



Information on

Setting up a local supported internship forum and training job coaches

Background and aim of local supported internship forums

In November 2017, the Government announced £9.7m for local authorities to increase the number of supported internships and other pathways to employment for young people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), by establishing local supported internship forums and training additional job coaches. This document provides more information about setting up a local supported internship forum and the benefits of doing so for young people with SEND, and includes a case study of an existing forum in Leeds. It also provides information about job coach training, and a list of useful contacts.

The aim of a local supported internship forum is to bring together all the local partners who can develop and deliver supported internships in a local area, with the goal of creating routes that will support more young people with SEND into paid employment.

Forums aren't about creating extra work or bureaucracy: their aim is to facilitate practical meetings to set up sustainable supported internships and other pathways to employment for young people, and should save forum members time and money in the medium to long term. Setting up a supported internship programme requires key partners including education providers, employers, supported employment providers, young people with SEND and their families, and local authorities to work together innovatively. Every local supported internship forum will be unique, responding to local circumstances. Some local authorities will choose to create a forum with one or more neighbouring authorities; others, especially where the authority is bigger, will choose to run their own. It may be helpful for forums to keep in touch via regional networks. For example, the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) programme runs regional PfA networks (across education, health and children and adult social care) to share best practice and support across the PfA outcomes: employment; friends, relationships and community; independent living; and good health¹.

The benefits of working together on supported internships and other pathways to employment for young people with SEND

There are many advantages to taking part in a local supported internship forum.

- **Forum members**
 - Forum members will be directly involved in changing the life outcomes of young people with additional needs who may otherwise struggle to move into paid work.

¹ For information on the regional PfA forums please go to: <https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/about-us/meet-the-team.htm#Regional>.

- A forum which enables the creation of work placements should result in the young person being better prepared by the education provider (who understands what an employer needs), and better supported in the workplace (as employers gain greater understanding of support needs, job carving², etc., but also the benefits of employing disabled people). This should result in a greater number of successful placements, and a greater chance that young people will be offered paid work at the end of their placement.
- **Local employers**
 - Local employers will value a more coordinated approach from education providers and the local Job Centre, so they aren't fielding multiple calls looking for work placements.
 - Employers on the forum will be able to provide honest feedback to other forum members about what did and didn't go well, learning from mistakes and spreading best practice.
- Education providers will be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that they are preparing young people with SEND for adulthood, especially employment, and working with others to do so.
- **Local areas**
 - Supporting more young people with SEND into employment will result in a more diverse, inclusive and tolerant local community, as employing disabled people and seeing the skills they have to offer becomes the norm in more workplaces.
 - Local areas will be able to demonstrate to Ofsted and CQC (the Care Quality Commission) in their area SEND inspection that they are preparing young people with SEND to enter work and be part of their community as adults.
 - There are also direct economic benefits to the local authority, for example in reduced adult social care costs. In 2016, the Department of Health reported³ that within the 18-64 age group, the largest expenditure was on learning disability support (£4.61 billion, 70% of all spending in this age group). Learning disability support has the highest unit cost (£1,359 per person per week for those aged 18-64, equating to £70,668 per person per annum) versus other needs (e.g. physical and mental health support).
- Broader economic benefits: there are considerable economic benefits to the state. For example, the National Audit Office estimated that supporting someone with SEN into employment could increase their income by 55-95%, and reduce costs to the public purse by around £170,000⁴.

Setting up a local supported internship forum

One of the first steps in developing a local forum will be to **identify the key players at local level**. These will vary between authorities, and the main determinant should be whether individuals are passionate about employment opportunities for young people with SEND, and can help to facilitate this. Key players should include some of the following:

1. **Local authority representatives** from the SEND department and adult social care department who are empowered to make decisions or have close links to those who can.
2. **Employers** who are prepared to offer employment.
3. **All schools and colleges in the local area, including mainstream, special, private, post-16 education and training providers**. These education providers may, through their parent groups, be able to provide direct links to major employers. It may also be worth exploring whether private schools can provide sponsorship or facilities, e.g. free transport, fund raising to pay for work wear.

² Customising a job to make the most of an individual's skills, freeing up the time of specialist staff.

