

SEND Employment Forum: Suggested Terms of Reference

These are the suggested Terms of Reference (TOR) and other information that will be useful when establishing or developing a local SEND employment forum.

Background & context

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (Children and Young People In England with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) sets out the strategic planning duties on local authorities and other services, in relation to disabled children and young people with special educational needs.

The Act also lays the foundations for statutory bodies to realise the vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), which is the same as for all children and young people - that they lead happy and fulfilled lives. This includes employment.

In 2022 the Government reinforced its commitment to supporting more young people with SEND into employment by the Department for Education funding a 3-year programme to strengthen Supported Internships. This programme has been extended for a fourth year to continue activities and build in sustainability.

The programme aims to:

- Support Local Authorities focusing on SEND Employment Forums and follow on support
- Increase employer engagement and facilitation by the Employer Ambassador Network
- Provide training to at least 400 more job coaches across England
- Provide 60 peer reviews using the Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework (SIQAF)

The Internships Work programme

The programme is delivered by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), the British Association of Supported Employment (BASE) and DFN Project SEARCH and includes the follow key elements:

- support to local authorities to develop SEND employment forums, administer and monitor new funding to meet programme outcomes
- engagement and support for employers to offer high quality work placements
- continue to deliver a sustainable process to improve the quality of Supported Internship provision and to train more job coaches who are essential to this work.
- Local authorities taking part in the programme are required to develop and maintain local SEND Employment forums to oversee this work.

Each local authority will be at a different point on their journey to improving employment outcomes for young people with SEND and have different arrangements and partners involved.

Purpose of the SEND employment forum

- To develop a strategic approach and action plan aimed at improving employment outcomes for young people with SEND
- To bring together all the local partners who can develop and deliver pathways to sustainable employment and promote collaborative working
- To create routes that will support more young people with SEND into paid employment
- To identify, develop (where there are clear gaps) and promote training and resources that schools, colleges and employers can access to make meaningful paid work a realistic outcome for all children and young people with SEND
- To provide partnership strategic support and challenge to the implementation of the internships work grant funding and action plan.
- To ensure long-term success through a sustainable means so that the legacy of the programme can continue after it ends.

Accountabilities

To be determined locally.

Membership

The partnership needs to be those people who can come together to have the right conversations leading to change in the local area. The cross-sector nature of the membership of the forum is a key element of success – bringing together expertise, including voices of young people and family members. The forum will be chaired by someone with passion, drive and ambition for employment.

The forum membership is likely to include:

- Parents - for example, through the local parent/carer forum or other parent groups
- Young people - for example, through a children and young people's forum, interns and graduates, young people's voice from schools and colleges.
- Education support services - SEN team, educational psychology, learning, sensory and behaviour support teams,
- Health services - designated clinical or medical Officer or representative, representation of therapy, nursing and mental health teams
- Social care (children and adult) services - representation of transition team, children with disabilities team, adult social care teams
- Employment services - Careers Enterprise Coordinators, Supported Employment services, local authority economic regeneration team or similar, DWP
- Schools - mainstream and special school representation
- Colleges, training providers and other supported internship providers
- Local voluntary and community sector organisations - local disability organisations/advocacy groups, young people's social clubs

- Elected members and champions for this agenda
- Local employer forums - for example representatives from the local chamber of commerce
- Employers - who are already committed to supported internships and will act as champions for your forum

Useful references

- For guidance on how to set up a successful Supported Internships: [Supported internships - GOV.UK](#)
- Information on job coach training: [Support for Job Coaches by Internships Work - NDTi](#)
- Some Local Authorities have developed these forums from existing groups or merged them with other strategic groups such as Inclusive Employment, Work & Skills or Preparing for Adulthood groups. You can talk to your Regional Lead who can give you ideas or connect you with others in your region: [Internships Work: NDTi Regional Leads - NDTi](#)