



**Celebrating  
Connect Yourself  
January 25**

Connect Yourself is a unique and innovative project that can achieve great things for the young people involved.

Connect Yourself works with young people (identified as SEND) who have finished school, college or supported internships and feel like they still have lots to learn.

We recognise that young people often have aspirations for a greater level of independence, but without the necessary skills, knowledge or support, are unable to achieve this. Some young people struggle to identify what they want to achieve in their lives.

Connect Yourself helps young people to think, plan and learn in a creative, fun and person centred way. We will help the young person to put together a plan that reflects what they want to achieve and the support they may need.

Working with existing partners across Warrington we will either deliver the training required or support the young person into the appropriate setting or service.

Our aim is to support each young person involved to maximise their potential, achieve greater independence and improve their quality of life.

Throughout our work it has been important to acknowledge that achieving effective and meaningful participation for young people particularly those with specific cognitive challenges and/or learning disabilities, time and flexibility is needed to build relationships in order to understand individual needs particularly around communication and the tools and approaches required to fully and meaningfully engage.

The Connect Yourself project is able to provide a unique, bespoke, and creative approach to meeting the needs of young people participating in the project. This has ensured real and lasting success for participants who have valued the individualised approach to their support. This has enabled young people to achieve their goals in a way that works for them and encourages positive engagement.

The success stories shared reflect both the range of needs of the young people and the individual approaches needed for each young person to fulfil their potential.

# Sam's Story

## About

Sam is 23 years of age and has a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome. Sam was struggling to access his local community and as a result had become increasingly isolated at home which had further impacted both his confidence and levels of anxiety.



Sam had clear aspirations to gain employment however at the point of the referral Sam was reluctant to travel independently which he recognised would be a barrier in achieving this. In addition, Sam wanted to develop and gain more confidence in public settings.

We agreed with Sam to work on the following goals:

- To be able to travel independently.
- To access a café and be able to confidently order and pay for his own food in public places.
- To gain paid employment.

### **A referral received from the preparation to adulthood team:**

*It would be great for Sam to be more independent and gain more confidence. He currently does not really go out and he does not have the confidence to travel. He would like to gain employment and be independent travelling to and from work. He would like to be able to order food in the café and manage money on public transport. All of these things would make a huge difference to Sam's life.*

## What we did

The Project Worker supported Sam to develop a step-by-step plan for travelling from his home to the town centre.

The Project Worker developed role play scenarios with Sam so he could safely practice what to communicate when using the bus and 'what if' plans should his regular bus be cancelled or changed. This bespoke approach was key in the Project Worker gaining his trust and encouraging Sam through the process.



# Sam's Story

## What we did continued

The plan included the following:

- Supporting Sam to become familiar with Warrington bus service 'Touch and Go' app to use for both information and reassurance when using the bus service.
- Develop and increase Sam's skills in road safety awareness.
- Plan journeys creating personalised documents with guiding text and photos (see example on next page).

The Project Worker moved forward on the following steps with Sam:

Stage 1 – The Project Worker supported Sam to travel from his home address to town.

Stage 2 - Once Sam felt confident enough the Project Worker then progressed to shadowing Sam at a distance.

Stage 3 – Sam was met by the Project Worker at the start of his journey and once safely on the bus the Project Worker then travelled to meet Sam at his destination.

Stage 4 - Once Sam was confident in travelling to town he identified he would like to be able to independently order food and drink in a cafe. The Project Worker using role play helped Sam to develop confidence around what to say when ordering food and a drink. The Project worker also worked with Sam to help plan, budget and use cash machines in preparation for visiting cafes. This enabled Sam to successfully use his local cafe and feel confident in ordering himself a sandwich and a cup of tea.

This approach allowed Sam the flexibility and time to move through the stages, building his skills and confidence at a pace that worked for him.

Once Sam was confident in travelling from home to town, the Project worker then incorporated visits to New Leaf (Warrington Disability Partnership) so Sam could attend appointments with his Job Coach.



# Sam's Story

## Achievements

Sam was able to achieve the following goals and skills over a period of 3 months.

- Now able to confidently travel independently from his home to the town centre.
- By accessing the Job Coach service Sam has developed IT skills and interview techniques.
- Applied for and successfully attended a job interview and gained paid employment.
- Continues to access local shops and cafés, Sam now feels comfortable in going into both and independently ordering or purchasing items.
- Now able to use self-service cash points using both cash and payment card.

