



*Case study: T Level Science industry placement at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust*

*Teenagers in a pathology lab? Yes, absolutely – says Kathryn Wadge from County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.*

*As a T Level placement coordinator, it's Kathryn's job to source placements within this NHS Trust and pair the opportunities with students.*

*The Trust has worked with New College Durham for several years, so when the college got in touch to ask about placements in hospital labs, Kathryn was keen to help. There were initially some reservations over the age of the students – hosting teenagers in a lab was a new experience for the team. But age did not present a barrier at all, as Kathryn explains:*

*“The main concern was that under eighteens can't go into certain areas due to Health & Safety restrictions, which included the laboratory. After discussions and completing Trust risk assessments, insurance checks and all other necessary paperwork, it was agreed they could.*

*“Staff initially had some concerns around behaviour and maturity, but it was quite the opposite. They were fantastic students, a proper asset to the team and they really got on with everybody. They were hard working, punctual and polite.”*

*The Trust has offered placements in Health before, but hosting T Level Science students needed a different approach. Kathryn worked with the pathology team and the college team to find a model that worked for everyone*

*“The Health students do day release, whereas the Science students did block release because that is what suited the pathology team best.”*

*The students went through a full recruitment process and were given a varied timetable with day-to-day supervision shared by different staff members. Risk assessments were updated to accommodate the ages of students and exclude specific tasks from the placements. Some tasks were classified as observational, so that students were still able to get involved through observation and questioning.*

*“They started in reception doing all the booking in of the different samples and then they went to blood science, assisting the staff to put samples through the analysers and reading the results. They were quizzed on what these different things meant as well. The staff really got into it and were asking them: “Well, what does this mean? What could that be?”, which was really nice to see.”*

*The students also spent time in the Microbiology and Cellular Pathology labs, so they gained experience of a good variety of disciplines and roles and worked alongside different staff members, who were all enthusiastic about the experience of hosting T Level Science students on placements:*



*“They loved it. They absolutely loved it. It was a chance for them to show their knowledge and to help inspire the next generation. Also to have someone new and inexperienced come in and say: “why are we doing that? Why are we doing this?” got them to pass on their many years of experience in their specialty and help educate the students to gain a real insight into their role.*

*“I think it also gave pathology a bit of a boost... they got some well-deserved recognition and the students got all they needed. They gained so much knowledge and a major learning experience, which they're really grateful for.”*

*Next steps are already underway with plans to expand the pilot and host more T Level Science students. Kathryn says:*

*“So it's been done, and we know it works. So, this time round it's been much easier. I've got two students that will be going to pathology, one that's going to pharmacy and another student going to medical physics. The positive experience we have had in the Trust shows that T-Level placements work, I now have other departments who are very interested and excited to get involved.”*

*For the young people themselves, next steps could involve study at university or immediate recruitment to the NHS. One of the hosted students has already applied for a suitable role, referencing the skills and experience that she gained on placement, and Kathryn has her fingers firmly crossed that the application is successful. Recruitment is a key motivation for the Trust's support of T Level Science placement students, so these young people would provide a very welcome addition to the workforce.*