

The Learner Journey

Yvonne Jackson

Kathryn Hilliard

Vision West Nottinghamshire College, Nottinghamshire



Summary

This case study describes the journey of a learner, Luke, as he undertakes his first supported work placement. Luke is currently studying an Entry level 3 course called 'Practical Work Skills' at Vision West Notts College, has Autism and Dyspraxia tendencies. He is able to write independently however this can be slow and he can become very anxious with new situations.

Employed as a Food and Beverage Assistant at The Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Luke worked Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm with a 30 minute break. Luke was supported by a job coach trained in Systematic Instruction. Initially demonstrating his anxious tendencies (arriving in a morning saying that he was nervous) he would relax as the day progressed. He was absent from the placement for two days due to sickness; Mum felt this was caused by nerves and that he did not have an illness. Upon return, Luke became more confident as the tasks became 'method' to Luke

The outcomes for Luke were a significant development of his confidence. This has continued to be demonstrated at College after the placement. He was given the opportunity to see what life could be like working full time and has demonstrated to The Belfry that a young person with Autism, given the correct and appropriate level of support, can '*learn quickly and work to an acceptable pace*' - a quote from the Human Resources (HR) Manager

Key lessons learned

The project was successful and many aspects went well such as:

- Observations provided a measureable way of monitoring progression and common patterns of further areas of support
- Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI) allows a student with a learning difficulty, to focus on one instruction, only to allow them to process the information
- Job Analysis gave the job coach the opportunity to really understand the job such as the 'unwritten rules'

- Task Analysis allowed the job coach to see how challenging a task can be once it has been broken down and provided observation task sheets
- TSI encourages praise at the end of the task – the student was not used to this, however the praise became more meaningful and effective as he got used to the experience.

Aspects which did not go so well include:

- TSI is difficult to use in a customer facing environment (customers may complain that some members of staff make comments like 'stop' to an individual without doing the task themselves) - in the future a 'Job Coach' badge or uniform would help to clarify this
- During the last week, Luke received some negative feedback – written and verbal. The member of staff felt that Luke had got to a stage where he was not improving, having learnt the job and now needed to start using his initiative, make decisions and interact more with the customers. All of these areas for improvement were confidence based, which has been an on-going issue with Luke. Therefore, these are areas that we worked on throughout week 3 and 4. By the end of the project, Luke was talking to customers, usually briefly; he was keeping his head up more and was smiling even when he was nervous
- The HR Manager commented '*Luke worked well to a high standard*', another member of the restaurant staff said '*Luke worked really well today; got on with all the jobs he was given*'. We feel that the level of support given was appropriate to challenge him while keeping his nerves to a minimal level
- We also feel that a big achievement has been the demonstration that someone with Autism can learn a multi-skilled job and remember the tasks

What we wanted to achieve

- Insight into the level of support needed to allow a young person with Autism to become employable.
- Steady reduction of the support needed by the student with certain tasks
- Significant development in terms of his skills, confidence and ability

Implementation - What the learner did whilst on placement

Planning our approach

- Key stakeholders engaged
- Teams/groups established to take forward the activity
- Roles and responsibilities identified
- Actions and timescales defined
- Resources/technologies used
- Considerations for what would happen at the end of the activity

What we did

- The student was selected due to the link with The Belfry and his course
- TSI recommends a 'Discovery' stage where a job coach visits the learner in their natural environment – this did not occur due to time constraints
- Luke attended an 'informal chat' at The Belfry hotel, prior to the placement starting with the two job coaches and two members of management

- The Job coach telephoned Luke's mum at least once per week to discuss progression and any issues.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

- Luke was given two targets; 'Learning the correct settings for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner', successfully completed by third day using 3 photo cards of the different settings
- The Second target was 'learning to independently complete the floor walk'. Luke particularly enjoyed this task because he seemed to enjoy the responsibility and independence of doing this. The Systematic Instruction was used significantly here as it was not customer facing.
- Two further targets were set for Luke; 'To communicate effectively with both members of staff and customers', challenging for Luke as the setting was different to talking to customers at Bay 6
- The Final target set was 'to make decisions about what tasks need to be completed rather than asking'. This was also an on-going confidence issue

What advice we would give to others

- Job Analysis is essential prior to the placement, gaining insight into the job and expectations
- Effective communication with the employer and other staff members is also crucial
- Share and agree expectations with employer and staff in advance of the placement starting
- Create Task Analysis for the tasks that the student may need support with
- Carry out regular observations of the individual to track development
- Take a camera and video camera if possible to capture lots of evidence

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Provider details;

Vision West Notts College is an FE College, located in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Luke is in a group of 10 LLDD Entry Level 3 learners, based at the Bay 6 centre where he takes part in both practical and theory days as part of his course.

Contact information; Yvonne Jackson email : yvonne.jackson@wnc.ac.uk