

Annual Report 2023-24



Get
autism
working

CareTrade Charitable Trust Registered Charity 1127890

Introduction

Staff and learners worked hard again on The Autism Project over the last academic year, getting involved with many different and varied activities.

Highlights from the year include:

Organising more **'Insight Days'** with employers to give learners an overview of the different roles available in each organisation. This year, learners visited **ZSL London Zoo** and the **Abellio Bus Garages**, among others (*more information below, page 3*)



Hosting various **social events** throughout the year as part of our enrichment calendar, including a parent/ carers event as part of **'Challenge Poverty Week'** to help support in the **cost of living crisis**, and an event organised by a group of learners who won a **Proud to be me grant** which included lots of **dancing, games** and their very own **photo booth!**

Our TAP Band **'UnTapped'** won a grant from the **Portal Trust** which they used to buy new equipment and put on a **live music night** at The Ivy House in Nunhead- we saw parents, learners and our alumni dancing the night away!


Read more [here](#) and **scan the QR code to watch a video!**



Our **'Working Kitchen'** team of learners, headed up by our Chef trainer Liz, made various dishes for different events we put on throughout the year. This included **catering for our staff Christmas party** and putting on an event at Mercato Metropolitano (*with lots of tasty cakes and treats -pictured left*) to raise awareness of all the work we do at CareTrade- **well done team!**



Employers

Guy's and St Thomas' 
NHS Foundation Trust


Whittington Health
NHS Trust

As always, a huge thanks to the **NHS** and all our **fantastic employers** for their continued support in hosting and working with our learners. .

This year we established a working relationship with some exciting new employers; **Industrial Light and Magic**, who are a visual effects company in Holborn.

 **Industrial Light & Magic**

They now have one of our learners working with them as a **runner**. We've also worked with **The British Museum**, whose placement learner grew in confidence over time and managed his own 'Object Handler Desk' independently.

 **THE BEDFORD**
EST. 1931

 **The British Museum**

We're thrilled to be working with **The Bedford**; an iconic bar, restaurant and music venue in Balham. One of our lucky learners has been working alongside the tech team as a **sound engineer**.

 **SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE**

 **Stepney City Farm**

We've worked with **Stepney City Farm**, which has opened opportunities for our animal/ nature lovers. We're also delighted to have started working with the **Globe Theatre** again.

 **abellio**  **TATE Eats**



Learners were also able to attend some exciting **'Insight days'** at different organisations across London to find out more about different job roles, take part in some work taster activities, and see behind the scenes in places such as **ZSL London Zoo, Abellio Bus Garages, Tate Eats** and **Old Kent Road Fire Station**

 **ZSL LONDON ZOO**

 **L F B**
LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

 **The Autism Project**

Learner Work Placements



Learners got the chance to try out several different **work experience placements** with our host employers – these opportunities have once again been **invaluable** to our learner's success on their journey towards employment and allowed them to develop new and **transferable skills** that will enhance their future career development. All learners have a job coach and have job coach support in their work placements. Learners tried out roles such as *(pictured top left to right)*:

Retail Assistant, Medical Records Clerk, Housekeeper, Farm Assistant, Sales Assistant, Stores/Hospital Porter, Gardening Assistant, Lost Property Assistant, Kitchen Assistant, Administrator, Usher, Archiving Assistant and many more!

SkillUp (Skills for work)

This year in **SkillUp** classes, Year 1 learners worked on their **communication skills** and learnt helpful tips such as how to give **eye contact** without looking directly in the speakers eyes.

Our Skill Up Tutor went and visited all learners in their placements to understand the environments that they were working in and what skills they needed to develop. This also enabled teaching staff to bring in more relatable real life scenarios to the classroom. Tutor visits were additional to job coaches weekly placement visits.

Learners spent lots of time looking at **skills and qualities** in their placements and Skill Up sessions. Learners learnt about how to explain to future employers how they demonstrated their skills in action, giving examples from their work placements using the **CAR technique (Context, Action and Result)**.

There was notable improvements in learners communication and confidence across the year.



In term 3, all learners had a **one-to-one careers interview** with Jo-Anne Rampling from Career Duality (external trained Level 6 careers advisor- pictured above). This was to support them to explore their future career ideas ready to move into year 2. Jo-Anne made each learner an individual **careers action plan** with future ideas to explore and helpful links and resources.



