



Services

Report of: Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	28 March	All

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Report: Project SEARCH offer for Islington young people in Islington

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report follows a presentation to scrutiny committee in December 2021 outlining progress to date in delivering **supported internships** for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Islington.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to set out the different options available to support internships for Islington young people with SEND in the future. The report sets out:
 - What we currently offer and impact
 - What alternative models are available
 - An analysis of the benefits of each option

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee is asked to:
 - Provide scrutiny and challenge to the benefits of the options presented so that prototyping and development of a more structured local offer can take place
 - Note that delivery of the preferred option would be delivered in partnership between Children's Services and the Youth Employment and Progression Team that sits within the Community Wealth Building Directorate, and we would look to the Council to be a key partner for offering work placement opportunities as one of the largest employers in the borough
 - Support the proposal that major providers (for example, those in receipt of contracts over £100k) are required to consider if they can offer work placement opportunities
 - Support the culture shift and workforce development that will be required within the Council and among contracted providers and partners to deliver this work.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following our successful SEND area inspection in 2021 one of the areas for development we have identified with parents and young people relates to options post-16 for pupils with the most complex needs.
- 3.2 At the moment, individual special schools and training providers do what they can to find future pathways for the individual pupils in their care; but, we need a more systemic and coordinated approach.
- 3.3 Supported internships are one way to provide both the structure and the scale required now and in the future to ensure our children and young people with the most complex needs have the ability to live fulfilling adult lives aligned with their aspirations.
- 3.4 Supported internships are a Further Education study programme for 16 to 24-year-olds with SEND, who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Supported interns are students 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.
- 3.5 They require a structured study programme delivered by a training provider in partnership with other key stakeholders. They require commitment from a training provider, business, a job coach, and the young person's school or college all working together with the young person.
- 3.6 A young person on a supported internship is based primarily with an employer (around 3 days a week) who provides them with an opportunity to work for a minimum of six months. This work should enable them to develop transferrable skills. Alongside their time at the employer, young people complete a personalised study programme which can include the chance to study for relevant qualifications, and if appropriate, and English and maths.
- 3.7 The overwhelming majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation. Work based learning is shown to improve the life chances of young people with SEND by supporting them into sustained, paid employment.
- 3.8 Supported internships also help address the issue of 'learner churn' or 'revolving door syndrome', where learners complete one programme and re-enrol on another programme at the same level, rather than achieving positive progression.
- 3.9 There has been some development of our practice in this area (see Section 4 below), but current local provision is limited in variety and scale, and some successful schemes which operated pre-pandemic have not yet restarted. The West London Alliance of Local Authorities have produced a very helpful guide to support internship opportunities across London (attached as Appendix A). These schemes are competitive, and many would require travel of some distance for Islington residents. They do provide some insight into possibilities however.
- 3.10 Education providers are free to design their supported internship programme with local partners to fit their local circumstances and to meet the needs of their learners. In the UK there are different 'brands' of Supported Internships. The main ones are:
 - **DFN Project SEARCH** – Operating in several Hospitals/ large Hotel Groups. Also several Local Authorities (including Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Hillingdon, Brent, Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, Ealing, Westminster)

- **Royal Mencap Society** – running in 11 London Boroughs including Islington. This model finds work placements based upon the young person’s interests and aspirations.
- **Project Choice** – in Hospitals run by Health Education England/ NHS
- **Transport for London (TfL)** – ‘Steps into Work’ Programme and placements are related to TfLs operations.

4. Our current offer

- 4.1 Our first local internship for young people with SEND was in 2017, with 5 internships offered as part of the project at Moorfields Hospital. By 2020 this had grown to 32 internships with around 71% of young people moving on to employment. In 2021 the number accessing Supported Internships then reduced to 10. Of these 8 are currently on a MENCAP programme and 2 are with a DFN Project Search programme based at Whittington Hospital.
- 4.2 Our Local Offer currently includes competitive access to the following supported internships:
- MENCAP
 - Leisure Services at National Star College
 - Hospital based programmes (Moorfields, Whittington, Great Ormond Street Hospital)
- 4.3 Young people undertake a range of meaningful work, as far as possible aligned to their aspirations for the future including Childcare, working in hotels, retail, catering, leisure (e.g. Tottenham Hotspur Football Club)
- 4.4 The two DFN Project Search programmes previously run in partnership with City and Islington College at Moorfields Eye Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital have not restarted from the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 4.5 Whilst Islington young people are able to access a range of programmes across London, most young people only want to access a local scheme.