³ *Personal Social Services: Expenditure and Unit Costs England 2015-16* DH, 2016

⁴ *Oversight of special education for young people aged 16-25* NAO, 2011

4. **Parents and carers**, for example through the local Parent Carer Forum (a full list of forums and contact details can be found [here](#)).
5. Local **voluntary and community sector organisations**.
6. **Supported employment** providers, including the supported employment service of the local authority.
7. **Local entrepreneurs** who are used to making change happen quickly, thinking out of the box and can have networks and connections to influential decision makers.
8. A **recruitment company**, as they will know what is going on with individual employers, and are constantly in contact with employers.
9. Local **Job Centre** contact, e.g. the Disability Employment Adviser.
10. Key person to **facilitate** the meetings: someone with passion, drive and ambition for the project.
11. **Young people with SEND**, for example through a children and young people's forum or from schools and colleges.

Having established a core membership, forums will want to discover which local executive and business network groups exist, and engage them. This includes business forums run by the local authority, [Local Enterprise Partnerships](#), and Partnership Boards in Opportunity Areas. These groups can open up a large potential network of decision makers, and experience suggests that they are often keen to be involved in supported internships when they find out about them. Most towns and cities have a business diversity and inclusion group where diversity and inclusion managers meet for events, who may well be receptive to being approached. Organisations who have signed up to [Disability Confident](#) are another possibility.

All supported internships should be personalised to the needs of the young person, and flexible so that they meet the needs of the young person and the employer. This means there are many different models. As well as [guidance](#) on supported internships produced by the Department for Education, there are many useful [resources](#) on supported internships on the Preparation for Adulthood website. National Grid have also produced a [toolkit](#) about setting up supported internships as part of their EmployAbility - Let's Work Together programme.

Forums may choose to expand their remit beyond supported internships to support broader work experience for young people with SEND on study programmes, including shorter term placements that prepare young people for supported internships, and apprenticeships that are accessible to young people with SEND. All young people entering supported internship provision should have had meaningful work experience in the workplace prior to entering the provision, and be motivated to work, preferably 16 hours or more a week.

Local supported internship forums may also choose to encourage bridging partnership arrangements between supported employment and education providers, for support during and after the supported internship.

The rest of this document mentions some organisations that charge for their services, e.g. Project SEARCH, and BASE (the British Association for Supported Employment). However, please note that DfE does not endorse or recommend any one particular provider of goods and/or services over another, whether specifically or generally, and – as always – it is entirely the responsibility of local authorities to ensure their spending is lawful and represents best value for money for them.

Top tips on setting up supported internships

[Lighthouse Futures Trust](#) started delivering supported internships in Yorkshire Water in September 2016 with 7 interns. Katie Parlett, CEO of Lighthouse Futures Trust, has provided the following ‘top tips’ on setting up a supported internship programme. This is followed by her experience of setting up a local supported internship forum in Leeds.

1. Ensure all students are prepared for their supported internship: Lighthouse developed their own programme, ‘[Talent City](#)’, following visits to National Grid’s [EmployAbility](#) programme. It is tailored to suit the local market and students’ needs, and has two stages:
 - Stage 1 – a preparation for the supported internship placement which introduces students to the workplace through our supported micro-businesses. These include Branching Out Gardening Services, Keepers Coffee and Kitchen, and Keepers Create.
 - Stage 2 – having gained experience and confidence in a work environment, students embark on a year-long group supported internship in major organisations in the region, as a group of between 3-6 interns, with 1-2 job coaches.
2. Open doors at a high level – the support of a senior executive can quickly cascade down to all levels in an organisation. If you are a school or college, there may be highly connected governors, trustees or parents with contacts: consider running an in-house networking evening.
3. Where possible, don’t re-invent the wheel – work with organisations like Lighthouse Futures Trust, National Grid and Cadent who will have information and clearly defined programmes for you to tailor and share knowledge that will quickly get you started. Project SEARCH are another long established deliverer of supported internships (see below for more information). We worked extensively with National Grid and the founders of EmployAbility at first, and we are now in a position to help others. Our host employers can also support your proposed host companies through phone calls, visits and sharing knowledge. Contact me (Katie) for further details.
4. Remember that relationships are built on trust and can take a few months to build; but if you invest this time, it can create a strong and equipped joint project team with a common purpose and common goals. We have worked with 8 employers in the past 12 months who will all start/continue programmes within the next 12 months with teams of 3-6 interns at each site.
5. Once you have made initial approaches to organisations, be prepared for quite a few meetings and presentations to the executive and management levels, and then whole organisations or departments. A case study really helps highlight to organisations what is involved – if you don’t yet have one, here are some inspiring examples:
 - a two minute [taster](#) about National Grid’s EmployAbility programme;
 - a [five minute film](#) made by a supported intern at Cadent; and
 - a [six minute film](#) about the work of Lighthouse Futures Trust.
6. Consider different supported internship models. Our work is based on group supported internships with 3-6 interns, but Project SEARCH typically have 8-12 interns in each programme, and you can also have a single intern at an organisation. Single intern arrangements have the advantage of often being quicker and easier to set up, but the interns lack a peer group which can inspire and motivate them. Logistically, it can also be more efficient to run a programme for a group. Large organisations have the advantage of providing many different role opportunities.

