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## Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Young People with SEND through Strategic Partnerships

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## Enhancing employment opportunities for young people with SEND through strategic partnerships

**(FE) ETF Employer Spokes Events:** Employer Spokes foster partnerships between FE providers and employers that evidence best practice in meaningful employment for people with SEND.

### Introduction

Hampshire County Council began collaborating with the SEND Centres of Excellence in 2022 as part of the 'All Our Talents: SEND Employability Action Plan.' This initiative aimed to ensure that young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have the aspirations, opportunities, and support needed to lead fulfilling and independent lives. This effort also aligned with the Hampshire Employment and Skills Recovery Plan, which sought to address the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through a skills-led recovery.

The partnership, which included Hampshire County Council's SEND Employability team, Employment and Skills Hub, Hampshire Achieves and Milestone Infrastructure, aimed to increase the number of young people with SEND accessing paid employment and engaging with workplaces. As well as creating high-quality opportunities for skills development through partnerships with employers, Further Education (FE) colleges, and young people.

### Implementation

The initiative involved a series of 'All Our Talents' events designed to help employers understand the business benefits, social value, and skills acquisition that engaging with young people with SEND can bring. Milestone Infrastructure participated in these events, sharing their experiences and developing their professional expertise. They also engaged in focused events and co-design work for the construction sector, leading to the creation of a Community of Practice.

Milestone Infrastructure implemented a Skills and Employment Plan targeting vulnerable young people through a mix of self-sourced opportunities and invitations from the ESH team. This plan was regularly reviewed to ensure effective interventions and inclusion of young people with SEND in outreach activities.

### Outcomes

Various methodologies were used to measure the outcomes and impact of the actions taken. Feedback from event participants was collected through forms, and qualitative feedback was gathered from learners during placements. The effectiveness of information gathered to support employers and education providers was assessed through immediate and follow-up surveys.

 Increased engagement of learners with SEND

 Improved transitions for learners with SEND

The partnership led to significant engagement, with 132 professionals participating in initial events. Feedback indicated high satisfaction rates, with 93% overall satisfaction and 100% for the 'All Our Talents: hearing from the workforce of the future' event. Employers reported intentions to apply the learning to future planning, share best practices, and engage SEND young people.

The Community of Practice also worked together to develop a resource to support employer to be more inclusive in their recruitment techniques. This was then shared with stakeholders in the construction industry.

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## Impact and Next Steps

The initiative had a positive impact on both young people with SEND and Milestone Infrastructure staff. Six young people facing barriers, gained work experience to improve their employability skills and confidence, two of which ended up with paid jobs at Milestone Infrastructure. While staff developed a better understanding of working with SEND individuals, fostering a more inclusive workplace culture. In addition, since September 2021, Milestone Infrastructure have attended four ETF events and engaged with 21 CIAG activities involving young people across Hampshire. The experiences were valuable for all involved.

Following feedback from the Community of Practice, of which Milestone Infrastructure were part of, the recruitment tool was turned into webpages, ensuring it is accessible to all in the construction industry:

[Diversifying your workforce | Jobs and volunteering | Hampshire County Council](#) 

Milestone Infrastructure plans to continue supporting Hampshire's SEND Employment Forum, the Community of Practice and other best practice groups, playing a key role in events and providing opportunities for young people with SEND. The next steps include capturing a wider range of feedback to measure the impact of partnership work and ensuring employers are supported in both strategic and operational roles.

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## Key Learning

Key learning points from this case study include the importance of strategic partnerships in creating employment opportunities for young people with SEND and the value of inclusive recruitment practices. Recommendations for good practice include capturing comprehensive feedback to measure impact and supporting employers in both strategic development and operational delivery to promote the benefits of engaging with young people with SEND.