



careermag

FOR INCLUSION

Get inspired to offer work experience to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

In this issue

D&I in Tech and Creative Industries

IBM & the National Autistic Society

Tech She Can

Inclusivity at TalkTalk

Inclusive inspiration

Dame Evelyn Glennie - Listen Up!

DWP support for employees

Case studies

Practical resources ...and much more!

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Careermag for Inclusion

Issue 6 | November 2023

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'Working with a SEND school frankly filled me with fear! Like most, I had preconceived ideas about what this entailed. Once you start working in a school and can see the difference you are making, there is no better reward!'

Richard Osborne, Enterprise Adviser & CEO of Business Data Group Ltd



Foreword

One of the many things I love about the supported employment model, are the values that run throughout. Values which support high ambition for jobseekers, supporting employers as equal partners, matching the right person to the right role, and then providing on-going support to ensure all partners' flourish. Supported employment is unique because it debunks the opinion that disabled people should be grateful for any job; instead, empowering people to access good careers.

As the CEO of BASE, I regularly meet with business leaders from across the UK to support them to become confident about recruiting disabled people. And I'm still hearing the same reasons for the disability employment gap that I did 20 years ago when I first began working in the supported employment sector as a job coach. Despite there being a clear evidence base around what works: Supported Employment!

From my experience, I believe that employers need a trusted partner they can approach to ask any question, a critical friend who can support them to feel able to have conversations with the disabled person directly throughout the whole employee lifecycle. Supported employment services can be that trusted partner.

Looking at the statistics, there are 18,000 employers signed up to the Government's Disability Confident scheme but only 7.5% of people with a learning disability, 9% of autistic people and 15% of people with a mental health condition are currently in any kind of paid employment, despite 75% of people saying they want to work. There are also currently over a million job vacancies but in contrast there are also 475,000 economically inactive young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). What are the statistics not telling us?

As the mum of three neurodivergent teenagers, all with very different needs, I have experienced firsthand, the barriers that traditional recruitment methods can create.

My eldest daughter has a learning disability. She has no qualifications but was desperate to work. With the help of a supported employment service, she gained work experience, layered up her skills and is now working unsupported at the Village Gym, three days a week.

My middle daughter is autistic (undiagnosed) and has just completed her GCSE's. She's equally as motivated to work and applied for 31 jobs, the day after her exams finished. She was rejected 30 times without ever speaking to anyone.

Thankfully the situation is changing. More employers than ever are contacting me; employers who want to commit to removing the barriers from their recruitment and selection processes. There are some great employers who are leading the way in inclusive recruitment such as DPD, who have incorporated a job coach into their early careers planning, Amazon and Coca-Cola who've set up a range of pathways into employment. As well as SME's like Mediquip who have introduced supported employment into the heart of workforce planning.

For any employers reading this, who aren't feeling confident about recruiting someone with a disability, get in touch! **BASE** and its members would be delighted to talk you.



Laura Davis
CEO of BASE

base

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Careermag career_map

About

A free publication for employers, Careermag for Inclusion is published by Careermag Ltd for the Careers & Enterprise Company. It is designed to encourage employers to offer young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experiences in their workplace. These guides show it can be done, how and why through inspirational examples of success and tips for best practice with signposting to further information and support.

Design

We use **OpenDyslexic** for the headers and Helvetica for the body copy as recommended by the British Dyslexia Association to ensure we are inclusive for the 10 per cent of the UK population that are dyslexic, and for visually impaired readers.

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Visit XXXX You can subscribe to Careermag for Inclusion and view all previous editions.

The next editions will be published in January 2024 and May 2024.

We welcome your input! Please get in touch if you have any questions or something to contribute.

Contact the Editor at info@careermag.co.uk



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Welcome...

Welcome to Careermag for Inclusion.

Employing young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) brings unique benefits.

When developing your workforce, this talent pool is often eager to learn and absorb training, which means you can create a workforce that is specifically tailored to meet your needs. It can provide your business with a diverse range of experiences and ideas. And their unique perspectives can contribute to a more inclusive and creative work environment.

In this edition, we look at advancing technology and digital tools, which young people are often more familiar with. Hiring young people with SEND can help you stay up to date with technological advances and you can leverage their skills in areas such as digital marketing, social media and data analysis.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have working with all the wonderful contributors who have taken their time to share their stories.

Sharon Walpole
Editor - Careermag for Inclusion



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Hearing people properly

Dame Evelyn Glennie CH is a woman of firsts. The first profoundly deaf person to be accepted into the Royal Academy of Music, the world's first professional full-time solo percussionist and the first woman chosen to be President of Help Musicians (formerly The Musicians Benevolent Fund). She shares her insight as an inclusive employer.

