

Employer information



Supported Internships

what, why and how?



Introduction to 'Internships Work'



Supported internships have been running for 10+ years and are one of the most successful ways to enable young people, with an identified additional need, to gain sustainable paid employment. However, currently, only 5.1% of people with special educational needs and disabilities gain permanent paid employment in the UK, compared to 80% of their peers.

This booklet aims to give of an overview of the Supported internship programme, how it can be beneficial to your business, FAQs that employers have raised and most importantly how to get started. Supported internships and opportunities for young people cannot be achieved without forwarding thinking employers such as yourselves.



WHAT is a Supported Internship?

- A full-time, structured work-based educational programme offered by colleges and training providers for young people, (aged 16-24) with identified additional needs and where the majority of their time is spent within the workplace.
- The structured study programme includes on-the-job training with a local employer, supported by expert job coaches, an employability programme looking at the soft skills of employment, vocational profiling to identify a student's skills and qualities and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate.
- Job coaches provide support to employers, increasing their confidence of working with young people and helping them to understand the business case of employing a diverse workforce.
- The support given to both the intern and employer, by a job coach, is fully funded by Access to Work - a Department for Work and Pensions grant.
- Supported internships aim to help young people gain paid employment by giving them the skills and experience by learning in the "real" workplace
- There are different models of supported internships which can be flexible to meet your business need. For example:
 - Interns spend all of their time with the employer, undertaking learning, delivered by the education provider, within the workplace environment.
 - Interns spend one day a week with the Educational Provider and approximately 15-20 hours per week with the employer.
- The model appropriate for the employer's business needs can be discussed with the education provider.
- There is no cost to the employer as the Intern is in full time education.
- There is no obligation to employ the young person at the end of the placement, however, supported internships are the perfect form of working interview, should there be a suitable vacancy.
- The overall goal of supported internships is for young people with additional needs to move into paid employment.



WHY should my business host a work placement?

As well as making a positive contribution to society, and increasing the diversity of your workforce to reflect your customer base, the benefits to your business include:

- ✓ Developing an ethical corporate image which can be fundamental to business success. A study found that 87% of consumers preferred to use companies that hired people with disabilities, and that 92% felt more favorable towards companies that hired individuals with disabilities.
- ✓ Working alongside a young person with an additional need can increase your organisation's understanding of your market. For an average business, more than 20% of your customers are disabled people. A workforce that reflects the diverse range of customers it serves, and the community in which it is based, is good for business.
- ✓ The placement can act as an extended working interview - giving you an increased chance of getting the right person to fill your vacancies and bringing new skills to your workforce.
- ✓ Interns can be trained to undertake tasks using an employer's methods, thereby meeting the required standards.
- ✓ Offering a placement will increase an employer's disability confidence, with job coaches available to supplement any in-work training that the employer provides. The intern can also undertake additional learning in college, identified by the employer, to work on qualifications that the employer would want for their workforce.
- ✓ There may be an opportunity to give a junior member of staff mentoring or supervisory experience if they act as a 'buddy' to the intern.



“ As a small business we have been happy to support students of all abilities through their learning journey. In setting up Internships within our workplace, not only are we able to offer students a chance to work within the industry but also increase their life skills and confidence. Facilitating Supported Interns is something we really pride ourselves in, seeing our team grow and flourish and offering some employment at the end of their placement. ”

Lisa Pike

Mrs Gill's Country Cakes,
Tiverton

WHAT will we need to do during the Placement?

- Interview (or other method to assess suitability) the intern prior to placement.
- Provide line management as you would with any employee.
- Work with the intern and job coach to ensure lines of communication are kept open and honest.
- Have input to the intern's review.
- Share with the training or education provider/job coach any concerns you may have.
- If it became obvious that the young person requires a reasonable adjustment to undertake their duties, the job coach can support you with this and, indeed, if there is a cost, Access to Work government funding often be used. Very often these reasonable adjustments can also provide useful to current members of staff.

HOW can I offer someone a supported internship placement?

- Now it's over to you if you are thinking about hosting a placement, firstly contact your local college or training provider, as shown on the last page of this booklet. They will work with you to understand the role you have available and to ensure the best job match between the potential intern, the role and your business requirements.
- Supported internships are flexible and the provider will work with your business to ensure the internship works for all concerned.
- Partnership is key to a successful supported internship and your input will be invaluable prior to and during the placement
- What happens at the end of the supported internship?
 - The aim of supported internships is to prepare young people with additional needs for employment. As the intern has been fulfilling a real business need in your organisation, you might consider whether you can take them on as a paid member of staff at the end of their internship.
 - This won't always be possible: you may not be in a position to recruit, or the intern may not have met the required standards. You can still play an important part in helping an intern achieve employment elsewhere, e.g. by providing a reference, recommending the intern to other employers, or giving honest feedback to the college about the skills and/or behaviours that the young person still needs to develop.