5. Likely future demand

- 5.1 The main area of need going forward is likely to be for children young people with higher functioning Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and those with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). The projected number of young people eligible in these groups are as follows, although it should be noted that a supported internship may not be suitable or attractive to all, who may prefer other pathways into education, employment or training.

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
ASC / MLD cohort potentially eligible	34	51	50	53	62

6. Options appraisal

- 6.1 The following principles are fairly common to all Supported Internships:

1. The young person should be between 16 to 24 year of age with SEND and have a current EHCP; want to find sustained employment; believe that you will have the skills to work by the end of the programme.
2. Supported interns will follow a personalised programme delivered by the education provider that meets their needs and provides progression and stretch. This includes relevant aspects of English and maths and subject areas that supports progression to paid employment.
3. A supported internship normally lasts for at least 6 months, and up to 2 years. Providers are not financially penalised if supported interns complete a supported internship earlier than originally planned to take up paid employment.
4. The supported intern will spend around 70% of their time at the employer's premises in a work placement. The young person will comply with real job conditions, such as timekeeping, shift patterns and dress code.
5. A supported intern normally rotate between different types of work placements. This could mean within a single, large employer who can offer different types of work experience or supported interns moving from a placement with one employer to a placement at a different employer. A key consideration for providers should be matching the needs of the intern to a suitable employer and placement.
6. Job coaches funded as part of the Supported Internship provide day to day support onsite to both the young person and the employer. Job coaches work closely with the further education Tutor. Job Coaches are trained in line with the national occupational standards for supported employment.
7. Work placements must work for both the young person and the employer. For the young person, the job must fit with their vocational profile, contribute to their long-term career goal and be flexible enough to address barriers where necessary. For the employer, they should meet a real business need. The employer should be committed to supporting the young person towards paid employment.

6.2 The costs and benefits of the various options currently available are as follows:

Model	How this is delivered	Cost per student	Pros	Cons
1. DNF /Project Search	A highly structured model that typically includes a partnership between a Further Education provider (including City and Islington College (CANDI)), a Local Authority and a large employer.	Range from £12,400 – £24,000 per person	Work placements already identified. External quality assurance. Good job outcomes.	Less flexible. FE College staff often restricted to term time and more traditional working hours.
2. Project Choice	Provide education, job coaching and the work placement as one package	Typically £14,000	Work placements already identified.	Focus on NHS / health roles
3. MENCAP	MENCAP provide education and job coaching directly	Average £15,000	Highly flexible and can work with any sector.	Job outcomes have been

	and partners with many employers		Work placements based on learners aspirations/ interests	lower than some others
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6.3 In considering the available models, our recommendation is that we work in partnership with local providers (primarily MENCAP and CANDI) towards developing a bespoke 'Supported Internship Islington' offer, which would be greatly enhanced if work placements could be guaranteed through the Council. This is likely to be a more accessible, flexible and cost effective offer. It would also give more opportunity to tailor programmes to the specific needs, aspirations and goals of the young person as well as being a truly 'local' offer.

7. Funding

7.1 Supported internships are funded as a 16 to 19 study programme, and as such the main source of funding is from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Many supported internships also include an amount of high needs funding from the Local Authority. These costs vary significantly between programmes and the needs of the learners and the support required.

7.2 Supported interns can also apply for Access to Work funding to cover the costs of practical support in the workplace.

8. Proposed Delivery Model

8.1 Our preferred approach is to develop a bespoke Islington model with the Council as provider of work placements opportunities

8.2 This work will be developed in collaboration between Children's Services and the 14-19 Team that sits within the Community Wealth Building Directorate. It will be incorporated within a 14-19 plan which includes work streams to deliver a further reduction in young people not in education employment or training, develop links with the world of work, and improve the Careers guidance offer available through schools. Within the objectives of this plan is a particular focus on vulnerable groups including those with SEND, looked after children, children known to the Youth Offending Services and over-represented groups such as White British and Black Caribbean boys. Development and delivery would also be supported by teams across education, health and care services, inclusive economy and jobs and schools.

