



“PEDALL OFFERS IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES AND BOOSTS CONFIDENCE.” – AN EARLY CAREER STORY

Working with PEDALL – New Forest Inclusive Cycling boosts skills and confidence and is an important step into employment.

“PEDALL offered a supportive environment where I could achieve my first paid role, which is something for many years I thought wouldn’t be possible,” Stef, a team member with the New Forest inclusive cycling project, said.

“Working with PEDALL has given me another great reason to be outside in nature,” her colleague, Ollie, added.

“PEDALL has given me a lot of happiness and more confidence to do new things, and it’s given me a chance to make new friends, which is a great thing.

I’ve gained confidence in myself and my ability to help others and to lead when needed.”

Stef, in her 30s, and Ollie, in his 20s, are employed by PEDALL as ride assistants. They help to deliver inclusive guided cycle rides, including cycle checks and cycle maintenance, and bring insights to the team supporting riders with a range of additional needs.

“I think, for me, being autistic means I’ve got more of a window into people’s experiences than a neurotypical person might have,” Stef said.

“THERE HAVE BEEN SITUATIONS WHEN I’VE BEEN ABLE TO UNDERSTAND A PERSON’S BEHAVIOUR BECAUSE IT’S SOMETHING I MIGHT EXPERIENCE TOO.”

“If somebody’s getting upset, I can tell if it’s been triggered by something that’s happened, but somebody else might not have the same understanding or it could seem like it’s out of the blue.”

She added: “Because of my lived experience being an autistic person, I find it easier to relate to and understand the experiences or challenges that come with being disabled.

“I find this helps me think of innovative ways to help people enjoy cycling and the outdoors.”

Ollie, who is also on the autistic spectrum, said: “I feel growing up with my diagnosis has given me a good background for spotting behaviours in other people, and my experience in dealing with that helps assist people with similar challenges.

“Having those pre-established skills in spotting meltdowns or overstimulation really helps.”

Stef and Ollie are keen cyclists having both ridden since they were young and Ollie described his bike as a ‘super important’ mode of transport that enables him to get around. Cycling is also a great source of enjoyment for the pair.

“For me, nature is everything,” Ollie said. “I’ve always had a strong connection with being outside. I find it so calming and still when life gets loud and busy.”



“I’VE ALWAYS FOUND HAPPINESS IN THE FOREST AND FEEL AT PEACE IN NATURE. SEEING OTHER PEOPLE HAPPY IN THE SAME WAY, I THINK THAT’S THE BEST PART OF WORKING WITH PEDALL.”

Stef added: “It’s very rewarding to see a clear difference between someone having a difficult day and then actually having a lot of fun.

“Riders might turn up to a session anxious or struggling with something but once they’re out in the Forest everyone starts smiling and enjoying themselves.

“You can see the benefit for carers as well. Sometimes we live really busy lives and get snowed under. Riding with PEDALL is one of the times in the week people get to relax and do something fun.”

Stef has previously worked in voluntary roles and said she hadn’t found an accessible opportunity with the right level of support and flexibility, but said PEDALL offered this and that she feels supported in the role.

“Sometimes for autistic people, if you have to make eye contact or sit a certain way it can be a big barrier. From the interview stage, PEDALL clearly thought about things and explained extra details in a way that was reassuring.”



Stef concluded she’s been able to develop herself and her CV through her role with PEDALL and the opportunities it’s provided.

If you’d like to help more people experience the benefits PEDALL provides, please [support](#) or [donate](#).



“I’ve gained a massive sense of accomplishment and pride through working with PEDALL. It’s a positive step to achieving future work-related goals. Working with PEDALL has allowed me to step into a role I didn’t realise was possible.”

Stef, Ride Assistant, PEDALL – New Forest Inclusive Cycling

