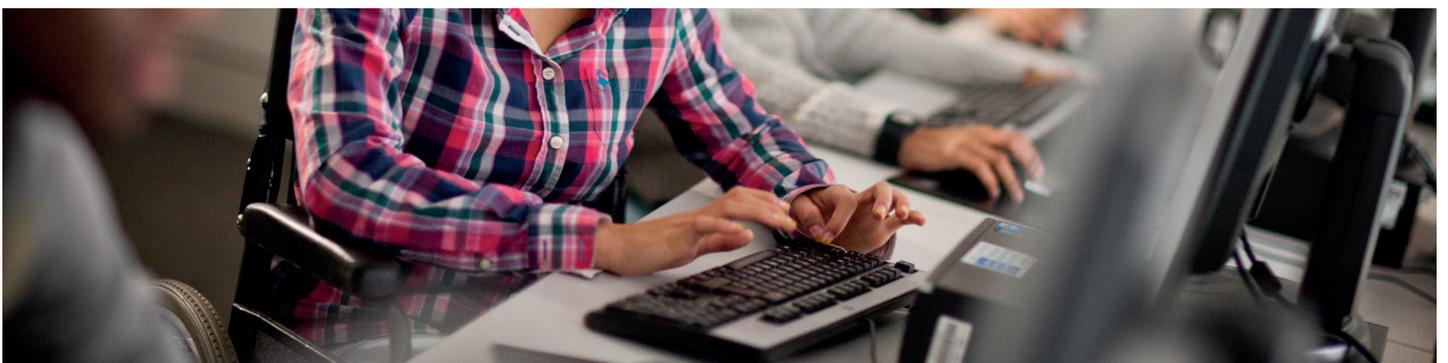
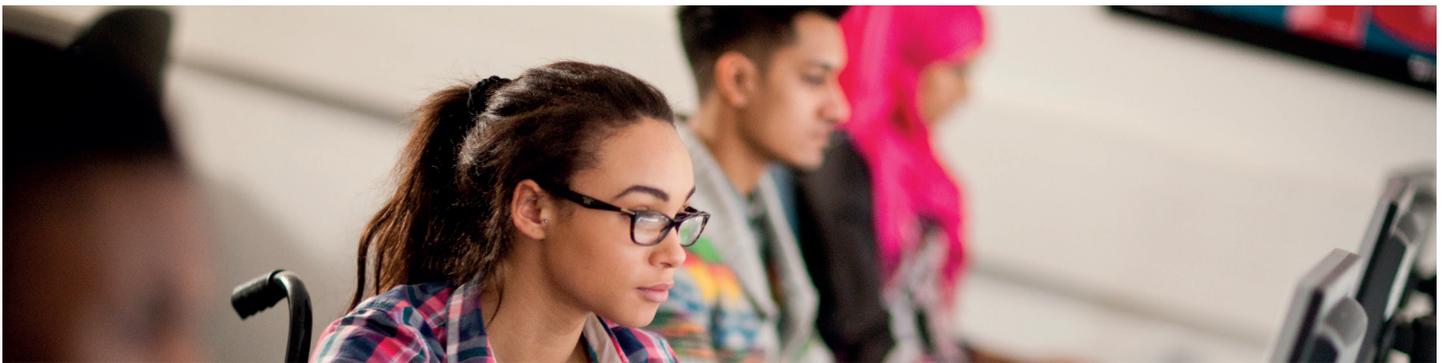




Department
for Education

EDUCATION & TRAINING
FOUNDATION



SOURCING WORK-PLACEMENT AND APPRENTICESHIPS

PAPER FIVE

Sourcing work-placement and apprenticeships

Organisations find the sourcing of external work experience opportunities for students/trainees with SEND particularly challenging, in a context where

- All young people at all course levels on Study Programmes, are expected to have external work placements.
- Sustainable placements are becoming increasingly problematic
- Perceptual barriers to participation can mean that employers focus on a disability or difficulty, rather than ability.
- The proportion of apprentices with SEND is unacceptably low nationally.

Examples of ways in which organisations in different contexts and remits, have implemented strategies to source suitable employment-related opportunities.

1

Wirral Metropolitan College: a very large GFE in an urban area

The development of specialist work-placement officers and responsiveness to new employers

Managers at Wirral Metropolitan College identified as a challenge, the sourcing of external work-experience placements for students on their discrete programmes.

They recognised the need for a different approach when securing work-experience placements, and they appointed a dedicated specialist Work Placement Officer who aimed to secure placements appropriate to the needs and

wishes of students. They found that, although it is difficult to align the aspirations of the student with what is available in the current economic climate, open and frank dialogue has been an effective way of enabling students to understand what opportunities are available.