## What happened next

Sam is thoroughly enjoying his new job and he has used his new skills and confidence to travel further afield independently.



***“Thank you so much for all your help, I love my new job and I’m feeling much more confident”***

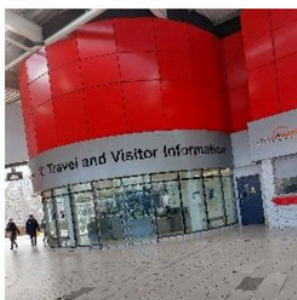
# Sam's Story



## Bus Journey from my home address to Warrington Disability Partnership



Walk to Lumb Brook Bridge and take the 1 minute past 9 CAT 5 Bus to Warrington Bus Station



Here is the Travel and Information Centre that I can use if I need some assistance



Take the nine forty am number 32 bus from Stand 8 to the Coach and Horses



Pressing the stop button when coming up to the Coach and Horses

# Sam's Story



Crossing the pedestrian crossing and walking down Beauford Street To WDP



Take the bus at the bus stop across the road from the Coach and Horses

Sankey Bridges, Coach & Horses	
P2 - Priestley College	
7 - Warrington	Arriva
32 - Warrington	Warrington Bus
110 - Warrington	Arriva

The earliest bus back to Warrington bus Station is the number 7 Arriva bus at two thirty-seven

There is also a 110 Arriva bus at two forty-seven and a 32 Warrington Bus at two fifty four

There are other times as we discussed on the bus time timetable, but these are all the number buses you need to travel back to Warrington Interchange.

## At stand 10 Warrington Interchange

Number 9A Warrington bus at

Three twenty pm will take you to London Bridge bus stop

Or

Warrington bus number 8 at Three thirty-five pm

Will stop at the Cobbs, Estate- Dale Lane bus stop. This is later but nearer home if the weather is poor



# Jack's Story

## About

Jack is a 19 year old young man who lives at home with his parents. Jack has a diagnosis of autism, learning disability, depression, and anxiety. At the time of the referral Jack's out of area college placement was coming to an end and he was extremely anxious that this would result in him losing touch with his friendship group and importantly his girlfriend who attended the same college.



Jack spent most of his time at home in his bedroom and had little interaction outside of the home. This was having a negative impact on his relationship with his parents and both described feeling frustrated and disillusioned with the lack of appropriate support available.

Jack had dreams and aspirations of joining the armed forces but had been made aware by his college tutors that he would struggle to meet the academic criteria and was finding it difficult to accept this.

Jack was clear that he wanted to be as independent as possible.

### **A referral received from the preparation to adulthood team:**

*Jack would benefit from travel training as he spends lots of time in his bedroom isolated which has caused frustration for both him and his parents.*

## What we did

The Project Worker visited Jack at home on a regular basis, where we were able to spend time discussing and sharing his interests, specifically video games. This time was key in ensuring the project worker was able to begin building a trusting and positive working relationship, which in turn enabled Jack to feel comfortable in taking the next steps toward journey planning.

# Jack's Story

## What we did continued

Following this Jack and the Project Worker identified and agreed the goals below:

- To feel less isolated and maintain links with his friendship group.
- To be more independent and confident in accessing his local community.
- To confidently travel out of town to meet his girlfriend and access the community together.
- To identify and familiarise himself with potential college placements.

The Project Worker supported Jack to plan a staged approach to his travel training.

### Stage 1

- Access, download and use Warrington's 'Touch and Go' app to access information to use in planning bus timetables and routes.
- Created personalised documents with guiding text and photos to plan journeys.
- Created 'what if' plan in case of emergencies, including support for Jack to meet and become familiar with the customer service/help desk staff within the bus station.

It was important that all routes agreed had a specific focus and meaning for Jack. This gave him a clear purpose and helped maintain his enthusiasm.

### Stage 2

- The Project Worker supported Jack on the journey from home to Warrington town centre, this continued until Jack felt comfortable to travel independently.
- To access and become familiar with the 'Trainline' app.

### Stage 3

- To plan and identify both bus and train journeys from his home to his girlfriend's address.
- To travel the route from his home address to his new college location.

# Jack's Story

## Achievements

Jack is currently still accessing the project but has already achieved the following:

- Travels to town independently to meet with friends and socialise.
- Travels to and from college independently.
- Travels with and supports his girlfriend to feel more confident when using public transport in Warrington.
- Joined a football team at college which is helping Jack to maintain links with his peer group and develop new friendships.

