

My name is Charlie. I am 21 years of age. I went to High school. It wasn't the best place, but I did all my exams and got level 3s and led a normal life but then when I went to college everything changed. People were bullying me at college, and I got my hair burnt. I have learning difficulties and autism, and I have speaking and listening problems. This is probably why I was bullied. At college, I was doing Bridge Builder which is a course for those with learning difficulties who want to go into construction trades. I did painting and decorating, woodworking, plastering and bricklaying. I did 4 years at college and the funny thing is they didn't have any more work for me. I passed all my exams. The only thing left for me to do was plumbing, so I left the college. Maths and English at college was not good so I decided to do them at a different college.

I was supposed to go and have a look at Lighthouse Futures Trust in 2022, but I hadn't finished my course then and I wanted to get through it and finish the level. My auntie told me about Lighthouse Futures Trust and said that they helped people with special needs. She thought this would be better for me, especially to give me more help on my maths and English.

I started at Lighthouse in September 2024. I have a work placement at CITU which is a sustainable building company that uses eco-friendly materials that help with climate control. All the equipment they use is made by their own factory. Citu is a five-minute walk from Leeds central bus station, so I get the bus to work. When I first started my auntie showed me how to get to work and pointed out landmarks to me so I knew where to go, but now I can travel on my own.

I am a labourer at Citu so I go round all the house plots that are up for sale and clean them out and tidy them up ready for sale. Some of these houses cost £2.5 million pounds and they have wonderful views, and they have solar panels.

I also help others who ask me for help. We walk to all the different sites as they are all quite close. I do like my job. Citu is a very nice place and the staff are brilliant. They know I have learning difficulties and they are all fine about it but they don't treat me like a child or treat me in a bad way. If I get anything wrong they will go over it with me and explain it and show me how to do it better. They are nice people and they are not mean to me. I am getting good job experience and I'm having a nice time.

I work Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for 6 hours. I start at 8.30am and finish at 2.30pm. I come home looking a right mess because cleaning the plots is a dirty job. I have to put loads of stuff in the skip, so I get very dirty. I have to wear overalls and hard boots at work and these have to be washed regularly. I also wear a high vis jacket and a hard hat for protection. The site is really safe, and it has designated walkways and

crossings so I feel safe and I haven't had any incidents. I am proud that I managed to complete 7 plots in just one day, all on my own!

I come to college on Thursday and Friday to learn maths and English. College is pretty good, they help me, and they put me through qualifications, such as CSCS which is the construction card that you need to work on a construction site. They also help me with doing my CV. The other interns are also very nice, and we have social clubs every week to get to know one another. I have friends at college, and it is a lot better than my previous college where those with special needs were kept together in a small place. This college isn't like that we can go anywhere and talk to anyone.

I've loved my internship at City. I love the people, and it is not boring for me. The staff are great and they treat me like an adult and not like a person with special needs!