

Sophie's story

Derwen College

Sophie is the captain of her own destiny having graduated from Derwen College in July 2024 after three years on the Hospitality & Food pathway. During this time she progressed into a confident young lady who has progressed to a supported internship and moved into own home.

Graduate Sophie gained a supported internship at a major supermarket and has moved out of the family home into her own supported living flat.

It's a remarkable transformation considering she arrived at college with significant anxieties which meant that her placement at a local college hadn't worked for her.

With a diagnosis of autism, Sophie needed support to settle into her new environment at College. It was her first time living away from home and staff helped her to manage that initial transition to College.

However, it wasn't long before she gained confidence. Her self esteem blossomed as her independence skills flourished.

She enjoyed helping to make meals, and setting the table in her residence. Care staff supported her to be able to self-medicate for her epilepsy, which was another step on her independence journey.

In her pathway area, Sophie worked in Hospitality and Food where she excelled, first learning key skills in the kitchen and restaurant, before moving on to work experience.

Internal work experience opportunities exist at Derwen Marketplace, at our on-site customer facing outlets, where Sophie worked



Sophie impressed with her food prep skills at Moreton Hall.



Sophie gained an internship, working at Tesco supermarket.

in the Walled Garden Café, the Food Centre, the Orangery restaurant and Hotel 751. Here she honed her customer service and hospitality skills where she enjoyed talking to and serving customers.

From there she progressed to weekly external work experience placements at McDonalds restaurant and Moreton Hall School canteen, where she did food prep. She impressed staff at placements with her work ethic and ability to work with very little support.

For her second and third year at Derwen College, Sophie lived independently with friends at the college's bungalow site where staff are available to support students whenever the need it – much like supported living.

It was a great stepping stone for Sophie, which she relished. Her and her housemates would make tea together, preparing lovely meals including weekly Sunday roasts, which she was famous for.

She also learnt travel training skills to walk and use public transport safely for work and day-to-day getting about. Outside of work, she also completed Bronze, Silver and progressed



She was awarded a Graduation prize for her independence skills.

through the majority of her Gold DofE award. She was a competent member of the DofE team, and on her Silver canoeing expedition, she got the nickname Captain Dempsey!

Sophie graduated in 2024, where she was awarded the prize for Independence for her exceptional progress living in bungalows and performing daily housekeeping tasks with minimal support.

After college, Sophie embarked on a Supported Internship in Stoke where she worked four days a week at Tesco in Hanley.

She lives away from home in her own one-bedroom flat. Staff are on-hand to lend support if she should need it, and she is just one bus ride away from her family. Which she uses independently – of course!

“Sophie graduated from Derwen having learnt life skills that she will go on to build upon to become a successful, self-sustaining young woman.”