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**News release**

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**Life-changing internships project set to help   
more disabled people into work**

4500 16-25 year olds with special educational needs and disabilities in England are set to benefit from a new, life changing, supported internships programme per year by 2025.

Internships Work is a brand new collaboration between the [National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi)](https://www.ndti.org.uk/), [British Association of Supported Employment (BASE)](https://www.base-uk.org/home) and [DFN Project SEARCH](https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/).

The Department for Education funded programme is designed to support more young people with additional needs to have greater choice and control over opportunities that prepare them for adult life and enable them to gain long-term meaningful employment. Currently, only 5.1% of people with special educational needs and disabilities gain permanent paid employment in the UK, compared to 80% of their peers.

**Project lead, Julie Pointer at NDTi said**:

“I truly believe everyone with additional needs can work if they want to. With the right support in place for them and their employer, the benefits for both are huge.

“An internship opens up life changing opportunities to the young people who participate. It’s more than just a job, providing independence, enabling them to contribute to the economy and making them a valued part of the community.”

Brian works as an engineer at the Marriott Hotel, originally starting as an intern on the DFN Project SEARCH programme:

“Getting this opportunity to work has made me more confident and I no longer see myself as a person with learning difficulties. I’m now someone who can, for example, pick up the phone and sort out a problem. I get up in the morning and I want to go to work. I enjoy every minute of it.”

**Minister for School Standards, Will Quince, said:**

“It’s really encouraging to see the positive impact that Supported Internships are already having for thousands of young people across the country.

“This programme provides the opportunity for young people to develop the confidence and skills they need to have a successful career, and I am looking forward to seeing more and more young people benefit from it.”

**Linda Hawkins, HR Director for Marriott Hotels, said:**

“All the interns gain key employability skills, interpersonal skills which will help them for any role. And, for us, we have new team members that are enthusiastic and motivated to succeed, adding to a more diverse workforce.”

**Claire Cookson, Chief Executive Officer at DFN Project SEARCH, said:**

“We’re delighted to be a part of the Internships Work programme, which will help break down the barriers and misconceptions that young adults with learning disabilities or autism spectrum conditions face daily around access to employment. Through our wealth of data and first-hand insight, our aim is to improve best practice across the board, showcasing the amazing talent these young adults have, and how policy needs to change to encourage the best form of inclusive recruitment.”

**Laura Davis, Chief Executive at BASE, said:**

“Having already developed the Supported Employment Quality Framework, this project provides an exciting opportunity to embed and further shape quality within Supported Internships. The team looks forward to working with Supported Internships providers across England to pilot and improve the Supported Internship Quality Framework to support the sector to achieve the best employment outcomes for young people, because ultimately that's what it is all about.”

**Paul Marshall, Chief Executive at NDTi, said:**

“I am so pleased that alongside our partners at BASE and DFN Project SEARCH, NDTi will be working with areas across England to help them drive supported internships and ultimately, jobs. The contribution and opportunity employment provides toward living a full and independent life is huge and we are so excited to be able to help support those outcomes.”

More information can be found at [www.InternshipsWork.org.uk](http://www.InternshipsWork.org.uk)

***ENDS***

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**NDTi**

The [National Development Team for Inclusion](https://www.ndti.org.uk/) is a social change organisation working to enable people at risk of exclusion, due to age or disability, live the life they choose.

Through change and development work, research and evaluation and best practice examples, NDTi inspires and supports policymakers, services and communities to make change happen - change that leads to better lives. NDTi already has an excellent track record of successfully delivering projects that improve outcomes for young disabled people, particularly the recent Preparing for Adulthood programme.

**BASE**

[BASE](https://www.base-uk.org/home) is a member’s charity whose aim is to champion and improve the employment outcomes for disadvantaged and marginalised people. The Supported Employment model has a clear evidence base that offers the best chance of securing sustainable employment for people with a disability or other disadvantage and champions the knowledge that anyone who wants to work can, provided they get the right support for the right job for them. BASE trading as Inclusive Trading have led the way in developing and delivering training and embedding quality. BASE and its members work in close partnerships with employers and other agencies to make work a reality for the thousands of people who use our services.

**DFN Project SEARCH**

[DFN Project SEARCH](https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/) is a national transition to work programme for students with learning disabilities and/or autism. They work in partnership across the public, private and voluntary sectors to create supported employment internships within private and public settings that these young people undertake during their last year of education, helping them to make positive transitions from education to the world of work. Nationally only 5.1% of people with these needs are in paid employment yet 70% of those supported by DFN Project SEARCH secure paid roles. With 120 sites across the UK, serving over 1000 interns per annum, DFN Project SEARCH has the largest data set in the UK, and changes the way society views and enables young adults with learning disabilities and autism to ensure that they reach their true and full potential.