

# Ben's Story

**Meeting new people and gaining core skills such as organisation has been enjoyable in the eyes of Ben Sweeney**



*We have developed the essential life skills, employability and physical wellbeing of young people with SEND through physical activity.*

**Tom Horton, Active Fusion Inclusion Coach**

Ben Sweeney, a familiar face within the Unified Leaders project, is an assistant coach who has a strong relationship with Special Educational Needs schools that Active Fusion are partnered with. Working in both camps and schools, Ben has gathered a lot of experience with us over the 4+ years that he has been with Active Fusion. Gaining the confidence to speak in front of over 100 people at our annual Active Fusion Conference. This project has helped Ben become a confident leader.

Interacting with both coaches and young people pushed Ben out of his comfort zone, positively. However, one of Ben's stand-out moments was finally building courage and skill to deliver his own and assist other coach's sessions. Ben described his milestone opportunity as "something new and a great way to be a role model".

The inclusive training programme works with young people 15 -18 to become sports leaders and positive role models for their peers in and out of school. Young Leaders work to develop skills and knowledge in how to increase physical activity levels to improve the health and wellbeing not only in their own lives but in the lives of others.

Working in education has helped Ben grow as an individual. Learning things along the way himself, he is constantly helping coaches to teach an active lifestyle in SEND schools. Having the children onboard with the project, sets up a pathway for education after school. Gaining a qualification ('I Can Lead') from the project, children are more likely to be employed.



Less than 6% of young people with SEND go onto employment after education. However, Active Fusion trains 50 young leaders per year, aged 15 - 18, with delivery of over 1500 volunteering hours per year.

Having lots of fun doing something Ben enjoys, he has learnt how to become a successful assistant coach within the Unified Leaders project working in SEND schools. Ben is seen as a valuable role model to these children. Ben lives with Down Syndrome. Overcoming his fear of ability, Ben uses his disability to his advantage to help children and young people to find themselves through creative arts and sports. Ben has been a positive face in this project to show those who participate that doing something you enjoy isn't impossible!

Ben works school time as well as the school holidays, through our Fusion Camps. At Camps, Ben originally started as a volunteer. On camp, Ben taught alongside coaches and gained a very valuable experience from his time spent helping on holiday camps. Ben soon became a reoccurring volunteer on camps, trying to further his coaching knowledge. Recently, Ben told us: "I like to give up my time to help others and help young people to have fun".



**Overall an amazing experience for development**



Ben would recommend the Unified Leaders programme to all people with SEND within a school environment, "I would love to work with Active Fusion again".

Ben highlighted that his overall experience had been a lot of fun and he had enjoyed meeting members of the Active Fusion team whilst interacting with the young people that were involved in his personal journey.

Active Fusion work with local partners to encourage more local providers to offer their own inclusive provision and provide progression routes for young people pursue further education and employability.

**Completing a core 12 week programme of physical activity and leadership training.**

**Participants will have equipped an employable qualification, ready for post-education environments.**



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