



# Phase 1 Planning





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## Phase 1 – Planning

# Our model for supported internships

### What are supported internships?

**Supported internships are a structured study and development programme based primarily at an employer’s premises.**

They are aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The internships provide the opportunity for them to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace.

Supported internships are unpaid – because the student is in full-time education – and last for a minimum of six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme.

Alongside their time with the employer, young people complete a personalised study programme, which includes the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications, if appropriate, and English and maths.

Young people on a supported internship who have a disability or health condition can apply to the Department for Work and Pensions’ (DWP) Access to Work fund.

An Access to Work grant can cover the additional support a young person may need for the in-work element of Supported Internships. For example:

- job coaches (where they support interns directly in their work placements – other support provided by a job coach, such as life skills activity and any educational activities, will need to be funded separately)
- specialist equipment that a young person needs at the employer’s premises
- the extra fares to work if the person is unable to use public transport.

### Our core model

Our Supported Internship delivery model is based on a partnership approach between businesses and local SEN schools/colleges.

Financial support is provided by DWP Access to Work funding.

We offer an 11-month internship with three placements that mirror school terms. Interns complete BTEC Work Skills and Functional Skills qualifications in the morning before attending their placements in the business, from 10.30am to 3pm.

We also have support from employee volunteers and strong partnerships with our supply chain providers and local government employment support teams to help deliver the programme.

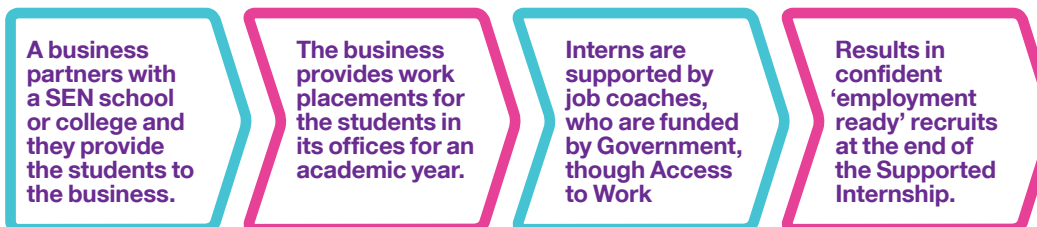
EmployAbility aims to help students gain confidence and build skills through worthwhile work placements, leading to permanent jobs.

Throughout their three work placements, interns are supported as they discover new talents, build their confidence, develop social skills and overcome barriers.

Every student who applies for our programme must have a statement of SEN or an EHCP.

Interns are supported at every stage of the process – from school to eventually finding a job and beyond.

### How our Supported Internship model works





## Phase 1 – Planning

# Finding a business/education partner

## Schools looking for a business partner

### What to look for

If your school would like to offer EmployAbility placements for your students, you will need a local business partner who can provide internships.

Ideally you will find a business partner no more than 10 miles from your school, so students will be able to get there fairly easily.

It also makes sense to look for a business partner that has the ambition for a corporate social responsibility agenda and is or wants to be involved in the community. Lots of community activity shows that the business and its employees are interested in making a difference.

Companies with a track record of development schemes and/or work experience will be set up to work well with schools and may have someone who manages placements as part of their job. Having designated people within the business to liaise with makes the whole process much easier. However, this is not a prerequisite as many businesses will want to start somewhere.

Look for a business that will have a variety of roles. Remember that there are very many different jobs in each company. For instance, a large IT business will have opportunities for admin, maintenance and portering as well as the more obvious IT roles. There will be more roles in a larger company – with 100 employees or more – but don't discount smaller firms as they can also offer very valuable experience, and working with fewer people may be preferable for some students.

Also, consider companies that are 'disability confident'. The Government's Disability Confident programme is working with employers to challenge attitudes towards disability and remove barriers to disabled people in work.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)

You may also find a local disability confident company via the Business Disability Forum: [www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk](http://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk)

## Help finding a business partner

There's a wealth of external support available to schools, colleges and businesses that are looking to develop their business links and careers agenda.

## The Careers & Enterprise Company

This is a brilliant resource. The Careers & Enterprise Company's national Enterprise Adviser Network connects schools, colleges and employers with careers programme providers, so that they can "work together to create meaningful encounters with the world of work for young people."

