

# Removing Barriers Project - Becoming a Disability Confident EMPLOYER: Impact Story - Lewco Holdings

Diversity & inclusion can benefit any business. Diverse cultures are always more productive than non-diverse ones. So bringing any form of diversity into the workplace – whether it be difference of opinion, different learning styles - is a good thing. It impacts the whole team, encouraging them to think differently, teach differently, behave differently. When you think differently you often come up with a better solution.



## At a Glance..

- Employs 350 staff members
- New recruits complete 3 weeks of training, acquiring skills at every work station

## Highlights..

- Lewco Holdings were signed up as a member of the government's disability confident scheme at COMMITTED level.
- Opened doors to 11 young students from Westfield Arts College, Weymouth College & SWRAC
- Achieved disability confident EMPLOYER status - July 2023



## What's next?

*"We're now working towards our Level 3 and that means influencing other companies in the area."*

*"We don't tend to work with additional stakeholders so this means getting out into the community and leading by example."*

LAUREN ROUTLEDGE, PEOPLE MANAGER

## Company background

Established in 2017, Lewco Holdings Limited is a franchise of McDonald's Restaurants. It comprises three separate Dorset restaurants, with one in Dorchester and two in Weymouth, employing a total of around 350 staff – 20 of whom are known to have additional needs and/or a disability.

## Outcomes

Lauren explained how being on the project has been so eye opening, that there are so many things that employers may not consider – simply because they don't have to face them themselves. It's been great to hear about the invisible barriers faced by many in the workplace that are not disclosed. It's encouraged us to think deeper & look at our processes in a lot more detail. It's also been interesting to learn about the support that is out there, which previously we weren't aware of & of course, it's been good to meet the other companies involved to share best practices. She also identified that one of the barriers to being part of such a huge organisation is that there is not a huge amount of influence they can have within the recruitment system, having to use what they've been given. Recruitment is all online via an AI bot. Likewise, the learning is delivered via e-learning – there's no way to have it read out or adjusted - so there are accessibility issues & that's out of our control. The only things we can put in place is the onboarding & training. At every point during this process we look for reasonable adjustments that can be made for the individual as required

**"We introduced a three-month supported internship at our Dorchester branch and that's been a huge success. This person has learning disabilities and autism. "**

Internally, Lauren will be approaching head office & pointing out the barriers to recruitment & e-learning. If changes can be made it would have a huge impact [bearing in mind that McDonald's employs more than 170,000 people working in 1,450 restaurants. It's staff are also one of the country's youngest workforces with three quarters of its employees aged between 16 and 25].

**"This was an opportunity for Young People to see what it's like working in our restaurants and for a big corporation like McDonald's. . "**