When recruiting you have such a short time together in order to get to know that person in an interview and may not be an accurate measurement of someone's ability.

It's important to see the whole person in the recruitment process. As an employer, I involve several people in the interview process and try to create a conversation which is broad reaching. Ultimately it's about finding the balance between being really specific about what you need from that person, but also trying to find out about them by teasing out their personality.

Apprenticeships and work experience placements are absolutely vital. You need time to be with the people you are creating something with. Apprenticeships give you this and that's so important.

I was initially rejected at my first audition at the Royal Academy of Music. In those days, they felt a professional orchestra wouldn't accept someone with a hearing impairment, but I didn't want to be an orchestral player - I wanted to be a soloist. I asked them simply if I was of the standard required to get in - yes or no? They auditioned me again after agreeing they couldn't speak for employers. After that audition, they simply said 'You can start in September.'

The double GRAMMY winning, internationally-renowned performer, composer and collaborator is widely regarded as a pioneer, having played the first percussion concerto in the history of the BBC Proms in 1992, as well as leading 1,000 drummers in the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games and commissioning over 200 new works for solo percussion.

In her online series '**Access All Areas**' for Scala Radio, Dame Evelyn addresses disability and access to music. In it she sends the message that the industry needs to be an inclusive industry, no matter what the challenges of people might be, and helps young people to see role models to be inspired by.

Her thoughts about listening to people holistically can help employers wanting to recruit people with SEND and neurodiversity - to spend time, listen to the whole person and zoom out when recruiting.

Part of the conversation with them was that my responsibility was to forge my career and theirs was to give me inspiration, give me good teaching skills and experience playing. This is what a working relationship between employers and employees should be.

The mission of **The Evelyn Glennie Foundation** is to 'Teach the World to Listen'. The aim is to bring different organisations together to talk and think about what listening really means - in any sector. We will be working with many organisations who support different groups of people - people with autism, people who are homeless, refugees, carers, young people, disabled people. It's a very exciting time!



Credit: Philipp Rathmer Brigitte

Advocating for every young person's right to progress

EMPOWER – THRIVE – ACHIEVE

Wider Lancashire Inclusion Summit 2023

The Lancashire Careers Hub is a collaboration of 154 secondary schools and colleges, including SEND schools and Alternative Providers (APs) across wider Lancashire who work together to deliver the very best careers provision. Collaborating with business partners, education and voluntary sectors, we strive to improve careers outcomes for all young people, ensuring every child can take their best next step.

According to *Scope UK*: The employment rate of disabled people is 53%. Compared to 82% of non-disabled people. Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people, and 3 times as likely to be economically inactive. 33% of disabled people and their families experience people making assumptions or judging their capability.

Statistics like these and conversations with Career Leaders about the 'challenging employment prospects' for young people with SEND were the catalyst that sparked our Lancashire event. Employers are missing out on a huge pool of talented individuals, and we wanted to showcase the positive side to disability, inspire and celebrate what young people with SEND can do!

This year's inaugural Wider Lancashire Inclusion Summit took place at Barton Manor Hotel, Preston and attracted over 130 participants, with representation from schools (SEND/AP/PRU/Mainstream), colleges, employers and other stakeholders.

The event brought people together who had a vested interest in offering opportunities for young people with SEND and sharing best practice to consider future developments in careers education and guidance.

The day provided a chance for all attendees to network and discuss future ideas and collaborations for work experience opportunities with a focus on encounters with employers and employees and workplace visits.



The event enabled employers to look at opportunities for attracting a diverse workforce, empowered Career Leaders to discuss the difficulties they are currently experiencing in engaging with employers and how this could be improved. It was a safe space to talk openly with a real focus on continuity and growth.

We had representation on the day from BASE (British Association for Supported Employment); Talentino! (delivering better careers guidance through specialist SEND Careers programmes); DWP (raising awareness around Access to Work and the Disability Confident Scheme); Positive Footprints (preparing children and young people to live purposeful, positive lives); Ability Consultancy (an equality and diversity education and training company specialising in disability awareness); and Project Search (a transition to work programme committed to transforming the lives of young adults with a learning disability and autism or both).

Career Leaders and headteachers from several SEND and AP institutions also had the opportunities to discuss best practice within their institutions alongside current students and alumni, highlighting the positive impact of raising aspirations, which produced comments such as "The inspirational stories have empowered me to feel like I can go to my setting and make a difference" and "great to learn about all the links in the chain regarding schools, colleges, services and employers".



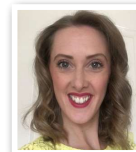
A panel discussion, which included Victrex, Booths and Enveco NW, explored the importance of building strong working relationships between schools and employers, to provide quality workplace experiences.

