

## **WorkFit Yorks & Humber: National Laboratory Service, Environment Agency**

National  
Laboratory  
Service



by Alison Thwaite,  
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WorkFit Yorks & Humber has recently been working with the National Laboratory Service in Leeds to secure an employment opportunity for Ben (pictured, right).

Following a successful informal interview he began a work experience placement at the laboratory as a Laboratory Assistant, working for 10 hours a week over 2 days. Within a few weeks of him starting work, the team there were so impressed that Ben was offered permanent paid work and he is now an established member of the Sample Prep and Registration Team.



Prior to Ben's appointment, the staff who would be working with him were given Down's syndrome awareness training. This included how they could make adjustments to tasks in order to give Ben the information that he would need to do the job in a way that would suit his



learning profile.

Feedback from the training was very positive with comments like *"People with Down's syndrome can achieve a lot in the workplace given the correct support"* and *"I feel much more confident about meeting and working with Ben and have a better idea of the steps I could take to make his work life as enjoyable as possible"*

It was wonderful to hear their plans about how they would welcome Ben and ensure that he felt fully integrated and part of the team., showing a real commitment to supporting him and ensuring that he feels valued and respected|

Prior to starting his job Ben said *"I want to learn things and I want to push myself. I want to show that I can do things on my own"* After only a short time Ben had mastered some important procedures and told me *"I know what to do on the computer and I know how to register samples and put labels on them. I take all the deliveries. I like the people I work with. I work with Shane, Andy and Johnny. I get up early on the days I come to work and I take all the deliveries from the drivers and sign for them. I put information about the samples that I look after on to spread sheets"*

Ben now looks after specific customer accounts himself and has responsibility for accepting deliveries and registering new samples arriving at the laboratory.

Colleague Andy (pictured right with Ben and Shane) is very impressed with Ben *"I'm really impressed with the way that Ben is keen to learn new things and take responsibility. He knows all of the couriers really well and is very well liked. He has picked things up so well that he works on his own quite a lot and comes and asks for help if he needs it. It makes him feel proud to be working on his own and just getting on with his job like everyone else"*



Ben has received great support from colleagues at the National Laboratory Service who were keen to embrace the WorkFit programme and help him to achieve his career ambitions. They



have supported him to learn new skills and ensured that he feels welcome. He enjoyed a recent night out with the team for a meal and drinks in Leeds.

Feedback from the team has been extremely positive; in particular around the way that Ben has shown a great aptitude for the work. He has learned a great deal about the procedures in a laboratory environment and is proud that he is able to make a valuable contribution.

Sample Prep and Registration Team Manager, John Fardon (pictured below with Ben and Laboratory Site Manager, Joanne Senior) says *"It seems clear that Ben has a real sense of belonging. Everyone enjoys working with him and we've had a very positive response to the programme from everyone. As an organisation I think we're more considerate and we are all more keen to help all of our colleagues. Having Ben here has made us look at our processes and helped us to improve, which benefits the whole team. Recruiting Ben through the WorkFit programme has been a life-affirming experience and his approach has set a benchmark that has spread through the lab. As far as I'm concerned there is nothing that Ben can't do and we will be supporting him to learn as much as possible and to give him every opportunity to develop his career with us"*



Ben and his mum, Angie (pictured below) kindly agreed to speak at the WorkFit Yorkshire & Humber Conference in January, 2017. Ben was shy but was able to tell everyone that his job makes him very happy and proud. His mum Angie told us *"we can't quite believe it; just a short time ago I heard about WorkFit and decided to get in touch and find out more. Alison arrived at our house at 6.30pm one night last October and talked to Ben about what kind of job he wanted and his hobbies and interests. Soon after she told us about the possibility of an*



*opportunity for Ben with the Environment Agency and since then we are now hoping that Ben will have something that we never thought possible . . . not just a job, but a career"*

John Fardon and Joanne Senior (pictured above) delivered a presentation at the conference about the work that they do in their laboratory in Leeds and talked about Ben's role there. They shared the steps on their WorkFit journey and illustrated some

of the changes they have made to information to make work more accessible for everyone in the team. In terms of diversity, Joanne told us *"We are committed to making our organisation as diverse as the environment. It's our job to protect and improve the environment and make this a better place to live. Our environment is diverse and so are the people we work with"* Labs in other parts of the country are at various stages of the WorkFit journey and are hugely positive about the programme and the outcomes so far"



. . . . and finally, huge thanks to James Trout, Environment Agency Laboratory Manager who has been fundamental in driving the successful roll out of the WorkFit programme across the four NLS laboratories. James has recently been recognised by the Environment Agency for his work in supporting diversity and inclusion in the workplace with the Chair's Award for Diversity Champion - a very worthy winner. In addition James' support has led to the decision by the Institute of Science and Technology (IST) to name DSA, and in particular the WorkFit programme, as their charity of the year. We are very grateful for the support of all of the NLS Teams across the country and look forward to continuing to work with them going

forward.

To read some of the stories of our inspirational jobseekers please go to: <http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/blog-category/workfit/>

To find out more about WorkFit and how we support people with Down's syndrome to access meaningful work opportunities that can benefit the rest of their lives, please contact the team on 0333 12 12 300 or email us on [dsworkfit@downs-syndrome.org.uk](mailto:dsworkfit@downs-syndrome.org.uk)

For more information visit the WorkFit website [www.dsworkfit.org.uk](http://www.dsworkfit.org.uk)