



#### JOB ROLE

Learning and Support  
Assistant

#### COMPANY

Lonsdale School

#### COMPANY SIZE

51 - 250 employees

#### APPRENTICESHIP

Teaching Assistant  
Standard  
Apprenticeship



## ■ INTRODUCING CHARLOTTE MILLER

Charlotte is a learning and support assistant, working with children who have physical and neurological disabilities at Lonsdale School in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. She absolutely loves her role as no two days are the same, and she goes in to work everyday unable to predict what might happen. Challenges range from behavioural issues through to medical emergencies and understanding the correct procedures to follow to ensure the children's safety is paramount.

In 2019, Charlotte decided to undertake the Teaching Assistant Standard apprenticeship programme. Having never been interested in University, she had a meeting with teachers following her mock results and wasn't entirely sure which path would most suit her interests. Being a 'hands-on' person and with an interest in medicine, Charlotte concluded that a role around teaching would suit her - and applied for a full-time teaching assistant role to gain some experience in the sector.





The school progressed Charlotte's application swiftly and stated their potential interest in aligning the position with an apprenticeship programme that would aid her development. The idea of gaining a qualification alongside earning, work and learning the job role was particularly appealing to Charlotte, as she stated that University was always an option she could explore later in her career.

Initially, Charlotte had her concerns about being younger than other staff members and was worried she might struggle to fit in with the team. To combat this, she was asked to focus on one particular class and begun to grow in to the position.

In terms of the programme itself, Charlotte was apprehensive about the assessment days at first as she didn't enjoy the pressure of being watched in her role. These worries were nullified however, following her first observation day with tutor, Karen from Sporting Futures Training. These observations were always followed with feedback, which helped Charlotte to grow in confidence as she quickly began to understand how to improve on her performance. She also stated that during the observations, it was simply like having a 'fly on the wall' and quickly felt at ease with the process.

A milestone achievement for Charlotte was completing her first observation, as Karen's guidance and support helped to ease any doubts she had about competency. Karen was also very straight forward in her approach, not simply focusing on positive feedback, but critiquing Charlotte's performance in a way that gave her actionable targets to improve upon.

Alongside this, Charlotte was tasked with completing the programme coursework which she would develop and submit. The combination of coursework, learning on the role and support from Karen meant that just fourteen weeks into her new role, Charlotte felt that she had come on leaps and bounds, from being a 'shy little thing' to exuding confidence and asking questions about how to improve further — even her Mum had noticed the difference in her attitude towards work!

Charlotte gained experience not only in her job role, but as a result of shadowing full time teachers and began to understand how assessments of the children were actioned. She would work through different topic areas with the class teacher and got to have an input on individual development and goal setting. In addition to this, she learned skills around safeguarding, how policies and procedures work, and about transitions through school and development stages. With the ability to conduct a 'baseline assessment' of children, she has gained skills that she can use well in to the future and will help mould the path she takes in her career.

Unfortunately, due to the implications of Covid-19, Charlotte was unable to take her assessment in 'normal' circumstances. This would have been a practical observation, but due to limiting human contact, Charlotte had to write up the different procedures she was involved with and witness declarations were submitted to support this. It's fair to say that Charlotte excelled on the course, as these write-ups were then used by Karen to guide other apprentices. This was also a milestone achievement for Charlotte, demonstrating how knowledgeable she had become in her role. The professional discussion element of the end-point assessment was conducted via Zoom call and operated very much in the way that it would have had they met face to face. Charlotte achieved a Distinction grade in her apprenticeship so should be really proud of her achievement especially given the pandemic related changes.





Post apprenticeship, Charlotte is now comfortable with all aspects of her role and is enthusiastic about learning more. She can take part in manual handling when required and enjoys the physicality of the role as it 'keeps her on her toes'. In the early days, Charlotte would lack energy after a hard day at work, happily stating that the position could be draining both mentally and physically at times. Now however, she is comfortable with what is expected of her and finds her time management has benefitted from juggling so many tasks at once.

Looking ahead, Charlotte aims to stay in her current role for at least another year to further develop her knowledge around more specific conditions that can affect the children she works with. There are a range of specialisms within the school that are particularly interesting to her, including physiotherapy and speech and language experts. Charlotte would like to gain a deeper understanding of the application of each of these therapies before moving on and is considering a more therapy-based role in the future.

**She stated that for anybody that might be considering an apprenticeship - they should jump at the chance if there is an opportunity within a field of interest. "Earning money whilst building a skillset is such a great opportunity, and whereas you are not guaranteed a job when you take a degree, long-term employment as a result of an apprenticeship programme is much higher".**