Careers

Careers sessions this year supported Year 2 learners to explore their chosen career path ideas and allow them to make informed decisions about their next steps after TAP. Topics in sessions included learning about their **local labour markets** and **sectors of work**, the **skills** and **qualifications** needed to transition into a chosen path and the **application process** for jobs/training programmes of their choice.

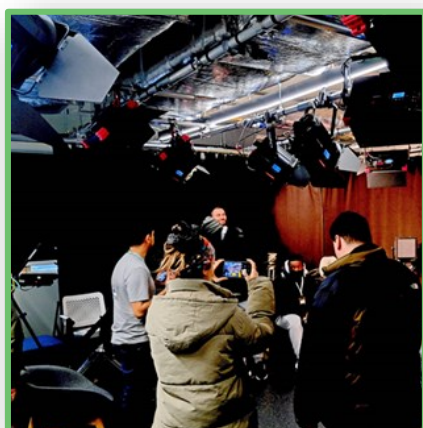
Learners made their own **CVs**, and **cover letters** and worked on developing their **interview skills**. Learners also looked at understanding key terminology on **job adverts**, as well as **reasonable adjustments** and how to ask for the right support for them.



Learners were given the opportunity to experience **mock interviews** with **Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital** and **Barclays Bank** (*pictured left*).

Important careers calendar events were celebrated including National Apprenticeship Week and National Careers Week.

Learners took part in different activities to celebrate these weeks including a talk from an autistic employee in work and his journey to finding employment at Guys & St Thomas' Hospital, and a visit to LSBU Technical College Campus where they saw first-hand examples of various **apprenticeships** available (*pictured bottom left*).



In Term 3, to support with their transition, learners attended a workshop about the support available to neurodiverse employees when in paid employment through the **'Access to Work'** scheme.



Functional Skills

English

This year, the Fun Skills team focused on helping learners improve their communication skills. By taking part in **weekly discussions, debates,** and **delivering presentations** on topics they were interested in, learners got much better at expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Learners also spent time working on writing skills to get them ready for assessments and the world of work. They learned how to **write professional emails,** fill in **application forms,** and **respond appropriately** to messages from employers and colleagues.



The winner of the Sherlock challenge! Learners had to give anonymous answers to questions related to their interests and then link the answers to their classmates.



Learners took part in roleplays throughout the year to practice their communication and prepare for English speaking and listening assessments.

Maths

Throughout the year, learners worked on improving their number skills by practising maths in **real-life situations,** such as managing **money** and **time.** For example, Maths learners went to the local Sainsbury's for a **budgeting activity.** The snacks they bought were later served at a learner social.

Learners worked hard to get ready for all their assessments and received individual support to prepare for exams. We are very proud of all our learners who worked hard and demonstrated good progress in Maths and English.

We are thrilled to share our successes from this academic year:

Learners who were put forward for exams and assessments achieved success rates of **67% in Maths** and **100% in English.**

These pass rates have helped us to identify the challenges faced by learners in Maths and implement targeted strategies to improve their understanding and outcomes moving forward.



Learners practised their practical measuring skills and applied their Maths knowledge to work out the perimeter of 2D shapes.

PSD (Personal & Social Development)

This year **PSD (Personal & Social Development)** sessions were introduced for all learners. The aim of sessions is to build on knowledge and skills to enable learners to lead **healthy, independent** and **fulfilled lives**. Sessions were designed to explore the following key themes: healthy living, relationships, personal safety, online safety, community & responsibility and equality, diversity & inclusion.

The sessions were delivered with an emphasis on developing **social skills** via group discussions, using real-life examples and encouraging learners to share their own views. Learners also had the opportunity to suggest lesson topics they believed would be beneficial to them.

Discussions covered throughout the academic year included:

Safeguarding yourself, autism & neurodiversity, mental health, online scams, British Values, extremism, sexual health & consent, healthy relationships, challenging stereotypes and discrimination, exercise & diet, LGBTQ+ rights & tolerance, and transitions & change.

Highlights from the year include:

- Learners participated in a **sex education workshop** delivered by Brook.
- Learners took part in **workshops** on **resilience, healthy relationships** and **transition** delivered by The Nest Southwark.
- Learners participated in a **Mental Health workshop** (*picture top right*) delivered by Kooth. They discussed the support Kooth provides to people who have mental health worries/conditions.
- Learners practised **budgeting** and **independent shopping skills**, using their purchases to make their favourite smoothies (*picture bottom right*).



