

# Earning a Living: Leigh's journey to employment



*"I am so happy to be paid. When it was my friend's birthday I was able to buy her some Pyjamas as a present and it felt really good"*

Leigh began her traineeship with Yellow Submarine in 2019, having not had a job before. Yellow Submarine's traineeship offers dynamic and ambitious training through real life work-experience in our social enterprise cafes alongside classroom based learning with peers. The programme is also designed to help trainees overcome specific barriers they might have to employment because of their disability; in Leigh's case her ability to understand the boundaries at work in terms of behaviour and managing stress due to her autism.

On the traineeship Leigh says *"I have worked my way up. I started as the little girl at school who didn't want to do anything and now here I am doing a job that I am good at. Before I started at Yellow Submarine I used to be so lazy, lying in bed every day and I had nothing, now I have got a routine and it feels great"*.

Yellow Submarine also works with trainees to support them onto the next step of their work journey as they approach the end of their traineeship. Leigh's dream is to be a Karate coach but she does not have the qualifications to do this... yet! Yellow Submarine supported her to access a funding pot and find a supported course to gain a coaching qualification. Yellow Submarine's Work Experience Manager says *"I wanted Leigh to be able to work in her dream job, but as we all know our first job isn't always our forever job and I knew that with support to learn how to be an effective Coach, Leigh can realise her potential in this area. However, in the meantime Leigh wanted to earn some money, and we applied for a part-time cleaning role at The Oxford Hub that she would be able to do alongside her qualification"*.

Leigh says that *"at Yellow Submarine I learnt how to respect boundaries, for example personal boundaries. I don't get too close to people now, I give them space and if they are working I wait till they are finished before I speak to them or ask a question This helps me in my job as the office I clean can be very busy. I can also cope better with my stress than I used to. I have learnt that it's ok to keep my stress with me when I am working and let it out when I get home. I have a balance between my Karate coaching and cleaning which is good because it helps with my stress. I think finding a job that is only a few hours at a time helps me with this as I don't have to hold on to the stress for too long"*.

Line Manager, Jade from the Oxford Hub thinks "it's an excellent idea" for other organisations to work with someone like Leigh. Jade says that working with Leigh "has confirmed to me even more that people with autism often bring unique talents, skills and qualities to the workplace. Leigh is extremely perceptive and picks up small details - a really vital skill when cleaning a small but messy office! Leigh is very methodical also in the way she cleans and always makes sure the job is done properly. As a person, Leigh is down to earth, funny and often asks direct and very relevant questions - all great qualities of someone on your team. Leigh has also made a brilliant addition to the women's football team. It's been a great way for us to spend time with each other outside of work and get to know Leigh more, and as Leigh has said, it means we are now 'work friends' instead of just colleagues!

The support that Yellow Submarine gave Leigh starting the role was very helpful in establishing Leigh into her role and learning her tasks as well as getting to know her support needs."

For more information on training at Yellow Submarine visit:

[www.yellowsubmarineshop.org.uk/training](http://www.yellowsubmarineshop.org.uk/training)

If you would like to discuss work experience opportunities contact:

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