



Department
for Education

The Sovini Group

Supported internship employers

Supported internships are helping to create meaningful employment with The Sovini Group



The Sovini Group are a collection of companies that provide quality homes for the public in the North West of England. In 2023, they made the decision to join the supported internship programme with the aim of helping local young people with SEND secure employment opportunities. The programme has already proven to be a success and their first supported intern, Ryan, is having a huge impact on their business.



How did you hear about supported internships?

We had a meeting with the SEND Employment Support Officer at Liverpool City Council. She put us in contact with some local SEND schools. We then agreed to support two individuals on a pre-supported internship programme over four weeks with the aim of offering a supported internship in line with the school year.

Why did you want to offer supported internships?

We have always supported a number of activities for young people in the local area, like work experience and career fairs, and we were really keen on supporting young people with SEND. Our Group's ethos is 'our purpose is our people' and supported internships felt like a natural step for us. We wanted to break down some of the barriers to employment that these young people face.

What did you expect to achieve by offering a supported internship?

We had an open mind in terms of expectations. We have been blown away by how well our supported intern – Ryan – has adapted and what he brings to the team. Ryan was given a special recognition award at our recent Apprenticeship Awards event for his passion and positive attitude.

How did you get ready to take on a supported intern?

It was essential that we familiarised ourselves with the programme's objectives and considered its structure, particularly making sure our managers were equipped with the knowledge and skills to support the young people during their time with us. Our health and safety team were also heavily involved to make sure we had tight control measures in place for the individuals who would be operating on a live construction site. We also had a bespoke training plan in place which covered all aspects of mandatory training and additional site-specific training.

Supported internships can have a massive impact on a business's culture and reputation



Have you offered any long-term roles to any supported interns?

We are extremely happy with Ryan's performance and we will be exploring some of our apprenticeship opportunities with him when the internship comes to an end.

What benefits have you seen for your business by taking on supported interns?

Ryan has made strong connections with employees across our business. He has performed really well in his role and his manager has said that he has taught him quite a lot about how to communicate well and how to approach certain situations. He has grown massively in confidence and is a valued member of the team.

How does the job coach help?

The job coach, provided by Ryan's education provider, is there every day to make adjustments for Ryan and to make sure he is developing on the programme. We have regular meetings with members of our learning and

development team, the mentor and the job coach, to make sure that Ryan has all the support he needs in the role.

What have you learnt about employing young people with SEND?

It is important to note that young people with SEND are all different and have different needs and support requirements. In our experience, these young people have a unique set of skills that can really improve your business and relationships within your team.

Would you encourage other businesses to offer supported internships?

We would 100% encourage other businesses to join the supported internship programme. It has made such a big difference to our business and has helped foster equality and diversity in our workplace. By participating in these programmes, businesses not only gain access to a diverse pool of talent but also contribute to breaking down barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities or other barriers.

If you had some advice for businesses who haven't thought about offering supported internships, what would it be?

Find out more about it, you won't regret it. Try not to be worried about the unknown. Speak to your local authority SEND contact and your teams to find out their views. Speak to other organisations (like us) who have had a positive experience. Feedback from our staff has been that it has not only enhanced their empathy and awareness but also equipped them with valuable skills and strategies for effectively supporting individuals with additional needs.



If your business or organisation is thinking about being part of the supported internship programme, you can **find more information on our website.**

