



Kaitlyn Coates

The staff at Learning for life first met Kaitlyn when she attended a transition visit at our new site at Disability North with a parent. She produced some beautiful work showcasing her attention to detail, creativity and exceptionally neat handwriting. She was very anxious in her new environment and struggled to use any verbal communication. Kaitlyn chose to communicate with small nods and shakes of her head.

Kaitlyn's parents were very concerned about her settling into this new college environment due to her being school phobic. They were, of course, very hopeful too.

On Kaitlyn's first day she was extremely anxious and required the comfort of a parent walking in with her. They stayed for about an hour. Kaitlyn continued to require the comfort of walking into college with a parent until very recently when she has been ready to walk in with staff and her peers without a parent. Such a big step for her!

A big turning point for Kaitlyn was the day that she came into college after a night feeling upset, like she hated herself and her Autism. Her parents were extremely concerned and spoke to a Tutor asking for help.

When discussing this with Kaitlyn we discovered that she knew very, very little about Autism and saw it as such a bad thing that stopped her from doing what she wanted to do.



Kaitlyn now has weekly sessions on learning about Autism in general and her Autism in particular. She has utilised some excellent Vloggers to learn more about Autism, Autism in females and masking. She has conducted research into famous people with Autism and has been able to confidently share the information she found with her family! She is also writing letters to another young person with Autism to learn more and to help validate her own feelings. She is starting to accept herself and her Autism, while recognising all of her strengths on the journey to discovering her own superpower.

During the Autumn term in college Kaitlyn really struggled to engage with other learners in class, during break and in social time. She has taken many small steps to become the confident, engaged learner that we now see daily. She will contribute to classes, communicate with other learners and even lead activities. This has led her to develop a kind and authentic friendship with one of her peers. She was also voted as our Learner Council Leader!



Another challenge that Kaitlyn has faced is one of her learning outcomes for her ASDAN qualification. She needed to make a journey to a shop to buy ingredients to make a hot snack. Kaitlyn feels extremely anxious about public transport so we problem solved together and came up with a plan of small steps which work towards travelling in a familiar member of staff's car. Kaitlyn worked very hard over the course of six weeks to achieve each step and was able to travel in an

unfamiliar vehicle to buy her shopping. An amazing achievement!

Kaitlyn is absolutely flourishing in her internal work placement working as a teaching assistant supporting with the production of displays and resources. She has developed a specialism for using our Communicate in Print software and has had excellent feedback from staff and our Principal on the quality of her work. Kaitlyn is always a joy to work with and we are all confident she will be able to progress to employment in the future.

Kaitlyn has a high academic level and alongside maintaining and developing her knowledge and skills Kaitlyn has learnt so much about herself. This will have the most impact on her life moving forward in adulthood. She knows that it is ok to feel what she is feeling. She knows that she can take small steps and as much time as she needs to achieve a goal. She knows that people understand her and her needs. She knows that people celebrate who she is. She knows her own potential. She knows she has strategies to help her to do what she wants to do.



We are all so incredibly proud of her and what she has achieved and look forward to seeing further progress as she continues her journey with Learning for Life.