

## Charlotte's story

Charlotte was in the final year of her PhD in Medical Humanities (English Literature) when she applied to the Professional Careers Programme. An academic career path was looking unlikely, as Charlotte would have to leave her support network and a team of healthcare professionals that she knew and trusted. Working for the NHS had always been appealing, and the GCIL programme seemed like the perfect way in!

The Equality Academy helped Charlotte start working as a content designer at NHS Education for Scotland (NES). While there she was able to use her writing, research and public engagement skills to create accessible careers content. Charlotte also learned so many new skills around content design, digital marketing and communications:

“I've been lucky to work with an amazing team and meet colleagues from across NHSScotland to develop accessible, inclusive and engaging careers information. The highlight for me has got to be creating and hosting the Careers in Healthcare podcast. I interviewed inspiring colleagues who



worked as biomedical scientists, cardiac physiologists, anatomical pathology technologists and more. It was a great success, so I did a second season celebrating our LGBT+ colleagues and their contribution to the NHS for Pride month. Chatting to people about why they love the work they do was a pleasure!”

Charlotte's placement was fully remote due to COVID-19, but that didn't stop her colleagues at NES and GCIL making her feel like part of the team: "While I never went into the office, I had regular check-ins with my line manager and team. My NES directorate also had monthly quiz nights, which was a great way of getting to know people away from their work. There's a NES Staff Disability, Long Term Conditions, Neuro-Diversity and Mental Health Network, which is a fantastic place for peer support. Finally, I was in regular contact with all the wonderful GCIL trainees at our network events, where we strategized on how to make the NHS a better workplace for disabled people."

8 months into her placement, Charlotte passed her PhD viva and then secured a permanent role as a content designer for Scottish Government. She attributes her success on the programme to the care and commitment of her NES line manager and GCIL placement co-ordinator: "Without them I wouldn't even have known about this career, never mind developing the skills and knowledge to secure a permanent role and focus on climbing the content design career ladder. The programme has opened so many doors and helped me build an invaluable network of fantastic people."

The Equality Academy feel that Charlotte's story highlights an important barrier for disabled people. The need to stay with trusted healthcare professionals and around a support network limited her career options, in a highly competitive job-market. We believe that many disabled people, with considerable talent and knowledge, are unjustly locked out of the workforce by factors like this. In Charlotte's case, she used the transferrable research and writing skills of her humanities PhD, and applied them to the creation of high-quality, engaging information on inclusion and career pathways into the NHS. She picked up highly sought after skills in social media and digital content, and in her way, contributed to the UK-wide issue of bridging the "Digital Skills Gap". Society will be enriched by Charlotte's contribution to the workforce, and the Equality Academy was proud to play a small part in this story.