

Children's Services

222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Children's Service

Meeting of: Children's Service Scrutiny Committee

Date: 23 July 2024

Ward(s): All

Subject: Update on Supported Internships

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Supported internships are structured, work-based study programs designed for 16 to 24-year-olds with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan. These internships aim to equip young people with the skills needed for sustained, paid employment.
- 1.2 The primary goal of a supported internship study program is to provide a substantial work placement, facilitated by an expert job coach and continued learning. Interns spend around 70% of their learning time in a workplace.
- 1.3 Benefits include:
 - Financial Independence: Achieving paid employment brings financial independence.
 - Personal Growth: It helps build confidence, self-esteem, and overall well-being.
 - Social Connections: Interns gain friendships and a social life.
 - Economic and Community Benefits: Supported internships benefit the economy, employers, families, and society at large.
- 1.4 These programs aim to improve the life chances of young people with SEND by preparing them for sustainable employment.
- 1.5 This report gives an update on the development of our local supported internship programme, including case studies of successful interns and plans to further develop our local offer.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The [National Disability Strategy](#) set out actions the government expect to be taken to improve the everyday lives of all disabled people. This includes children and young

people, no matter what their SEND, to be able to reach their full potential and receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

- 2.2 With the right preparation, the strategy assumes that most young people with SEND are capable of sustainable paid employment. It therefore expects all professionals working with them to share this presumption and provide the career advice and support that help young people to develop the skills and experience that they need to succeed in their careers. However, evidence in [post-16 education and labour market activities, pathways and outcomes](#) research (2022) showed that pupils with SEND are less likely to be in sustained employment 15 years after Key Stage 4 than their peers.
- 2.3 Supported internships are therefore seen as a great opportunity to improve the life chances of young people with SEND by supporting them into sustained, paid employment.

3. What is involved?

- 3.1 Supported internships are a structured, work-based study programme for 16 to 24-year-olds with SEND, who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The core aim of a supported internship study programme is a substantial work placement, facilitated by the support of an expert job coach. The role of the job coach is crucial to supporting the young person, particularly during the set-up period but also in offering ongoing support (see paragraph 7.3).
- 3.2 Supported interns are enrolled and supported by a learning provider, for example, a school or college, but spend most of their learning time in a workplace.
- 3.3 Supported interns are in full-time education and their supported internship work placements are part of their course. There is no legal requirement or expectation that the supported intern will be paid. Supported internships are exempt from the National Minimum Wage regulation.
- 3.4 Supported internships last for a minimum of 6 months, and up to two years. Exceptionally they can extend to a third year.
- 3.5 The supported internship should contribute to the long-term career goals of the young person and match their capabilities. Alongside their time with the employer, supported interns complete a personalised study programme delivered by the school or college, which includes the chance to study for relevant qualifications, if appropriate, and English and maths at an appropriate level.
- 3.6 Every young person is supported in the work placement by a trained job coach, put in place by their education provider. The job coach provides in-work support that tapers off, if appropriate, as the supported intern becomes familiar with their role. Job coaches also work with employers, increasing their confidence in employing individuals with additional needs and helping them to create and support a diverse workforce.

- 3.7 The aim of supported internships is to support young people with EHC plans to gain paid employment by:
- supporting them to develop the skills valued by employers
 - enabling them to demonstrate their value in the workplace
 - developing confidence in their own abilities to perform successfully at work.
- 3.8 The measure of success of a supported internship is a transition to sustained and paid employment.
- 3.9 The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to work in co-production with children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers to develop a Local Offer of the services they expect to be available. This means that local authorities must find out what children, young people and parents want from the Local Offer. The Local Offer sets out the range of services available and supported internships are expected to be a key part of this.

4. Student engagement?

- 4.1 Our **SEN Team** coordinate placements to Supported Internships for Islington residents using vocational profiling as a young-person centred approach to gathering information specifically related to work. It is a way of understanding what a young person's experience, skills, abilities, interests, aspirations and needs are to support them to find a job. It is an active process that involves:
- observation of the young person in different environments
 - supportive conversations
 - bringing in information from a variety of sources and perspectives
- 4.2 The profile captures details about where someone lives, who they live with, and identifies areas for development, such as learning to travel independently, telling time, and using money. Overall, it aims to facilitate informed choices about jobs and careers