My Journey

An intern story

I did a **Supported Internship in College**, at No Limits Café and Hub, a Café that specifically supports adults with different abilities to gain work experience, employability and customer service skills, to support them in transitioning to a more independent adult life. They are Disability Confident Leaders. After my Internship I was offered 2 days a week paid work, as a Team Member and Mentor to others.



On finishing college and turning 18, I started to look at **Customer Service jobs and Apprenticeships in Customer Service**, linked specifically to the railway, which has been my passion and hobby my whole life! I had already started to volunteer at South Devon Railway (SDR), my local Heritage Railway which I have been going to since I was 2 years old. I applied for roles there but was unsuccessful and it highlighted my need to work a bit more specifically in relation to administration and office tasks. SDR had not done Apprenticeships before, but my current employer approached them about the possibility. Fortunately, because **I volunteered at SDR**, they knew me and knew my passion, and how good I am at on-the-job customer service skills. With this, plus the support of my **Disability Confident Employer** and the inclusive attitude of SDR Managers, it enabled us to start the process to register and apply for a Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner Apprenticeship!

SDR learned about the Access To Work (ATW) process and gained funding for a Job Coach to support me in my role. My employer and family liaised with SDR, ATW and the college, who accepted me onto the Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner Apprenticeship with my Entry level 3 Functional Maths and Level 1 Functional English.

On 1st August 2022 I started the Apprenticeship I had always dreamed of! Actually, working within a Heritage Railway, which is so close to my heart, with the extra support of a funded job coach along the way. My Job Coach is amazing and so supportive. I am learning so much and have achieved so much already, even in the first month. I love helping people, enabling them to enjoy their visits to us and learning all the roles within customer service at SDR. I even still volunteer on some days off!

I really hope this insight into my journey inspires others with different abilities to look more at Apprenticeships, delve deeper, get a disability confident advisor to help you and start on the journey of your dreams too! All Apprenticeships can be 'Supported' Apprenticeships with the right people around you to get you started. Don't further 'Dis' our 'abilities'!

Drafted by Zach and Sarah Thorp

Supported Internships at Devon Partnership NHS Trust

Devon Partnership NHS Trust has had a supported internship programme in place for three years.

However, the impact of the pandemic prevented the Trust from placing interns, as many were no longer actively engaged with their educational providers and unable to travel. Nevertheless, by 'thinking outside the box' the Trust's Corporate Affairs Team were able to support an intern by enabling the placement to happen fully remotely, with continued support of a job coach, who also worked remotely. Working 'online' met the needs of both the intern, who suffers from significant anxiety, particularly around travelling and of the Trust who could not readily support an Intern on a Trust clinical site.

The supported internship placement was an outstanding success. However, it became clear that internships do not have a seamless transition to further development and ultimately substantive employment. The Trust valued the contributions of the intern and the skills she had brought to the Trust, so the Trust worked in-house to move the intern onto a supported apprenticeship and to build a supported internship to an apprenticeship pathway for future Interns.



“ We want to celebrate the amazing asset she is in our Trust. We are extremely proud of our intern, the skills and capabilities she has demonstrated to us, the patience she has exhibited and most significantly, her courage.

But most of all we want to thank her for just how much she has taught all the members of her team– about care, compassion, inclusivity, tenacity and breaking down barriers. We owe so much to her for opening our eyes, individually and collectively, to a wider world of possibilities.

We are now ambassadors to deliver change and to see our workforce evolve in the coming years with confidence, valued and developed staff working throughout our services that have come through a supported internship journey. ”

Laura Hobbs

Employer Concerns Identified in Department for Education Guidance - FAQs

Are there health and safety issues?

Interns are covered by the employer's insurance as for any employed staff. For the vast majority of interns, there will be no need for any considerations beyond those that exist for all staff.

Any concerns can be discussed with your job coach or the education provider. The placement will have been carefully job matched to ensure the environment is suitable for the intern and the employer.

Will it take up a lot of time for employer and staff and affect productivity?