Some of the positive feedback we received following the event included:

"Listening to all the inspirational speakers brought the event to life."
"Learning just how many opportunities there really are out there for young people."
"Awareness of local employers who actively support pupils with SEND"

The Lancashire Inclusion Summit has sparked spin off working groups between Cornerstone Employers and Career Leaders focusing on "Making workplace visits accessible for all", and the Summit will now be an annual event to discuss important progress that has been made throughout the year.

Since the event, we have been invited to join Lancashire County Council's Preparation for Adulthood delivery group and are in contact with the LCC SEND Partnership. We hope to build on these current relationships, continue to collaborate and support positive transitions.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Employers are key to supporting young people to develop and understand the importance of **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS** to improve "job readiness".

Allow students to speak to employees who they can relate to – **REAL LIFE CHALLENGES**

Experiences of the workplace need a **TAILORMADE APPROACH** as each cohort of students is different - employers need to talk with SEND Career Leaders.

PREPARATION – students need to get to know companies and employers need to get to know the students. Employers could visit the school prior to a workplace experience or provide a short video for the students about what to expect on the day of the visit and who they'll be meeting.

Do you want to support young people in your area to develop and understand the importance of employability skills and improve their "job readiness"? Help schools, special schools and colleges shape future careers **Volunteer to become an Enterprise Adviser**

To find out more about the Lancashire Careers Hub and the work we do, please visit: lancashirecareershubs.co.uk

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The big question: How do you get more women into tech?

Only 1 in 4 tech workers are women. And, when you get to leadership level, that drops to 1 in 10. But we need women to be equal members in creating and developing the new technology businesses, products, and services that shape our world, ensuring technology works for all.



Auriol Stevens, Vice President Workplace Experience, Kyndryl and Chair of the Board of Trustees at Charity Tech She Can, shares her views. There's no single answer, but here are five things that you can do to help.

1. Start young: Tech education and careers inspiration needs to start from a young age, before unchallenged gender biases start to impact and influence choices. Tech She Can's animated lessons are relatable, fun and a great way of introducing tech concepts. They're suitable from age 5 upwards and cover topics like Cyber, AI and AR in an accessible way. They also help children understand that what they are passionate about can also be their career! Sports, the environment, art, music, maths, reading - all can be aligned to a career in technology.

2. Volunteering: If your company offers volunteer days, you - and your team - can go into schools to deliver lessons to inspire young people. If you become a **Tech We Can Champions** virtual training is provided that will give you all the material, and confidence, you need to deliver lessons in person or online. There is a supportive community of more than 400 volunteers - both men and women - and you don't need to work in tech to take part.

3. Create pathways into employment: When you are recruiting consider looking at alternative routes into employment, such as apprenticeships, returners schemes or retraining existing staff. Tech She Can is working on an exciting Apprenticeship programme where 91% of the tech apprentices are women. It is free for SMEs, charities and social enterprises to access and a great way to upskill your existing staff or recruit new talent. After 3-4 months of training the apprentices are ready to be deployed, so they have an impact very quickly.

4. Role models: Highlighting successful women in tech as role models really inspires and motivates young girls. You can also talk to the young people you know about your job, to make careers tangible. Rather than ask them what they want to be when they grow up, ask 'what do you want to do/build/change?' Check out Tech She Can's role model videos for some inspiration and remember to help them see how their passions are present in the workplace.

5. Support organisations working in this space: Partnering with charities like Tech She Can to become part of a network of industry leaders that promote gender diversity in tech is so valuable. Getting more women into tech is a societal problem, so no one individual or organisation can solve it on their own. But, by joining forces, together we can have a real impact. Find out how to become a member of Tech She Can and join our mission to #ChangeTheRatio!

Achieving balanced gender representation in tech requires a collective effort from educational institutions, business, policymakers and society as a whole. By implementing these strategies, we can create a more inclusive and diverse tech industry for everyone.

Tech She Can is a charity that works with education, industry and government to change the ratio of women in tech to create a more diverse workforce.



Widening access to apprenticeships

HIT Training Ltd has been chosen to lead a groundbreaking pilot program to improve accessibility to apprenticeships for SEND learners who previously were not eligible to access apprenticeship programs.

Currently only apprentices with a pre-existing Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Learning Difficulties Assessment (LDA) are eligible for exemptions from having to pass Level 1 or Level 2 Functional Skills (English and/or maths) for any apprenticeship scheme. However, under the pilot, learners without evidence of an EHCP or LDA statement and low English and maths levels will be able to enrol and work towards and pass the lower level of Functional Skills English and maths at Entry Level 3.

