



**CORNWALL  
COUNCIL**  
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Education  
Business  
Partnership

# Supported employment

**An employer's guide**



[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

# Contents

This booklet aims to give 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 offer opportunities for young people that could not be achieved without forward thinking employers such as yourselves.**

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**Doubling supported internship provision in England by 2025.**

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# Overview



**In the UK, only 5% of individuals with special educational needs and disabilities achieve permanent paid employment, a stark contrast to the 80% employment rate among their peers.**

This glaring gap underscores the importance of expanding and enhancing initiatives like supported internships to bridge this divide and provide equal opportunities for all individuals in the workforce. Addressing this issue is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone has the chance to thrive in meaningful employment.

## Making effective transitions into employment

To support young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in transitioning to employment, it is important to recognize the untapped potential and skills these individuals may have.



### ENRICH AND ENHANCE

Employers stand to gain from accessing a diverse and motivated talent pool, enriching their workforce with unique perspectives and abilities. By supporting inclusive employment practices, businesses can also enhance their public image and showcase their commitment to diversity and social responsibility.



### OFFER OPPORTUNITY

Internship programs tailored to the preferences, strengths, and needs of individuals with SEND can provide valuable work experience, skill development, and a pathway to sustainable employment. By offering opportunities that align with each individual's interests and goals, employers can create a supportive environment that fosters personal and professional growth.



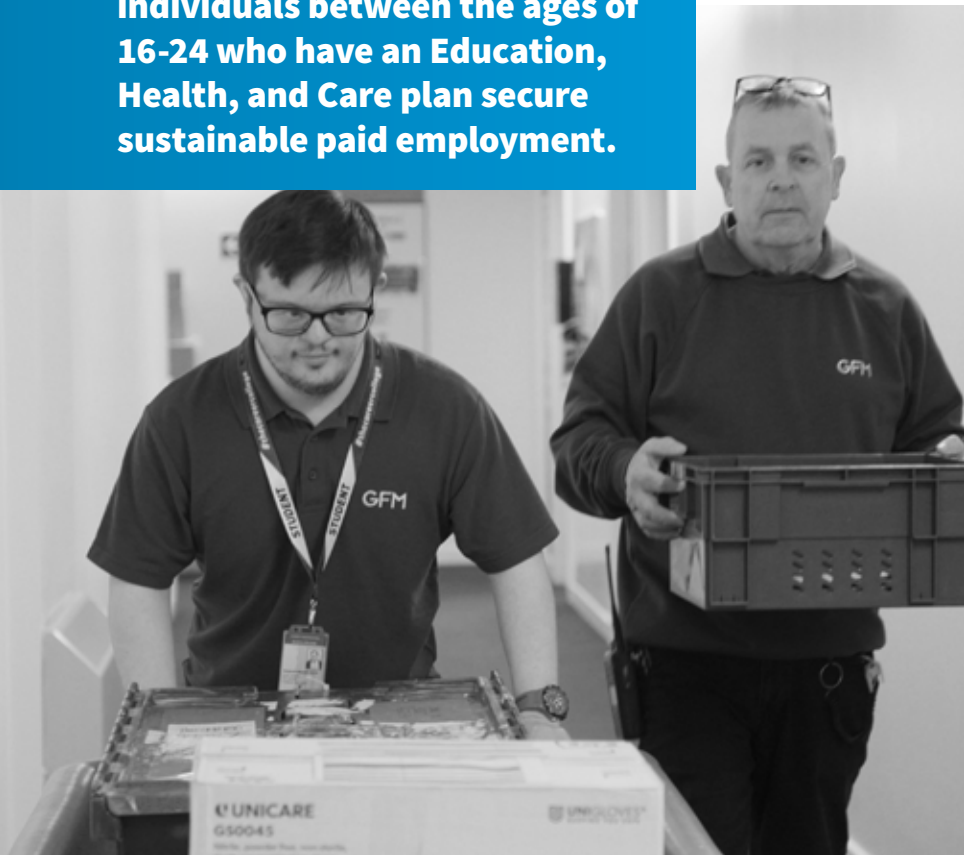
### COMMIT TO INCLUSION

Customers and clients are increasingly valuing companies that demonstrate commitment to diversity and inclusion by showcasing a workforce that reflects a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

# What is a supported internship?



**A supported internship is an unpaid specialised program designed to help young individuals between the ages of 16-24 who have an Education, Health, and Care plan secure sustainable paid employment.**



These internships primarily take place at the employer's premises, allowing the interns to gain valuable workplace skills and experience.

The focus of this program is on providing practical on-the-job training within a workplace setting, with most of the time spent at the actual workplace. The structured study program also includes support from expert job coaches who assist in developing the necessary skills that are essential for employment.

## **A supported internship aims to:**

- Support young people to develop the skills that are valued by employers
- Enable young people to demonstrate their value and potential in the workplace
- Develop their confidence in their own abilities to perform successfully at work

The measure of success of a supported internship is a transition to sustained and paid employment.

## **What is my role as a manager?**

**We recognise that this is your business, and it needs to be effective for you.**

The role of a manager during a supported internship is crucial in ensuring the success and development of the intern. Managers play a significant part in the process by conducting interviews or assessments to determine the intern's suitability for the placement.

Once the intern is on-board, it is important for the manager to provide regular line management just as they would with any other employee, fostering a supportive work environment. Effective communication is key during a supported internship, and managers should work closely with the intern and their job coach to keep communication channels open and transparent.