Jack is pleased with himself and so is his girlfriend and feels less likely to panic when taking part in community based activities.

## What happened next

Jack is currently exploring opportunities for a potential bespoke role in his local Army reserve centre, something he is very excited about and if successful would help to meet his aspirations.

***“Thank you, you visiting him appears to make him feel better about himself and he looks forward to talking with you and completing new challenges”***

**Feedback from Jack's Dad**





# Emily's Story

## About

Emily has just turned 21 years old and has a diagnosis of autism and a learning disability. Emily feels her confidence has been significantly affected by the Covid pandemic.



Emily has been finding it difficult to access the local community and has difficulties with managing her road safety as she struggles when walking in areas with high levels of traffic due to noise levels and can experience sensory overload.

Emily would like to be able to feel more confident to walk in these areas as she has aspirations to independently visit places of interest and meet up with friends to participate in a variety of social activities.

### **A referral received from the Learning Disability team:**

*Emily has regressed with some of her independence since Covid, she currently attends college but relies on her parents to take her.*

*Emily may benefit from some travel training, specifically how to be safe near roads and to maybe practice a familiar route such as going to the local shop so she can then build this independence up.*

## What we did

The Project Worker met with Emily in her home to develop a plan together:

### Stage 1

- Planned the safest route when walking to a local newsagent.
- Developed better road traffic awareness through periods of walking together, leading to Emily completing this journey to the local newsagent independently.
- Emily's confidence grew around managing busy roads. We expanded on this familiar walk and accessed other local shops and cafés within her village.

# Emily's Story

## What we did continued

### Stage 2

- Emily then aspired to travel further afield and we planned a route into the town centre from her local village.
- As part of Emily's travel training we developed a bespoke plan to go into the town centre by bus. The plan included images and photos of the bus route to enable Emily to become familiar with the route before we began travelling by bus.
- The Project Worker supported Emily to familiarise herself with the 'Touch and Go' app, a useful tool in accessing information and planning routes.
- The Project Worker supported Emily to build connections with the local bus service as part of a 'what if' plan. We met with the customer service/help desk staff within the bus station, just in case Emily experienced any difficulties in the future.

### Stage 3

- The Project Worker supported Emily to become confident in paying for purchases in shops using both cash and card, and communicating with shop assistants and using self-service checkouts.
- Emily built on this by trying on outfits in her favourite clothes shops and gained the confidence to return items, which is something she had not done before.
- Emily began to ask her parents if they needed anything from the shop whilst she was out. Emily started to buy small items for the house such as milk and bread, which made her feel useful.
- Accessed Geek Retreat in Warrington town centre as Emily would like to meet friends there in the future. As part of Emily's 'what if' plan the project worker and Emily met with the owner and gained trust for any future visits which was reassuring for Emily.
- The Project Worker supported Emily to become familiar with the layout of the local shopping centre which helped her when accessing shops and cafes she enjoys going to.
- Emily accessed a variety of cafes/food places and gained confidence to order and pay for meals. Emily formed positive relationships with the staff which helped her to feel more familiar with the surroundings and began to visit them on a regular basis.
- As part of Emily's bespoke plan the project worker developed information which included directions and images of how to travel to places of interest in the future.

# Emily's Story

## Achievements

Achievements completed over a period of 12 months

- Emily now travels independently by bus and walking, to shops and cafés in her local village and town centre.
- Emily feels confident in accessing shops and purchasing items.
- Emily now regularly travels into town to socialise with friends.
- Emily feels empowered that she can contribute to her household by buying groceries and in turn helping out her parents.

## What happened next

Emily began to meet with friends in town and went to the cinema for the first time in a long time which she very much enjoyed. She also made new friends by joining a gaming group. Emily is now looking into volunteering or a part time job.



***“I am now doing things I thought would have taken me years to do!”***



# Luke's Story

## About

Luke is a 22-year-old man. Luke has a diagnosis of Global Development Delay, ADHD, Autism, and mobility difficulties.



Luke had the skills to access public transport however he struggled with navigating and managing busy environments. Luke had tried to use public transport previously, but this had caused him high levels of stress particularly during busy periods where passenger numbers are unpredictable. Unfortunately, this has had a negative impact on his confidence, and he had stopped accessing any public transport as a result.