It's a government-backed organisation with senior figures from business and education on its board. The network comprises trained, professional enterprise coordinators who the Careers & Enterprise Company co-funds with a local enterprise partnership.

You can approach your local enterprise coordinator to request an enterprise adviser – this is a senior business volunteer who'll usually have good connections with your local business community. He or she will be able to advise you on potential partner schools, colleges and businesses in your area, as well as potential growth areas for employment opportunities in the local area.

Check out the website ([www.careersandenterprise.co.uk](http://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk)) to find out more about the network, including how to join.

## Business in the Community

This is the Prince's Responsible Business Network. Business in the Community is a global, business-led charity. It has a core membership of more than 800 organisations that work together to tackle "a wide range of issues that are essential to creating a fairer society and a more sustainable future."

So if you're looking for a school, college or responsible business located near you, this could be a very good source of information. To find out more, visit [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk).

## Local Chamber of Commerce

You could also contact your local Chamber of Commerce for details of local companies.

## Phase 1 – Planning

# Finding a business/education partner (continued)

## Businesses looking for an education partner

### What to look for

A business interested in offering EmployAbility placements for students with learning difficulties needs a local education partner – a school or college – to work with.

Ideally, your partner school or college will be no more than 10 miles from your premises, so students will be able to get to work by themselves.

Look for a school that caters for young people with moderate learning difficulties as they will be the most suited to the work placement scheme. EmployAbility usually works with schools that tend to have their own established work placement schemes, but don't discount local SEN colleges or mainstream colleges with SEN provision.

Check that the school has a further education unit or a sixth form and that interns will be students who are in their last year of education. This means when they finish their internships they will be ready for work; going back to school after a work placement could be seen as a step backwards for these young people.

The school should be state funded and have a well-defined careers agenda for the students. It's also important that there is a supportive and proactive leadership team with individuals fully committed to EmployAbility. Ideally there will be someone who manages placements as part of their job. Having designated people within the school to liaise with makes the whole process much easier.

### Using Edubase

Edubase is the Department for Education's register of educational establishments in England and Wales. You can search it for schools near you.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase/home.xhtml>



## Phase 1 – Planning

# Building a relationship with your partner

**National Grid’s EmployAbility model for Supported Internships is very much based on the development of a strong partnership between the school or college and the business.**

For this model to be effective and sustainable, it’s vital that all partners share the same ambitions and values, and that the relationship you build together is founded on mutual trust and respect.

Taking this approach from the outset will help to make sure that your supported internship starts off on the right footing and will contribute to its success.

It’s important to gain a good understanding about your partner at an early stage.

For the business, this would mean finding out about things like the size of the school or college, the age of the students, the range of learning difficulties, how the students are supported and so on.

For the school or college, this would mean learning about the size of the business, its industry sector and locations, its activities and the types of roles people have within the organisation.

This knowledge will prove enormously helpful to both partners when it comes to selecting the most appropriate interns for particular roles in the business. Where a school or college has partnerships with a number of businesses, it can even help match the right intern to the right business. This will help achieve the best outcome for all parties.

### ‘Getting to know you’ activities

A successful partnership is based on strong personal relationships that are rooted in trust. These relationships will be developed through regular interactions between the school or college and the business. This in turn will result in more students becoming aware of the programme and more employees volunteering to support it.

To help both parties get to know each other better and become familiar with the environments they work in, we recommend that you run a series of ‘ice-breaker’ activities – some located at the school or college and others at the business site.