Wellbeing

Learners participated in many events throughout the year including **Young Mind's Hello Yellow Day** (Mental Health), **Movember** (Men's Mental Health), **Black History Month** and **LGBTQ+ Pride Month**. We also celebrated **Neurodiversity Celebration Week** and **World Autism Acceptance Week** by sharing the lived experience of our learners and staff.

Learners took part in various activities including an exercise challenge, discussing strategies on how to improve mental health, participating in workshops, social events and making displays.

Highlights from the year include:

- We introduced a **wellbeing lunch hour** at the learners' work placements to discuss healthy living, confidence and self-esteem building. **1:1 support** was provided to the learners who needed it.
- Our **mental health ambassador Keron** (*pictured right*) supported our wellbeing lead in organising and leading on our half termly social events.
- Learners participated in the **TAP's Got Talent** event which saw lots of learners taking to the stage!
- Learners participated in **organising a social event** after winning a grant from the Proud to be me fund.
- We won a grant to run a parents event to help **fight poverty**. Parents were offered generous food parcels to help their families during the **cost-of-living crisis**.
- Our summer event **celebrated learners' successes** this academic year; it was a day full of fun, food and dancing with our learners in their best party outfits!



Independence

This year saw another exciting year of learner's developing their independence, with a primary focus on **travel independence sessions**. Learners attended classroom and practical sessions on **personal safety, road safety** and **travelling using the Tfl network**. The sessions aimed to support learners in accessing the transport network confidently and safely in and around their local and wider communities, as well as equipping learners with the necessary skills to plan, organise and execute seamless travel experiences.

Highlights from the year include:

- Learners attended the **Southwark travel training programme** again. This session is developed by The Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Team, Arriva and TfL Travel Mentoring Service.
- We attended sessions with **DLR Community Ambassadors** on how to stay safe.
- We hosted a workshop with **The Money Charity** which covered cost of living, money, identity safety and financial wellbeing.
- We held our annual **Social Action Day** this year in Burgess Park, where we picked litter so that others could enjoy the benefits of a clean park (pictured right).

Learners' favourite journeys this year included:

Covent Garden, Hamleys, London City Airport, Elstree Studios, Surrey Quays Leisure Park, the Uber Boat to Greenwich (pictured below) and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park!



Having received the TfL Travel for Life Gold Accreditation last year, this year we were highly commended for the '**Best Newcomer Award**' as part of **TfL STARS**

Outcomes

We are also proud to announce that **69% of TAP graduates progressed into work or further education/training** this year.

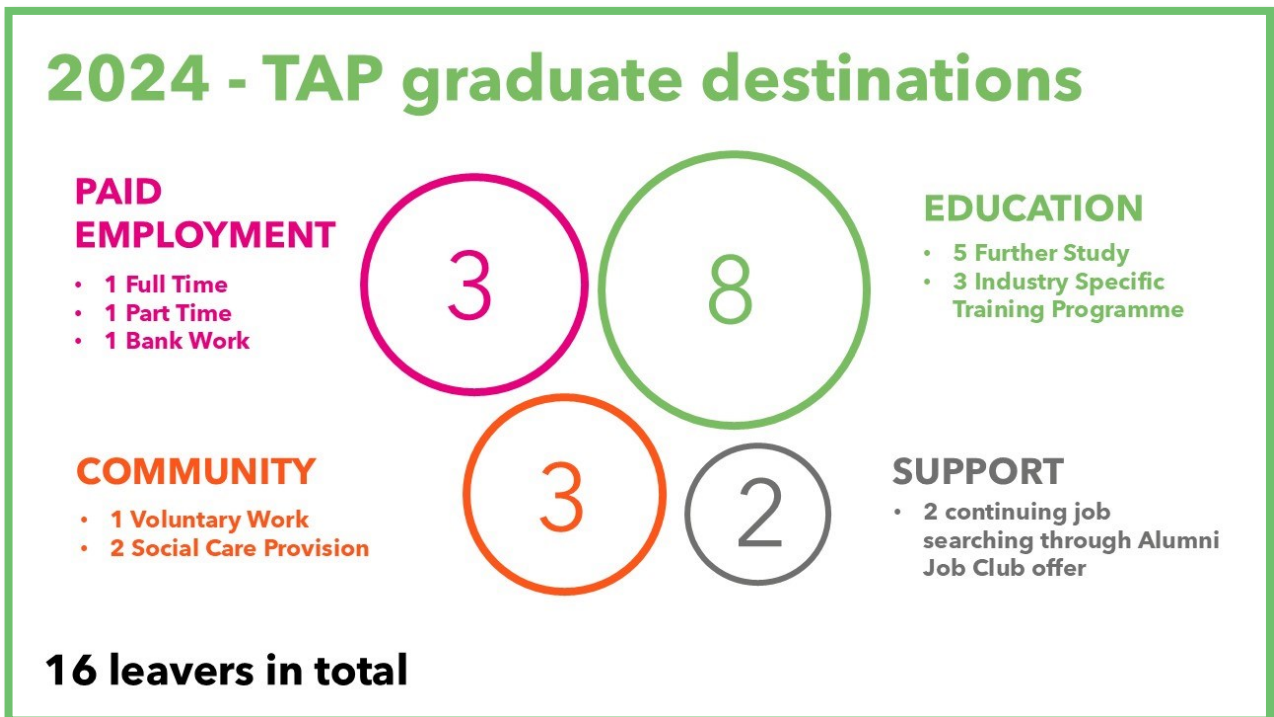
Many of our learners this year **discovered industry passions and aspirations** by completing work placements at TAP that led them to decide to pursue **further training and study** in **specific job sectors**. These learners made the choice to continue to develop their skills and gain further qualifications in various areas including IT, media, transport and hospitality.