5. Local Offer

- 5.1 The number of Supported Internships offered locally has gradually increased over the last few years and . Some of the Supported Internships available locally and accessed by our interns now include the following:
- Project Search ([Project Search – Whipps Cross](#)) and ([Project Search - Moorfields Eye Hospital](#))
 - [Ambitious College \(Project Search - Whittington Hospital\)](#). **The Autism Project (TAP)** is a full-time, two-year, employability programme for young people on the autistic spectrum, run by the Whittington Hospital. aged 18-25. Students spend over 70% of their time in placements around the hospital to build their skills and learn 'on the job' We are always happy to talk to new departments that would like to take part. All students will follow our supported internship curriculum for their first term and typically students will spend 3 terms (their first year) following this: they will learn within real work experience placements within the hospital four days a week,

supported by work-place mentors and specialist job coaches and spend one day a week in class where they learn valuable employability and independent living skills and work towards City & Guilds qualifications in both Employability and Functional Skills. The objective is for young people to become 'work-ready'

- **Steps into Work** is a 12 month programme. It involves participants completing three unpaid work placements mainly in office-based roles within Transport for London (TfL). Students also have the opportunity to complete an operational placement as a Customer Services Assistant (CSA) working in a London Underground (LU) station. This also provides them the chance to gain an NVQ Level 2 unit 027 Customer Services in the Railway Industry Award. Steps into Work is delivered as a partnership between Barnet & Southgate College, Transport for London, and the Royal Mencap Society.

5.2 We are building strong positive relationships with [Mencap](#) and their supported internship programme 'Interns and Outcomes'. Interns and Outcomes comprises:

- Assessment of prior learning and educational attainment vocational profiling to structure and document information about individual abilities and interests
- Enrolment and induction pre-placement preparation matching to an employer according to skills, development needs and choice work experience
- 1-3 placements, dependant on the person and the employer Support provided throughout the placement by a job coach accredited or non-accredited work-related
- Personal development learning, including English and maths observation and records of progress and achievement non-accredited personal and social development, for example, travel training, communication skills, social skills for the workplace, money management and timekeeping skills as well as plans to move on to other pathways to work sustainability and tracking
- Working with the employer and individual to ensure placements are a success

Interns And Outcomes process

We ensure that individuals receive the best experience, and it is vital that preparation work is carried out thoroughly with all stakeholders to achieve this. Here is an example of how the process works:



6. Engagement

6.1 43 Islington students have completed Supported Internships, since 2020. The breakdown per year is as follows:

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	Total
Year 1	3 students	7 students	6 students	9 students	25
Year 2	1 student	3 students	5 students	6 students	15
Year 3	0	0	1 student	2 students	3
Total	4	10	12	17	43

6.2 37 of those students either remain in or will be moving into full, part time or self-employment.

6.3 We currently have 14 young people engaged in Supported Internship programmes with the Royal Mencap Society, and 3 with Project Search. This is the largest cohort of interns we have supported at any one time.

6.4 Some case studies of successful supported internship programs are included as **Appendix 1**: for confidentiality and privacy, we use a pseudonym in case studies.

Hardas at Project Search:

- The case study details Hardas's journey from initial interview to fulfilling a business need in a catering role. It highlights the use of vocational profiling, coaching, natural support, and off-job training. It shows how Hardas's confidence and abilities increased significantly during the program.

Jasmine's Story:

- Jasmine, received extra support to adapt her role to suit her strengths. She successfully secured long-term employment through the supported internship programme which shows the value of job-carving.

Mason at Mencap:

- Mason participated in a supported internship Mencap. He gained confidence and independence while working in the college shop, developing key retail skills

Please see also the following link to [The Courtyard Islington](#) and stories about five of the young people who secured supported internships between 2021-2023.

7. Lessons learned

7.1 Through the experiences of students to date, we have come to recognise the many elements that are critical to successful Supported Internship programmes:

