

Supported internships for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) – briefing paper

Purpose

To develop progression routes to employment for young people with ALN who are under-represented in the workplace. Currently in the UK 7% of learners with significant ALN end up in employment whilst many more are supported by home or are dependent on adult social services. In the latter case the costs of care are considerable and range from £25k per year up to £70k depending on the nature of the support package. For adults below 65 with learning difficulties the average figure is close to £40k.

The supported internship progression route is designed to develop the skills of the individual, encourage employers to review their job roles and recruitment practices in order to consider this group of potential workers, promote self-esteem and worth in the learner and ultimately place them in a job thus increasing their chances of independent living and making a contribution to their community. There is then a consequent saving of resources on the part of the local authority (LA) and Welsh Government.

Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/other corporate priorities

Improvement Priority One - Successful Economy programme

1.1 Aim - To help local people develop skills and take advantage of opportunities to succeed and to extend that success to every community in the County Borough

1.1.3 Work with schools to close the gap in educational attainments for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not and improve learner outcomes for other vulnerable groups including looked after children and young carers.

1.3.1.2 The introduction of Supported Internships leading to employment for young people with ALN

Background

As part of the Post 16 review feedback from special schools indicated that their learners found it very difficult to gain employment after they had finished their education programme whether this was at 18, 19 or later after a course at college. The young people themselves made it very clear in their contribution that many of them would like to get a job but were pessimistic about the prospects.

The special schools have used ELITE Supported Employment Ltd in the past to provide short term placements. The schools found the costs becoming prohibitive and whilst it was a useful experience for the learner there was no planned pathway into employment.

ELITE have been operating in South Wales since 1994. Over the past 10 years there has been little change across Wales in the proportion of young people with significant ALN gaining employment – it has stuck at around 7%. One possible critical factor is that insufficient numbers of employers in the region have been encouraged to look at their recruitment practices and consider taking on young people from this group of learners.

Two lines of investigation have been followed in order to develop a view on an appropriate way forward.

Engage to change

This is a national project funded to the tune of £10m by the Big Lottery's Getting Ahead 2 grant over a five-year period. It aims to support 1000 learners with learning disability. On an even split across Las, Bridgend could claim up to 45 places or 9 per year. The cost per learner is £10k.

- Learning Disability Wales is co-ordinating the project.
- Elite is sourcing the internship opportunities in South Wales.
- Cardiff University is monitoring and reporting on the project.
- The programme for learners is Project Search which is a supported internship model from the USA
- A pilot project was established with Cardiff and Vale College as the educator, Cardiff University as the employer and Elite brokering the placements
- The internship runs for 6 months and is paid with a 50% contribution from the employer
- All Wales People First is a rights based organisation supporting the voice of these groups of learners. It will undertake an evaluation of the project through membership advocacy groups
- Welsh Government is a partner in the project and the Assembly sponsor is Mark Isherwood AM, Welsh Conservative Shadow Minister for Communities, Europe and North Wales Growth Deal
- Young people are eligible for the project if :-
 - They have a learning disability, learning difficulty or Autistic Spectrum Disorder
 - They are 16 to 25 years old
 - They are not in education, training or employment or at risk of not being so
 - They have support from family or support network
 - They want to work
 - They are prepared to undertake training to develop skills
 - Their needs are not met by existing statutory provision (this may preclude young people in special school settings)

- A link to Elite's website is provided below and papers from the launch event are attached

<http://www.elitesea.co.uk/>

Opus Employer Engagement Services and More Than 7

The Project Search model from the USA is considered quite an expensive model through the purchasing of the licence to use the model in the UK. However in England a number of supported internship schemes have been established with a leading example being that of the National Grid Supported Internship scheme that has been running since at least 2013. A link to their programme can be found below:

<http://employabilityletsworktogether.com/>

Mark McGillicuddy was the founding director of this programme and subsequently moved on to create Morethan7, a social enterprise organisation specialising in supporting young people with ALN into employment. Nationally the employment rate for these learners is around 7%. Morethan7 and Opus are experiencing success rates of 70% in their projects to date.

Opus is the employer engagement arm of the project sourcing potential employers who are prepared to reconsider their recruitment policies and the job structures in the workplace to create openings for learners with ALN. This often consists of "job carving" where simpler elements of existing jobs are brought together to create a role for the ALN recruit and freeing up the existing members of staff for more complex tasks. This establishes the opportunity for an internship and if this proves successful a permanent paid employment going forward. The internships are unpaid with learners registered as still being in education and maintain eligibility for benefits. They undertake skills training and a relevant vocational qualification alongside a minimum of 16 hours per week in the workplace supported by a Job Coach.

Morethan7 takes over once the employers are signed up in principle. Mark's task is to work with employers, educators and job coaches to prepare the ground ahead of the start of any internships. More detail on the approach taken by Morethan7 can be found at :

http://www.morethan7.org/?page_id=179#

A short set of papers from Opus is attached that set out their joint approach to supported internships. They currently work with a number of local authorities and colleges in England and Cardiff LA in Wales. Links to Opus are provided below:

<https://www.weareopus.co.uk/>

Recommended way forward

Having taken advice from Procurement the recommendation is to construct a proposal for supported internships and send this out via email to a minimum of 3 organisations and undertake an evaluation of the responses. The project would then proceed with preferred option from the evaluation.

The aspects that will be taken into account in the published brief are as follows:

Supported internships in BCBC

BCBC is seeking to establish in Year 1 of this project a number of supported internships to help progress young people with additional learning needs into paid employment. These learners will be drawn from our special schools, learning resource centres and potentially our local FE college. It is our intention to establish a sustainable model for supported internships with high quality provision leading to very positive outcomes and delivering good value for money.

The project may be extended to a second year and the resources available are £10k per year (subject to confirmation of the use of the LA-retained element it will come from the Post-16 Grant from Welsh Government).

Please note: this project is designed to run outside the national Engage to Change project.

Organisations wishing to become engaged in the project will be invited to provide responses to the statements below:

1. Please describe your experience in delivering supported internships with Job Coaches.
2. What success rates have you achieved in translating internships into paid employment?
3. Please provide an indication of the numbers of employers with whom you have engaged and the numbers of placements delivered.
4. Please provide examples of the qualifications achieved by the learners during the course of their internship.
5. How many internships would you anticipate being able to establish during each year of the project?
6. Please set out your fee structure per internship.

John Fabes

Specialist Officer Post-16 Education and Training
August 2017