Katie Madsen

'I’m Katie, and I’m 23 years old. I was diagnosed with Anxiety and Depression whilst I was a teenager, and then I was diagnosed very recently with Autism! I have learned a lot about myself this year because of the Autism diagnosis, and things have become easier as I now know what adjustments I require. I’m so excited to be an expert by experience so that I can learn more about what services the council provides to people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), and find out how I can make them even better! Many of my friends also have SEND and I would love to be able to use my own experiences, plus the stories from theirs to improve the opportunities, support, and confidence for children and young people with SEND.

I definitely put myself into a small box when I became an adult, and was too scared to push myself to try new opportunities, so this seemed like the perfect opportunity to break free and show my capability. I’m hoping that I can help many people understand more about autism and mental health, as well as other special educational needs and disabilities, so that schools and workplaces try to give more adjustments, rather than the other way round, with people with SEND having to try adapt and adjust to environments or situations that aren’t accessible to them.

My achievements I hope to obtain this year are higher confidence for myself, which had been shattered at a young age due to lack of understanding from others about mental health, and to be able to remove others' stigma surrounding SEND. I want to be able to make a real difference to the current mindset that many have, especially when it comes to autism, where people often get infantilised. This may be dreaming too big with the current state of how the world treats those with SEND, but eventually I’d love for the world to be 100% accessible to everyone, no matter what their needs or disabilities are, and I hope I can contribute a big amount to doing this!'