In addition, Luke had often experienced unpleasant and unhelpful responses from members of the public to his perceived difficulties which had further dented his confidence and severely limited his willingness to access his local community.

Luke wanted to achieve his goal of living in his own accommodation and to drive his own car.

Luke wanted to seek paid employment and find ways of contributing to his local community by raising awareness of neuro diversity.

### **A referral received from the preparation to adulthood team:**

*Luke has Global Development Delay, ADHD and suffers with involuntarily movements which can impact his mobility.*

*Luke does have the skills and capability of getting on a bus, however, being on a busy bus stresses him and he would like some support with this.*

## What we did

Luke was initially very apprehensive about the project and the benefits it may have, and it took time for him to feel safe and comfortable enough to agree to participate.

The Project Worker spent time meeting with Luke, getting to know him, what was important to him and what approaches worked best in terms of support and sharing information. This was an essential stage in building a safe and positive working relationship.

# Luke's Story

## What we did continued

Over a period of two to three months the Project Worker and Luke met informally until he was able to confidently express his wishes and explore next steps and future plans.

### Stage 1

- The Project worker supported Luke to walk into town and familiarise himself with the bus station and layout.
- Luke was supported to introduce himself and make links with key staff at the help and information desk within bus station.

### Stage 2

- The Project Worker supported Luke to become confident using the Touch and Go App to plan routes outside of peak travel times.
- A pictorial plan of the route was created by the Project Worker. This provided reassurance as Luke could see key landmarks and this helped in reducing Luke's anxiety.
- With the Project Worker's support Luke applied for a bus pass.

### Stage 3

- Over a six week period the Project Worker travelled with Luke from his home to the town centre until he was confident to do this independently.
- This involved helping Luke to identify contingencies for alternative bus times and routes should he need to exit the bus during his journey due to overcrowding. To help reduce anxiety when on the bus the Project Worker encouraged Luke to think about where to sit to promote personal space where possible.

### Stage 4

- The Project worker supported Luke to identify key appointments so new routes could be planned for example health appointments; this was essential for Luke as these appointments provided him with further coping strategies to manage his anxiety.
- Support was provided by the Project Worker in discussions with DVLA to ensure reasonable adjustments were in place when applying for and taking his theory test.
- To explore alternative supported living options, the Project Worker helped Luke to request a Care Act assessment.
- As part of the transition planning, with support from the Project Worker, Luke planned journey's in order to view proposed properties.

# Luke's Story

## Achievements

Achievements completed over a period of 13 months.

- Luke is now regularly accessing his local community with confidence and is able to complete his own shopping.
- Luke has successfully obtained his own accommodation and support package.
- Luke has achieved his goal of completing and passing his driving theory test.
- Luke now has his own mobility vehicle.
- Luke has plans to work as expert by experience alongside the Learning Disability Health Team delivering training sessions and sharing his experiences to support and inform others.
- Luke attended and participated in the 'Live Your Best Life' event hosted by Warrington Speak Up
- Luke has worked with the Project Worker to explore and develop images for the Connect Yourself Website.

## What happened next

Luke has now been successful in achieving his dream of obtaining full time employment.

Luke is excited about sharing his story and is awaiting dates for training sessions with the LD team!

***"I cannot thank you enough for what you have done for me and the way you have done it. I would not be where I am today without your support. I particularly appreciated that you never rushed me and were prepared to accept me without judgement. It has given me more confidence to get out and I've started to believe I will have a life now. I'm even making long term plans to have a place of my own and to consider what jobs would suit me. Thank you."***



# Young Person feedback

*"Through getting the bus into and back from town I now feel confident enough to go to the shop for mum and myself"*



*"You have helped to have the confidence to meet my life goals!"*

*"The session today was amazing! really learned a lot from it"*



# Young Person feedback

*“Thank you! a massive milestone achieved, inside I'm jumping up and down and cheering like someone daft!”*



*“ Thankyou for listening to me!”*

*“Thank you for taking the time to help me with things and making sessions so enjoyable”*



# Family member feedback

*"The difference the project has made to my daughter cannot be valued enough, it is as though barriers have dropped and she is flying, planning her next journeys!"*



*"Thank you for everything you have done for C. As a family our minds have been put at rest, we now feel we can support C more effectively and plan for her future."*



*"Big day tomorrow, D's first day at college tomorrow. I can't thank you enough for the help with D, he's definitely growing in confidence. He's said once he gets his timetable he may try further bus journey's or train"*