The HIT Special Educational Needs and Disabilities coordinator (SENDSCO) will conduct additional assessments to determine whether a learner would have the equivalent need for an EHCP or LDA and then approve this flexibility. By taking part in this innovative SEND exemption pilot, HIT hopes to revolutionize apprenticeship requirements and remove traditional barriers that have hindered employees from accessing apprenticeships. The aim is to ensure that low English and maths levels or the absence of a formal EHCP or LDA statement will no longer stand in the way of anyone wishing to embark on a rewarding apprenticeship journey. This also has the potential to widen the talent pool for employers.

Micaela Barlow, Quality Director of HIT Training Ltd comments, "We are honoured to be involved in this pilot to help improve accessibility of apprenticeships to some of our most vulnerable learners. Whether it be from learning difficulties or a poor experience with the education system, there are a number of reasons that individuals struggle with academic focused work but would make brilliant apprentices. By breaking down



some of the barriers to entry, we know that these learners will gain confidence from their new found skills and qualifications that will help them progress in both their careers and lives."

The pilot program is running from May 2023 to April 2024 and is open to any apprentices, including those already in the workplace, with training provided by HIT Training, Connect2Care or EDN.

To find out more or to take part please complete this [form](#).

Jill Whitaker,
Managing Director,
HIT Training Ltd



Divisions of HIT Training Ltd.



We Care, We Challenge and We Commit

A stone's throw from Salford Quays, nestled between MediaCity and Manchester city centre, sits TalkTalk in its headquarters, The Soapworks - former Colgate-Palmolive soap factory. Founded in 2003, the connectivity provider is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year and is one of the biggest technology companies in the North West, employing around 2,000 people.



TalkTalk relocated its HQ from London to Salford in 2019 with its '100% Human' campaign – echoing the company's inclusive culture 'for everyone'.

"Employees are at the heart of everything we do – and that's evident through our company values: We Care, We Challenge and We

Commit," says the company's Chief People and Procurement Officer Daniel Kasmir.

"Our people leaders play a crucial part in encouraging diversity of thought within their teams to allow employees to thrive and succeed within their roles, at all levels," said Daniel.

As an innovative, challenger brand, within a fast-paced industry, there are several examples of where TalkTalk has been and is at the forefront of new ideas when it comes to growing and engaging its workforce both now and for the future.



The Kickstart Scheme

TalkTalk welcomed over 100 young people into the business, across a multitude of roles, between 2020 and 2022 via The Kickstart Scheme. Launched by the UK Government in the hope of protecting and elevating young people amid the pandemic, Kickstart provided funding for employers to create six-month work placements for 16- to 24-year-olds in receipt of Universal Credit. The £2billion scheme put young people at the heart of the country's recovery and businesses, big and small, played their part to train, develop and mentor those who needed it most.

Today, thirty of these young people are still working at TalkTalk having been offered full-time contracts with the broadband company. These roles are across HR and talent, tech, and consumer. And as a result of the invaluable work experience and skills gained through their placement, many secured permanent roles elsewhere across the region within their chosen sectors.

Daniel said: "The last few years have been hard on us all, especially young people, and the Kickstart Scheme enabled us to deliver opportunities that really change lives. We were able to welcome local, young talent into the business to gain valuable industry experience and I am delighted when I walk through our HQ and see some of those people still working with us."

TalkTalk

For Everyone

Employ Autism

Another initiative implemented into TalkTalk is the Employ Autism scheme. Run in collaboration with the company's core charity partner, Ambitious About Autism, the scheme aims to tackle the inequalities faced by autistic adults when trying to find employment.

First introduced in October 2022, the connectivity provider hired five talented autistic young adults on a 6-month internship, where they developed key skills in their area of speciality, grew their confidence, and gained crucial workplace experience, which will prove invaluable in their transition from education to employment.

Ahead of the interns joining, the workplace was assessed from a neurodiverse perspective, ensuring quiet spaces were available and adjustments could be made where needed.

Daniel said: "We've seen huge success from Employ Autism. Every intern has brought fantastic skills and fresh new perspectives into their teams. And we've been thankful to extend some of their contracts to continue the invaluable work they're doing."

Nathan joined the Corporate Affairs team as a Policy Associate in October 2022, helping to manage one of our core communication lines with external stakeholders, liaising with key stakeholders both in the business and externally. He said: "The sense of community is something that I've very much enjoyed - it not only gives you a sense of purpose, it makes you feel like you're part of a group, makes you feel included."