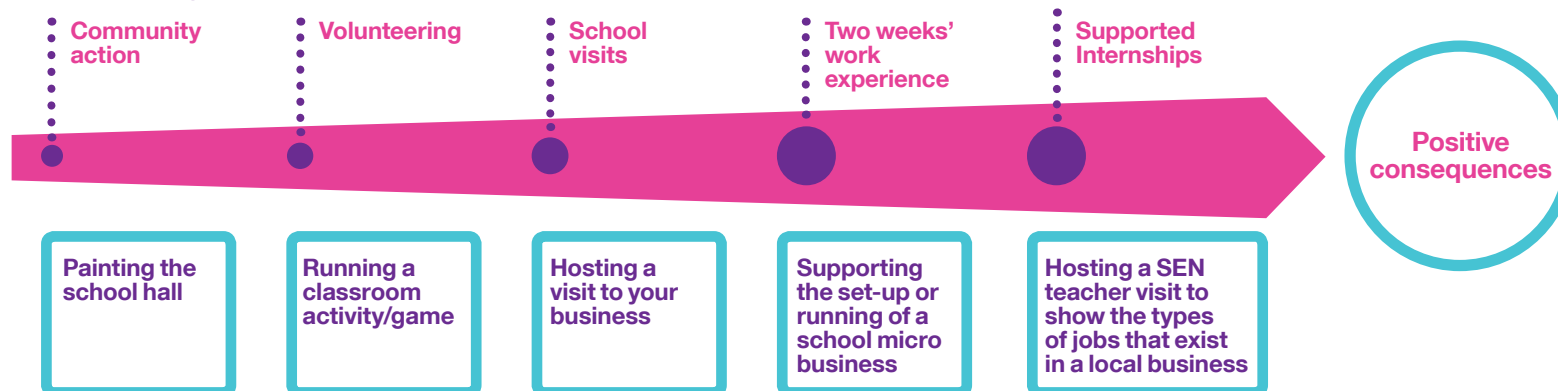
Schools and colleges should include school curriculum and careers leads in

these activities, as well as potential future interns; while for businesses, the activities provide a fantastic opportunity for employees who will be involved in the programme to meet up with school personnel and potential future interns.

Remember that any interaction between businesses and special schools is positive. If you are unable to provide supported internships, are you able to do small initiatives?

It often works well to start with a team-based ‘community’ activity, like painting school buildings or tidying up the school grounds or supporting an enterprise day. Further suggestions are illustrated below.

## Partnering with special schools





## Phase 1 – Planning

# Seeing is believing

**The best way to learn about the benefits of EmployAbility is to see it in action. National Grid and other host companies running EmployAbility welcome visitors from schools and businesses who would like to talk to us and our intern students to find out how EmployAbility works.**

National Grid started EmployAbility after an inspirational visit to Bath University Hospital, where students with disabilities were working. We were impressed by the fact that the young people were realising their potential and contributing to the success of the hospital.

We were so inspired that we wanted to offer our own Supported Internships to students with learning difficulties. We launched 'EmployAbility – Let's work together' in September 2013 and we hope that we can encourage you to join in too.

Now many other companies, schools and colleges are involved and all are happy to tell you about their experiences. The young interns will be equally pleased to tell you what a difference EmployAbility is making to their lives. You can meet students on their work placements and talk to other former interns who now have permanent jobs.

You can see for yourself how regular and meaningful work really benefits these young people, broadening their horizons and giving them confidence in themselves and in the future.

Work helps them see opportunities and possibilities for their future after school and they learn skills that will be with them for life. They meet new people and enjoy becoming part of a team.

You'll also see how businesses benefit; because EmployAbility matches young people with appropriate jobs, they are a real asset to the companies they work for.

### Learning from others

If you're a school or college, peer-to-peer discussions can be very fruitful and you're bound to pick up some very useful tips.

If you're a business, depending on your geographic location, these school or college contacts could also be potential partners for your own supported internship programme.

In fact, many of our partner schools and colleges are seeking additional new business partners, so that they can offer more opportunities and greater variety to their students.

Partnering with a school or college that already has experience of supported internships with other companies is usually easier than starting the programme from scratch.

### Arrange a visit

If you'd like to arrange a visit or find out more, please email [employability@nationalgrid.com](mailto:employability@nationalgrid.com)





## Phase 1 – Planning

# Senior leadership support

### Setting an example for others to follow

Visible, senior-level backing for the supported internship programme from the education partner and the business partner is vital to its long-term success.

This support by senior leaders (including directors of the business) underlines the programme's importance to staff and students at the school or college, and to all employees at the business organisation.

It sends out a strong message: this programme matters. This in turn will encourage students, school or college staff and employees within the business to find out more and get involved.

Until a few years ago, young people with additional learning needs were often not expected to go into any form of employment after leaving education. In special schools, the way students and their families view themselves in terms of aspirations can often be very low.