8.3 We would anticipate moving to a full scale implementation which can meet the needs of all young people with SEND who might benefit from supported internship within three years. However, we would propose starting at a small scale with one-off work experience opportunities with key partners, prototyping an offer for 1-2 young people with major providers, before moving to full scale implementation. This will enable us to test and learn; it will also allow space for the necessary workforce development to ensure that young people will be welcomed and appropriately supported in work placements within the Council. Phasing of delivery would therefore be as follows:

Phase 1: Continue with existing approach and laying foundation: one-off work experience opportunities, and some supported internships

Phase 2: Prototyping a supported internship approach with named key major employers in the borough

Phase 3: Scaling our supported internship offer

9. Implications

9.1 Financial Implications:

Supported internships are funded as a 16 to 19 study programme, and as such the main source of funding is from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). To attract ESFA funding, the provider needs to timetable at least 540 planned learning hours. An English and maths condition of funding applies to students on supported internships. Providers should therefore ensure study towards an English and maths qualification at the appropriate level is included. If a student is exempt from the English and maths condition of funding, they should still pursue appropriate literacy and numeracy.

Supported interns can also apply for Access to Work funding to cover the costs of practical support in the workplace. Access to Work is a discretionary grant scheme delivered by DWP which can assist in paying for practical support to enable disabled people or those with health conditions to overcome workplace barriers.

Access to Work can pay for things such as:

- specialist equipment
- adaptations to equipment and workplace
- a support worker or job coach
- communication support
- additional travel costs of getting to work if someone is unable to use public transport or drive themselves
- disability awareness training for employers about the employee's specific condition

For supported interns, this means Access to Work can fund:

- job coaches
- assistance to travel to and from work if the intern cannot use public transport or drive themselves
- specialist equipment for the intern to use at work

Access to Work awards are tailored to the needs of the individual, which means awards will vary depending on the supported interns' circumstances.

High needs DSG funding arrangements may also apply where the support costs of establishing and running the supported internship in line with this guidance exceed £6000 (avoiding double funding with Access to Work). Local authorities have the prime responsibility for planning and commissioning funding for high needs students.

It is essential that learning providers currently delivering supported internships, and those considering doing so, discuss their plans at the earliest opportunity with commissioning local authorities. This enables authorities to agree and plan their budgets for young people with high needs and consider changes in demand for and supply of new and emerging provision

Local authorities can record supported internship participation on their SEN2 data return.

9.2 Legal Implications:

The Council is under a general duty to identify in their area children for whom they are responsible who have SEND and those for whom they should determine the SEND provision which should be made (Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations).

The SEND Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated Regulations. Local Authorities must have regard to the Code of Practice whenever they are taking decisions. The SEND Code of Practice sets out how professionals across education, health and social care should support children and young people with SEND to prepare for adult life, and help them go on to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health and community participation.

The Code states that 'one of the most effective ways to prepare young people with SEN for employment is to arrange work-based learning that enables them to have first-hand experience of work, including supported internships', which it describes as 'structured study programmes for young people with an EHC plan, based primarily at an employer. Internships normally last for a year and include extended unpaid work placements of at least six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. Students complete a personalised study programme which includes the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications, if suitable, and English and maths to an appropriate level. Young people with EHC plans will retain their plan when undertaking a supported internship'. (*SEND Code of Practice, Paragraph 8.32*)

9.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

There are no Environmental Implications arising from this report.

9.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

10. Conclusion

10.1 Supported internships are a great opportunity to improve the life chances of young people with SEND by supporting them into sustained, paid employment. Achieving paid employment not only brings young people financial independence, but it can be key to:

- Building confidence and self-esteem
- Increasing health and well-being
- Gaining friendships and a social life

There are also benefits for the economy, employers, families, the local community and wider society.

Appendix A: West London Guide to Supported Internships

Signed by:

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