

Life under lockdown as an apprentice

Jordan shares his experience so far...

Meet Jordan

Hello, my name is Jordan Leaman. I'm a Level 2 business and administration apprentice at Sanctuary Group in Worcester. Back when I was in high school, in the year 2012, I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

In 2013 I started at Heart of Worcestershire College for the next chapter in my academic journey. I had the challenge of settling into an environment that was new for me. This proved difficult, faced with anxiety and problems with my confidence, ultimately my development in these aspects has defined me and helped make me the person I am today.

During my first year of college I was elected as a course rep for IT and in 2017 I received a further education award. Computing has always been a passion for me, I always look to teach myself new techniques and skills that I can pick up and apply to my work-life. I also managed to achieve a C Grade in GCSE English, Level 2 Diploma in ITQ, and a certificate in employability and work skills, through an unpaid internship I did as part of the college's work placement course. I became worried because I hadn't managed to achieve a minimum of Level 2 in functional skills mathematics it would set me back.

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Having thought about university, I questioned if I would manage to cope with the workload and if it would send me into financial difficulties. I decided that the apprenticeship path was the best possible route. My biggest concern was struggling to find a job relevant to my skillset.

Between August and December 2018 was a rocky point for me, having lost my maternal grandparents. I was very close to my grandparents, they would always encourage me to have high aspirations and to not give up. I kept going and persevered with my aspirations.



Towards the end of 2018 I started to look for an apprenticeship. This is when I discovered the opportunity for a vacancy in the Energy Team at Sanctuary Group. I applied through Worcester Group Training Association. This was also my first interview for a paid job.

I like to think that my academic journey has been the story of someone who started out shy, reserved and not sure where he was going, to becoming someone confident, keen and sure of where he would like his future to go. Something I like to remind myself is to always strive to achieve the best results, to the best of my ability, a trait that I look to apply in all my endeavours.

Continuing to work through Lockdown.

My company have issued me with a company laptop to allow me to work from home, I am lucky to having already had the desk space and necessary audio equipment in place. This has meant I have had to adapt to working from one screen, which is difficult having Asperger syndrome where I become accustomed to following a routine.

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My advice for anyone in work during COVID-19, whether it's an apprenticeship or not, is to look after your wellbeing, and most importantly your mental health – set time aside to communicate with friends and family through technology, find hobbies you may not have had time to pick up before isolation. I also recommend taking screen-breaks from devices for 10-20 minutes every hour or two, and again most importantly and to follow the advice from the government and the NHS.

Finally, I would like to say that with strong commitment and dedication to succeed in our careers, success is down to our own development and willpower to persevere and to keep going with our aspirations. As they say, we are the architects of our own futures.

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As someone with Asperger syndrome it is difficult to not see friends physically, social communication plays a big part in my wellbeing and prevents me from having the feelings of facing challenges alone. However, being in isolation nationally we are all facing this challenge together and with the modern amenities we have today, such as technology, we can help each other through this difficult time and use technology to put a smile on the faces of our friends, family and acquaintances.