Corporate Affairs Director, Lucy Thomas, has mentored Nathan since he joined the business. She said: "Nathan has been an invaluable asset to our team, and a total joy to work with. Not only has this been an opportunity for him to develop new skills from our wide-ranging work in corporate affairs and communications, but he's offered fresh perspectives and new ideas which have strengthened our business area too. I strongly urge other employers to consider implementing this initiative in their business."

Following the success of the initiative, in June TalkTalk welcomed five students from Manchester Metropolitan University on an eight-week internship via the Employ Autism scheme. As part of the programme, hiring managers were given training from Ambitious about Autism on how best to support autistic people in their teams and help them thrive during their time in the workplace.



Employee Networks

Across TalkTalk, there are six established employee-led networks that were created to educate, inform and support employees. Each of the networks hold a different agenda and the synergy with the business works both ways. All colleagues are welcome to join any of the networks. These include the LGBTQ+ network TalkPride, TalkNeurodiversity, Empower – which exists to celebrate colleagues from Ethnic Communities –, the Armed Forces network, Women in Tech and TalkFamilies.

This year, there are two additional networks being created – one to support colleagues around disability and another to further recognise and educate on faith and religion. All of these communities significantly impact the company culture, educating and raising awareness while celebrating all colleagues from the moment they join TalkTalk.



To find out more about how Ambitious about Autism could help your organisation become more inclusive, go to www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/contact-us





TEES VALLEY

Inspire and raise aspirations for young people in SEND establishments

The Tees Valley Careers Hub, in collaboration with SEND career leaders, identified a need to develop a bespoke initiative of activities to allow students to gain valuable life skills, supporting them in their next best steps. Now in its third year, the SEND Enterprise Challenge Week has increased in popularity.

More than 500 students aged 11-24, from eight schools across the region, met employers and learning providers including Cleveland Fire Brigade, local colleges and Stockton's Arts Centre, ARC, to learn about jobs, career paths and skills. For the event, the Careers Hub, alongside Catcote Academy, partnered with Middlesbrough-based industrial services firm Altrad UK, which was also the sponsor.

The week consisted of a four-day series of challenges and interactions taking place virtually and in schools. A Continuing Professional Development session was delivered to staff in schools and resources were shared ahead of the event. The first day consisted of a welcome and introductions. Altrad UK launched its challenge to the students, which was to build a vehicle using reclaimed and recycled materials and create a method of communicating the importance of sustainability. Mentors from the firm were all on hand in each school to kickstart the week. Day two involved an encounter with Cleveland Fire Brigade where students had to design an escape plan, again learning about the valuable skills they could use in the world of work. On the third day, students had the opportunity to meet a range of providers to help prepare them for their next steps. On day four, all students had to showcase their ideas around the Altrad UK challenge to school judges, and teams were then selected to present on the Friday.

The final day culminated in a celebration event in which students were able to showcase what they had learned throughout the week in a very hands-on, practical way. This gave the students the confidence and ability to stand in a room of more than 500 people and talk about their ideas and concepts, as well as unveil their sustainable car. Every student was awarded for their effort, commitment and dedication.

The initiative allowed for extensive interaction between schools and employers/providers. The evaluation of the week was extremely positive and showed an increase in students' confidence, communication, teamwork, creativity and problem-solving skills.

Lisa Greig, CEO of Hartlepool Aspire Trust which operates Catcote Academy, one of the schools involved, said: "We are excited again to be involved in the annual Careers and Enterprise Challenge week. Over the previous two years it has been a pleasure to continue to work in partnership with TVCA to ensure SEND students across the Tees Valley are able to showcase their skills and develop their skills for the world of work."

Tony Jester, Altrad UK's Executive Vice President of Operations, said: "We are delighted to be able to work with the Tees Valley team to support this very worthwhile STEAM event. These types of events are essential to help develop skills and knowledge in a hands-on way, furthering our young people's ability to work across disciplines through project-based learning."

Click here to find many resources from the SEND Challenge Week or scan the QR code.



Offer experiences of your workplace!



FAQs for employers who would like to work with students with SEND. Insights from the West of England Careers Hub.

Employers have a vital role to play in preparing young people for future careers by helping them acquire employability and life skills. Schools can provide a talent pipeline for employers as well as enrich their workforce. Many employers initially feel daunted about the prospect of employing a young person with SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities), but there are many benefits and many find their fears are unfounded.

Experience of the workplace should move beyond a once a year event, involving diverse experiences across the year. It can come in many forms, such as work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience, as long as the experience is meaningful.

Young people with SEND can benefit from exposure to many workplaces to develop their awareness of all opportunities available to them. For young people with SEND it is important that we ensure they have been fully prepared for the experience to enable them to gain positive impact and for it to be meaningful. This could mean sending in a short video for them to familiarise themselves with the people and the environment and hosting short visits to ensure they are aware of what to expect and what is expected of them. Schools are happy to support and can advise as to what would be best to meet the needs of their specific young people.

