

Employer Guide to Supported Internships



Employer guide: supported internships

Work experience and study programme for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Thank you for your interest in supported internships. This guide will aid your understanding of this pathway and how we can support your inclusive journey.

We understand the difficulties employers face in relation to recruitment. Our vision is to create a structure of support to enable employers, training providers and young people to work together to create meaningful opportunities for individuals with SEND.

Supported internships offer a solution to skills shortages across all industries, with opportunities to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and inclusive workforce.

[Find out more](#)

(Right-click the links to open in a new tab or window)

“Having a supported intern has had a really positive impact on our organisation and employee morale.

Making reasonable adjustments has proven no problem at all and I would definitely recommend this pathway to other employers.”

- Supported internship employer



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Useful terminology

Below are some terms and their meanings that you will find in this guide.

1 SEND

A term used if an individual has a special educational need and/or disability which means they need additional support.

2 Autism

A developmental condition that affects the way individuals communicate and how they experience the world around them.

3 Neurodiversity

Used in the context of autism, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia and other conditions, this is the idea and acceptance that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways, and that these differences are not viewed as deficits.

4 EHCP

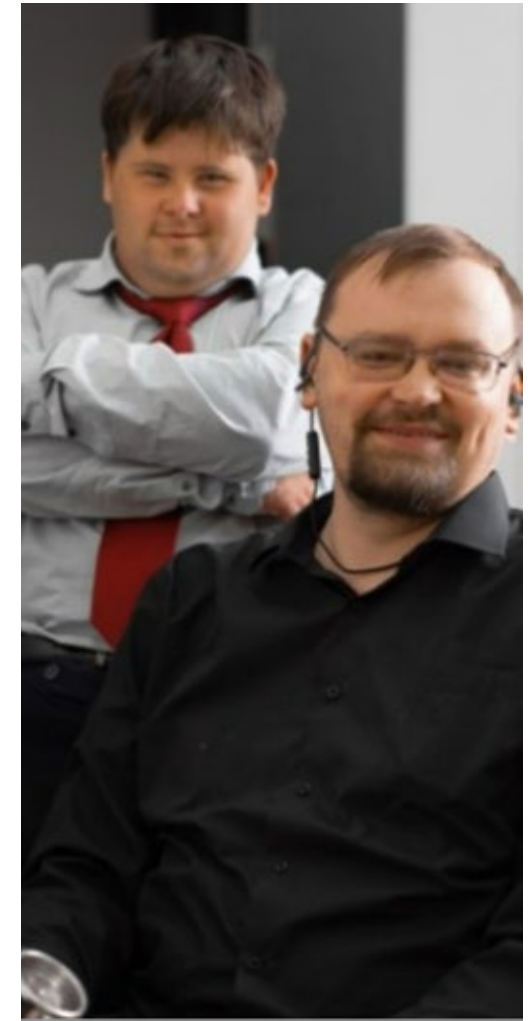
Education, Health and Care Plan – a document created by professionals to ensure specific young people with SEND have the support needed to help them into and through adulthood.

5 Functional skills

Alternative skills qualifications which help individuals gain the most from learning and working. Positioned as an alternative to GCSEs, Functional Skills Qualifications in ICT, English and Mathematics help students gain important real-world skills and improve their problem-solving in work settings.

6 Job coach

Individuals who assist people with SEND to learn and accurately carry out job duties, providing a link between the employer and employee.



The benefits of an inclusive workforce

Rationale for recruitment



Hear Fairhive Homes talk about the benefits of being a Disability Confident Employer. Click the image or this link to [watch the video](#).

1. High work quality

Leading companies understand the importance and advantages of hiring employees with SEND. A study by the Institute of Corporate Productivity showed that 3 in 4 employers find employees with SEND to be just as good as, or even better than, others in terms of work quality, attendance and motivation.

Whilst a job means a lot to most people, it can be even more important for a person with SEND due to the relatively limited employment opportunities available to them. Employers therefore benefit from more highly-motivated employees offering equal or better work performance compared to their peers.

2. Improved corporate culture

Providing inclusive employment opportunities and a sense of workplace inclusion improves the morale of all staff. This boosts the workplace culture, and employees develop more empathy for customers and each other, thus improving team performance and company productivity.

3. Lower employee turnover

Job applicants with SEND are more likely to seek job stability than other candidates, so are more likely to stay with a company for a long time. This means less waste on recruitment and training costs.

4. Financial & performance benefits

Research has shown that [companies that hire people with SEND](#) tend to outperform others, with higher revenues, profit margins and net income. Employees with SEND are better able to identify improvements to products and services that will benefit people with SEND, thus attracting more customers with SEND. The spending power of disabled households is known as “[the purple pound](#)”.

If you provide equipment and services to help employees with SEND to work, as the law encourages, [these do not count as taxable benefits](#), you don't have to report them to HMRC and you don't pay tax or National Insurance on them.

The benefits of an inclusive workforce

5. A wider talent pool

A huge 1 in 5 of the working-age population have SEND, a wide talent pool for businesses to access. Employers compete with each other for talent - why wouldn't they recruit highly talented and motivated employees with SEND rather than less qualified or motivated people without SEND?

