Hi Everyone,

My name is Jack Fitzpatrick, I am 20 years old, and I have a diagnosis of Autism and Dyspraxia. I am currently a third year student at Liverpool John Moores University studying an Education Studies and Inclusion Ba Hons degree. In July this year I completed a month working on a Diversity and Inclusion Consultancy Internship with LJMU based remotely, working from home within the Careers department reviewing unseen disabilities and Diversity and Inclusion within LJMU. I am also sitting on the Inclusive and Accessible Digital Environment Working Group for LJMU and a steering committee creating a disability careers event with speakers in November 2021 highlighting our commitment to showcase the disability inclusive culture within LJMU.

My diagnosis has given me challenges over the years, but I have had fantastic support in order to overcome these barriers enabling me to develop coping strategies. It has been a long journey to where I am today.

I was diagnosed at the age of three with Autism and Dyspraxia. The challenges I faced included coordination difficulties which impede my development and I have had intensive support to overcome these challenges. I found some daily tasks that are often taken for granted very difficult. One of my strengths from the early age of 1 was my ability to talk and communicate with people. Apparently, I haven’t stopped since and enjoy conversing with people. Early diagnosis is the key to my development, and this provided me with fantastic support from family, friends, and Learning Support Assistant’s throughout my education. It truly has allowed me to fulfil my full potential as I now have 8 GCSEs, 3 A Levels and I am now studying a degree in a specialised and an ever-emerging field. However, I am aware that I have been fortunate to have had the right support which has enabled me to overcome barriers in all areas of my life. This has led me to try and strive to help others to reach their full potential.

My Education Studies and Inclusion Degree has given me a holistic overview of the education system and more importantly the topic of diversity and inclusivity and the discrimination and other problems this can bring within society. This has fuelled my interest in the sector of Diversity and Inclusion. The last year during the Covid 19 pandemic has provided me amazing opportunities. I created a LinkedIn account and started to network with people within this sphere and this has allowed me unprecedented opportunities to speak with people in the Diversity and Inclusion sector globally and within small and major multinational companies. This has culminated with me having talks with a multinational construction company and completing my three-week university placement with them in January to February this year.

During this time, I produced a five-thousand-word report on their inclusivity culture with 20 recommendations which has consequently allowed the company to integrate some of these recommendations and the roll out of the Sunflower Lanyard to all people in the company across their 325 sites around the UK. My contribution also supported them gaining ‘ Disability Confident‘ employer status.

As a result of my placement I am now on a 4 month Internship with the company working remotely within their HR department and being rotated across smaller departments completing projects which are making impactful changes to the company.

During the past year I have formed a partnership with 3 people to research Diversity & Inclusion within the workplace. The outcome of this research has resulted in me setting up my own Diversity and Inclusion consultancy business with my business partner Gillian Burgis called ‘Inclusive Environments’.

I really appreciate the opportunities I have been given and it has been very insightful how LJMU establish an inclusive culture to ensure that everyone has access to all services and to transition into employment.

During the course of the Internship, I produced a report which consisted of a set of recommendations to establish views on accessibility and inclusion within the different areas of the career’s website. This will hopefully allow insightful conversations to happen and accessibility to be integrated for all who use the website.

LJMU are really wanting to strive to create an inclusive culture for all students and employees. An analogy that I like to use is that buildings are built of strong foundations and this can certainly be applied to educational establishments such as LJMU ensuring the company has an ethos of fairness, equality, respect, dignity, and diversity, they are the strong foundations that allow organisations such as LJMU to remain standing for many years to come.