

PURPLE DAY – JOHN’S STORY

Written by Serco Media and Communications

For John Butcher (3rd from the left), Simulation Specialist Senior Instructor, NZ Training Services (NZTS), Purple Day this year (26 March) held a deeply personal meaning.

Around 12 months ago, John was diagnosed with epilepsy after a series of medical consultations, specialist appointments and tests. He lives with a form known as focal impaired awareness seizures, one of many types of epilepsy that people may not always understand or see.

Like many, John describes feeling overwhelmed at first. But throughout his journey, he chose to be open, keeping his leaders and team informed, and eventually sharing his diagnosis more broadly across the workplace and with customers.

What followed is what makes this story truly powerful.

With the support of the Serco Defence NZTS team, John has continued to deliver in his role, including teaching New Zealand Navy Commanding Officers in ship handling and navigation. That support isn't passive, it's active, ongoing, and grounded in care. His team regularly check in, understand his triggers (like fatigue), and look out for him in a way that enables him to keep doing the work he loves.

John puts it simply: “being supported – and allowing himself to be supported – has been key.”

This year, with backing from his leaders and team, John helped bring Purple Day to life at Serco. From organising purple shirts and a morning tea, to connecting with Epilepsy New Zealand, the day became more than awareness, it became a visible show of unity, care and understanding.

“My epilepsy has knocked me around, but it’s only an illness. Purple Day is important to me because it acknowledges the team around me – the people who support me to keep working and living a normal life.”

At Serco, we talk about Care, and this is exactly what it looks like in action.

Thank you to John and the NZTS team for sharing your story, raising awareness, and reminding us of the impact we can have when we show up for each other.

From Epilepsy New Zealand:



0800 37 45 37



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www.epilepsy.org.nz

We would like to sincerely thank Serco and the NZTS team for the incredible support shown to John. The way you have embraced a culture of care and understanding – truly seeing the person, not the epilepsy – is exactly what we hope to see in workplaces across Aotearoa.

Your commitment to supporting John to continue doing what he loves, while also raising awareness and funds for Epilepsy NZ, is both inspiring and impactful. Thank you for standing alongside John, and for helping create a more inclusive and supportive community for people living with epilepsy.

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