What are the hours and should I pay?

Students should not receive any payment for their time at your organisation and be given the opportunity to carry out meaningful work and/or observe work activities. The student will normally need to work during school hours as they need to be transported back to the school by teachers for transport home.

Who is responsible for the health, welfare, safety, and security of the young person?

The employer is responsible for providing a safe environment for the student in accordance with local health and safety legislation, and all employees working with the student are made aware. Depending on the type of experience this could include obtaining employer's liability insurance, public liability insurance, vehicle insurance and confirming that students are covered by each policy (where applicable).

School should see a copy of these. Risk assessments need to be carried out for students before the placement and shared with the school. The school should provide the necessary form. In the case of absence, accident, or sickness, the employer should notify the school contact. The school will be the primary point of contact for parents and carers.

What are the requirements for safeguarding?

The employer has a duty of care towards young people at work and needs to consider the suitability of staff who may be working with the young people during the experience you are providing. The employer must disclose staff (where known) who are disqualified from working with children (in accordance with the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000).

What other ways could employers work with SEND schools/colleges?

Consider feeding back on CVs, taking part in a Dragons' Den or providing mock interviews for the students. Employers could provide company visits with insights about the company - in person or virtually. All are useful for a student as a way of finding out about the 'world of work'.

Helpful Resources for Employers

CEC Toolkit for Employers working with SEND Students (including an example educational risk assessment template: resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/resources/work-experience-resources-send-school)

Young People on Work Experience: The Law: [Young people at work - work experience - HSE](#)

If you would like further support, contact your local [Careers Hub](#).



“I am successful because I have ADHD, not in spite of it...”

This was said to me by an entrepreneur and business owner at our conference last year, a man who had been permanently excluded from school and has no formal qualifications.

We are living through a period of significant change in our understanding of Neurodiversity. There is much interest in Neurodiversity currently and waiting lists for ADHD assessments have never been longer in the UK, particularly from adults. There has been a 300% increase in adult diagnoses for ADHD since 2003. This is very exciting and, finally, many more people are now getting correctly identified and receiving support and treatment.

ADHD is characterised by Variable attention, Impulsivity and Physical and Cognitive Hyperactivity.

However, there is still a lot of misunderstanding. Variable attention, one of the key features of ADHD, is a good example of this. The ADHD Foundation delivers training and awareness raising sessions for businesses and companies throughout the UK and sometimes employers will say to us, “why should we employ someone with ADHD, they can’t pay attention?” Our response is to stress the importance of taking a strength-based approach. Variable attention is not “Attention deficit” as the name of this condition suggests. A person with ADHD can pay attention, in fact, they can hyper-focus on subjects that interest and motivate which can be an asset in the workplace.

Cognitive hyperactivity can also be a strength at work- the ability to think out of the box, to make quick decisions under pressure, to have lots of ideas with high levels of energy and creativity. When we are putting teams together at work, who doesn’t need a team member who is a visionary and who will energise everyone with their enthusiasm and drive? Combine that person with a good planner and completer and you have the makings of a dynamic and effective team.



The future will be bright for children and young people with ADHD when we all start looking beyond neurodiversity as a set of deficits or as “disorders.” When we recognise the unique skills and qualities associated with ADHD, we can begin to create opportunities and environments for young people to thrive in and succeed. As one manager said about a recent training session that I delivered for a Housing Association, “Watching my team understand ADHD fully.... I could see lightbulbs going off around the room.”

Colin Foley
National Training Director
ADHD Foundation



For more information about training opportunities with the ADHD Foundation, contact: colin.foley@adhd.foundation.org.uk

IBM partners with The National Autistic Society

“*Absolutely and completely life changing*” is how James describes joining IBM via the Autism at Work programme. James joined IBM after some difficult years in and out of jobs and education.

“I’ve carried the label of being lazy and unemployed for many years – now I am proud to say that – ‘I’m a software engineer at IBM’. IBM is a prestigious company to work for, and from a financial and self-worth perspective, having this job has made all the difference.”

The IBM Software Development Lab works with the National Autistic Society on their Autism at Work programme, as part of IBM’s global neurodiversity program. The programme aims to improve employment opportunities for autistic people. Five employees joined as permanent staff at the IBM Hursley location.

