

## SEND Live Work Experience 2025

This year SEND Live 2025 provided work experience opportunities for 13 young people across three SEND schools within Oxfordshire (Kingfisher, Fitzwaryn and Mabel Prichard).

The work experience opportunities provided the young people, aged 16-19, with hands on experience with the aim to give an insight into a career opportunity and support future career decisions. The work experiences exposed the young people to a variety of opportunities. Through these experiences across a range of job roles the young people could explore possible career paths with the aim to boost confidence, independence and have a real-life workplace experience.

SEND Live work experience opportunities involved several preparation sessions which the young people participated in:

- **Applying for the roles advertised.** This included completing application and expression of interest forms to apply for the roles advertised.
- **Q&A session.** The young people met with two of the event organisers at the school setting. These sessions allowed the event organisers to find out more about individual needs, for the young people to understand the roles that they had applied for and provide an opportunity for the young people to ask any questions they might have about the work experience.
- **Event Preparation.** Taking place at County Hall, some young people also developed their travel skills by using public transport. Participation in a range of carousel work experience activities to prepare for the SEND Live event, including but not limited to, lanyard prep, laminating items, preparing signage, checking attendee lists and counting items.
- **Venue Preparation.** Attending the work experience venue. Providing the young people with the opportunity to explore all parts of the building and become familiar with the layout in preparation for the SEND Live event.

The work experience opportunities included:

- **Catering:** Preparing and delivering food and drinks.
- **Event management:** Organise speakers and guests and resolving issues that arise on the day.

- **Event preparation:** Preparing resources for the event, including lanyards and leaflets and checking attendees and booking numbers.
- **IT support:** Setting up equipment, resolving issues that arise during the day and checking the set-up, speaker volume for example.
- **Speaker assistant:** Providing personal assistant support to a professional delegate speaking at the event such as handing out leaflets, public speaking experience, general duties and shadowing.

The young people received both an 'Oxfordshire Achievement Award' and 'AQA certification' for completion of work experience.

The work experience opportunities contributed significantly to the successful running of the day and the participants were extremely proud of the work they completed. Professionals attending the event, and staff at the venue commented on how professional, polite and dedicated the young people were in their roles.

## **Quotes from supporting staff**

"I was particularly impressed with Alex who took on the responsibility of speaker assistant. He was very nervous at the start of the role and initially needed someone stood next to him to repeat what he was required to say to introduce the speaker. However, by the third introduction he was much more confident and was very proud of himself".

"Gavin participated in a wide range of tasks as part of his catering role. He was very proactive in the tasks he was completing and was able to listen to and follow instructions exceptionally well. He executed his role so well that he was even offered an opportunity to return to the catering team to complete some further work experience in the future".

"We loved having our work experience team help us"!

## **Quotes from work experience young people**

"It was a very fun experience" – Mable Prichard young person

"I enjoyed it" – Mable Prichard young person

"It was good" – Kingfisher young person

"It was fun" – Kingfisher young person

## **Keynote speaker notes**

This years Keynote speaker Ben Juggins delivered a powerful, honest and emotive speech to open the SEND Live event. He reflected on his own journey through education and work from mainstream and SEND schools, post-16 provision and college, internships to full-time volunteer work at a local primary school. Ben highlighting the challenges he faced and those professionals who supported and nurtured him which resonated with the delegates. Ben's passion and commitment to supporting others and giving back to his community gave opportunity for great reflection and delegates commented that the Keynote speech made them think about what they can do continually improve and support SEND children within their own school settings.

Following the success of the Keynote speech Ben has received communication from an independent specialist day school in Oxford. The SENDCo stated that speech was so powerful and inspiring that they have invited Ben to speak at students' graduation taking place at Brookes University.

One of our workshop speakers, Dr Sarah Moseley, Author, Trainer & Educational Consultant gave a special mention to Ben in her social media post commenting that his speech on lived experience was deeply moving.

## **An Employment Support Workers reflections from the work experience:**

For the past two years, Jade Buck has been working with students doing work experience at SEND Live. These opportunities are incredibly valuable for their futures, giving them a real chance to see what it's like working within certain areas.

"The process for these students involves a lot of preparation, starting with writing an expression of interest and personal statement about why they want to do the work experience and about themselves".

"Students are then visited in their school settings to discuss things further, meet their educators, and find out more about their needs. The roles they have applied for are fully discussed with them, so they have a good understanding of what they have signed up for. This is also a perfect opportunity for the students to ask any questions they might have".

“Next, they help with event day prep, making signage for speakers and the marketplace, decorations for the venue, and sorting lanyards with raffle tickets. They will then visit the SEND Live setting to familiarise themselves. Lastly, the big day arrives”.

Jade Buck has mainly supported individuals who wanted to do catering. “Julie and her team at the Kassam are incredible at making the work accessible and achievable. They are patient and understanding of all the quirks the students have”.

“Instructions are clearly given and demonstrations shown. The jobs include placing muffins on trays in a particular pattern, stacking crisps and fruit, washing up, checking tea and coffee supplies and restocking when necessary, laying the food out for lunch, clearing up after breaks, and changing water bottles in the conference rooms. The most fun part is when they get to drive the trolleys with items on”.

All the students Jade worked with this year thoroughly enjoyed the work they were given. “There is no pressure on them, so if they need to have a break, that's absolutely fine”.

We will be continuing to run work experience opportunities at SEND Live 2026. Please reach out to [lydia.martin@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lydia.martin@oxfordshire.gov.uk) if you are interested in taking part.