



Georgie Makes Big Strides into Employment at Tiny Steps Day Nursery

This case study looks at how Georgie secured an apprenticeship during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how a combination of her talents, motivation and a supportive employer has seen her flourish in the role.

The Job Search

Georgie had begun meeting with her Job Coach, Ellen Atkinson, and they had been thinking about what Georgie is good at and what a suitable job match would be. She had some experience of working and volunteering with children but was also interested in exploring office and admin roles. The job search was underway and then the pandemic happened, meaning restrictions and lockdown were introduced, and fewer organisations were hiring.



To keep herself busy and to add skills to her CV, Georgie completed an online IT course at home during the first lockdown. Then, as nurseries began to reopen and the need for childcare grew, Georgie spotted that Tiny Steps Day Nursery were advertising for an Apprentice and she applied.

First interview

Georgie was surprised and happy to be invited for an interview, especially considering that lots of people were looking for work at this time. Georgie is autistic and chose to share this with the Deputy Manager, Tracy Edwards-Read, before the interview. Tracy agreed that Ellen could join the Zoom interview too and they were also happy to make small adjustments to the process by sending the interview questions in advance. This meant Georgie and Ellen could read through the questions to make sure Georgie understood them and to do some interview practice together. Georgie felt confident and ready to talk about herself, her skills and her experience.

The interview took place over Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. Having Ellen attend the interview gave Georgie some extra comfort and assurance that, should she need it, Ellen would be there to support her. Lou Nicholson, the Nursery Manager, had not experienced working with a job coach before and had been concerned that Ellen would answer on Georgie's behalf, but in reality "Georgie did all of the work and shone". Ellen only prompted Georgie once, just to remind her to tell them about how proactive she had been during lockdown and how her new IT skills had been developed.

10 candidates were interviewed at this stage and Lou said that:

“Georgie bowled us over, she was confident, was able to answer eloquently and we absolutely wanted to take her onto the second interview.”

Second Interview

Georgie was delighted to be asked to attend a second interview. This too had to take place on Zoom, but the first one had gone well so she felt prepared. This time, Georgie was asked to read a story to them to show how she would engage with the nursery children. Georgie has previously read to children in her voluntary roles and immediately knew which book to choose. Georgie knows *Room on the Broom* by Julia Donaldson off by heart and during the interview was able to bring the story alive by giving different voices to all the characters! Afterwards, Georgie felt really proud of herself and thought that even if she didn't get the job, it was a positive experience that she could learn from.

After a week (which felt much longer!), the nursery phoned to offer Georgie the apprenticeship. Georgie was shocked and surprised and was silent for a moment; they asked if she'd like it and Georgie said a big “yes, please!”.

Getting Started

Before her first day on the job, Georgie felt nervous and had butterflies, but she was also excited and ready to get started. She thought the rules around being COVID-19 safe would be stressful, but they weren't so bad as everything was explained clearly.

There was some adjusting to do as Georgie's previous experience has been with 7 to 8 year-olds and now she was working with 2 to 3 year-olds. There was also a lot to learn around routine for the children, as well as cleaning and preparing food. The work shifts can vary each week, some are early (8am-2pm) and some are late (12-6pm). So, Georgie is learning to be flexible and organised.

Georgie is looking forward to learning more about childcare and thinks the best part of the job is working with children, because they respect everyone the way they are.

“Georgie is her genuine self at work and children love that. She is a genuine, confident, sparkling member of the team!”
– Lou, Nursery Manager

The Nursery's Culture

Lou believes her team thrives because of their different personalities. The nursery celebrates individuality and uniqueness so that their early years setting promotes an environment where every individual is respected.

The nursery makes adaptations for the children they support, so it is fair to accept that individual staff members have varied needs too. The nursery's approach to recruiting is not about ticking boxes, but about creating a truly inclusive culture.



Georgie prepared a [one-page profile](#) with details about the things that matter to her and what support she needs. With Georgie's permission, her one-page profile was shared with staff members at the nursery so they could best help Georgie through her induction and the apprenticeship.

Furthermore, Lou has an open-door policy and encourages Georgie to ask questions. Lou is hoping that Georgie's confidence in asking for support and advice will encourage other staff members to do the same. Now they also record their staff meetings so that it is less tiring for Georgie and she can watch it at another time.

"I can't express how wonderful it is to see how confident Georgie is now, the support she has had at Tiny Steps is amazing."

- Ellen, Job Coach

Georgie's Top Tips

This is Georgie's advice for others who are looking for a job:

- Be patient
- Keep looking and researching
- Have a back-up plan
- Stay positive!



Podcasts

There is a two-part podcast series available to accompany this case study. Click on the links below to hear an interview with Georgie and more of her top tips for employment:

[Part 1: Georgie's Employment Journey](#)

[Part 2: Georgie's Employment Top Tips!](#)

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