The EmployAbility project offers a tried-and-trusted formula for special schools and colleges to change that perspective into one of hope and possibility for the future.

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### Raising aspirations – a personal perspective from a deputy head of a special school

**“The EmployAbility project has raised aspiration levels in a way that we’ve never seen before...”**

### Claire Cookson, Deputy Head of Woodlands School in Warwickshire, said:

“We’ve got one young man who was our first ever intern. He talks really eloquently about the fact that what he felt was in front of him was a lifetime on benefits, sitting at home watching television. He felt very low, as you would do if that was your projection.

“Yet suddenly, through the EmployAbility project, he felt really, really valued. Like his fellow interns, he felt that he was bringing something positive to the workplace. And that’s the point – they suddenly realise that they have all these skills and employers need them. It’s phenomenal.

“Another of our interns spent a term with National Grid’s Corporate Affairs team. We matched him to the team because he has a very, very good understanding of social media. And that’s exactly what the team needed. He ended up managing their YouTube channel and all that kind of stuff – he went in, did it and the positive reinforcement for him was that people were coming to him for advice. Amazing.”

This is very much about raising aspiration levels. Not just among the interns but across the entire school.

Here’s what Claire Cookson had to say about the impact that the EmployAbility project had on her special school – and indeed all the schools involved.

“It has really changed perspectives, not just for the interns going into the workplace, but also for the other pupils at the school. Even pupils quite far down the school are now thinking: ‘That could be me.’ And it’s become a reality.

“When we were setting up EmployAbility, the first cohort of interns was saying to me: ‘I can’t go to National Grid. Everybody wears a suit and drives a fancy car.’ They didn’t see themselves fitting in at all. But actually, what we find is that within about two days of getting there, they change – almost immeasurably – in terms of the way they walk, the way they present themselves and the way they conduct themselves.

“And in terms of them projecting into their futures, now they are thinking: ‘I need to earn some money because I’m going to live independently.’ These are things that potentially they weren’t contemplating before.

“It has become an amazing social experiment, to watch what happens when you take young people out of a special school and put them into employment. It’s a really excellent example of how people live up to expectation. It’s absolutely life-changing for these pupils and their life outcomes will be different because of it, without a doubt.”





## Phase 1 – Planning

# Senior leadership support (continued)

### Making it happen – schools and colleges

Special schools have a wonderful opportunity to make a powerful difference to the long-term future of their students through a supported internship programme.

However, this is not for the faint-hearted; transforming that vision into reality requires strong commitment and continued involvement from the school’s senior leadership team.

Mark McGillicuddy, who has been involved in EmployAbility from the outset and went on to establish the MORETHAN7 social enterprise, said:

**“The senior leadership team needs to be bold and brave.”**

### Claire Cookson has first-hand experience of what’s needed from the senior leadership team at the school or college:

“I am a senior leader of the school. I think that, collectively, special schools have all made a positive commitment to developing their work-related learning opportunities. It is too often the case that once our pupils leave education, everything stops for them; we have to make it really meaningful. Actually we have got to be a massive driving force in opening these opportunities for education.

“However, we can’t do that on our own because we don’t work in industry. So from a senior leader perspective, having this new business network and being able to draw on the experience of people in industry – and receiving information from them about how we shape our curriculum – has been really empowering for all our schools.

“With this support we have all been able to change our qualifications, as well as our whole approach to our provision. We’re running microbusinesses with support from our business partners, offering new work experience opportunities and live briefs for students to use and apply their developed skills. It’s really, really enabled everyone to join industry with education, which I honestly don’t think has ever been done before.

“And in a funny way, we seem to now be ahead of our mainstream peers in terms of that engagement. I think it’s because we have the flexibility and can disapply areas of the national curriculum. So we can be really focused on destination. And that’s what the EmployAbility project has really helped us to do: become way more destination driven.

“It’s the senior leadership team that has to drive this and set the level of expectation across the school. We have the most incredible staff who will do anything for our pupils. But it’s a very protective environment, so we continue to work with our staff team to make sure they know that these people are going to get jobs. It’s our job to make sure we map backwards, to equip these students with the confidence and the independence skills to be able to do that.