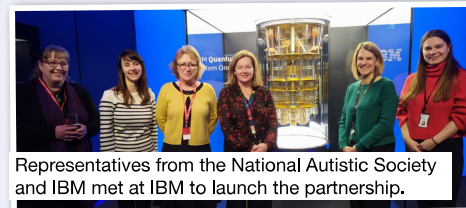
If you are autistic, you are one of the least likely of all groups to be employed in the UK, according to recent data from the Office of National Statistics. IBM has over 100 years of experience with diversity, inclusion and equality in the workplace and we believe neurodivergent identities are to be celebrated, and a vital part of our IBM Community.

How have IBM and the National Autistic Society been collaborating?

Our Hursley location has been focusing on creating safe psychological and physical spaces for our neurodivergent colleagues for a number of years. We wanted to expand this to offer an inclusive advertising, recruitment and onboarding process. Autism at Work helped us deliver this. Managers and the recruitment team have all taken part in autism training. As a result, for example, rather than having an interview pose questions about hypothetical situations, or asking the candidate to talk about their strengths, we provide a logic puzzle in advance which forms the main discussion point in the interview. Candidates can then more easily demonstrate logical thinking, which is more relevant to our software development roles.



James Ashman performing music with his band



Representatives from the National Autistic Society and IBM met at IBM to launch the partnership.

The National Autistic Society are signposting IBM SkillsBuild, a free online education and career readiness programme, to all of its members.

Earlier this year we jointly ran an IBM SkillsBuild virtual bootcamp on the topic of IT Support, for six weeks for 30 autistic learners.

Why do we want to hire autistic employees?

Teams that have different ways of thinking help us to see and solve problems more clearly. While business needs drive our desire to recruit and retain diverse talent, when we make changes for inclusion, we find that many of our employees benefit. For instance, we set up a Wellbeing Space with the guidance of autistic colleagues, and many others also benefit from the space. Our commitment to these values are part of what drives our ways of thinking differently, our innovation.

As for James, he’s already been recognised for his contribution to the company, being nominated as a Rising Star at the national UKIT Awards.

You can read more about the IBM Software Development Lab’s work with the National Autistic Society [here](#).



“My learning difficulties and confidence in appearance have been the biggest challenge for me to overcome on my journey into work.”

In the UK there are over 850,000 adults with a learning disability of working age. Yet, the employment rate of those known to adult social care services is a staggering 4.8%. Rachel is part of the 4.8%. This is their story.

After hearing about the programme through family, in September 2020 Rachel began a year-long internship delivered in partnership with Marriott and DFN Project SEARCH that would change their life.

Supported by an onsite teacher and job coach, Rachel undertook various rotations at The Marriott Heathrow, where they were exposed to different departments within the hotel. Key takeaways included learning how to manage their time and prioritise responsibilities, as well as building their confidence, communication and teamwork skills.

“My Movement to Work programme has helped me realise that even with disabilities, there is nothing you cannot achieve.”

Now Rachel is employed by Marriott as a Food and Beverage Associate, and hopes to continue learning new skills while working for the company.

Rachel's supported internship is part of a 7 year collaboration between Marriott and DFN Project SEARCH. The internships are specially designed to ensure young adults with autism and learning disabilities have the resources, support and opportunities to gain employability skills with a view to enhancing their chance of employment.

Research demonstrates that those with learning disabilities provide a multitude of benefits to businesses, from higher retention rates to boosted morale.

But one of the largest barriers to employment for young people with disabilities is the lack of awareness and understanding on disability. Marriott reports that from taking part in the supported internship model, staff teams have had the opportunity to develop their own skills and knowledge of working with people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Managers in particular are more patient during on-boarding and training, more empathetic when communicating and particularly more open-minded when it comes to finding new ways of doing things.



Additionally, when setting up the supported internship programme, DFN Project SEARCH hosted two days of tailored training to build relationships between the various parties involved to ensure everyone was aligned to the common goal and that the programme was immersed into the culture of the hotel.

The supported internship model acts as an alternative to mainstream college, enabling young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to prepare for the world of work in a safe and supported way.

Compared to just a 4.8% employment rate for all working age adults with learning disabilities, 70% of interns at Marriott have gained employment following their participation on the programme. This clearly demonstrates intervention works and adds real value to businesses and individuals alike. Click [here](#) to find out more.



Youth Voice on Networking

I'm Ilya, a first year politics and international studies student at Warwick, with previous work experience in politics and financial services. Much of my industry knowledge and experience was gained through my interest in networking and self-development.

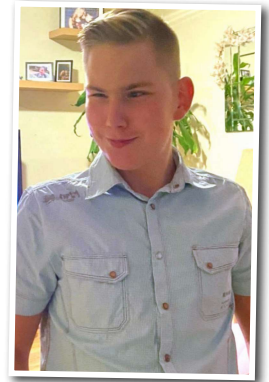
My very first interest in subjects like Economics was prompted by interactions and insight I gained through networking. The topic of networking has become vital for young people to be able to learn about a sector and break through the barriers that are in place. The acceptance of online working has made networking and early communication with an employer a reality for many. One of my most interesting work experiences involved me first having several online Q&A calls with professionals in the consulting industry, and then working with the same company in person on real life business cases.