Their strategy for sourcing external placements consists of two elements: maintaining a good relationship with employers with whom they had previously had placements, and identifying new employers prepared to accept students with SEND.

With employers who worked with them already, the staff maintain regular contact, ensuring that the business needs of the employers were discussed and understood, and that students are matched appropriately to the work requirements.

The staff find that they need strong support from managers when contacting new employers in recognition of the time needed to be responsive. Employers who express interest in working with SEND students, often seek advice and guidance from the college and appreciate quick and effective responses that can include telephone calls, regular meetings, joint developing of support strategies and the involvement of support staff.

The impact of this approach is that in 2015/16 all students with SEND, for whom it was appropriate, accessed substantial external work-experience placements.

2

Nova Training: a national ILP, with 28 centres, offering traineeships, vocational training and apprenticeships

A focus on challenging perceptual barriers about young people with SEND

The managers identified as challenging the need to ensure that their trainees had the opportunity to participate in meaningful work placements leading to long term sustainable employment. They had found that many employers were reluctant to accept trainees with SEND.

The strategy they adopted was predicated on trying to ensure that employers recognised a learner's ability, rather than just seeing the disability or difficulty.

They adopted a multi-strand approach to overcome these perceptual barriers.

Firstly, managers encouraged tutors and support staff to spend time with employers, involving not just the senior managers, but the shop floor supervisors, focusing on the benefits that learners could bring to the organisation. They identified some large, locally-based national employers, particularly those who have a community involvement ethos, such as the Co-operative group, believing that if one store would be willing to provide opportunities for learners and it went well, then others would do the same.

Finally the managers appointed a team of job-coaches to support

the learners in the first instance. An agreed programme of activity and daily structure was agreed with the learner, job-coach and employer. The job-coach was instructed in the processes and responsibilities of the job. Over time, and as appropriate, and following discussion, the job-coach support was reduced, until ultimately, where possible the learner could work independently.

As a result of this recent strategy, one learner has full-time permanent employment and many others are working in their placements independently, with a view to progression into paid employment within the next four to six months.

3

Groundworks: a small charity-based ILP in an urban environment

An approach based on local knowledge

Managers identified as a major challenge the sourcing of suitable work placements and work related learning opportunities, that would offer progression opportunities, meet trainees' interests and long-term goals, and ultimately lead to long term sustainable employment.

The strategy the managers adopted was to explore the local community to identify a range of possible placements that matched the skills profile and interests of their learners. A range of local provision was identified and explored. The successful opportunities identified included an introductory opportunity, for trainees, by assisting with tea

and coffee and lunches in the local community health centre. A member of staff had approached the practice manager, who agreed that trainees would provide teas, coffees and snacks on two days a week. This opportunity provided a supported introduction to the workplace, whereby trainees could focus on specific skills linked to communication in a realistic setting.

A variety of placements was sourced in this way, with different levels of challenges, mainly in public sector and third sector organisations, including a placement at a local 'living history' project for a learner with complex autism who has a wealth of knowledge about local history; his encyclopaedic knowledge has enabled him to progress from needing one-to-one support on placement, to delivering information to visitors, supported only by a volunteer at the centre.

4

Petroc: a large GFE in a rural area

The recruitment and training of job coaches to work with employers

The managers identified their rural context as a challenge, together with the recruitment of job coaches with the skills to work effectively with employers and students on their programme of Supported Internships.

The strategy adopted by the managers was to recruit Job Coaches who have backgrounds in marketing and recruitment and provide them with employment coaching qualifications. They invest

a significant amount of time in 'selling' the Supported Internship to the local employers. Their time is spent explaining the unique employability qualities of the students, the structured approach to support from the Job Coaches for both the student and the employer and the benefits to their organisation.

The managers identified that a critical aspect of getting employers involved in a rural environment is the reputation of the Interns, who spend most of their time on the employer's premises, supported by a fully trained job coach. They therefore spend much time in preparatory work to ensure that the match is right between employer and Intern. This preparation begins the previous year, when the majority of Interns complete extended work experience placements in which Job Coaches support Interns and monitor their progress. This means that Job Coaches can make use of specific evidence and examples when discussing the skill sets of Interns with potential employers.

The managers hold several annual events to publicise the achievements of students who present case studies of their placements and celebrate offers of employment and further training. Local employers are invited to attend to see what the Interns can offer them and how other companies have embraced the programme. This approach has been very successful in sourcing new employers. At the end of the pilot year 15-16 73% of our students were offered paid employment and

27% progressed into voluntary work or apprenticeships.

