

## Learning example

### An effective pathway to employment: Wakefield's approach

#### Introduction

This learning example sets out Wakefield's approach to effectively implementing a bespoke supported internship programme; one of their pathways to employment.

#### Aims and Objectives

Wakefield was providing two existing supported internship programmes through the Project SEARCH initiative. However, feedback from young people, parents and professionals highlighted the need for an additional supported internship programme. Wakefield recognised that young people wanted to have more choice over their supported internships and for them to relate to their aspirations.

The Multidisciplinary Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Panel identified several young people who did not wish to engage with placements offered by the Project SEARCH initiative as they did not align with young peoples' career aspirations. To support young people to achieve the objectives and outcomes identified in their EHC plans, Wakefield chose to extend their current offer by developing a bespoke supported internship programme.

The bespoke supported internship programme aims to:

- Provide young people with various internship choices
- Enable young people to achieve sustainable, paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work through learning in the workplace
- Improve young people's achievement of the four key life outcomes: employment and further education, living independently, the best health possible, having friends and relationships and being able to participate in the local community.

#### Approach

The Multi-Agency Preparing for Adulthood Forum recognised that a bespoke internship programme could offer placements in line with the young persons' aspirations, which would allow young people to progress onto paid work in their chosen field. The Forum recommended this additional pathway and the Multi-Agency SEND Strategic Partnership Board (which includes the Parent Carer Forum, NHS, Local Authority, special schools and post-16 colleges) made the decision that Wakefield should introduce a new programme. Wakefield secured high needs block funding to develop the programme. Wakefield consulted with several commercial employment programme managers offering supported internships and

after careful consideration, chose to commission 'Prospects, The Shaw Trust'. Prospects, The Shaw Trust supported internship programme complements Wakefield's existing Project SEARCH programme as it engages with local businesses.

Prospects, The Shaw Trust was piloted with 8 young people. Wakefield college identified young people who had completed employability courses where next steps would either be: Project SEARCH, a Traineeship or an Apprenticeship. They were offered interviews in each area and if they were unsuccessful, they were then offered another course but it appeared that it was not of interest, the young people lacked motivation and began to disengage from the educational settings. If young people begin to disengage, the educational settings are asked by the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Team (SENART) to alert them and to hold an Annual Review in line with statutory processes so that Wakefield's Local Authority Multidisciplinary EHCP Panel can suggest alternative pathways. In these types of cases, Prospects, The Shaw Trust supported internship programme was an alternative option and after the young people completed their interviews and accessed 1:1 taster sessions – they chose this particular pathway, formally requesting consultation for a supported internship.

Care leavers and young people in care returning from out of district placements whose aspirations were to source paid employment were also offered interviews for Prospects, The Shaw Trust supported internship programme. If the young person is successful in enrolling onto the bespoke programme, Ixion Holdings are named on Section I of the EHCP as they are a grade 1 Ofsted training provider. SENART Senior Case Officers attending Annual Reviews in various post-16 settings were similarly sharing information on the programme. If they indicated an interest, young people and parents, as well as existing education staff were asked to visit the Leisure Centre (where the programme was based) and speak with the co-ordinator for further information on the programme.

### **How does the supported internship programme work in practice?**

The case study below demonstrates how it works in practice:

T is 22 years old, a very sociable person who likes to be with people and help them if he can; T has a prime need of specific learning difficulties.

T has a keen interest in cars and studied motor vehicle mechanics at college for four years. He also enjoys music and talking to his friends. He has many strengths that include, cleaning cars, communicating with people, especially children and most of all helping others.

T had aspirations to work in motor vehicles, or as a Teaching Assistant; he has always wanted to have his own home and be able to drive his own car.

T attended Wakefield College and completed Level 2 vehicle fitting, in addition to, Pearson

Workskills Level 2 Award and City and Guilds Functional Skills Maths and English – Level 2. He completed a non-accredited Prep for employment skills Programme whilst at college and decided to access Prospects, The Shaw Trust Internship in September 2021 as he was unable to achieve a Level 3 qualification and was unsure of next steps.

T's specific difficulties means that he needs tasks and instructions broken down into small manageable sections; T is able to carry out multi-step instructions if he has undertaken the same tasks in the same order repetitively over an extended period of time. He requires a high degree of repetition to build up this familiarity. T also requires a high level of verbal prompting to keep him on track with a sequence of instructions. T struggled with timekeeping.

Wakefield College's SENCo contacted the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Co-ordinator to ask if there was anything else T could access as he would not consent to a referral to Adult Social Care to determine if he was eligible for a package of care. After speaking to T, an interview was arranged with the manager at Prospects, The Shaw Trust and subsequently T was accepted onto the programme. The 5 Day Officer continually dropped in to see how T and the interns progressed over the year and offered to support if required. T began studying with The Shaw Trust Supported Internship Programme in the 2021-2022 academic year, a unique programme combining work and education that equips young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment. Placements were identified and based on T's strengths, skills, and interests. T was supported through on-the-job coaching and improvement strategies. The goal is to help interns obtain paid employment and live independently.