6. Lead the way

It is no longer enough just to know that disability discrimination is unlawful. The way to provide equal job opportunities to all deserving candidates is to create inclusion. Play your part by creating vacancies in your company for people with SEND and set a real-life example to other businesses of the multiple benefits you reap by doing so.

For inspiring stories of people with SEND thriving in a variety of workplaces, click the links below.

[Ercol](#)

[Latimer House Hotel](#)

[Sainsbury's](#)

[The Lion in Waddesdon](#)

[Chiltern Rangers](#)

[Bucks Healthcare Trust](#)



Reduced staff turnover



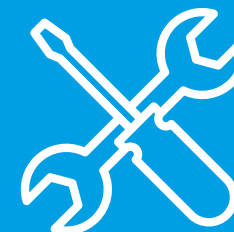
Reduced recruitment costs



Increased productivity



Elevated morale



New ways of working



Financial benefits

About supported internships

Supported internships are structured work-based study programmes for 16-24 year olds with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The aim of a supported internship is to create a substantial work placement for a person with SEND, achieved with the support of a job coach.

Research tells us that the extent of a person's ambitions and their ability to follow their dreams **depends on how they have been supported** throughout their life.

By offering learning in the workplace, internships provide the opportunity for young people to achieve future sustained paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work.

Supported interns are in full-time education and their work placement is part of their course. Placements last for a minimum of six months, and up to a year.

There is no requirement to pay the wages of a supported intern.

Eligibility

Financial support

Flexibility

Government guidance

Job coach support

Quality Assurance Framework

Suitability

Support for employers

Supported internship providers in Buckinghamshire



Website: stonydean.bucks.sch.uk/supported-internship

Contact: Christy Lavery

Phone: 01494 762538 / 07814 305444

Email: clavery@stonydean.bucks.sch.uk



DEVELOPING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Website: talkback-uk.com

Contact: Kath Dunn

Phone: 01494 434448 / 07897 415402

Email: kath.dunn@talkback-uk.com



**Buckinghamshire
College Group**

Aylesbury Wycombe Amersham



Website: missionemployable.co.uk

Contact: Katharine Weston

Email: katharine.weston@missionemployable.co.uk



Website: hee.nhs.uk/our-work/project-choice-supported-internships

Contact: Lindsay McCafferty

Phone: 07780 225 297

Email: Lindsay.McCafferty@hee.nhs.uk

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection practices often inadvertently create barriers for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

There are many minor adjustments that organisations can make to their recruitment processes that will enable applicants to demonstrate their skills as potential employees. Many of these adjustments may also benefit other, non-SEND candidates and enhance overall efficiency in recruitment.

Click the links below to read guidance on accessible recruitment.

[Job advert/description](#)

[Reasonable adjustments](#)

[Application forms](#)

[Work trials](#)

[Interviews](#)

[SEND supporters](#)



Aaron's supported internship journey

Aaron joined the Buckinghamshire Supported Internship scheme in September 2020 after completing his studies at Stony Dean Sixth Form.

A collaboration between Buckinghamshire Adult Learning and Stony Dean School, Aaron's internship saw him work at Stoke Mandeville Hospital throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, working as a catering assistant helping the team prepare food for hospital staff.

Aaron's work ethic was noticeably impressive, requesting to work throughout the school holidays in order to show his willingness and reliability, knowing these traits could improve his future job prospects. This was noticed by his manager who offered Aaron a temporary contract in July 2021 and swiftly made this a full-time permanent position in October 2021.

Aaron remained conscientious with his studies, achieving an English Functional Skills Qualification, The Prince's Trust Employability Skills Level 2 award, as well as his Food Safety and Catering Qualification Level 2.

Aaron's is such a successful story that he has returned to the supported internship scheme to provide advice to new cohorts of interns about how to find a job, offering them the benefit of his experience and showing them what can be achieved.

Aaron, who is still loving his job and plans to stay with the company long term, sums it up: "I believe I have had the best experience at the hospital because I was made to feel welcomed and valued by the team. Covid did not stop me from accomplishing my goal!"



Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions

Employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure all workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs.

It's not enough for employers to provide disabled people with exactly the same working conditions as non-disabled people. Employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. Some disabled people might not need or want adjustments, although this might change over time.

Reasonable adjustments include:

- Changing the recruitment process
- Adapting working practices for individual needs
- Making physical changes to the workplace
- Providing suitable equipment for individual use
- Supporting a phased return to work if an employee becomes disabled
- Providing training opportunities, recreation activities and refreshment facilities

Learn more by clicking the links.

[Government guidance](#)

[Healthy and Safety Executive](#)

[ACAS](#)

[Federation of Small Businesses](#)

[National Autistic Society](#)

[Citizens Advice](#)

Support for employers

Employers play a vital role in supporting young people with SEND into work and preparing them for adulthood.

There is also a great deal of support and advice on offer to employers to ensure they are able and prepared to do this in the best way.