5

HTP Apprenticeship College: a largely rural ILP with a range of sub-contractors

Sourcing and retaining traineeships and apprenticeships

The challenge for HTP managers is sourcing and retaining traineeships and apprenticeships for the cohort of learners who have the ability to undertake this style of learning programme but face a wide range of different needs and challenges, such as cerebral palsy and mental health needs.

Managers have developed a strategy that has worked well for many years, involving a combination of careful preparation, to make sure the learner is ready, and the identification of suitable employers, who will be involved in the support of learners and delivery of training throughout the programme. These employers include those with established apprenticeships, as well as newly sourced employers. With new employers, more time is spent in preparation and monitoring.

The HTP curriculum and course offer is very responsive to employers' needs. Training Consultants take an exceptionally flexible approach to training and assessment in the workplace. To facilitate this approach, all staff at HTP are recruited from industry and, once employed, undertake training made up of a series of accredited development modules and supported on job training.

This initial, two year, programme ensures they develop the skills required to identify and understand learners' support needs and design individualised programmes of learning.

The initial training and ongoing CPD provided by HTP also gives staff the confidence and competencies they need to identify suitable placements and engage with stakeholder agencies and employers. Together they ensure the adjustments and support required to meet individual learner and employer needs are fully understood and embedded throughout the period of training from induction to post training review and reflection. This model of team work means that learners receive appropriate, coherent, seamless, training from HTP and their employer.

Where appropriate, a potential apprentice may undertake a work-placement prior to commencing an apprenticeship programme. This provides the opportunity for the Training Consultant to gain a good understanding of the specific adjustments required, or specific training that might be needed by the learner/employer prior to the commencement of a longer programme of training.

Alternatively, learners may spend time at an HTP campus undertaking an individual learning programme that may include placements in HTPs own training hotel, before embarking on a traineeship or apprenticeship. This provides them with the time they require to develop the personal, social

and employability skills in order to access a meaningful work based programme and progress into sustained employment.

All learners with SEND who have engaged with HTP Apprenticeship College have successfully completed their apprenticeship or traineeship programme.

* See 3 additional individual sample case studies showing the ways in which adjustments have been made to support trainees and apprentices, with successful outcomes.

REFLECTIONS

How confident are you that the individuals with identified support needs needs in your organisation have meaningful external work-placements, offering realistic opportunities for some kind of employment, as appropriate?

- Very confident
- reasonably confident
- not very confident
- not at all confident

Where you are not confident, what are the specific challenges/barriers you face?

What possible strategies/interventions might you consider to improve the situation?

ANNEX
LEARNER A, B, C

Learner A

Whilst at HTP Apprenticeship College, this learner completed a full-time study programme at Level 2 in Childcare before progressing onto an Advanced Apprenticeship in Childcare which she successfully completed in October 2016.

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

This individual has cerebral palsy. Initial advice and guidance sessions were undertaken whilst she was at school. This enabled an individual learning and support programme to be agreed to enable her to commence a full-time, one year programme in Childcare on leaving school. During this period of training a strong, trusting relationship was built between the learner and her Training Consultant.

Whilst the learner had disclosed their physical disability before joining HTP, it took time and sensitivity to establish the support required to address additional, emerging needs. Mobility limitations mean that floor based childcare activities present challenges and seasonal drops in temperature can worsen symptoms, particularly in the morning, causing the learner to arrive late for training/work.

This learner also has care responsibilities for younger siblings with physical impairments which prevented her attending some sessions during the 12 months she was on her full-time, campus based programme.

As part of the Level 2 Childcare programme learners undertake workplace training with an employer. One of the challenges faced was the learner's reluctance to discuss her

support needs in a childcare setting with an employer.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

The period spent in the training centre prior to work placement experience being commenced was extended to build confidence and identify specific support needs to ensure an appropriate placement/employer was found. The learner found discussing her limitations difficult. The Training Consultant worked with her to agree the approach to be taken with the work placement employer to ensure she was supported in the workplace and the children attending the nursery were safe at all times.

Undertaking this work placement enabled the learner and employer to work together to develop a trusting relationship. Working with the HTP Training Consultant appropriate support was put into place and on completion of the full-time study programme stakeholders were in agreement that progression, with additional support, onto an Advance Apprenticeship in childcare was appropriate.

During her Apprenticeship, additional support visits and contact between meetings were provided by the HTP Training Consultant. One to one training sessions away from the workplace were also provided to enable the learner to complete some elements of the Advanced Apprenticeship framework.

