

News

DATE March 2018

Coventry's Cadent scoops top autism honour for specialist internship scheme

An internship scheme run by gas network Cadent at its Coventry offices for students from two local special schools has won a prestigious accolade at the National Autistic Society's [Autism Professionals Awards](#).

Cadent was awarded the 'Most Supportive Employer' accolade at a special ceremony in Harrogate on Wednesday (7 March) for its EmployAbility scheme.

The annual event, supported by headline sponsor Axcis Education Recruitment, was hosted by Jane Asher, president of the National Autistic Society, and award-winning stand-up poet Kate Fox. The ceremony is part of a two-day conference for autism professionals.

Sophie Woolham, EmployAbility Strategy Manager, at Cadent, said, It's a huge honour to win this award, and for our scheme to be recognised nationally.

"The hope is that eventually the interns can get a permanent role with our company or other local employer, but if that's not possible they will have gained a wealth of work skills and personal confidence that boosts their job prospects. We are immensely proud that to date 74% of our graduated interns have gone on to employment against a national average of just 6%.

"We are now working closely with our local councils and businesses to share our experiences and hope to create many more placement and job opportunities."

Carol Povey, Director of the National Autistic Society's Centre for Autism, said: "Huge congratulations to Cadent and the EmployAbility team. They should be very proud for standing out among so many high quality nominations and impressing the judges with their work helping autistic students into employment.

"Support and services in the UK are still far too patchy. We hope that sharing the stories of our winners and finalists, including Cadent's, we will inspire other people and organisations - and give them some ideas about how they can make a real difference."

Cadent launched EmployAbility in 2014, a supported internship programme for students with special educational needs and disabilities, in their final year of education. According to the National Autistic Society just 16% of autistic adults are estimated to be in full-time employment, so schemes like this are extremely important.

Cadent has partnerships with four specialist schools, including Exhall Grange in Coventry and Woodlands School in Coleshill. The scheme has been running for several years at Cadent's Hinckley offices, but last September marked its launch at Coventry.

Students from Exhall Grange and Woodlands will spend an academic year in Cadent's Coventry offices where they work towards a BTEC qualification and complete three varied work placements.

Job coaches from the schools work with Cadent to learn the roles, then support the students to do the work, before gradually stepping back and letting the interns do the job for themselves. Cadent's recruitment partners Pertemps also work with the interns to prepare them for employment so, at the end of the internship, they all have fantastic CVs, portfolios of work completed and interview skills.

Cadent's accolade was one of 15 awards presented to individuals and teams involved in education, health, social care, employment, community projects and volunteering. The winners were chosen by an [independent panel](#) of 10 autism experts who judged each nomination on their innovation, creativity, impact and sustainability.

For more information about the winners and the awards, visit: www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk

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For more information about the Autism Professionals Awards, photos or interviews, please contact the press office at the National Autistic Society at press@nas.org.uk

Notes to editors

The National Autistic Society

- The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people on the autism spectrum and their families. Founded in 1962, it provides information, support and pioneering services, and campaigns for a better world for people on the autism spectrum.
- To find out more about autism or the charity, visit www.autism.org.uk.
- Follow the National Autistic Society on Twitter ([@Autism](https://twitter.com/Autism)) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety).

What is autism?

- Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.

- More than 1 in 100 people are on the autism spectrum, including an estimated 700,000 people in the UK.
- Every person on the autism spectrum is different. It can present some serious challenges –but, with the right support and understanding, autistic people and their families can live full lives.
- Although everyone is different, people on the autism spectrum may:
 - Be under or oversensitive to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours, which can make everyday life extremely difficult
 - Find social situations and change a challenge, sometimes leading to extreme levels of anxiety
 - Experience a ‘meltdown’ if overwhelmed by anxiety or sensory overload
 - Benefit from extra time to process and respond to communication.
- Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.

Autism Professionals Awards

- The annual Autism Professionals Awards, which are supported by headline sponsor Axcis Education Recruitment, were launched in 2013 to recognise and promote good autism practice and inspire others to improve their own work.
- There are 15 awards covering education, health, social care, employment, community projects and volunteering.
- The independent judging panel consists of 10 leading experts in the field of autism from a variety of professional backgrounds across the UK. Full biographical details of all judges are available on the website: <http://www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk/judges>
- Information about all 15 categories and all the shortlisted finalists is available here: www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk

Sponsors

Headline sponsor

Axcis Education Recruitment

- Axcis Education Recruitment is the foremost supplier of SEND staff to mainstream and specialist schools in the UK.
- We have offices nationwide and work with a range of candidates, from TAs and teachers to therapists and school leaders. We would love to hear from you if you are looking to recruit any temporary or permanent SEND staff, or if you are seeking employment in this sector.
- Axcis provides quality people for day-to-day cover, long-term and permanent assignments. We pride ourselves on our ability to listen to your needs and find you the right candidate, no matter how specialist your requirement may be. We consistently receive excellent feedback from candidates and clients alike and would welcome the opportunity to work with your school or provision.
- Find out more: www.wwww.axcis.co.uk

