

ST HELENS WELLBEING

“We’ve been welcomed with open arms here; it’s really brought us out of our shells.” What it’s like to work for St Helens Wellbeing Service and CHCP with additional needs.

Meet Stephen Lea and James Baldwin, a couple of St Helens Wellbeing Service workers who have become valuable assets to the service since joining 5 years ago. Meet Stephen Lea and James Baldwin – a couple of St Helens Wellbeing Service workers who have become valuable assets to the service since joining 5 years ago.



Nothing seems to faze them and they go about their hard-working days showing such enthusiasm for their job despite one thing —both having additional needs...

Stephen, 50, from Haresfinch has a left-sided brain injury from birth, while James, 41, lives in Prescot and has a learning disability.

The two have become good friends since meeting on St Helens Council’s supported employment course at

Stephenson Resource Centre; an example of how the council is working to create a better place by supporting skills and creating employment opportunities for all.

After gaining a qualification in Maths and English, they went onto secure a part-time permanent job within the St Helens Wellbeing Service where they’re tasked with promoting Healthy Lifestyle support programmes. They include Infant Feeding, Early Years, Family Fit4All, Weight Management, Lifestyle Referral, Cooking, Healthy Eating, Walking, Social Prescribing, Health Trainers, Mental health and Wellbeing promotion, Smokefree, Oral Health.

They do this and also get involved in a number of activities such as the outdoor walks; events, Makaton, social media, vlogs and the ‘Supporting Arm’ group for making sure services are inclusive and accessible for the more vulnerable service users, for which they are considered experts as they test out resources and develop their own innovative ideas to support people with additional needs to adopt healthier lifestyles.

The wider organisation of CHCP (City Healthcare Partnership) has recognised the value and effective support given by Stephen and James in helping to implement the crucial ‘Accessible Information Standards’ (AIS) across the organisation.

“We started at the same time 5 years ago, although it seems longer than that,” joked James, who, when asked what his favourite aspect of working with the Wellbeing Service Team was, simply replied ‘everything.’

“We like the whole lot. Working as part of the team and making new friends has made our confidence and social skills grow,” he said.

Agreeing to James’ response with a nod, Stephen added: “We’ve been welcomed with open arms here; it’s really brought us out of our shells and given us new skills to support our community.”

Being part of the team has led to just more than just a confidence boost too. Working in a health-focused environment has resulted in the pair taking on a more motivated approach to looking after

December 2021

their own health, with James talking up nature walks in addition to being a walk leader for the service, while Stephen still maintains his healthy weight goal through healthy eating and exercise.

“I’ve been on a bit of a health-kick since starting here and I like to share that with my friends and peers, being a good role model and hopefully encouraging them to do the same, “ said Stephen.

“Being here has brought a lot out of me and goes to show that a disability doesn’t have to stop you from being employed and sharing experiences, skills and learning new skills.”

Commenting on the progress the two have made since joining the team, Healthy Living Manager, Claire Glover, said: “Stephen and James have made a brilliant addition to our team and they say that being here has improved their lives too.

“They found adjusting to virtual working challenging at first during the pandemic. Yet they soon embraced it and continued to come up with ideas, test and develop resources and easier methods of communication and inclusion which they’re both passionate about. They are such an asset in supporting their colleague’s wellbeing too – and they’ll even work on their days off,” she laughed.

To find out more on what the St Helens Wellbeing Service has to offer, visit:

www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/StHelensWellbeing/>

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For more information about the supported employment scheme, visit: www.sthelens.gov.uk/social-care-health/adults/services-for-adults-with-additional-needs/supported-employment/