Supported Internships

Essex County Council

Supported internships offer valuable opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as they move from education into the world of work.

These structured transition-to-work education programmes offer young people the chance to develop confidence and learn new skills within a real employment setting with the support of a qualified job coach and department mentor

What are the benefits to my business?

- bringing fresh perspectives and giving back to the community
- fostering diversity and enhancing workplace inclusivity
- shaping a job role for the needs of your business and the young person
- saving on recruitment costs if you hire the intern at the end of their programme
- increasing your confidence of employing individuals with additional needs

How old will the young person be?

Supported interns must be aged between 16 and 24 years old, have a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and be motivated to achieve paid employment.

Do I have to pay the intern?

There is no cost for providing a supported internship. Work placements for supported internships are unpaid, because participating in an extended work placement is part of their programme of study at college or education provider.

Do I need to help organise their travel to work?

To be eligible for a supported internship, the young person should be able to travel independently or willing to learn independent travel skills. As with any employee, you would not be expected to pay costs towards travelling to and from the workplace.

How long will the internship last?

Supported internships last for a minimum of 6 months, and up to a year. They currently run in line with the academic year (September to June/July). Interns can take holiday outside of term-time and work through half-term if required, and usually have two weeks off at Christmas. Most supported internship programmes will end in line with the start of the summer holidays.

What will my business need to provide?	Your organisation will need to commit to providing a high-quality work experience, which is substantial and meaningful for the young person. You will also need to provide line management and supervision as with other employees, and mentorship to help them integrate into the workplace. Support for your business will be provided by a job coach, including any reasonable adjustments that need to be made.
Do I need to find a Job Coach to help support in the workplace?	No, the college or training provider will provide a job coach to work alongside the young person to learn the skills required for the workplace or tasks. This support is reduced as the intern becomes more confident within their role, but the job coach will always be contactable if needed.
Do I need special insurance? Is there a lot of paperwork?	No to both questions! Interns are covered by your insurance as if they were an employee, however the college or educational provider will need to complete a health and safety declaration with you.
Will the intern be with me all week?	The aim of a supported internship is for the young person to spend 70% of their time within the workplace, as well as one day a week developing their maths and English skills within college. Often providers will suggest a phased approach to placements, beginning with one or two days a week in work according to the young person's individual needs.
What happens if things go wrong?	Every effort will have been made to ensure that a sound match has been made between your business and a suitable intern, but if something does go wrong, your first point of contact will be the job coach to resolve any problems. If the placement were to become unviable, they would work with you to bring it to an end and will discuss whether to consider placing another young person within your organisation.
What happens at the end of the placement?	As the intern has been addressing a business need within your organisation, you might want to considering offering them a paid position once their supported internship ends. If this is not possible, you can still play an important role in helping them secure employment elsewhere, e.g. providing a reference, recommendation or constructive feedback on the skills and behaviours that they need to develop further.

To discuss taking on a supported internship within your business email:

targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk