

Connor is overflowing with compliments for Dave and the team at Aspire in Sheffield, for how they have supported him to make progress with his life and career. After finishing school, Connor attended college in Crystal Peaks, studying Games Development and IT & Business, and hoped to secure a role in one of the many digital businesses in the city once he had finished his studies. Despite applying for lots of roles in IT, Connor wasn't offered a job, and even after applying for "any old job" he found himself unemployed and getting increasingly frustrated.

By what Connor describes as, "a stroke of luck", his employment advisor at the Job Centre referred him to Talent Match, who then put him in touch with Aspire. The organisation is a community enterprise in Sheffield that refurbish and recycle IT equipment, creating opportunities for vulnerable and socially excluded people along the way.

Connor started off volunteering with the project 3 days a week, and was soon offered a paid position. He enjoyed putting some of his learning from college into use, and picking up new skills along the way. Connor's placement started off in the recycling unit where equipment which cannot be refurbished is sorted, and moved on to the tech department where equipment is tested before it is sold through the community shop. Connor enjoyed the relaxed and friendly working atmosphere at Aspire, where he came into contact with lots of different people, some of whom had learning differences, yet all working together as part of one team.

When it was time for Connor to move on to his next challenge, Aspire supported him with getting his CV up to a professional standard, "which it definitely wasn't before!" he jokingly admitted. Connor soon secured a full time job in a computer warehouse, doing similar work to that which he carried out at Aspire, but on an international level - something he's excited about as he can see how his education and training, complemented by Aspire, is leading to him having a positive impact and advancing his career.

"I've found a passion I never knew I had. I have always been interested in IT but never really knew which direction to go in. If I hadn't started volunteering at Aspire and stuck with it, I never would have got this job and been doing something that I enjoy. Dave and Steve, the shop manager, saw potential in me that I didn't know was there. They believed in me and changed my perspective, and I'm really grateful."

The future is looking bright for Connor. He has recently applied for a new role at his company, which will see him taking on more responsibility and developing his skills by managing the repair and refurbishment of computers before they are sent out to customers. Fingers crossed!

You can read more about the work of Aspire here: <https://www.aspire-sheffield.co.uk/>