

Practice guide

SEND & Alternative Provision

Preparation for Adulthood - Supported Internships, Westmorland and Furness

Background, purpose and rationale

Too many of our young people with SEND progressed to Post 16, engaged with programmes, yet at the end of their courses, still open to our services, they were simply not ready/confident for employment. We wanted to address the benefits of the employment option much earlier. Supported Internships (SI) had proven their worth and we saw NDTi and Project Search as a way of ensuring young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), who have so much to contribute, had the opportunity to progress into employment.

In 2022, the council elected to take advantage of the Department for Education grant funding to develop more supported internships. Our primary focus was on recruiting employers for SIs and the opportunity to address gaps in our Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) offer. Meanwhile, our four colleges had signed up to Project Search and began working with the local authority to identify young people for whom this offer would be beneficial. We engaged with NDTi and the grant of around £15k enabled the council to build some capacity to work across its teams to produce an action plan to develop Supported Internships. This plan sought to: increase awareness of SIs as PfA; upskill internal and external teams and support services; and use every available means and medium to inform schools, practitioners, parents/carers and young people of the benefits of the programme.

The SI Action Plan quickly turned into more of a PfA action plan with SIs at its core. There is not one single action or initiative that has enabled the success of SI uptake, it is the combined initiatives and actions of several LA teams, SI providers, mainstream and special schools and wider partners/stakeholders including Careers providers, individual employers and employer groups.

What we did to improve young people's outcomes

To improve outcomes for young people with SEND, the council expanded its capacity and addressed service gaps by forming an Employer Engagement Group involving key stakeholders like the LEP, Careers Hub, council HR, School Improvement, and SEND leads. A SEND Transformation Lead coordinated the group. Key initiatives included:

- Specialist Supported Internship (SI) provision commissioned by the SEND Team, with expanded employer engagement, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Support for colleges in recruitment, retention, and pastoral care, plus quality assurance and graduation events.
- CPD delivery to SENDIASS, SENCOS, and participation in special school events.
- Creation of a SI Provider Group for two-way communication on progress and challenges.
- Introduction of non-means tested travel grants for 16–19 YP and appointment of a Travel Training professional for pre-16s.
- Promotion of SIs across internal and external stakeholders, including Adult Social Care (ASC).

- Collaboration with ASC Transition Officers to promote Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) pathways from Year 9.
- Commissioning of careers support to help complete EHCPs and use of a vocational profiling tool.
- Special schools worked with Cumbria Careers Hub to develop employer links and work experience.
- Revised EHCP quality assurance to include PfA, shared with partners.
- Co-created Transition Guidance and a PfA Route Planner with children, parents, education, health, and ASC.
- Updated Local Offer with PfA and SI case studies.
- Secondment of a Post-16 Officer to SEND to support new provision and SI development.
- Appointment of a SEND School Improvement Officer to improve EHCP outcomes.
- Sponsorship of Careers and SI events using NDTi funding.
- Launch of an Early Careers offer in 2025, including the council as an SI employer.
- Development of pre-SI pathways at age 16 by colleges and SEND providers.
- Establishment of an EHCP review group to co-produce paperwork and a new QA Framework.

What was the impact?

Quotes from the young people involved:

"I have experienced so much of the hospital when I was a porter," Oliver 2023/24.

"I get lots of support and guidance from my NHS Mentor," Ibbby 2023.24.

"DFN Project Search is the BEST experience," Annie 2022/23.

Data

Increased numbers of YP progressing into SI and progressing into Employment (see data below) We currently estimate upward of 45 YP will follow a SI pathway in 25-26, with for the first time, 16-18s following a pre-supported internship pathway.

Westmorland and Furness 2023-2024	
Provider and number of YP on Supported Internship	DFN Furness College: 17 DFN Kendal College: 6 Right2work: 8
Positive Outcomes %	90% progressed to employment, the three who did not have continued for 2024/25

Resources

[Families Information | Supported Internships](#) [Families Information | Preparing for Adulthood](#)

[Families Information | Careers Information, Advice and Guidance - Inspira](#)

Materials for vocational profiling

PfA route planner

Moving on Transition Pack

Case Studies- BAE Systems

Find out more

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