The intern will still require new staff induction and training on the tasks to be undertaken but the job coach will be there to give the extra time required to support the intern and ensure the tasks are learnt to a high standard.

We have no experience of communicating or supporting people with additional needs in the workplace

The training provider/job coach can deliver awareness training for your staff around the needs of the Intern but they will also be available for any support that is required. Interns can also request training for staff via an Access to Work claim.

Can someone with a disability or learning difficulty really do any of the jobs I could offer?

Employers are often surprised at just how much a person with a learning difficulty or disability is able to do, once the right support is in place. It may also be useful to think how a specific role might be 'carved' for an individual if tasks were allocated differently across a team. Some employers have found productivity is increased when they take this approach (e.g. freeing up some staff from data entry work, taken on by the intern, so they can do more customer-facing activity).

What will other staff or customers/clients make of it?

The job coach can support the staff to understand the abilities and needs of the intern. It is rarely a problem for existing staff and often brings out the nurturing side of one or more colleagues who thrive in that role. Customers and clients are often pleased to see a diverse workforce, especially if it helps the workforce to better reflect the client group – and that’s any workforce that serves the general public. If issues do arise, the job coach can help negotiate solutions.

Will a job coach just get in the way and be an extra burden?

Job coaches are very skilled in making their presence as unobtrusive as possible. They are likely to be around quite a lot to start with – but this is very helpful to the employer in getting the intern trained up to do the job and ironing out any teething issues. As the intern grows more confident, the job coach will begin to withdraw although they will do some light-touch monitoring and be available to intern or employer if additional support is needed (e.g. if employer introduces new or more challenging tasks).

Will I face some kind of equality / discrimination challenge if I don't recruit the intern at the end?

Employers are not obliged to recruit the intern at the end of the internship. This is the ideal outcome but is not always possible. Employers are only expected to recruit the intern if there is a vacancy and the intern is the best candidate for the job. Providers will expect them to apply their normal recruitment procedures – with reasonable adjustments to the process as required, as for any disabled job applicant.

Source: Supported internships - Supported Internships | British Association for Supported Employment (base-uk.org)

Did you know. . .

Employers get additional funding to support employees with different abilities?

Not just those on Supported Internships or Apprenticeships but anyone in paid employment who has disabilities or learning difficulties can apply to access extra support if they need it.

FAQs

What are additional needs?

This is a term used to encompass any needs that may require consideration within education or the workplace. Not all interns will have additional 'learning' needs but all those on a supported internship will have an Education, Health and Care plan.

Will we have to pay the Intern?

No, the interns are on a full-time education programme, which is just taking place within the workplace rather than an educational establishment.

Will we be able to meet the intern before they start?

Definitely. The interview process is very important for all concerned. The provider will have already discussed your requirements and the potential intern prior to the interview to give you the time to prepare the interview and take into consideration any environmental needs.

What happens if we think it isn't working?

If you think it isn't working, please speak to the job coach or education provider when you first have concerns. Very often these can be addressed, and the placement can go on successfully.

However, if that is not the case the placement will cease. If you have more general concerns or would like more information about the supported internship programme you can contact Devon County Council – email: economy-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

For support with disability and employment ACAS offer a free helpline – **0300 123 1100**.

Who will support us?

The job coach will support employer, intern and staff. There is no cost as it is funded by Access to Work.

Will the job coach stay all the time?

The job coach will stay for as long as is required. The job coach will liaise with you in planning a phased withdrawal.

If we don't have a suitable job at the end of the placement what will happen to the Intern?

If you do not have a vacancy the job coach/provider will work with the intern to seek alternative employment.

My staff are worried about working with someone with additional needs, they are worried they will say something wrong.

Free familiarisation training can be provided or, if needed, specific training to address an individual's needs. The job coach will be there, or can be contacted, to answer any questions.

Education and support providers

No Limits Café

www.nolimitsafe.co.uk

email: enquiries@nolimitscafe.co.uk



Bicton College

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Waymakers

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Aspire

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InFocus

Penny O'Keefe email: pokeefe@infocus-charity.org.uk

Jason Ryder email: jryder@infocus-charity.org.uk



Petroc College

email: reception@petroc.ac.uk





Useful links

Access to Work factsheet for employers - GOV.UK
devon.cc/accesstowork

Ready Devon
www.readydevon.org.uk

Ashley - Ready Devon
devon.cc/readydevonashley

For more information about Supported Internships, please either contact your local Education or Training Provider or email Devon County Council:
economy-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

If you would like this pack in an alternative format please contact:
economy-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

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