



**“I knew I wanted to do something that made a difference.”**

### **What made you consider an apprenticeship?**

At aged 18, many of my friends went off to university. I didn't feel like university was a good fit for me, and I really had no clear idea of the career path I wanted to take.

An opportunity came up to join a new rotational apprenticeship programme coordinated by Frimley Park Trust. Optalis became my host employer for the duration of the apprenticeship. The apprenticeship was for 15 months and I started in May 2019.

### **At what point did you consider a career in care?**

I wasn't actively looking to pursue a career in care, but I knew I wanted to do something that made a difference. This opportunity came up and I was open to taking myself out of my comfort zone and experiencing something new.

### **What did your apprenticeship entail?**

My first placement was at Optalis, working alongside Rehabilitation Care Assistants, Occupational Therapists and Physios. This 8 week placement, was a positive introduction to Health and Social Care. I particularly enjoyed the aspect of working out in the community.

I then took up a 4 month placement at Frimley Park Hospital, which was quite different but I was working in a great supportive team.

My next placement at Wexham Park Hospital started shortly before the pandemic took a grip. I have to admit this was a really intense and challenging time. I was working on a Covid ward, and supporting some very ill and vulnerable people. The hardest part was seeing people suffer without the support of their family and loved ones. It wasn't long before I became unwell with the virus too.

In June I returned to Optalis to conclude my training. In August I was offered a permanent position with the organisation working as a Rehabilitation Care Assistant.

**We talked to Megan Brown - Reablement Care Assistant in our Short Term Support and Reablement Team about her apprenticeship and why she chose to join our organisation.**

### **What have you learnt? Have there been any positive outcomes?**

Much of the training you receive during the apprenticeship is 'on the job'. I have found the classroom training that I have done on my various placements really interesting, but the pandemic caused much of that to stop. The reflective learning has continued throughout and I have found the support provided by Optalis to be really helpful.

I have certainly learnt new skills during my apprenticeship and have developed resilience that I didn't know I was capable of.

One of the real positives of working in the different environments is that I can genuinely empathise with people. Many of the people I support in my role at Optalis have been recently discharged from hospital. Having worked across both settings, I have a greater insight into the journey they have been on.

### **What support have you had?**

The Assistant Manager at STS&R has been a great support to me. This is a new programme, so in many ways we have worked through it together. She has helped me follow up with the training provider if I had any questions, and has been proactive in trying to understand how best to support my learning.

When I was unwell the team from Optalis checked in on me to see if I was ok, and stayed in contact with me throughout my placements.

### **What made you choose Optalis as your employer?**

I am really enjoying working at Optalis. They have been a breath of fresh air.

I like being able to support people in their own homes. In many cases their family do not live nearby, so I may be the only face they see all day. I make sure I make it count. It is a rewarding role to have.