

Healthcare

Apprenticeships

## NIAMH CLARKE - LEVEL 7 ACCOUNTANCY OR TAXATION PROFESSIONAL APPRENTICE

Niamh Clarke is a Level 7 Accountancy or Taxation Professional apprentice. We spoke to Niamh recently about her experiences of undertaking an apprenticeship as a young person with LDD (Learning Difficulties and Disabilities). Keep reading to find out more.

### Did you receive any careers advice on apprenticeships at school?

In school, there was no careers advice or direct push to go into apprenticeships. Instead, we were encouraged to go to college. My year was the first one that had to stay in education until 18, so our natural progression was to go to college. We didn't get any visits from apprenticeship providers or employers talking about apprenticeships. When I was at sixth form college, there was careers advice but it focused on University and the UCAS process. I found out about apprenticeships from my own research and talking to family and friends.

### Why did you choose to do the Level 7 apprenticeship and how has the programme been so far?

I chose the Level 7 Apprenticeship because of the kudos of the role and what it would mean for my opportunity for career progression and earning potential. I joined the apprenticeship from University, so when I started in the workplace I found it hard at first to juggle working and learning for my apprenticeship. I spoke to my training provider, Kaplan, about how I was struggling and joined a neuro-diversity call at my employer (as I had discovered I am dyslexic whilst at University). I then spoke with my Talent Coach and their Inclusion Lead which resulted in getting the ball rolling for additional support and a discovery that I have ADHD. It helped me understand what I was entitled to both at work and with my apprenticeship. I now feel much more able to talk about this, even though it's quite personal. I've learnt you can only get so far with dealing with it yourself, you need to lean on others for help.



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#### **You did a traditional degree before your apprenticeship. Now you have access to additional support how has your experience changed?**

The support was there for dyslexia in my final year of university, and they worked hard to help me get adjustments in place for my finals. Independently, I had to seek out extra support with a tutor on specific matters. However, in my apprenticeship, its real focus is on me for the long term and not just passing exams. The areas I know I struggle with in my apprenticeship are being developed for me to succeed for my whole career, not just a three year degree. The elements I was struggling with, such as my organisation and time management at university, really improved on the apprenticeship as I knew the signs to watch out for and had guidance from the Inclusion Manager on how best to manage my work and apprenticeship development with my ADHD. I have regular check-ins, and I can decide on the frequency. My Talent Coach gives me an action plan which we changed to help me be really clear on what I need to do.



#### **What would you say to any young person with LDD considering an apprenticeship?**

It's a give and take scenario. Find an employer and training provider who you feel you can disclose your information to. However, you also need to be proactive and use your voice to say what support you need or think you might require. Speak up. Your apprenticeship provider wants to see you excel in all areas. They're there to help you so don't worry about raising any concerns you have.

The apprenticeship for me has been the best tool for reflecting on my needs and what I want to see changed. The apprenticeship gives you breathing space to think about all areas of your development.

The biggest factor for me was going against family expectations of what my education path should be. Remember to keep your end goal in mind, and you can do an apprenticeship in a really caring and supportive environment. You won't be left to your own devices. And it's your own path as an individual, so don't necessarily judge yourself against others.

# POPPY LAILA, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSION MANAGER AT KAPLAN



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“The main goal of the inclusion team at Kaplan is to contribute successfully to the facilitation of learners’ autonomy and independence, in their learning and their work environment. We worked closely with Niamh to provide support for her requirements, as we do with other learners. That might be for example putting a support plan in place to help with auditory short-term memory and visual short-term memory. We encourage a holistic approach by removing barriers for apprentices to maximise equity. Reasonable adjustments such as exam access arrangements, reading aids, screen overlays, additional tutor and talent coach support, adapting resources, workplace buddy, referral to Occupational Health along with regular review meetings of the support plan have allowed us to review the impact of each provision and adapt the plan accordingly to make apprentices’ experience inclusive and accessible.”

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