“It absolutely had to come from the senior leadership team, definitely.”

### Making it happen – businesses

For businesses, senior leadership involvement in the programme will inspire employees to get involved and managers to consider offering placements and job opportunities to the interns.

The nature and degree of this high-profile support will vary from one senior leader to another, of course. However, it often includes encouraging functions within the business to provide supported internships and host external stakeholder events, with people giving up their own personal time to talk to the interns about their job roles.

If you’re considering embarking on a supported internship programme, why not take one of your senior managers or directors along with you to visit a business that already has a programme up and running?

This will allow them to see for themselves how the programme can transform young people’s lives. In our experience, this sort of ‘seeing is believing’ opportunity often acts as a catalyst to kick-starting a programme.

At National Grid we have found that Supported Internships have opened up a new talent pool to us, increased the disability confidence of our staff and raised employee engagement.

## Phase 1 – Planning

# Senior leadership support (continued)

### Business benefits of supported internships

There are many advantages for businesses, including:

- increased disability confidence, disclosure and disability awareness
- skills development opportunities – leadership and coaching skills
- increased employee engagement, attraction and retention
- stronger team and supplier relationships
- discovering skill levels that don't exist in normal talent pools
- building connections with local community
- enhancing the reputation of the business.



of employee volunteers for EmployAbility said in a survey the volunteering had contributed to their professional development.



of employee volunteers for EmployAbility said in a survey they felt more positive about National Grid.



retention of National Grid intern recruits.

“I developed a new level of respect for people with special needs and their abilities.”

## Phase 1 – Planning

# Senior leadership support (continued)

### Top tips for getting started in your business

- 1 Get commitment and involvement from the top (CEO or director level):**
  - present to your Executive team
  - secure a sponsor.
- 2 Remember: 'Individuals make this a success'**
- 3 Mobilise colleagues who:**
  - demonstrate special interest in things like the disability network and corporate social responsibility activities
  - are active in volunteering
  - have been involved in activities with local schools.
- 4 Visit the school to see the skills range of the pupils and then:**
  - canvass support among your internal network
  - start with a few (but varied) placements
  - attend 'seeing is believing' showcase events
  - use the initial placements as a 'soft landing' to develop the soft skills of the interns.





## Phase 1 – Planning

# Checklist for delivering your plan

- You are knowledgeable and confident about the supported internship model** – you’ve already researched it and/or been to see it operating successfully elsewhere
- You believe your supported internship programme ambitions can be realised** – you’re personally convinced about the value of the programme and are committed to making it happen
- Your senior leadership team is fully on board** – you’ve achieved top-level buy-in to the programme and you’ve been asked to lead the implementation on behalf of your school or college
- You have built internal competence and ‘know-how’** – you’re already developing the in-house skills and capabilities to implement the programme
- You have found a suitable and willing partner** – they are local, share your values and commitment, and are large enough to deliver a successful and sustainable programme
- (School or college) You have identified your job coaches and are planning to train them up** – you’ll equip them with the skills they’ll need to help deliver the programme (for example, you have booked systematic instruction techniques training, to be delivered by an external provider)
- (School or college) You have started to map your curriculum offer** – you’ve also begun to establish your tracking systems
- (School or college) You have already identified enough suitable and willing students with EHCPs (education, health and care plans) to start your pilot scheme**
- You have started meeting regularly with your prospective partner** – you’re already working as a team
- (Employer) Your site is prepped and ready for the arrival of the interns** – you have allocated the base room for the interns
- (Employer) You have invited the students and their parents or carers to tour the site** – you’re doing all you can to familiarise students, parents and carers with the site and reassure them that the supported internship will be a positive experience for all those involved
- (Employer) You have allocated the first placements to the students** – you have worked with the job coaches and the school to match the right students to the right departments
- (School or college) You are confident that all the necessary funding mechanisms will be in place** – you have investigated and applied for the education and pre-employment support available and are happy that it will be in place when the programme goes live
- You’re ready for go-live** – everything’s all set for the programme to start in September
- (School or college) you have organised the opening ceremony and launch event** – you’ve invited everyone involved in setting up the programme, as well as students, parents and carers.