19% of TAP graduates this year gained **paid employment**– this was **60% of those who had decided that employment was their primary goal after leaving TAP (5 leavers)**.

Of those who moved into paid employment, learners have started in transport, hospitality, and housekeeping roles.

All TAP leavers will now be invited to join our **alumni** which includes being invited to socials and events. Those who wish to continue job searching with support have been invited to join our **'alumni job club'**. Those who have been successful in finding employment will be able to receive continued job coaching support from CareTrade at their workplace through the Access to Work scheme.

Currently, **18 TAP leavers** from previous years **continue to receive ongoing support from CareTrade** through the **Access to Work** scheme



A message from our CEO, Karen Edwards

The Autism Project (TAP) is CareTrade's flagship education programme and provides intensive and highly individualised support to help young people to find their own pathways towards their goals.

This year, for the first time, **more learners decided to continue further study** as part of their journey towards work than those that wanted to move directly into employment. This has **lowered our three-year average** from **56% to 45%** of TAP graduates moving directly into paid employment after TAP.



Any disappointment here needs to be put in context. It **remains significantly above the ONS (Office of National Statistics) figure of 22% autistic adults in employment.** More importantly, it is imperative that we remember our purpose and remain true to supporting each individual learner on their journey. Continuing to study further to move towards a personal goal/career pathway is equally significant, especially within this age group.

All TAP leavers/graduates had a positive destination that was relevant to their goals and I would like to recognise the progress and determination of these young people and the dedication and passion of the TAP staff supporting them.

Careers inevitably develop and change over time, and **CareTrade offers programmes that TAP graduates can access in the future**, if and when they are needed, whether it is to look for a job, change career or to offer support to sustain current employment. This **alumni offer is unique** and it is essential for the long term wellbeing of the autistic work force.

TAP learners tend to join younger now than ten years ago and this is likely to result in more variation in individual desires, goals and journeys. It is our role to support our leavers through alumni socials and events. TAP graduates are encouraged to stay in touch and those that want to work but have not secured work can join our alumni job club.

The Autism Project proves that with the right support, autistic young people who want to have careers can be a part of the work force.



A message from Head of Education, Mark Finch

Reading this year's TAP report filled me with immense pride as I couldn't be prouder of the progress our learners at The Autism Project (TAP) have made this year.

The results speak volumes: 69% of TAP graduates have moved into work, further education, or training—a testament to the commitment and hard work of both our learners and our dedicated team.

It's also inspiring to see that 19% of graduates have secured paid employment, highlighting the impact of TAP's efforts. But **TAP's focus goes well beyond job readiness; we're dedicated to preparing our learners for every aspect of adulthood.** This includes building essential skills in areas like independent travel, wellbeing, and personal and social development (PSD). By equipping our learners with these tools, we're empowering them to lead more independent, fulfilling lives.



Additionally, the ongoing support from the Access to Work scheme is invaluable, ensuring that graduates are not only ready for their next steps but also have guidance as they settle into their careers.

This **holistic approach** to training, work placements, wellbeing, and life skills is what makes **TAP unique**, empowering our learners to build sustainable careers and step confidently into adulthood.

If you are considering what to do next, please give us a call, come to an information session or an open day. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



www.care-trade.org/the-autism-project/



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