T completed his first 10-week placement at a Motor vehicle Garage, he had at this point decided that his interest in cars would remain as a hobby and with support he began researching career ideas to confirm employment options for the future. His second placement was at MENCAP where he grew in confidence, further improving his communication skills. His third placement was as a Teaching Assistant in a primary school and it was here that T decided he wanted a job helping others. T was totally immersed in the workplace, learning through continuous feedback, and gaining real employability and competitive work skills.

T whilst an intern at Prospects, The Shaw Trust achieved Pearson WorkSkills Level 2, Functional Skills Maths and English Level 2 and was able to independently use BKSb resources for maths, working at level 2 in some areas. Further to this, typical days included classroom instruction in employability in addition to independent living skills.

T is now able to express his wishes and feelings which has enabled him to develop appropriate friendships with his peers. He has learnt to be creative with regards to problem solving and always moves towards positive solutions. Staff at the internship programme found

T to have a very caring disposition, realised his potential and followed his journey from being a shy young man to becoming self-sufficient, punctual and excellent at time keeping due to enjoying the environments in addition to his personalised study programme. T also passed his practical driving test and prospered over time helping others who were less able than him. Consequently and leading by example, Prospects, The Shaw Trust offered T 20 hours of paid employment as a Job Coach working for them when he completed his academic year in July.

T is now a very happy member of the team, he has bought a car and drives himself to and from work, prepares his own lunch, arranges to socially meet with his peers from his time as an intern and now supports other disabled young people at Prospects, Shaw Trust Programme at the Lightwaves Leisure Centre in Wakefield.

T supported the Employment Hub and the PfA Team as an Event Ambassador along with the new interns this year at the SEND Careers Event at Pontefract Racecourse. He was in his role as a Job Coach instructing the young person he was supporting to register attendees and providing refreshments and snacks to exhibitors throughout the day.

T's family are incredibly supportive and so proud of him getting a job at Prospects, The Shaw Trust, he is happy, continues with his hobby learning about cars in general, is more independent than he has ever been and is no longer relying on them like he used to.

"Prospects, The Shaw Trust have gone above and beyond in supporting T during his time with them. When he started with them, he'd had a lot of rejection from job applications and even interviews but he buckled down, turned himself around and we are really pleased that he has successfully gained a position in something he enjoys and we've never seen him so committed to anything; he now engages in conversation with both myself and his mum about his job and he couldn't be happier" (Quote from T's parent). T, says: "I'm really happy in my job and I love helping people".

### Key challenges

- The Covid-19 pandemic was particularly challenging for the programme. Many businesses were struggling to remain open, there were temporary and permanent closures and a shift to online shopping. This resulted in Wakefield losing several existing placements and providers and therefore unable to offer young people work experience.
- Many young people had additional diagnoses with compromised immune systems which meant they could not access any environment outside their home.
- The pandemic impacted on the 2019/20 cohort of young people; they were unable to gain employment. Further support was offered for this cohort to continue to develop the skills needed to secure paid employment alongside supporting the new cohort in 2020/2021.

## Key learning for other Local Authorities

- Choice - it is important that there is a varied choice of offers available so that young people can engage effectively in the one that works for them.
- Attend SEND career events for young people – attend SEND career events for young people so that from Year 9, destinations can be carefully planned and mapped within a reasonable timeframe. This can be supported by young people on existing supported internships.
- Explore career pathways through a multiple lens – aspirations, personal values, work experience, placements and organisational factors all influence a young persons' early career choices and progression. This variety of factors provides a useful lens through which to explore career choice and progression. Understanding and exploring these factors with a young person can help to positively influence decisions on applying for appropriate pathways that would enhance the careers of young people with SEND.
- Experience – when local authorities are exploring supported internship programmes they must consider programmes that are experienced in working with learners aged 13-24 with SEND, specifically in the areas of: assessment, employability, transition, job brokerage and job coaching.
- Staff will need to be focused on pre-placement, work-based support, employer support and transition to employment.
- Questions to consider:
  - Do they have existing programmes that you can visit?
  - Do they deliver or have accredited careers guidance services for young people with Education Health Care Plans?
  - Look at their network of partnerships – are they Disability Discrimination Act compliant premises? Do they have a database of suitable employers?
- Ensure that there are inspirational tutors and job coaches who have a diverse skill set, be solution-focused, flexible, adaptable, autonomous and know how to layer their level of support.
- Ensure Job coaches will be on site and accessible to ensure a successful internship.