OUTCOME

The learner successfully completed the Advanced Apprenticeship in Childcare within the expected time frame of 15 months. She is now continuing with the employer as a full-time, fully qualified member of the nursery staff.

Learner B

This learner undertook a traineeship in a sports and fitness setting with HTP Apprenticeship College prior to progressing onto our BTEC Level 3 full-time programme.

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

This individual has cerebral palsy and was a LAC learner and was living in sheltered accommodation when he attended the initial information, advice and guidance session with HTP Apprenticeship College.

He had previously commenced a full-time programme in sports and fitness with a Further Education College on the mainland. However, as a result of a sudden, unexpected change in care arrangements the learner failed to complete this course.

The learner had low levels of social skills, no work experience and found it extremely difficult to connect with his peers and make friends. There was also a strong reluctance to discuss problems relating to personal circumstances and therefore additional time and resources were required to establish a trusting relationship between stakeholders. An alternative college provider had been approached by the agencies

supporting him however, they were unable to commit to the level of support required.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

Working with the learner, the local authority and other support agencies additional time and resources were set aside to identify barriers and ensure the appropriate levels of support were in place. HTP helped address housing difficulties and access appropriate financial support.

As the learner required specific support to enable him to work in a sports and fitness setting, it was essential to identify an employer who would provide the support the learner needed to undertake a traineeship. Once a suitable placement was found and the learner commenced training it was clear that he excelled in this vocational area.

During the traineeship the learner continued to attend training sessions at an HTP campus and often came in early to spend time informally with the centre staff and he would often seek their company at break times when he felt more comfortable discussing his progress and concerns.

OUTCOME

The learner completed 26 weeks on the Traineeship programme. During this period he gained valuable work experience and employment skills. He was given an outstanding reference from the employer on completion and the comment he wrote on his end of course feedback survey read "My traineeship was life changing!"

He has now commenced a Level 3 BTEC in Sport and Exercise with HTP and hopes to progress onto the Extended Diploma and gain a place at University.

This learner is currently completing his UCAS application and progressing well on the BTEC programme. Lesson planning ensures this learner is able to take a full part in group and individual activities and he is on target to achieve a distinction in each area of the BTEC syllabus.

Learner C

This learner has completed a full-time, Level 2 programme in Nails, progressing on to a traineeship in a customer service setting. She is now 9 months into a 12 month Intermediate Apprenticeship in Retail.

CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

On completion of Year 11 this learner continued into the school's 6th form provision. However, she experienced severe anxiety, insomnia and depression which resulted in her leaving the A Level course. Initial assessment and discussions between HTP staff, parents and other support agencies identified exceptionally low levels of self-esteem, confidence and communication skills.

However, support was put in place to enable her to commence a full-time programme in Nail Technology Enhancement with HTP. During her 12 month study programme she gained in self-esteem and confidence. On completion she decided to pursue a career in retail rather than specialise in the Nail and Beauty sector and progressed onto a traineeship in a retail setting which has led to her commencing an Intermediate Apprenticeship in Retail.

SUPPORT PROVIDED

During the 12 month period of full-time study on campus extensive support was provided to enable the learner to develop essential personal, social, employability and work readiness skills. Regular meetings between stakeholders ensured that any emerging or changing needs were identified and addressed promptly. On completion of training progression to a traineeship with additional support was agreed.

On commencement of the traineeship the learner worked in a customer service role. However, she found the busy environment challenging and an alternative placement was sourced in a quieter, retail setting.

During the period of the traineeship additional, frequent support visits enabled small, step by step, achievable objectives and targets to be agreed with the learner and employer. This approach was effective in highlighting progress and helped build the learner's confidence enabling her to progress onto an Intermediate Apprenticeship in Retail with the employer.

Whilst the learner suffered setbacks during the first few weeks of her Apprenticeship which she found difficult to discuss, regular contact with the employer and parents ensured HTP was able to provide additional support visits, often at short notice, to help address the barriers and challenges she was facing.

OUTCOMES

Since initial engagement with HTP the learner has made remarkable progress. Close, continuous engagement and encouragement have enabled this young person to develop a wide range of personal, social and employability skills. Their confidence and self-esteem has grown immeasurably. Working in conjunction with the parents, support services and the employer has enabled us to provide a caring, supportive and motivational matrix of support with people on hand to provide positive feedback and encouragement.

It is anticipated that this learner will complete her Intermediate Apprenticeship within the expected length of stay and progress onto an Advanced Level 3 Apprenticeship in Retail with her current employer.

