



Vital Services offers development opportunities for students with learning disabilities

Vital Services and our Trust partnered with Calthorpe Academy under the Aspire Learning Disability Programme around 4 years ago. Since then, we have seen six students with learning disabilities given the opportunity of a supported employment placement for a day a week over the course of each year.

The partnership allows learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from Calthorpe Academy to develop relevant occupational skills within the health sector while promoting their resilience, independence and well-being.

Tina Small, Deputy Facilities Operational Manager has been the lead advocate of the programme, working with the students during their time working at our Women's Hospital. She said: "The students are valued members of the team and we pride ourselves on being able to help and support learners as they develop through life and the challenges that they face.

"We believe that being part of the team here at the hospital allows the students to grow and expand their knowledge, develop their confidence and learn skills to help them reach their own personal goals."

This year, we have Piotr and Isu, our first profound hearing-impaired learner working with Vital Services and the team have embraced Makaton signing to help promote Isu's independence. When asked what Isu likes most about working in the hospital, he signed: "The people, being the same as others, staff communicating with me through gestures and signing and feeling like a part of the team."

In addition to Isu and Piotr working with the Vital Services team, we have three other students, Ismail, Dua and Callum working in the Liver Unit and Therapies department. The ward staff as well as the team from Vital Services have worked alongside job coaches from the Academy to profile and match skills to meet the needs of each department.

Bebeanna Woo, Vocational Inclusion Manager from Calthorpe Academy said: "We cannot thank the advocates of Vital Services, Tina and her team as well as ward staff enough for embracing our learners. "This partnership of weekly paid work placements has allowed us to challenge attitudes and raise aspirations and as an Academy has helped us to facilitate social inclusion, widening participation as well as improving learner's confidence and wellbeing.

"You have done nothing but go above and beyond in making my team and learners continue to feel valued and welcome in your team. I can truly say that you all demonstrate the Trust ABC values."