Retinopathy of Prematurity. Prior to his time at Tesco he had already completed several other work experience placements, including one at Exeter City Football Club. Will, a self-confessed huge football fan, spent time at the club checking fans' security tags as they came through the turnstiles.



*Will getting to grips with the shelf boxes!*

**Linda Stafford, WESC's Work Experience Coordinator** said: "He is an excellent example of what can be achieved with a positive attitude and determination.

"Upon leaving WESC, Will hopes to remain in Exeter, living independently in one of the supported houses provided by WESC and hopefully in paid employment with the work experience he has gained previously and at Tesco."

Will getting to grips with the shelf boxes!

Will's work placement has been organised by Whizz-kidz, a charity which helps provide wheelchairs for children that require them.

Well done Will!