Other sponsors

Axia ASD Ltd

- Axia ASD Ltd is a Chester-based diagnostic service for Autism Spectrum Disorder, Dyspraxia/Developmental Coordination Difficulties and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, amongst both children and adults.
- Axia is founded and directed by Dr Linda Buchan, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with a forty-year experience in the field of Autism and neurodiversity. Axia has a vastly experienced Multidisciplinary Team of diagnosticians including Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Systemic Family Therapy, Mental Health Nurses, and prestigious trainers, authors and researchers in the field of Autism.
- Following diagnosis, individuals/families may access brief support sessions to make sense of their diagnosis and future hopes. Individuals/families may self-fund, or seek funding (with support) for, complex psychological/psychotherapeutic intervention where appropriate. Adults diagnosed at Axia can access a monthly post-diagnostic support group which hosts stimulating themes and guest speakers. Axia is committed to partnership, collaboration, empathy and innovation across all aspects of the service. Axia accepts self-funded and private healthcare referrals and is also an independent provider to the NHS (free at the point of access) for NHS Eastern Cheshire, South Cheshire, Vale Royal and Salford. In addition, Axia recently won the tender for diagnostic services of Autism Spectrum Disorder in North Wales Child and Adolescent Services.
- Find out more: www.axia-asd.co.uk

Pulse Community Healthcare

- Pulse Community Healthcare provides specialist outcome focused support for both children and adults with a learning disability and/or autism diagnosis, who may present with behaviours of concern.
- Working in close partnership with commissioners, local authorities, local organisations, hospital teams, our clients and their families; providing bespoke healthcare services which are designed to meet the principles of the Transforming Care Agenda, offering tailored care for every individual we support.
- Pulse Community Healthcare has a proven track record of supporting a wide range of long-term complex-care conditions and a reputation for delivering excellence across all aspects of case management.
- Our vision is to increase personal choice and empower people with a learning disability and/or autism to live fulfilling and rewarding lives and be an active member of their own community.
- Find out more: www.pulsecommunityhealthcare.co.uk/

Room to Reward

- 'Room to Reward' is a registered charity, founded within the hotel industry, working to reward deserving charity workers and volunteers with complimentary hotel breaks.
- Since forming in 2015, we have welcomed more than 125 hotels and over 95 charities into the scheme in locations all over the UK.
- To date, we have been delighted to donate over £60,000 worth of stays to deserving volunteers and staff. Room to Reward was created to give a little something back to the people we call the 'Hidden Heroes' - the frontline employees and volunteers who are consistently going the extra mile and making a great personal sacrifice day after day.
- Find out more at www.roomtoreward.org.

Autism Accreditation

- Established by The National Autistic Society and its affiliated local societies, with support from the Department of Health, Autism Accreditation has been the foundation upon which much of the successful expansion of quality services for people with autism has been built. We work to improve the quality of provision for autistic people by:
 - providing a unified standard of excellence in both policy and practice
 - presenting a systematic framework for continuous self-examination and development
 - giving guidance and support to the services who use our programme so that they can meet the established criteria required for accredited status.
- Autism Accreditation provides an autism-specific quality assurance programme for over 300 organisations throughout the UK and across the globe: clients include local authorities, NHS trusts, education authorities, local autism societies and private companies.
- Find out more: www.autism.org.uk/accreditation

Network Autism

- Network Autism is a place where professionals can come together, open up new channels of information and share good practice. Join Autism Network and you will be able to:
 - connect with other professionals
 - collaborate in finding new solutions
 - share expertise and knowledge
 - support colleagues in achieving better outcomes.
- Find out more: www.network.autism.org.uk/

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Notes to Editors:

Cadent

Cadent is the UK's largest gas distribution network with a 200-year legacy. We are in a unique position to build on strong foundations whilst encouraging the curiosity to think differently and the courage to embrace change. Day to day we continue to operate, maintain and innovate the UK's largest gas network, transporting gas safely and protecting people in an emergency. Our skilled engineers and specialists remain committed to the communities we serve, working day and night to ensure gas reaches 11 million homes from Cumbria to North London and the Welsh borders to East Anglia, to keep your energy flowing.

Cadent manages the national gas emergency service free phone line on behalf of the gas industry - 0800 111 999*

Cadent Gas Ltd is majority owned by a consortium of global investors composed of Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets (14.5%), CIC Capital (10.5%), Allianz Capital Partners (10.2%), Hermes Investment Management (8.5%), The Qatar Investment Authority, (8.5%), Amber/INPP (4.4%), Dalmore Capital (4.4%) and National Grid plc (39%).

*All calls are recorded and may be monitored.

