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Creating better employment opportunities for post-16 SEND learners and supporting transitions

(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

In 2022, Hampshire County Council (HCC) began collaborating with the SEND Centres of Excellence as part of the 'All Our Talents: SEND Employability Action Plan.' This initiative aimed to ensure young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have the aspirations, opportunities, and support to live fulfilling and independent lives. The focus was on increasing 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

To address the increasing number of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans and SEN support learners, particularly post-16, Hampshire County Council's SEND Employability Team worked with internal departments to host a series of 'All Our Talents' events to raise awareness of the benefits of supported employment, including Supported Internships, and highlight the support available to employers. Following these events, the Hampshire Employment and Skills Hub (ESH) played a central role in actively following up with attendees and discussing supported employment opportunities, encouraging more inclusive approaches to filling skills gaps and meeting recruitment needs. One of the pathways discussed was Supported Internships. During the 2022-2023 academic year, four Supported Internship (SI) placements were arranged with the parks and Streetscene team at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. ESH then worked closely with the Grounds Maintenance Manager, Hampshire Achieves (HCC internal supported internship provider) and Hampshire County Council's marketing team to develop a video case study to share the positive impact a supported internship can have on both the learner and employer. This has since been shared widely at events/training and on social media.

[Supported Internship Programme: Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council \(youtube.com\)](#) [↗](#)

Outcomes

Following the All Our Talents series of events, feedback from participants was gathered via feedback forms, outlining both qualitative and quantitative immediate and longer-term impacts. Measures focused on the effectiveness of information gathered to support employers and education providers in meeting their immediate aims.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, three more supported internship placements started with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and one learner successfully transitioned to an apprenticeship in the workshop maintaining the team's machinery.

The supported internships have positively impacted recruitment for the parks and Streetscene team, providing an alternative to standard recruitment processes. The placements have also helped develop staff confidence in areas such as inclusion and autism.

Impact and Next Steps

The supported internships have shown to be beneficial for both learners and employers. One learner reflected on their placement, highlighting the new skills gained and the mentorship received. The case study video created has been widely shared, demonstrating the benefits of supported internships. The ongoing engagement of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in providing placements shows the long-term positive relationships fostered by the SEND Employability teams 'All Our Talents' programmes of work. Next steps include continuing to develop relationships and partnerships to maintain and further the positive impact.

Key Learning

Key learning points from this case study include the importance of relationship development and the benefits of supported internships for both learners and employers. Recommendations for good practice include fostering partnerships through initial engagements and understanding the benefits and barriers to providing placements. These partnerships are crucial in meeting objectives and ensuring the success of supported internships.