

My Story – Navigating education with ADHD

OFFICIAL

Ages 16 – 18: Completed 4 x A Levels

Aged 18 – 19: University the first time – Psychology at Cardiff Met

Aged 19 – 20: University the second time at Liverpool John Moore's

Aged 23 – 27: L4 Railway Engineering Apprenticeship at Network Rail

Aged 26: Received ADHD Diagnosis

Aged 29: L6 CMDA at University of Staffordshire alongside job at Network Rail of Scheme Project Manager

Legal Compliance

Inclusive Culture

Effective Support

Information Overload

Energy Fluctuations

Hyperfocus

Impulsivity

Mental Fatigue

Verbal Overflow

Racing Thoughts

Time Blindness

Executive Dysfunction

Barrier to Expression

Emotional Intensity

Restlessness

Direction Confusion

Information Overload

Energy Fluctuations

Hyperfocus

Impulsivity

Mental Fatigue

Racing Thoughts

Time Blindness

Executive Dysfunction

Barrier to Expression

Emotional Intensity

Restlessness

What the evidence shows

Standard fixes don't fit: Generic support packages ignore ADHD's individuality. (Jansen et al, 2017)

Masked needs, missed voices: Apprentices rarely help shape their own support. (Haglund, 2020)

Same support, tougher demands: Rising academic pressure isn't matched by adaptive help. (UK Government, 2010)

System failure: Admin gaps and weak enforcement block effective adjustments. (Pearson and Gimblett, 2023)

Overloaded and undertrained: Staff lack time and confidence to apply support plans. (Pearson and Gimblett, 2023)

ADHD is a disorder that is defined through analysis of behaviour. People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity– impulsivity that interferes with day-to-day functioning and/or development. ADHD UK. (2025)

In August 2025, an estimated 4.33%, around 2.5million people in England have ADHD (NHS, 2025)

ADHD in Action: Practical Support for Apprentices Who Think Differently

Heather Campbell

Recommendations - Turning insight into action

Extensions ≠ support: Deadline delays are a band-aid, not a solution. (Smith et al, 2025)

Design for one, benefit all: Inclusive tools help every learner thrive. (Design Council, 2006)

Assessments need a rethink: Recall-heavy tests sideline ADHD strengths. (Liu and Huang, 2021)

Rigour ≠ rigidity: Policy language can undermine the legitimacy of adjustments. (CMI, 2024)

Support ≠ hand-holding: One-to-one help builds independence, not dependence. (Liu and Harwood, 2022)

Flex isn't a favour: Alternative teaching models should be standard, not special. (Jones et al, 2025)

Culture first

Train with empathy

Make support visible

Coach executive function

Rethink assessment

Automate inclusion

Focus on impact

Learn from work models

Teach flexibly

Invest in what works

Embed neurodiversity into values, not just policies. (Bunbury, 2020)

Use lived experience to build real understanding.

Let apprentices rate their adjustments anonymously.

Scaffold planning, prioritisation, and follow-through.

Test skills, not just memory.

Let tech handle adjustments, not admin.

Support plans should guide teaching, not diagnose.

Use Access to Work as a blueprint for education.

Break tasks down, offer options, and prep materials early.

Research what truly helps neurodiver gent learners.

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