

Ekene – an inspirational journey

Ekene, Laundry Technician employed by Arjo at Charing Cross Hospital.

Ekene joined the DFN Project SEARCH programme in September 2017. DFN Project SEARCH is a supported Internship programme that support young people affected by learning disability and autism in a real-life work environment. It is through one of these work rotations that Ekene worked with colleagues at the NHS and Arjo to learn develop and excel at work-based skills. During his rotation as a laundry technician, he demonstrated his ability to follow instructions and consistently deliver a high-quality standard of work. With the support of the onsite team Ekene was encouraged to ‘layer on’ additional skills which ensured he thrived in the role that he enjoyed so much. As a result of the comprehensive support and with Ekenes focus and determination he was offered paid employment by Arjo in 2018 and he now works 25 hours a week.



In the photo Ekene meeting Minister Donelan January 2020

According to Camila Majica-Braesyde, Business Liaison at the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, “Ekene continually delivers a high, quality standard of work and continues to carry out this great work through the Covid-19 pandemic”.

Since becoming a laundry technician, Ekene has not only developed his practical skills, but his social skills have blossomed. He has grown in confidence to such a degree that he was one of the first people to meet Minister Michelle Donelan during her visit to the Charing Cross Hospital programme earlier this year, and has since continued to challenge stereotypes around employing people with disabilities by providing an outstanding service and supporting NHS workers on the frontline.

Camilla went on to say “Ekene has adapted so well given the circumstances. He thrives on routine and pre Covid-19 he would always turn up for work at 9am and come straight over to give a High 5. As the safety and social distancing measures were implemented, we sat down with him and explained that he would have to find

an alternative to a High 5. He now greets his team members when he arrives for work by saying ‘*Good morning, High*’ without any physical contact”

Ekene said: “I like work, my friends are here; when I have friends around me I feel safe.”

Jasmine Jade, DFN Project SEARCH Tutor at the Charing Cross Hospital said “I started working with Ekene as an LSA at the College; at the time I was Ekene’s 1-1 support. He always had great attention to detail and showed a caring and considerate personality. Ekene needed support and a range of strategies to develop his social interactions, and to access the curriculum. He first applied to join the Supported Internship programme at Charing Cross Hospital in 2016 and it was identified he would need another year at college to prepare. However, through his own determination, hard work and a supportive team who believed in his potential, Ekene was successful and joined the following year.

Whilst on the programme at Charing Cross Hospital Ekene continued to grow as a person, he surpassed everyone’s ambitious expectations and was one of the first interns that year to land himself a full time job. Ekene has inspired so many interns to raise their own ambitions.”