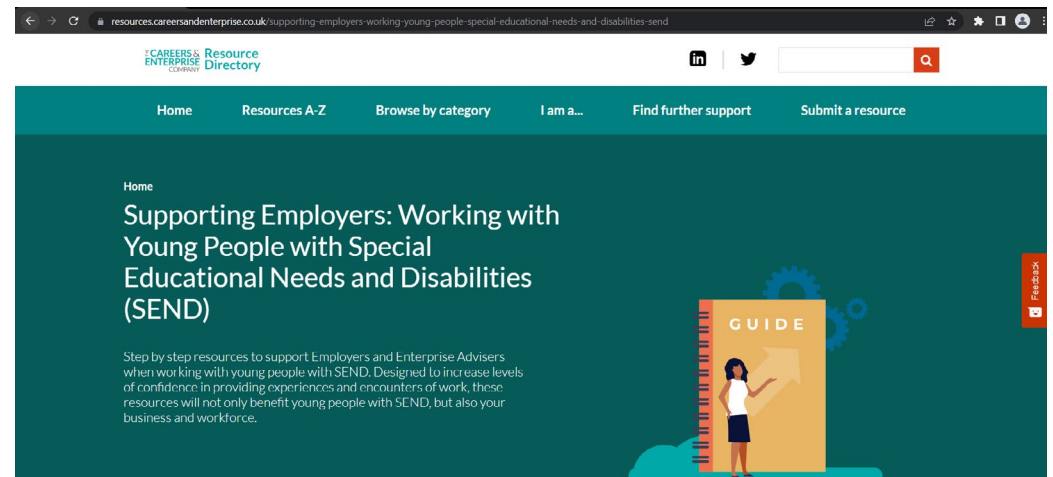
One focus is on **disability awareness and etiquette**, which involves educating people about different disabilities and how to engage with people with SEND in a way that allows them to carry out a specific task.

This is predicated on the simple philosophy: “Do not assume”. Do not assume that someone with SEND needs help or views their disability as a negative thing.

In this way, we can challenge outdated social conventions rather than reinforce them.

The Careers and Enterprise Company provides resources for employers working with young people with SEND.

[Find out more](#)



Learn about different disabilities

ADHD

Autism

Cerebral palsy

Down's syndrome

Dyslexia

Dyspraxia

Hearing impairment

Learning disabilities

Visual impairment

“Disability awareness is the practice of knowing, acknowledging, and accepting individuals’ experiences as they relate to disability.

Moving beyond your own level of comfort is key to a greater understanding.”

- [Disability Rights UK](#)

Other conditions



Access to Work – making work possible

What is Access to Work (ATW)?

Access to Work is an employment support and grant scheme that helps people with a physical or mental health condition or disability who are working, self-employed or looking for a job.

It provides individual practical support and advice to help them overcome barriers to work. Employers may be asked to contribute towards the cost of one-off support, with grants available to help with additional costs for things that go beyond what are deemed “reasonable adjustments”.

What could Access to Work pay for?

- Special equipment or adaptations
- A support worker or job coach to help in the workplace
- Disability awareness training for colleagues
- Communication support at a job interview or in the workplace
- The cost of moving equipment following a change in location/job
- Travel support to work for those who cannot use public transport or drive
- A Mental Health Support Service for people absent from work or struggling with their wellbeing

Extended support to help with homeworking

Covid-19 changed the way we work, with many employers asking their staff to adapt to new arrangements.

Through Access to Work, people can get grant funding if they have a disability and need support to work from home because of Covid-19.

Funding can help pay for special equipment or support services and can be fast-tracked if the worker is in a clinically vulnerable group.

Financial support is also on offer to those who cannot safely use public transport to get to work due to their health condition, while a tailored package of mental health support for up to nine months is available for those with anxieties about working in a Covid world.



Learn more about Access to Work

Call 0800 121 7479
or click the link below.

[Find out more](#)

Be a Disability Confident employer

Disability Confident is a self-accreditation scheme that encourages employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop people with SEND.

By being Disability Confident, you lead the way in your community and might just discover someone your business cannot do without.

The government scheme was developed by employers and representatives of people with SEND to make it rigorous but easily accessible, particularly for smaller businesses.

The Disability Confident scheme helps employers make the most of the talents people with SEND can bring to the workplace.

Disability Confident employers of all sizes are:

- challenging attitudes towards disability
- increasing understanding of disability
- removing barriers in front of people with SEND and those with long-term health conditions
- ensuring that people with SEND have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations



How to become Disability Confident

The scheme has three levels designed to support you at every step on your Disability Confident journey.

You complete one level before moving on to the next. The first two involve self-assessment, while the third requires an external audit.

Government guidance explains which commitments you must agree to and which actions you need to take at each level.

[Find out more](#)

Additional information

Email the Buckinghamshire Disability Confident employer group

BucksWorkability Partnership

Buckinghamshire Council - Preparing for Adulthood

Bucks Skills Hub

Local voluntary organisations

Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS)

MacIntyre Charity

Talkback

Neurodiverse Self Advocacy (NDSA)

Workforce Skills Team

For more information and support, contact the Workforce Skills Team at Buckinghamshire Business First.

Email WorkforceSkills@bbf.uk.com or call **01494 927130**.