



Engage to Change

What we have learnt through supported internships in Wales

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This is an easy read version of 'Engage to Change: Influencing and informing -Briefing on the evaluation of supported internship models to support young people with learning disabilities and autistic young people into employment.'

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How to use this booklet



This is an easy read document. You may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 27**.



Where the document says **we**, this means **Engage to Change**. For more information contact:

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About Engage to Change

Engage to Change was a 7 year project. It was funded by:



- the National Lottery Community Fund



- and supported by the Welsh Government.



The project supported young people with a learning disability or autism to:



- learn skills for work,



- and move into paid jobs.



Learning Disability Wales worked with **ELITE Supported Employment, Agoriad Cyf, All Wales People First, Cardiff University and DFN Project SEARCH** to deliver this project.



We started 2 ways of delivering **supported internships** across Wales. They are called:

- DFN Project SEARCH internships
- and Alternative Supported Internships



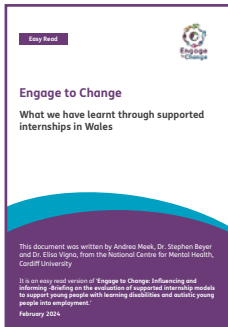
A **supported internship** is where young people learn through working. The work is unpaid. They are supported by a **job coach**. People doing an internship are called interns.



A **job coach** supports interns to find, learn and stay in their job.



Supported internships give young people the skills they need to get paid jobs.



This document is about how well our **supported internships** worked. And what we think needs to happen next.



The full report is available here: <https://www.engagetochange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/supported-internships-report-English-compressed-2.pdf>

About DFN Project SEARCH



This is the most popular way of providing **supported internships** in the UK.



In 2016 we started the first **DFN Project SEARCH supported internship** in Wales.

There are 3 main parts of a DFN Project SEARCH **supported internship**:



1. **A Host Business**

This is the business where **interns** work. Host businesses teach the basic skills of the job. And provide a work-based mentor for their **interns**.



2. **A local college or education provider**

They recruit young people to become **interns**. They teach the **Project SEARCH employability skills curriculum**. This is a plan for what should be taught.



3. **A Supported Employment Agency**

They provide trained **job coaches**. **Job coaches** provide support to **interns** in work.



Internships last for 1 school year. They spend 10 weeks at a time doing different jobs.



Interns work for around 6 hours a day.



At the end of their **internship**, young people were supported to find paid work.



Interns who were not ready for paid work were told about services that could help further.

About Alternative Supported Internships



Between 2019 and 2020 we set up **3 Alternative Supported Internships**.



These were separate from the **DFN Project SEARCH internships**.



Internships lasted 1 school year.



Internships were offered to students from colleges.

They were supported by:



- a tutor from the college



- and 1 or more job coaches from a supported employment agency.



Alternative supported internships were more flexible.



Interns spent different amounts of time in class and in work.



The amount of time **interns** spent in work depended on their needs. And on what jobs were available.



At the end of their **internship**, young people were supported to find paid work.



Interns who were not ready for paid work were told about services that could help further.

About our interns

Between 2016 and 2022:



- 224 young people had a **supported internship**.
- 144 young people were on a **Project SEARCH internship**.
- 80 young people were on **Alternative Supported Internships**.



- 191 **interns** finished their internship.
- 203 **interns** agreed to be in this report.
- The information in this report is based on 191 **interns**.



- 3 out of every 10 **interns** identified as female.

- Most **interns** were 18 years old.



- Just over 3 out of every 10 **interns** said they had a learning disability.



- 1 out of every 10 **interns** told us they were autistic.

- Just under 2 out of every 10 **interns** told us they were autistic **and** had a learning disability.

- 2 out of every 10 **interns** told us they had **specific learning difficulties**.



- **DFN Project SEARCH internships** supported more young people with:
 - a **Statement of Special Educational Need**
 - or an **Individual Development Plan**.

- **Alternative Supported Internships** supported more young people with **specific learning difficulties**.



- Almost 5 in every 10 **Project SEARCH interns** found paid work after their **internship**.

- 1 in 10 **interns** found paid work after an **Alternative Supported Internship**.



- Most **interns** told us that they wanted to get paid jobs after their **internship**.

What we found out



Supported internships in Wales were started in 2016 by the Engage to Change project.



Before this there were no similar opportunities for young people with:

- a learning disability,
- autism,
- or both.



Supported internships are a good way to help these young people into paid work.



Interns doing a **Project SEARCH internship** seem to have done better.



There are different reasons for this that we need to think about.



Project SEARCH has good systems. They check what they are doing is working.



Interns do a set number of job roles for a set time. And do a set amount of learning in the classroom.



Project SEARCH internships work with large employers. This means **interns**:

- can work on site
- are supported by a large organisation
- get good job induction and training
- have the choice of different job roles.



Project SEARCH internships were running for 3 years before **Alternative Supported Internships**.