Case study on how we set up a local supported internship forum in Leeds by Katie Parlett

Our version of a local supported internship forum is called the Supportive Employers Yorkshire Group. It has grown through working with many existing networks and groups in the city. We:

- have presented at the Yorkshire Diversity Forum, which has a number of major employers as members, and Leeds City Council Employers Group (70 employers);
- regularly attend and present at eight different business networking groups across the city that meet at breakfast or early evening to share contacts and experiences;
- attend the autism and learning disability strategy groups in the city alongside other support groups and charities, who also have key employer relationships and can help create opportunities;
- co-ordinate employer approaches, as everyone is in danger of knocking on the same doors; and
- use the skills of a business leader who has experience of working with major local and national businesses.

The Group has a number of objectives:

- to educate, promote and increase supported internships across the region;
- to share knowledge and provide a support network for other employers;
- to ensure we gain the highest possible employment outcomes; and
- to look at internal organisational processes e.g. HR, reasonable adjustments to the workplace to ensure sustainability and success.

There are 2 key partners in the work we are doing across Leeds and the Yorkshire region: employers and education providers.

- **Education providers:** we work in partnership with a local college and many of the local special schools to deliver high quality, outcome focused supported internships. Lighthouse Futures Trust oversee and manage the programme. Job coaches and staff known to students work as a team.
- **Employers:** it is easier to engage employers than you think! We found the key was ‘seeing is believing’. Initially, we took several interested employers to National Grid so they could see the benefits and understand how the EmployAbility programme worked, and it gave them the chance to talk to the employer and the supported interns. Now we have local ‘showcase’ sites at KPMG, Yorkshire Water and Carillion in Yorkshire, with several new sites about to start up. Employers needed to know that after putting some resource into the smooth running of the programme, the supported internships are largely led and managed by a team of professional job coaches on site at all times who understand both the needs of the business, and the talents, skills and support needs of the interns.

Funding for job coaches

As well as creating local supported internship forums, funding for local authorities is also intended to be used for training job coaches. Job coach training should focus on two aspects: the support they provide for learners, and how they engage and support employers.

Training for job coaches can be accredited⁵ (i.e. it can lead to a formal qualification), or unaccredited. BASE, the British Association for Supported Employment, recommend that training for job coaches should be in line with the National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment Practitioners, which were up-dated in 2017 (www.base-uk.org/nos). BASE is also happy to advise about non-accredited training and can offer bespoke solutions, which includes signposting to other providers who offer training for job coaches.

Talk to someone who’s done it before!

⁵ There is a Level 3 Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners that is available through BASE (www.base-uk.org/cert) which is awarded through Gateway Qualifications.

There are already many inspiring examples of supported internship programmes being delivered by a wide variety of education providers and organisations across the country. Thank you very much to the following individuals and organisations who have offered to share their experiences if you are interested in finding out more:

National Grid's EmployAbility – Let's Work Together programme: Box.EmployAbility@nationalgrid.com

And see further resources and short films on their website:

<http://www.employabilityletsworktogether.com/resources/videos/>

Sophie Woolham, Project Lead for Business Change at Cadent sophie.woolham@cadentgas.com

Claire Cookson, Deputy Head at Woodlands School (Unity MAT) cookson.c@welearn365.com

Katie Parlett MBE, CEO of Lighthouse Futures Trust Katie@lighthousefuturestrust.org.uk
(note that Lighthouse Futures Trust will be running free regular workshops for schools and colleges, job coaches and host companies throughout 2018 – contact Katie to find out more)

Mark McGillicuddy, founder of [MORETHAN7](#), a Social Enterprise mcgillicuddymh@gmail.com

Anne O'Bryan, [Project SEARCH](#)⁶ Programme Specialist anne.o'bryan@projectsearchuk.com

⁶ Project SEARCH is a partnership approach developed in the UK over 8 years. It operates in 47 large host businesses with a success record to date of 650 people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions going into full time paid work. There may be experienced Project SEARCH partners in your area who would be glad to contribute to your forum. Project SEARCH offers its own training for instructors, supported internship coaches, job developers and follow on job coaches for paid employees after the programme ends. Please note that there is a cost associated with delivering a Project SEARCH programme. Contact Anne O'Bryan for further details.