7.2 School support:

- 7.2.1 It is important that the supported internship follows on from high-quality education provision with a focus on preparation for employment, including tailored advice and guidance, and prior experience of the world of work. The [SEND code of practice](#) explicitly states that all children and young people with SEND should be prepared for adulthood and that this preparation should start early.
- 7.2.2 Statutory careers guidance sets out that all young people in secondary school get a programme of careers advice and guidance that is stable, structured and delivered by individuals with the right skills and experience. This includes those with SEND. For this to happen, there needs to be an explicit focus on preparation for adulthood within the EHC plan from year 9 annual reviews onwards.
- 7.2.3 We have heard from students about positive examples of pre-work placement activity including:
- Vocational profiling and assessment
 - Identifying possible internship placements
 - Practical support such as sourcing and gathering relevant documentation e.g., dress code and workplace culture
 - Travel training
- 7.2.4 Our local '100 hours World of Work' programme helps ensure all young people in Islington, including those with SEND, have access to high quality careers experiences, enabling schools to put careers at the heart of students' learning and development. This means that our supported interns will have already experienced the world of work through their careers provision in secondary and post-16 education
- 7.2.5 A strong motivation to work is important so that interns will want to spend the majority of their time in the workplace. Parents and carers sharing their aspirations for employment is therefore also an important factor. Schools can helpfully work on:
- Raising parental and carer aspirations
 - Helping parents and carers understanding of what the young person can achieve
 - Removing barriers such as concerns about family income loss
- 7.2.6 The focus should always be enable the supported intern to be as independent as possible, however.
- 7.2.7 As the supported interns will be approaching adulthood or already be young adults, we will always seek their permission to involve their parents and carers, making sure that this is not seen by the young people as undermining their independence or diminishing their role in decision-making.

7.3 Job coaching:

7.3.1 We have learned that the skill of the job coach in bringing all the components together is critical to success. Coaches need to ensure that all staff share a 'can-do' attitude and a strong belief in the young people's ability and right to work. This enables teams to engage with and inspire supported interns and their families to aspire to paid work and demonstrate to employers the value of these young people in their paid workforce.

7.3.2 The core role of the job coach is to provide tailored support to both the supported intern and employers so that the young person can make a positive progression to paid employment. It is a distinct role within the team that requires specialised training.

7.3.3 The job coach supports the intern to learn from, develop in and maintain their supported internship work placement, and the employer to offer meaningful work placements that match the skills and needs of interns, adapting roles and tasks where possible and appropriate. They also help employers to develop their confidence in employing people with a disability.

7.3.4 A good job coach will provide for a supported intern in the workplace by:

- Learning the job role in readiness for training the supported intern
- Training the supported intern to master tasks by breaking them down
- Checking the interns' understanding, re-phrasing or repeating employer instructions when necessary
- Producing visual or written aids and ensuring any assistive technology
- Encouraging self-assessment and reflection as part of target-setting
- Modelling workplace behaviours
- Mentoring and confidence-building
- Negotiating an increase in responsibilities or new activities
- Trouble-shooting or advocating for supported interns when things go wrong
- Identifying skills development needs
- Supporting positive progression

7.3.5 A job coach will also support an employer by:

- Explaining the intern's strengths, support needs and successful communication strategies
- Providing information about a particular condition or advising on reasonable adjustments
- Suggesting appropriate ways to explain tasks
- Being a first point of call if issues or problems arise and negotiating solutions
- Ensuring interns are on task and meeting workplace standards and expectations (for example, time-keeping and attendance)

7.4 Promotion

7.4.1 We are doing more work on our [Local Offer website](#) to ensure that the supported internship programme is clearly described as an option, so young people are aware of this pathway.

- 7.4.2 We have learned that early discussion of supported internships as a pathway allows for preparation and learning of essential skills that increase the likelihood of a successful internship, such as independent travel. Also, the importance of making it clear that interns will be required to comply with workplace conditions, for example:
- Attendance
 - Time-keeping
 - Appropriate workplace behaviours
 - Dress code
- 7.4.3 We are working closely with the following key partners to continue to develop and extend our local offer.
- Local SEND supported internship forum
 - Other providers e.g., neighbouring LAs
 - Parent and carer groups (children's and adults)
 - Progression partners such as Department for Work and Pensions, Disability Employment Advisors

7.4 Identifying suitable employers

- 7.4.1 This remains our biggest challenge.
- 7.4.2 Successful internship programmes are dependent a working in partnership with one or more employers. Work is ongoing within the Council to train and prepare colleagues across our services, who may or may not have experience of working with people with SEND to be Disability Confident employers.
- 7.4.3 The primary goal of a supported internship is to secure paid employment for the supported intern. This may be with the host employer if a suitable vacancy is available. However, if this is not possible, host employers can still play an important part in helping a supported intern to achieve employment elsewhere.

8. Future Plans

- 8.1 We are currently working with Council departments and partners, including Anchor Institutions, to develop work experience opportunities as a further step towards a Council-led Supported Internship offer by September 2025.
- 8.2 Work is being supported our Early Career and Talent Team (Human Resources) who are developing a work experience placement programme to provide opportunities for priority groups including care leavers and young people with SEND. This is ground work to help make adjustments necessary, improve disability awareness (training modules have been developed inhouse by Children's Services) and build awareness and confidence across the workforce.
- 8.3 Four work experience places are earmarked for this Summer in different departments, with more targeted work from September with a view to these departments becoming Supported Internship trailblazers in September 2025.