When we started **Alternative Supported Internships**, we were impacted by COVID. Many workplaces were closed during lockdown.



Alternative Supported Internships are a more flexible way of providing **internships**.



Each site decides its own timetable for learning in the classroom and at work.



The time spent in work was different across sites.



The hours and days an **intern** would work depended on:

- their needs
- what opportunities were available
- and how long it took to travel to work.



We need more information from more sites about **Alternative Supported Internships**. This will help us understand if this type of **internship** works for:

- young people with a learning disability,
- autism
- or both.

Gender



Overall, more males got **supported internships** than females.



We need to look into this more. We must make sure females have the same opportunities to get **supported internships**.

Diagnosis



More young people with a learning disability got paid work through **Project SEARCH internships**.



This makes sense. **Project SEARCH internships** employed more young people with a learning disability.

Past work experience



Overall having past work experience helped **interns** to get paid jobs.



Research shows that work experience increases the chance of getting paid jobs.



Schools and colleges should focus more on how important work experience is.

The future of Supported Internships



Welsh Government is now providing **supported internships** across Wales through colleges.



Some of these **supported internships** are **Project SEARCH models**. Some of them are **Alternative Supported Internships**.



Getting a paid job is the main goal.



But they are also looking at supporting young people into things like **supported apprenticeships**.



A **supported apprenticeship** is when a person learns the skills of a job whilst working. They are supported by a **job coach**. They are usually paid less because they are still learning.



Some of these **internships** are even more flexible than our **Alternative Supported Internships**. For example, the time spent in work and in class varies even more.



We do not know yet how well these **internships** will work for young people.

Funding



We need ongoing funding for supported employment agencies. So they can carry on providing 1 to 1 **job coaching** support.



Having trained **job coaches** is an important part of **supported internships**.



This includes providing **job coach** support before, during and after an **internship**.



At the moment, there is no support for **interns** after their **internship**. There is no funding for support outside of **supported internships**.



We should be able to use **Access to work** funding. This could be used to pay for permanent **job coach** staff in large organisations.



Access to Work is money from the **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)**.



Access to Work can really help support more people.



After their **internship**, most young people get low skilled jobs. Where there is less job security.



Young people with a learning disability should have ongoing support to:

- stay in paid work,
- gain more skills,
- and get more responsibility if they want it.



There is not enough funding for job coaching in Wales to support this.



This limits the choice and control people with a learning disability have over the working lives.



In the future we need to focus more on supporting young people into paid work after their **internship**.

What should happen next



In the UK we now have a **Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework**.



This can be used to make sure **supported internships** are the best they can be.



In Wales we also have the **Quality Standards and Guidance for delivery of supported internships**.



This is a guide for providing **supported internships** in Wales. It was published in 2023.



It will be important to check how these 2 things help to improve **supported internships**.



Our **supported internships** have been an important part of employment support in Wales.



Our project has helped to get **supported internships** started in Wales.



We must make sure young people have equal chances to get good **supported internships**. And move into the paid jobs they want to do.



There must be an on-going talks between:

- Welsh Government
- UK Department for Work and Pensions
- Policy makers
- Other funders

Recommendations



- Have a **national framework** for providing **supported internships**.

A **national framework** is a document that explains how something should be done.



- **Supported Internships** should have a set minimum number of hours spent learning through work.



- We should have guidance for **Alternative Supported Internships** in countryside areas. To help students find the right work placements and jobs to match their skills.



- **Job coaching** is an important part of **supported internships**. There should be national funding for a job coaching service.



- **Job coaching** is a skilled role. There should be:
 - more **job coaches**
 - more training for **job coaches**
 - a framework for **job coaching** in Wales.



- **Supported internships** should last for 12 months. So there is more time to prepare for internships, and more support after.



- **Access to Work funding** should cover **job coaches**. To provide support before and after **internships**.



- **Access to Work funding** should cover permanent **job coach** staff in large businesses like hospitals and universities.



- Work experience should be more valued in education. This would help young people realise they can achieve a paid job.



- Young people should be supported more to see if they are ready for **supported internships**. This would help make sure young people are ready to move from education into paid work.



- The main goal of **supported internships** should be getting a paid job. **Supported Internships** should be the final step in education.



- If an **intern** does not get a paid job, there should be other work programmes to focus on. For example, **supported apprenticeships**. Instead of just going back to education.

- More work needs to be done on:



- Making sure females are included in **supported internships**.



- Finding out if getting a part time or full-time job through **internships** depends on personal situations, like if a person gets benefits or not.



- Finding out what helps young people keep their jobs.

Hard words

Job coach

A job coach supports Interns to find, learn and stay in their job.

National framework

A national framework is a document that explains how something should be done.

Supported Apprenticeship

A supported apprenticeship is when a person learns the skills of a job whilst working. They are supported by a job coach. They are usually paid less because they are still learning.

Supported internship

A supported internship is where young people learn through working. The work is unpaid. They are supported by a job coach. People doing an internship are called interns.

