

Building Life Skills:

How West SILC is Using ESLs to

Prepare Pupils for the Real World

“ Displaydata went above and beyond to understand our vision. The ESLs help us personalise learning for every individual, which is so important given the range of needs we support. The supermarket is a stepping stone into the real world – and the digital labels have helped shape that. ”

Rob Lakewood,
Associate Assistant Head
and Post-16 Powerhouse Lead,
West SILC

West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (West SILC) is a community special school in Leeds, United Kingdom, supporting around 250 learners aged 2 to 19 with a range of needs. Across its five sites, the school delivers a highly personalised approach designed to help pupils grow in confidence and independence across all aspects of their lives.

At the school's Powerhouse site – a specialist environment for students aged 16+ – the focus shifts to preparing for independent adulthood. Through tailored work experience, practical learning environments and real-world simulations, learners are supported to develop key functional skills and prepare for life beyond education.

A central part of this approach is the on-site supermarket, a lifelike retail environment where pupils develop essential skills such as budgeting, shopping and money management. It's here that Displaydata's Electronic Shelf Labels (ESLs) have become an integral part of the school's mission – helping pupils 'learn to live' and 'learn to earn'.



Benefits

- ▶ 250 4-colour ESLs installed across the school's simulated supermarket
- ▶ Centralised content control to personalise pricing for each pupil
- ▶ Pricing updated instantly to reflect real-world scenarios
- ▶ Fully tailored support from Displaydata with ongoing collaboration

Challenge

West SILC's mission is to equip young people with special educational needs with the tools they need to live full and independent lives. At the Powerhouse site, this includes simulated real-life environments such as kitchens, pop-up shops, and a supermarket. These spaces support pupils on their journey towards adulthood and help them prepare for the world of work.

Initially, the supermarket was very basic, using homemade paper price tags and plastic fruit and vegetables. Even after support from convenience retailer One Stop helped bring the store to life, the paper labels remained a limitation – unchanging, easily memorised, and not representative of how pricing works in the real world.

As Rob Lakewood explains, *"We were aiming to teach real life skills, but the price labels didn't change. Pupils weren't learning how to spot deals, understand percentage discounts or adapt to fluctuating prices."*

Solution

After discovering the concept of electronic shelf labels (ESLs), Rob saw a clear opportunity to enhance learning with more dynamic tools.

Keen to partner with an ESL provider who would truly understand the school's unique needs and educational goals, Rob struck up a conversation with Displaydata, which quickly turned into a positive relationship.

Rob appreciated how Displaydata took time to understand the school's vision and the complexity of individual learner needs. Our Dynamic Cloud Solution now powers 250 4-colour ESLs in the West SILC simulated store, providing the flexibility to adapt the label displays to a range of learning needs so that lessons can be personalised to reflect the school's values.

For example, for those pupils who are yet to understand decimals, prices can be rounded to whole numbers. Others learn to calculate discounts and compare offers as prices are updated in real time.

The system also supports outside learners on internships, giving them experience in retail and inventory management by switching ESLs from customer-facing prices to back-of-house stock data.

Benefits

With Displaydata ESLs in place, the West SILC Supermarket has evolved into a fully functional, flexible learning hub that mirrors real-life shopping. It helps pupils gain confidence with money, compare value, make spending decisions and recognise price accuracy.

- ▶ **Personalised learning:** Teaching staff adapt labels to suit individual learning stages.
- ▶ **Real-world relevance:** Offers, discounts and price changes simulate modern retail.
- ▶ **Broader skill-building:** ESLs are used for both customer-facing scenarios and back-end stock management.
- ▶ **Ongoing support:** The Displaydata team provided a tailored onboarding experience, taking the time to understand the school's goals and offer a solution that fits, and continues to provide ongoing support.

As Rob concludes, *"We appreciate the way Displaydata was willing to support West SILC – just the fact that they showed an interest and took time to listen to us showed us that this would be the perfect partnership."*

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