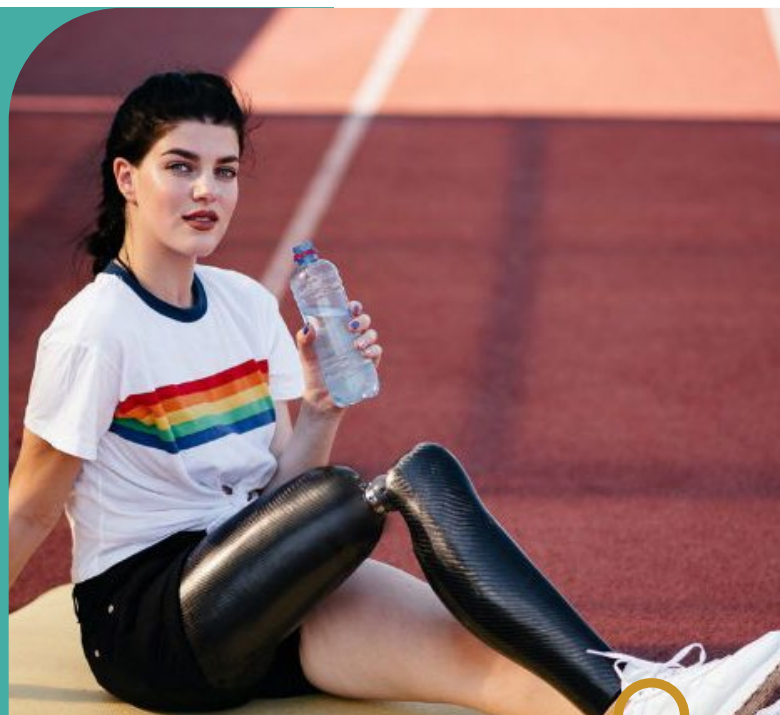


Amaze SEND Futures Project

Supporting SEND young people to think about their future

The aim of this partnership project between Amazing Futures, Amaze's young people's service, and Brighton Metropolitan College was to support 14- to 25-year-olds with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to think about their future, build confidence and skills, and better understand the education, employment and training options available to them.



METHODOLOGY

The project was co-developed by Amaze's Brighton and Hove intern, a young person with SEND, based on Amaze's young-people-led model and her experience of co-planning and co-delivering Amaze's peer support groups and SEND-friendly activities and workshops. The project included:

- setting up a new social group for young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition: The ASC group first met at Brighton MET during spring term, with about 10 students attending the weekly sessions. Amaze's intern helped the group design their group agreement and plan their sessions, while MET staff invited various speakers, many of whom identified as neurodivergent, to talk to the group.
- delivering four creative workshops: These sessions, held at Brighton MET and supported by its staff, covered mark-making, photography, video-game design and stop-motion animation. The workshops gave participants the chance to try creative activities, talk to professionals working in creative jobs and find out about HE pathways into the creative sector.
- delivering four 'Working Towards Careers' workshops and a handbook for SEND young people: These sessions covered, among other topics, job applications, interviews and legal rights to support at work. One of the sessions was delivered via a stand-up comedy workshop, with a focus on using autistic strengths and recognising differences as advantages.

Participants chose the topics for the creative and careers workshops via a questionnaire and also informed the delivery style of the workshops. This ensured that each young person was able to fully participate in the planned activities. Participants' feedback was recorded and will be used to design future workshops.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Context

Pupils with SEND face many barriers to their education and these difficulties can continue beyond school, with many struggling to move into training and employment. SEND young people leave education with only a 5.9% chance of securing paid employment (BASE 2018/19 data). Tailored careers advice and experience of the world of work is vital to improving their career outcomes. This project was part of the SLN Community Fund which aimed to link local community organisations with state schools and colleges in order to use the expertise of those outside of the education system and learn from one another.

Duration

21st February to 30th June 2022

Partners

Amaze and Brighton Metropolitan College

Funding source

Uni Connect Community Fund

Amaze also provided any additional long- and short-term support the young people needed via its peer support groups and specialist careers service, including one-to-one careers information and advice to help young people identify their options, develop job-search skills and understand what support/ reasonable adjustments they can ask employers for.

IMPACT

Some 35-plus young people with SEND took part in the project; some accessed more than one activity but 15 attended the creative workshops, 19 attended the careers workshops and 28 received one-to-one careers support. Through the project, the young people attending were able to:

- improve their knowledge of what it's like to study a creative media subject at HE level and to work in this area
- improve their awareness of their options, including those available at Brighton MET
- better understand the support available to them, including how Brighton MET can accommodate their needs
- make friends and increase their confidence in meeting their own needs and taking their next steps
- increase their confidence and skills in finding, applying for and maintaining employment (according to 60% of those receiving careers support).

Participant feedback on the project included the following statements:

'I feel more confident about my future. The workshops were not only useful but also fun. The IAG coordinators' way of presenting made learning easy but also very chilled out.'

'I liked that we had a go at different activities. It was good to try out things I haven't done before.'

'It's great to see someone like yourself on stage [during the careers workshop]. I now know more about comedy now and will write my own jokes.'

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The learning from this successful partnership with Brighton MET can be used to develop partnerships with other providers in the city, ensuring that more young people with SEND can be referred to other services and supported into volunteering/employment through routes outside of Amaze.

By sharing expertise and strengthening the community of support for SEND learners, the project has been able to increase young people's awareness of and confidence to access learning opportunities at Brighton MET.

The creative workshops offered young people with SEND the opportunity to learn new concepts and methods using a SEND-friendly approach already familiar to them from attending Amaze's peer support groups and activities. This helped the young people to challenge themselves by learning new skills in a fun, engaging manner. Overall, the attendees' feedback was very positive, and both Brighton MET and the facilitators involved in the social group and workshops are keen to run them again, subject to funding.



TALKING POINTS

- Does your organisation include SEND learners in the development of your projects?
- Does your organisation work with community organisations to develop best practice for SEND learners and use the expertise of those outside your organisation?
- What SEND specific resources does your organisation use to support SEND learners in your careers and guidance work?

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