# Family member feedback

*“My son would not have gone to college if he hadn’t built the trust and confidence with you to help him!”*



*“Thank you so much, he has gone from wanting to pick up a magazine from his local shop to accessing his local village then getting the bus into town, his own confidence and ours has grown”.*



*“Well that went well:), M said that he felt very comfortable with you, he's looking forward to next week. I've shared the good news with his education officer”*



# Professional feedback

**“I know that they will have individualised support at a pace that is comfortable and appropriate for them”.**

We have had referrals for several young people from the Connect Yourself Project to our new leaf project. This was to support the young people to attend their appointments here at Warrington Disability Partnership at the beginning of their time on our programme.

It is obvious, when seeing the advocate with each of the young people, that they have a great rapport with him, and that they trust him to support them and help them to move forward. He has helped them gain independence to travel by public transport and they have eventually been able to attend my appointments independently, once they are confident to use the local buses themselves. However, his support goes beyond that, and he has also supported them to take part in other activities, to improve their confidence, their social interactions and their skills for employability and for life.

Knowing the level of support that Connect Yourself offers, I have been happy to refer some of my participants to that service too, when they have expressed a desire to become more independent. I know that they will have individualised support at a pace that is comfortable and appropriate for them.

Connect Yourself is a vital service and I hope that it will continue to support the young people of Warrington.

**Senior Employment Advisor & Volunteer Recruitment Officer**



# Professional feedback

**“He has been able to remove barriers, provide care and shown incredible patience helping our young participants to navigate through life safely and with confidence”.**

Connect Yourself is an amazing service that we have turned to on many occasions for support to be given to the young people that we work with who need travel training, help with confidence and much more. Without this service, we would have struggled to get the help we need for those who need it. I have been working with the advocate who has been integral to providing the support that my young people have needed who are on our new leaf program. He has been able to remove barriers, provide care and shown incredible patience helping our young participants to navigate through life safely and with confidence.

The advocate recently supported a young man I was working with who has ASD. This young man was incredibly intelligent but travelling was his barrier to his choice of work location. He was also unable to take a simple trip into town to purchase what he needed. The young man also wanted to travel independently to do some voluntary work and within a couple of months my participant was travelling independently and has now also gained employment. I believe that this would not have happened without the interaction with the advocate and this amazing organisation.

The people of Warrington need this service to enable people to live fulfilling, productive and enriched lives that they deserve. It would be amazing to see the service continue to thrive and provide the much needed support within our town.

**Employment Advisor**

# Professional feedback

**“you supported them to develop their confidence, social skills, budgeting and communication, lifelong skills that the young person can continue to develop once your support ends”.**

I think what the Connect Yourself project does is amazing, definitely a needed service for our young people of Warrington.

I've sent quite a few referrals through for my young people, the support you have provided and the feedback I have received has been amazing.

One of my young people wanted support to practice and familiarise themselves with a journey to and from a college work placement. The young person wanted to travel there independently rather than relying on their parents. Following up with my young person you helped them to achieve this, providing them with lifelong skills they can build on to continue developing their travel independence and independence over all.

Another young person I referred to yourself wanted support to travel independently. The feedback I received from the young person and family was amazing, not only did you support with independent traveling, you supported them to develop their confidence, social skills, budgeting and communication, lifelong skills that the young person can continue to develop once your support ends.

Thank you for all the amazing work you do

**Social Worker - Preparation for Adulthood Team**

# Professional feedback

The advocate's understanding of the needs of young people with difficulties relating to social, emotional and mental health as well as communication and interaction is excellent. He managed to work for an extended session on his first visit with a young person who really struggles to communicate and it went really well. What a great service. Thank you.

## **SENDCo and Assistant Head Teacher**

We wanted to put in writing, how pleased we all are that A is able to access Connect Yourself – specifically working with the advocate. Your skill and experience in working with young people with A's profile is clear. We feel A having someone (particularly you personally!) with no (obvious) agenda, who is not (obviously) assessing, who is there to support the development of life skills is so important for A at the moment.

## **Education Transitions Worker**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and hard work with our most vulnerable young people in Warrington, the feedback that I have received from the YP that I have referred to you has been nothing but amazing and you have genuinely changed their life, thank you.

I do hope you can offer this much needed support and guidance for many years to come.

## **Skills and Training Officer**