

Life as an apprentice with a disability

Meet Lee, a Level 3 Information Technology apprentice at Maersk

I found my apprenticeship through a world-leading tech and digital skills organisation called QA. Before I started the apprenticeship, I got in touch with the Apprenticeship Development Manager at Maersk, to see how the company could support me and my disability.

My disability means that Maersk has had to adapt and overcome boundaries so that they were inclusive of my disability. I am profoundly deaf and have been since birth, which means that I rely on lipreading. Colleagues were made aware of my deafness before I started, and Rebecca has supported me in making my working day as smooth as possible.

When speaking to people, I make sure they know of my disability if they weren't already aware and ask that they face me when speaking to me and possibly slow down their speed in which they talk, so I can lipread accurately.

I have also been assigned a desk buddy, Ben, who started his apprenticeship at the same time as me. We have worked together for 18 months now, and he is there to also support me, alongside Rebecca. We have built an effective working relationship, making sure to communicate clearly and concisely. A prime example of this is if there was a fire in the building. I cannot hear the alarm, so Ben must know where I am at all times, in the event that this occurred. He is then able to let me know and we can both leave the building safely.

Other challenges I have faced during my apprenticeship have mostly been to do with Covid-19. When we all started working from home, myself and my colleagues began using video calls to have meetings, which meant we needed to find an accessible piece of software that included captioning. My company were very supportive and installed software onto my work laptop, making it more accessible for me. It was also made a rule that everyone should have their cameras on, so that I was able to continue lipreading and so that the calls were more inclusive of my deafness.



Alt text: A headshot of Lee

I am proud of being a part of the South East Ambassador Network. This means that I get to highlight my disability and hopefully encourage other disabled people to consider an apprenticeship.

I am passionate about being an example to those who may not think apprenticeships are possible for them if they have a disability. As part of the Ambassador Network, I also go into schools and gives talks about my apprenticeship, which I hope inspires students to think about options other than university when preparing to leave school.