

Enabling people with a learning disability into work through Digital Champion training and support

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Digital Unite is teaming up with the UK's leading learning disability charity, [Mencap](#), on a new initiative that explores how becoming a Digital Champion can open up wider employment opportunities for people with a learning disability.

Funded by the Ufi charitable trust, the discovery project entitled DCN Enable will examine how people with a learning disability can be effectively trained and supported in a formal volunteering role to improve their social and digital skills.

There are an estimated 800,000 working age adults with mild-to-moderate learning disabilities in the UK but only 6% are in work¹. Those who are working face limited employment opportunities and often take on manual roles. Now, as workplaces become increasingly automated and digitised and rely on social and soft skills such as problem solving and negotiating, those lower level jobs are at risk of changing in focus or being removed altogether. For example, a shop floor worker in a supermarket is now required to use a digital device to check stock deliveries and a post room assistant is replaced by robotic fulfilment equipment.

Led by Digital Unite in partnership with Mencap, Enable will work with people with a learning disability and their employers to explore the changing nature of the workplace. It will identify suitable learning content and assistive technologies which will then be tested amongst users to ensure it is practical and accessible. The scoping work will run until September and will inform a wider Test and Learn programme.

Payal has dyslexia, she says *" Being able to watch videos online instead of reading helps me to learn about things more easily. I have been able to improve my writing skills this way which has helped me at work and personally too."*

Emma Weston Chief Executive at Digital Unite said: *" From the thousands of people Digital Unite has trained and supported we know that being a Digital Champion has huge life-changing benefits. Not only do Champions develop their own digital knowledge but they also learn mentoring and engagement skills and feel better about themselves from helping others. Their increase in self-confidence can spur them on in other areas of their lives, taking on more responsibilities at work and pursuing other learning opportunities. We are delighted to be partnering with Mencap to explore how the Digital Champion role can make a significant difference to people with learning disabilities."*

Mark Capper, Head of Development at Mencap said: *" For people with a learning disability it can be difficult to build up skills and experience suitable for the modern workplace. Developing new skills and confidence as a Digital Champion has real potential to improve the way people with a learning disability are involved in today's modern workforce. Being employed is about more than earning money. It's about feeling valued, independent and fulfilled. We're doing everything we can to make this possible for more people with a learning disability."*

↑Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, England 2017-18