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# MJC: Getting involved

By Sean McAlinden



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# Introducing Sean McAlinden



**Job:** IT Programmer

## **Why did you want to get involved with Parent Pledge?**

I spend most of my waking hours with noise-cancelling headphones on tapping away at a computer, essentially living in a bubble. When the COVID 19 lockdowns started to take effect, I decided it would be good to get involved within the community and come out of my bubble. Being autistic myself and my son attending Woodlands Meed I decided start on my door step.

## **How have you worked with the students?**

I have given students a presentation about being autistic and working in IT and my career path and restarted Code Club. This positive experience made me realise I can do much more and I introduced the company I work for to the Meed's Job Club; which has resulted in a partnership which will benefit students for years to come!

**This presentation is my story and shows how giving a bit of your time to engage the students with your career or work place can truly change lives.**

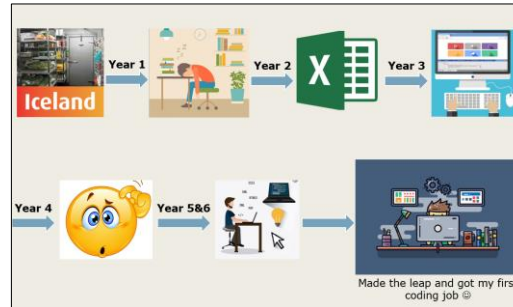


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# Careers in IT presentation

The Meed's Job Club helped me to set the level of the presentation and techniques to engage the students and answered all my questions.

In my presentation I showed my journey into programming and talked about some of the more exciting things I have done over the years within my roles. I also included an insight into what it is like working in software engineering as an autistic person and I included information about different roles in IT such as programmer and software engineer.



The students were engaged and asked some excellent questions. It felt great to play a part in showing them what a career in IT can look like and how it can work out well for people with certain conditions such as autism.



# Discussing the Meeds Job Club at work

Following the presentation, I felt energised and determined support the MJC and the students further.

I sent an email to James Lee, the Chief Technical Officer of the company I provide software development services to suggesting the possible of the company providing some work experience to students at Woodlands Meed college. James's response was very positive and it became clear that Chambers & Partners are incredibly passionate about neurodiversity in the workplace.

It became evident that there was an opportunity to partner up Chambers with Woodlands Meed, and I immediately got back in touch with Alex so we could pounce on this opportunity.



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# Woodlands Meed and Chambers and Partners

It was clear that there was a lot of positivity on all sides and clear benefits to all parties.

Not only could Chambers help provide an excellent experience for students who may wish to work within IT, but they could also benefit from a pool of talent that could otherwise be hard to access or even find.

**Chambers**  
AND PARTNERS

Alongside the longer term partnership that was being developed Chambers were keen to offer a summer job to a student who was due to leave in the July.

This offer came at the very end of the summer term and so MJC and Chambers management team worked together to identify a role and a suitable candidate for a three-month summer job.

It was amazing to see what can be accomplished by a group of people with a shared, positive aim.



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# Interviewing Elliot

The application and interview process is often challenging for anyone and both the MJC and Chambers were keen to make the recruitment process more accessible to the students.

The details of the role, Software Tester, was shared with Elliot and he was keen to apply. Alongside Elliot's formal application Chambers received some background information on his preferred ways of working and he was invited to interview.

James adapted his interview technique and made Elliot feel at ease and Elliot interviewed exceptionally well. We both noted how prepared Elliot was and how great his questions were. James was highly impressed and very excited for Elliot to join Chambers.



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# Working with Elliot



Elliot originally joined the IT team in July 2021 on a three month contract undertaking training to be a software engineer.

He is very polite and easy to get along with and his positivity has been infectious. Elliot's approach to problems is fantastic to see in action; his thought processes lend themselves very well to finding discrepancies and bugs where others would easily miss; there have been several occasions where Elliot has spotted things that seasoned experts wholly missed.

Elliot is also being trained in advanced techniques that would not be typically possible with junior team members at this point in their careers.

Elliot is also proving something significant; by giving him the chance to prove himself in a field well suited to his capabilities, he can contribute to the company's success and do a job that he will love. He has also demonstrated an elevated level of capability that has been an eye-opener for people; I love this.





# Where is Elliot now?



I am thrilled to say that Elliot has accepted a full-time, permanent position within the Chambers IT department as a QA tester and automation programmer.



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# What have I gained and what's next?

It is probably quite evident from this presentation, I have gained a great deal from taking off my headphones, stepping out of my bubble and getting involved.

I feel an incredible mixture of gratitude, pride and general happiness and it all started with a small presentation to the students about my career.

Introducing Woodlands Meed to Chambers has been one of the best things I ever did; such great things have happened since I sent that email.

Finally, I would also say I have also gained a determination to see what else we can do; it's great that we have found a path for Elliot and hopefully others with similar interests in IT, but there is more we should do.

Not all of our kids want to be in IT, so we need to open more doors for them... in my case, it just took sending an email to the Meed's Job Club.



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# How does Elliot Feel about this experience?



Recently I have accepted a full time position at Chambers, I still have to pinch myself everyday to believe I have been given this fantastic opportunity.

The job gives me a sense of self worth. It has boosted my self confidence because I am learning new things and achieving things I didn't think were possible. It has also made me more resilient to change and new things.

I know a lot more about IT, it is amazing being mentored by Sean and he has been incredible and meeting new people.

When you leave Woodlands Meed you may feel really sad and a little lost, never lose hope and faith as you never know what opportunities lay ahead for you, never lower expectations your dream job is waiting for you as long as you believe in yourself, you can do anything. Don't be afraid to take on a new challenge, it may be daunting at first but the rewards will be worth it.



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