Companies could, and should combine both physical events and remote experiences to open up careers which at first glances seem opaque and unavailable to young people. Targeted networking by firms can also build important bridges to communities which are underrepresented. For instance I am visually impaired myself, and although I like in person events, the option to start with online engagement gives me flexibility, brings in a wider demographic, and removes limitations on distance. Without the willingness of firms to embrace new technologies and methods of networking, I would have probably still had a limited understanding of different sectors.

Although this just has been my own experience on the power of networking, there is a much bigger trend of firms picking up upon this. Today household names have networking and

skills development opportunities for university students, going all the way down to GCSE and sixth form students. Look back twenty years and try to give me an example of a big company providing events for pre-university students, you probably won't find many. Yet today you don't have to look far for examples: from spikes in the numbers of young users on platforms like LinkedIn, to the growth and adoption of industry spotlight events targeted towards school students.

The importance of diverse talent to reflect a diverse client base has coupled with a noticeable skills gap in areas like communication triggered by the pandemic limiting the interactions of young people. Spurred on by these challenges, companies are taking the next steps towards providing inclusive networking opportunities which develop early talent and build skills like confidence, communication, and industry knowledge. My own experience is just one of many stories of how networking can have a transformative impact upon both young people and firms.



Youth Advisory Group

Ilya Vencjuns is a member of The Careers & Enterprise Company's Youth Advisory Board, which is supported by the British Youth Council. This diverse group of young people aged 14-26 from across England make sure the young people's voices are heard.

To find out more about the Youth Advisory Group, go to: www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/who-we-are/youth-voice/youth-advisory-group/



Access to Work

Your employees may be entitled to financial support if they have a disability or health condition.

Support for anyone with a disability or health condition

Access to Work is a specialist disability service from Jobcentre Plus that gives practical advice and support to disabled people, whether they are employed, self-employed or looking for employment.

The support will depend on your employees needs. Through Access to Work, they can apply for:

- a grant to help pay for practical support with their work
- advice about managing their mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

They may also qualify for funding to manage their mental health at work and communication support at a job interview.

It does not matter how much they earn. If they get an Access to Work grant, it will not affect any other benefits they get and they will not have to pay it back.

Access to Work could give them a grant to help pay for things like:

- BSL interpreters, lip speakers or note takers
- adaptations to their vehicle so they can get to work
- taxi fares to work or a support worker if they cannot use public transport
- a support worker or job coach to help them in your workplace

Further information

If you think any of your employees may be eligible for financial assistance from Access to Work, you can direct them to [Access to Work](#) for detailed information to check their eligibility and how to apply.

Become a Disability Confident employer

Information about employing disabled people and how the Disability Confident employer scheme can help your business.

Information for employers

As an employer, being **Disability Confident** means thinking differently about disability and taking action to improve recruitment, developing and retaining staff.

It might just help you discover amazing new talent!

Visit the Disability Confident employer scheme on gov.uk to find out:

- How to become a Disability Confident employer
- Guidance on employing disabled people and people with health conditions
- Guidance on renewing/updating your Disability Confident status



Department for Work & Pensions

Helpful Resources for Employers

Employers are vital to help bridge the gap between education and employment. We have pulled together useful resources to inform your thinking about offering experiences of your workplace for young people.

[An Employers Guide to Supported Employment](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Supporting Employers: Working with Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Resources for Employers](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[Experiences of the Workplace \(BM 6\): Step by Step guide for Employers](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

[An employer's guide to supporting STEM careers education in England](#)

STEM Learning

[DMA Talent: Dyslexia Employers guide](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company & DM Trust

[DMA Talent: Autism Employers guide](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company & DM Trust

[Ambitious about Autism Toolkits](#)

Ambitious about Autism

[Linking Careers to the Curriculum: A guide to engaging students and supporting progress by embedding teaching in the context of the world of work](#)

The Careers & Enterprise Company

Get in touch

If you are an employer and interested in working with young people with SEND, contact the [Careers & Enterprise Company's Business Partnerships Team](#).

If your organisation has resources that you feel would benefit other employers, please get in touch with Sharon Walpole, Editor of Careermag for Inclusion on info@careermag.co.uk.

Careermag for Inclusion Past & Present

You can access and download all previous editions of Careermag for Inclusion as well as subscribe at www.careermagmediagroup.co.uk/careermag-for-inclusion

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