

Supported Internships: Factsheet for Employers



What is a supported internship?

Supported internships are a structured study programme aimed at young people (aged 16-24) with an Education Health and Care plan to gain experience within a supported environment based primarily on site at an employer. They provide a platform for young people to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work through learning in the workplace.

Supported internships are unpaid and wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. During their time at the employer, supported interns spend one day a week at Hereward College to complete a City & Guilds qualification in Employability along with English and maths qualifications if appropriate.

Why did the government introduce supported internships?

Supported internships were introduced by the government in 2013 to give a greater focus on preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.

What are the benefits of offering supported internships for employers?

Supported internships can benefit your business in the following ways:

- Simple model ensures minimal impact on business and student
- No additional cost – each supported internship is government funded
- Acts as an extended working interview, giving an increased chance of getting the right person for the job
- Interns may have skills currently lacking in existing staff eg. high functioning autism can result in significantly above average accuracy
- Increased workforce diversity, reflecting the communities it serves

What will my business need to provide?

Businesses need to commit to providing a high-quality work experience opportunity, which is substantial and meaningful for the young person.

The supported internship placement should last for an academic year (10 months) and allow one day off per week study leave for the intern. You will need to provide effective line management and supervision of the intern and a work buddy or mentor should be allocated to them.

The placement should enable the interns to develop new skills and behaviours, engage in purposeful work related learning, and have the confidence to take the first step in their career to secure a traineeship, apprenticeship, or other employment.

What happens at the end of the supported internship?

Although employers are not required to provide a job at the end of the internship, the aim of supported internships is to prepare young people with learning difficulties for employment. As the intern will have been fulfilling a real business need in your organisation, you should consider whether you can take them on as a paid member of staff at the end of their internship.

Many organisations that the college works with have carved up existing roles in order to meet business needs and provide entry-level positions. Additional funding is also available to those businesses who wish to recruit apprentices who have an Education Health & Care plan.

If you are not in a position to recruit or the intern hasn't met the required standards, employers can still play a role in providing a reference and feedback to the college about the skills or behaviours that need to be developed. Once the young person has completed their placement, they will continue to be supported by Hereward College to find meaningful employment based on the skills they have gained as a result of their internship.

What will it cost me to offer a supported internship placement?

There is no financial cost to an employer taking on a supported intern. Young people taking part in a supported internship placement are unpaid as it is part of their programme of study at college.

The funding for the Job Coach and any reasonable adjustments required will be managed by Hereward College directly with the relevant funding bodies.

What support is available during the supported internship?

Hereward College will manage the intern recruitment process and the government funding application for a Job Coach to work alongside both the interns and employer.

The Job Coach will work with the employer to arrange the induction and settling in period, and provide as much support as is needed during this time. They will support with any reasonable adjustments needed - these often cost nothing and can benefit other employees too.

As the young person becomes more able, the Job Coach will gradually withdraw their support, but an employer will still be able to contact them or Hereward College at any time if issues arise.

Hereward College provides safeguarding training for employers taking on supported interns as standard, and offers distance-learning courses for employees covering areas such as understanding learning difficulties and autism awareness. More information is available at www.hereward.ac.uk/short-courses or by contacting us on 024 7642 6194.

Will the young person fit in to my workplace?

Getting the right young person into the right job role with the right employer is critical to the success of an individual internship. The Job Coach will work with you to identify a job role that fulfils a real business need for your organisation, and ensure the best possible candidate match to the job role and placement. The role can develop over time as you get to know what the young person can do.

The college may suggest 'job carving', which means working with you to tailor the placement to best meet your business needs, whilst utilising the strengths and abilities of the young person. This might mean that tasks carried out by other employees can be given to the intern. Employers who have offered supported internships have found that it frees up resource and decreases the workload of other staff.

What happens if things go wrong?

Every effort will have been made to match your business with the most suitable young person, but if something goes wrong, the Job Coach should be your first point of contact to resolve any issues.

It may be a skills gap, a difference in expectations between the intern and employer, a behaviour concern or simply a misunderstanding by the young person or employer.

If it becomes clear that the work placement is no longer viable, the Job Coach will work with you to bring it to an end. Either the Job Coach or Hereward College will discuss why things went wrong, and whether to consider placing another young person with you.

How do I get started?

Contact Hereward College's employability team employability@hereward.ac.uk or 024 7642 6175 to arrange a discussion. More information can also be found at www.hereward.ac.uk/employability.

"This scheme has been a fantastic partnership with Hereward College. All of the interns made a real success of their time with the organisation and we have been able to welcome a number of supported interns to the organisation in permanent paid positions.

"As well as helping young people with disabilities into paid employment, this has been a great initiative for the staff here at WM Housing who gain a lot by working alongside the supported interns." Head of Customer Involvement and Engagement at WM Housing