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# Case study

At the age of only 19, David is an acting senior support worker at Sunnyside House in Essex, a residential home for adults with learning disabilities that specialises in preparing young adults to move into their own accommodation. The care home offers 24-hour residential and respite care, using innovative training skills programmes that can help service users to move onto independent living and to sustain that lifestyle.

## **David Mernissi**

Acting Senior Support Worker  
Sunnyside House, Essex

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*I care...*

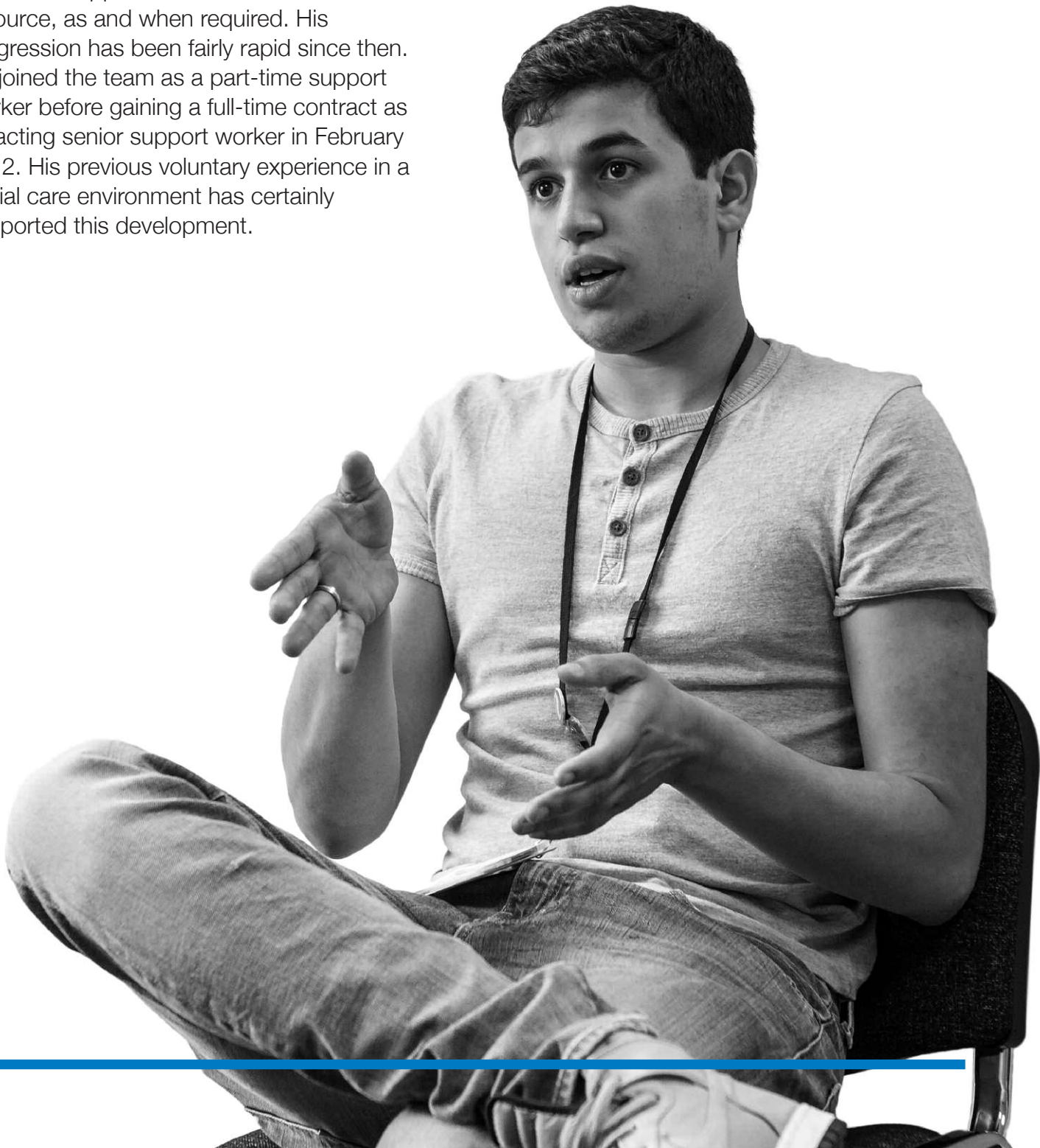
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## Background

Although David doesn't come from an academic background, he has been applying his life skills to the social care sector since the age of 15, when he took on a voluntary role at a day centre for children and adults with learning difficulties. He continued working there until the age of 18, gaining valuable experience for his now chosen career path of social care. Whilst volunteering he was also working in a shipyard for a year, learning woodwork and metal skills.

## Career progression

David has worked at Sunnyside House since March 2011, starting as a relief worker to support the team with additional resource, as and when required. His progression has been fairly rapid since then. He joined the team as a part-time support worker before gaining a full-time contract as an acting senior support worker in February 2012. His previous voluntary experience in a social care environment has certainly supported this development.





## A role in social care

David finds that no two days are the same. He can be hands-on supporting people who use the service during one shift and overseeing a team of up to four support workers the next. He supervises his team's work performance, sets goals and daily tasks and addresses any issues that may occur within the team or with the people who use the service. He works in a team of four and is on-call one week each month to manage any emergency situations that may arise.

“I work as part of a very good team and I couldn't have achieved what I have done so far without them. We all work together and it's not about anybody asserting their authority.”

As an acting senior support worker, David can often find himself in the position of shift leader, supporting the shift manager to plan staffing and the duties required for that shift. He is ultimately responsible for managing any incidents that may occur.

“The most satisfying parts of the role are having the ability to help people change their lives and the constant variation that my role offers. I can often be found helping to identify service users' needs, cleaning the floors, managing an epileptic seizure, taking a service user on an activity or writing a policy. I just love the variety in my job.”

Sometimes, David finds it quite challenging to be taken seriously due to his young age, but this is soon overcome when people who use the service and peers realise what invaluable experience he can offer, plus the right level of practical skills for the job.

During his time at Sunnyside House, David has received extensive training that has included becoming a qualified first aider, epilepsy awareness training, health and safety training, manual handling training and changing behaviour training. He has already achieved a level 2 qualification in Health and Social Care and hopes to start a level 3 qualification in the near future.

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## Ongoing support

David has found the continuous personal and training support and team spirit to go beyond his expectations. He feels that a combination of this, and a very good management structure of supervisors, deputy managers and hands-on support workers and senior support workers, has been the key to his success so far.

“I’ve had a lot of training that can open up so many doors for me in the future. The idea of being a paramedic in the future appeals to me and there’s no reason why I can’t aim for that. You can do whatever you want as long as you’re willing to put the effort into the training.”

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## Skills for Care

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