Managers also have a role in the intern's performance reviews, providing valuable input and feedback. In cases where the intern may require reasonable adjustments to fulfil their duties, the job coach can provide support and can tell you more about Government funding such as Access to Work.

### A supportive internship would benefit your organisation through:



**Developing an ethical dimension of your business, which can be fundamental to business success.** Research has shown that the majority of consumers prefer companies that hire individuals with disabilities. By fostering a diverse workforce that includes people with additional needs, businesses can gain valuable insights into their market and better cater to their customers.



**Offering internships to individuals with disabilities.** This can also benefit the employer by providing an extended working interview opportunity, which allows companies to assess potential candidates for future job openings while also bringing in new skills and perspectives to the workforce. By training interns to meet the employer's standards and offering support through job coaches, businesses can increase their disability confidence and create a more inclusive work environment.



**Providing mentoring or supervisory experience to junior staff members who act as mentors to interns.** This can help develop leadership skills within the organization.

# Diversity to thrive

## Employer network

Diversity to Thrive is a new collaborative network of employers and education providers, driven by Cornwall Council's commitment to improving diversity and inclusion for young people across the county.

The network is dedicated to expanding their talent pool and assisting young individuals with special education needs and

disabilities in transitioning to employment, offering young people an inclusive and thriving business community in which to find inspiration and opportunities.



The aim is also to change the culture within businesses when it comes to diverse employment.

The partner organisations believe that everyone has the right to aspire to the best possible future. Together, the Diversity to Thrive partners have created strong links to the wider SEND Employment Forum, aiming to increase supported employment opportunities, work experience, and supported internship placements for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Cornwall.

Do you want to be a part of Diversity to Thrive? **You can advocate for supported employment by:**

- Spreading the word to friends, colleagues, and other employers
- Connecting with us on social media
- By using and sharing the Diversity to Thrive logo with your networks.
- Offering work experience or work tasters
- Collaborating on supported internships.



**For more information, please contact:**

[ebp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:ebp@cornwall.gov.uk)

Everyone deserves opportunities in Cornwall for employment

**Stephen Roberts**, Careers Hub - Cornwall & Isles of Scilly

Diversity in the workforce is not only important, but it is also essential.

**Sarah Anthony**, Education Manager at Newquay Orchard



Case study ▶

**Project SEARCH -  
Bodmin Hospital**

## Lauren – supported intern



**Lauren, aged 23, had been on a supported internship with Project SEARCH since November 2023.**

Before Lauren enrolled onto Project SEARCH, she had attended Brannel School, referring to her experience as a ‘mixed bag’. The Pastoral Support was helpful, however she felt as though she could be supported in other ways.

Lauren felt it would have been better for her to have been on a vocational course in her last two years as an alternative to GCSEs, which she felt she could not do. Lauren entered a foundation type of course at Truro College when she was seventeen and was there for three years, however the COVID-19 pandemic affected completion.

**She then came across the opportunity to do Project SEARCH.**

childcare is Lauren’s ultimate Career goal, Lauren has focussed entirely on opportunities for work experience in childcare, to help build her CV.

Lauren did her placement with Project SEARCH in housekeeping and admin, learning about managing all the laundry from the in-patient wards and sorting all the bed linen, towels etc and making sure they are coded for the right wards.

She has also been responsible for food and tea trolleys to give on the ward (elderly ward) and felt she particularly liked doing the menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner and recording the volume of fluids that the patients require. She feels she wants to learn more about making the beds as these must be done in a particular way and she feels is a good skill to learn.

Lauren was quite shy when she joined and now feels much more confident in her communication as she has had to talk with the other staff, and particularly the

lead Housekeeper, who she takes instructions from. She felt she is punctual and has learned to do things when she sees them needing doing rather than wait to be asked which she did at the start of the placement.

“The progress Lauren has made has been incredible and I can really see a bright future in terms of building up her experience to get paid work and then entering her “dream” career in childcare. There has been positive feedback from staff at her placement, which is great to hear. She has a real skill in listening and patience

**Danielle, Job Coach**

Project SEARCH is new to Cornwall. The aim of Project SEARCH is to get young adults with SEND needs into a job role. Often, young adults with SEND needs struggle to access the first opportunities for employment and this project gives them those first steps. The project connects these young adults with employers.

Let’s get these young people the experience they deserve.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**70%** 

of learners on Project SEARCH are offered full-time employment.

### TOP TRAITS

Research shows that **communication, teamwork, listening, and initiative** are the most important traits that employers look for when recruiting.



# Frequently asked questions

## What are the 'individual needs' of an intern?

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 (EHCP).

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legal document in the UK that outlines the special educational needs of a child or young person up to 25 years old, and specifies the support they require from education, health, and social care services. It details the extra help needed to meet those needs and how it will support them to achieve their goals.

## Are there costs involved when employing an intern?

There is no cost as it is funded by Access to Work. 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 adjustments.

## What happens if we think it is not 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.

## 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 do not 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 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.

## What is the difference between a supported internship and an apprenticeship or supported apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that include off the job training either at a College, Training Provider or on site. Supported internships are specifically for young people that have an EHCP as these young people will require additional support so they will have a job coach to support them through their placement.

There are no entry requirements for internships like there are for apprenticeships.





# Contact

Access to Work:

**[www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)**

Cornwall Opportunities:

**[www.cornwall-opportunities.co.uk](http://www.cornwall-opportunities.co.uk)**

For any other questions or queries **please**  
**contact [ebp@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:ebp@cornwall.gov.uk)**

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