- 8.4 The Council offer will look to broaden the range of opportunities available and away from a more traditional hospital / office based offer. So of the roles that young people have told us they would like to perform include:
- Customer Service: handling inquiries, helping residents, and providing information.
 - Administration: Opportunities to learn office skills, data entry, and document management.
 - Catering: Exposure to food service, kitchen operations, and event planning.
 - Environmental Services: opportunities in parks, with waste management, maintenance, or cleaning.
 - Community Engagement: Involvement in community events, outreach, and public relations.
- 8.5 The above are all opportunities that the Council could offer.
- 8.6 The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) is also supporting us to further develop our SEND employment forum, which meets quarterly. The forum includes local education providers, employers, and parent carer representatives. It is working to increase focus on pathways to employment for young people with SEND, and specifically to identify, commission and develop new Supported Internship opportunities.
- 8.7 DFN Project SEARCH is offering support on engaging employers and support them to offer high quality work placements by providing information, advice and training that enable growth in internships and job opportunities.
- 8.8 We are developing strong relationship with MENCAP and their supported internship programme.
- 8.9 Other actions include:
- Continuing to promote our Supported Internship offer, including review and development of the local offer website to improve visibility and accessibility for parents and Islington young people studying in and out of borough.
 - Continuing work to improve EHCP plans to reflect progression to adulthood as part of DfE SEND and AP Improvement plan change programme (test and refine).
 - Continuing to develop Council and anchor institution-based work experience placements for SEND young people as stepping stone towards a Council led Supported Internship programme.
 - Ensuring the value of investment in forums and Supported Internships is demonstrated to Local Authority leaders
 - Contributing to the sharing of best practice in approaches to SEND employment forums, including regional join up where appropriate
 - Develop, monitor and report on work during the programme
 - Continue to monitor and update data on uptake and outcomes for supported internships, and to increase the number of supported internships
 - Engage with delivery partners (training partner and job coach support) to support a Council-based Supported Internship programme to go live in September 2025.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 In conclusion, the Supported Internship Programme has demonstrated significant positive impacts on the lives of young people with SEND. By providing structured, work-based learning opportunities, these internships have enabled participants to develop essential skills, gain confidence, and transition into paid employment. The success stories highlighted in this report underscore the importance of continued investment and support for these programs.
- 9.2 Looking ahead, our focus will be on expanding the range of opportunities available, particularly within Council departments, to ensure that more young people can benefit from these valuable experiences. By fostering strong partnerships with employers and enhancing our vocational profiling and job coaching services, we aim to create a more inclusive and supportive employment landscape for all.

Background papers:

- None.

Final report clearance:

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Appendix 1 – Case Studies

Case Study 1: Hardas

Summary

This case study demonstrates an Intern's journey from initial interview in January 2023 into fulfilling a business need in May 2024. It outlines the interviewing and occupational profiling, leading to a job match, coaching, using natural support, off-job training, fading support and independence in a catering role. The results show a marked increase in confidence and abilities, an expressed interest from the work base provider and the gathering of relevant information that will follow the Intern into future employment.

Introduction

- The Supported Internship programme attended was for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, whose goal is sustainable employment.
- The programme took place at a host employer where the job role was modelled in respect of the intern and teaching and learning took place alongside to acquire competitive work skills.
- The emphasis was on collaboration, driven by the partnerships, job coach and business.
- The objective was to obtain paid employment for the intern.
- The case study described here relates to a young person with autism.

What Hardas wanted to achieve

- Build confidence with people and his environment.
- Build confidence in his own abilities.
- Work towards lessening support and building independence.
- Train in Employability Skills.
- Establish an open and supportive communication system, with frequent opportunities for feedback on performance.
- A job outcome.

Implementation

Initial Interviews

- This involved finding out about:
 - Interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, aspirations.
 - Learning, health and communication preferences and needs.
 - Family/Carer support/others involved.
 - Education and work experience.
 - Qualities abilities and strengths.
- It also included
 - Reviewing job descriptions to match findings.
 - Observing tasks and work environment.
 - Establishing support needs and planning and agreeing next steps.

