

Northbrook College



A learner's story: Jake Blackman

Jake Blackman is a learner at Northbrook College. He enrolled in September 2009 and is studying for a Level 1 Carpentry qualification.

Jake spent 12 years at a specialist Deaf School. Jake is Deaf and British Sign Language (BSL) is his first language. His experience at Northbrook is his first in an educational setting in the 'hearing world'.

Jake enrolled at Northbrook as a direct result of seeing a DVD the college had made about how they support d/Deaf learners¹. He went along with his parents, who are also Deaf, for a visit. He like what he saw and signed on the dotted line.....

To ease his transition into college Jake was allocated a 'buddy', a mature 2nd year Deaf learner. This proved a successful partnership as it helped Jake overcome his nervousness. Jake and his buddy have become good friends and meet up regularly whenever they are in college at the same time. Jake has agreed to be a buddy himself next year.

Jake has a Communication Support Worker (CSW) with him throughout his college day. However two months on from starting at the college Jake was regularly seen in the refectory, minus his CSW, with his hearing peers. They have been keen to learn sign language to communicate more effectively with Jake. Since losing his initial nervousness Jake's sense of humour has

shone through, making him a popular student.

Jake has three teachers who undertook Deaf Awareness training with one of the three learning BSL.

Jake's attendance at college is excellent, a sure sign his support plan is working well for him. He has been accepted onto a Level 2 Carpentry course and is busy looking for an apprenticeship.

Here are some questions that might guide you on what to do next:

- How do you support perspective d/Deaf learners to think of your provision as their next step?
- How do you make information accessible to potential d/Deaf learners?
- Could you develop a 'buddy' system like the one used at Northbrook College?
- What training do you offer CSWs?
- What training do you offer teachers who have never had a d/Deaf learner in their class before?
- How can you support hearing learners and d/Deaf learners to overcome communication barriers?
- Do you scaffold support to learners as and when they feel able to do things for themselves?

¹ Click on <http://www.northbrook.ac.uk/disabilities/> to view the film clip