

# Zara's Story: New Experiences

## Meet Zara

- Zara is 17 years old .
- She has been receiving a Direct Payment for many years, paid to her Mum as her third party, and has had a few Personal Assistants (PAs) over the years, employed by her Mum.
- Having a PA has meant that Zara's Mum could have a break from her caring responsibilities and Zara could have time outside of the family home.



# Zara's Story

## Zara's needs

- Zara is autistic and has difficulty in social situations and can also get very overwhelmed in public spaces.
- As she is now young woman, Zara and her family thought that employing a PA closer to her age would help her to get out more and try new hobbies and social activities. This could help her to gain independence and her own identity, not governed by Mum and Dad.
- Zara and her family needed help with recruitment to find the right person able to support Zara's needs. They wanted someone younger, but also with some experience of neurodivergence and the challenges it can present.



# Zara's Story

## SILC Support

- SILC helped Zara to advertise for a PA. SILC had recently attended job fairs at local Universities, so the family found a student registered on [www.supportfinder.org.uk](http://www.supportfinder.org.uk) who was looking for a part-time role as a PA.
- SILC gave interview advice, checked references and undertook a DBS check. SILC provided information on all the paperwork Zara's family needed to complete as an employer such as contracts, payroll and insurance.
- SILC also arranged relevant training for her new PA, such as Autism Awareness and First Aid.



*"SILC really helped us, as Zara's family, to find and employ this PA. It is great to see Zara gain confidence and having a young person supporting her means she can access more social opportunities."*

# Zara's Story

## Outcome

- With SILC's help, Zara was successful in recruiting a new PA who is a student at a local Uni and not too much older than Zara.
- Zara's PA has a sibling with Autism, so is familiar with the challenges that Zara can face. She has taken time to get to know Zara and learn what she needs support with, such as social cues, being able to communicate publicly, and dealing with the overstimulation of busy environments. She is helping Zara to gain skills for interaction and socialisation outside of her family.
- With her PA's support Zara has been able to try new hobbies independent of her family, such as rock climbing, and is starting to feel more comfortable out in public spaces.



*"Zara's PA encourages her to try new stuff but understands when she gets overwhelmed and is there to provide emotional support. It is so good for Zara to see that she can get this kind of support outside of the family."*