Process

- Liaison with work provider about Hardas's interests and abilities. Organised staff Induction regarding specific learning needs and the importance of clear communication with one job at a time, starting in a small kitchen and quieter work environment, on a 1-2-1 basis.
- Gave specific and generic information about autism on a need to know basis and to raise awareness, stressing the importance of consistency of information and supporting with change.
- Advised natural support about the clear use of language, the importance of practical demonstration, practicing without fear of making a mistake and checking understanding. (Work duties already experienced and natural support interested in being involved)
- Hardas visited the employer with support worker and job coach to look at the place of work and meet key people involved in the work (informal interview)
- Discussed opportunities and negotiated elements of the job Hardas could be comfortable with at the start and how it could be progressed as confidence builds.
- Completed a communication form with names and telephone details.
- Explained and demonstrated a comfortable way for Hardas to communicate concerns when anxious about how and when to communicate in the work place. (Hardas would show a red badge on the inside of his uniform collar as a sign for help)
- Organised a set pattern of duties and times to do them, which included lunch breaks and some activities in less busy times at the host employer.
- Ordered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and established a start date.
- Agreed one day per week to start, leading to two days as progression.
- Set fixed rules (ask if unsure, discuss concerns before work, set work duties, daily feedback and times and writing in a "Communication Book" for carers information and for providing them an opportunity to report back and to reinforce achievements or address concerns)
- Set up off-job training to address numeracy aspects of the role (weighing and measuring)
- As confidence with tasks increased, faded coaching to a mentoring role and collaborated with natural supports on work development.
- Set up own areas of responsibility to further confidence.
- Standards and productivity were observed to be an automatic response with tasks that became familiar.

Outcomes and impacts

What Hardas achieved

- Once confidence had built in small 1-2-1 environment, tasks were added in different work environments and moving into the main kitchen.
- Established a high level of ability and working knowledge from previous work and used this to encourage independence and the resultant increase of confidence, which in turn prompted a willingness to try new things
- Reinforced the ability to learn by allocating own responsibilities, which highlighted initiative capabilities.
- New-found confidence and abilities.

What support staff learned

- Not to be carried away by the momentum of progress and successes by forgetting fundamental learning requirements i.e. checking understanding.
- Hardas's ability to see jobs and get on with them without being told demonstrated his comfort in the work environment and the potential for developing skills

What advice Hardas's team would give to others

- The importance of individualised work based learning strategies and the consistency of information, action and support from all involved.
- Change is a fact of life and although we might try to avoid it through good planning, it sometimes cannot be avoided.
- With the right support, change can be accepted to a better degree and the knock on effect is having a more flexible employee.
- Endeavouring to create a positive and comfortable learning and working environment is a sound plan but be prepared to be flexible or even change the plan, with the discovering of the unexpected i.e. a giant leap in progress or a backward step.
- Ensure that over time employees supporting those with disabilities do not forget their particular needs, especially at times when changes are being implemented

Case Study 2: Jasmine's story and the importance of job carving

- Jasmine enrolled in a supported internship programme but needed extra support to enable her role to be adapted to suit her strengths.
- In her case, a role in a hospital reception area wasn't the right fit for her due to the demands this placed on her speed and communication skills.
- The hospital therefore 'carved' a role to enable her to spend more time on wards doing other important and necessary tasks.
- 'Job carving' is used where a person can successfully undertake most tasks in their job role but there may be an element of their duties which they are not able or comfortable to complete.
- Jasmine was successful and gained employment from her placement on the programme and has gone on to gain further experience and enjoy all the benefits that being employed brings which those who do not face additional barriers, can take for granted.
- Jasmine feels she is contributing equally in society with everyone else, and above all is happy, fulfilled and doing a great job for her employer.

Case Study 3: Mason's experience

- A Supported Internship gave Mason a chance to build up his confidence and gain independence.
- He began by working 2 days a week in the College shop where he had previously studied, which allowed him to develop retail skills in a familiar and supported environment.
- Despite initially struggling with communication, Mason was able to work with his Job Coach to focus on specific areas of development and break down tasks for ease of understanding.

- His Job Coach praised Mason, commenting on what a joy it had been to support him and allow his abilities to develop
- After 6 months, Mason was able to move on to work at a local store.
- This was a big step, but he was quick to demonstrate his progress, and show a willingness to work independently and solve problems confidently.
- His Job Coach was able to gradually withdraw support and encouraged Mason to work alongside his colleagues.
- Mason is still working as a paid employee whilst attending College one day a week.