

Transcript

An SEF Story: The Black Country's Combined SEND Employment Forum

Kate Loftus, Senior Manager Disability Employment, Sandwell Metropolitan Council

Well, it was for practical reasons, really. A lot of the colleges work across boundaries. So we wanted to work with Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton colleges and bring them all together so they weren't having to go to four different forums across the Black Country. And what we wanted to achieve from it was really to look at what the barriers were with increasing the number of Supported Internships in the area. We found that we were able to come across quite some common ground with that. We also were all at different starting points, so some of us had more experience than others, and that enabled us to learn from each other.

Fiona Weir, Social Value Manager, VINCI Building

I was keen to get involved with the SEND forum because I saw it as an opportunity to learn how our construction site teams can help support the workforce and those coming new into the industry with supported needs. It's also learning from the experienced teams in the forum group and the advice and support that they're able to share to all the employers that attend. It's also educated myself and our site teams on the brilliant schemes out there to inclusively support SEND and neurodiverse individuals into employment.

Sarah Hancocks, Enterprise and Supported Internships Coordinator, Dudley Council.

One of the positive outcomes that we've got from the forum is the development of the Reverse Job Fair that we'll hold on the first of April. That we'll see around 40 young people come together and showcase and demonstrate their skills to opportunities to employers that will come along. Hopefully on the back of that, we'll see some employment opportunities for them.

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Fiona Weir, Social Value Manager, VINCI Building

If I was to offer any advice to other employers about the Black Country SEND Forum and the importance of engaging with their local SEND Employment Forums, I would say to absolutely go for it. Speak with your local authority employment teams, local to your areas, to find out more information on how you can get involved and what offers of support are available to employers in those areas. From my participation, it's opened up opportunities for VINCI Building for a great talent pool of local candidates for our sites, but also for our supply chain and SMEs on the site. The forum has been a great as a networking tool to support us and our local project site teams.

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