

The Supported Internship Programme *In Bexley*

FAQS



What is a Supported Internship?

The Supported Internship Programme is a personalised study programme for young people aged 16 – 24 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The programme usually lasts for a year, and it offers interns the opportunity to gain valuable practical experience in the workplace, whilst engaging in further complementary study at college alongside their work. They will generally spend a larger proportion of their time in the workplace, and will also study English and mathematics to the appropriate levels alongside any additional courses. The intern will receive the support of a 1:1 Job Coach, if required, to help them to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace. The goal at the end of the programme is for the intern to enter paid employment.

Is the Supported Internship Programme full-time?

This varies between different education providers and different models of the Supported Internship Programme. It also depends on the individual needs of the student, and the amount of work the individual employer has available.

For example, some students may be able to attend their work placement four days per week alongside one day at college, meaning that their programme is full-time. Other students may be able to complete two days at their work placement (whether the work the employer has to offer is limited, or whether the student feels that they require a shorter working week) and one or two days at college completing the qualifications or courses required as part of the Supported Internship Programme. This may differ between each individual education provider.

Is there a possibility that (the student) can continue with the programme or college for longer than one year?

The Supported Internship Programme generally lasts for one year, as it is the overarching goal for the student to enter paid employment at the end of the programme.

What happens if (the student) doesn't achieve paid employment at the end? Can they go back to college?

Where students do not enter paid employment, some might prefer to continue with further education, or instead enter voluntary work or another programme such as a traineeship or apprenticeship to further their training, skills and experience. Support will be provided by the education provider when planning the next steps of the student.

What subjects will (the student) study as part of the Supported Internship Programme?

Each individual education provider has different courses to offer, therefore queries about the exact courses should be directed to the education provider. However, English, Mathematics and Employability are usually the core subjects which students study as part of the S.I.P.

If you couldn't find a suitable placement by September what would happen?

Generally, the planning and preparation process for finding placements for students on the programme begins in the previous academic year and over the summer. Depending on the education provider, placements may begin any time between September and January. This depends on the structure of the individual programme and the availability of suitable placements. The programme usually lasts for one year yet the length of placements can vary from six months to one year. This depends on agreements made between the employer and the provider, and the individual model of the programme established by the provider.

Although unlikely, if a placement had not been established by the designated date, the student would continue their college-based studies as part of the Supported Internship Programme until a suitable placement was established, and efforts would be made to ensure that they receive some work experience input up until then.

If you found a placement that didn't work out would it be possible to change?

Students' career aspirations are assessed by way of a vocational profile, which enables the job-matching process to take place. Those tasked with establishing work placements are informed by the vocational profile when engaging with prospective employers. If the initial placement did not work out, or if they were unable to establish a placement with the student's first-choice employer or field of work in their vocational profile, the person tasked with seeking a placement will attempt to establish a placement within the student's second-choice or third-choice (etc) field of work. The aim is to ensure that the student is employed in a field of work aligned with their career aspirations.

Could the placement continue supported for more than a year if required?

Where required, students are provided with the 1:1 support of a Job Coach who assists and trains them in the workplace. Such support includes learning and understanding different roles and responsibilities within the workplace, completing tasks and developing a professional skill-set. The goal is to ensure that students reach independence in each area of their lives, and the Job Coach can assist with this in the workplace.

Support is tailored to the needs of the individual student, and as they become more independent, support is gradually withdrawn. The withdrawal of support is dependent upon the student's needs and levels of independence. Students will not be left to struggle on their own: for the duration of the S.I.P, support will be provided to the student as long as they require. Even once support has been fully withdrawn, the Job Coach can still occasionally attend to 'check-in' with students, or if a student is required to learn a new skill at this stage, they may require a couple of days of intensive support before support is withdrawn again.

Support will be informed by the needs of the student. Nevertheless, the student and their parent or carer, as well as their employer, will always be able to contact the Job Coach throughout the duration of the Supported Internship. In some circumstances, other organisations may be liaised with to assist with further support (if required) if/when the student enters paid employment.

Would we have reviews at the College for both college work and the workplace?

The S.I.P is a personalised study programme, therefore although discussions will take place regarding the work placement, this will all come under the same review with the education provider.

Would the employment side stop during the holidays?

It is important to differentiate the S.I.P from general college courses, and as such, students may attend their work placements throughout the holidays. This should be discussed with the education provider.

Will my, or my child's, benefits be affected by them working throughout this programme, even though it is unpaid?

This depends on each individual's circumstances. As supported internships are unpaid, benefits are not affected during the time of the supported internship placement. However, if the student enters into paid employment, either with the placement host or another employer, benefits may be affected. It is suggested that you contact the DWP for more information if you have any further concerns or queries. You can also book in for an appointment at your local jobcentre plus, in order to seek advice. Alternatively, you can visit www.gov.uk and view the benefit calculators to assist with your query.

How are the Supported Internship work placements chosen?

Students' career aspirations are assessed by way of a vocational profile, which enables the job-matching process to take place. The vocational profile is a document which asks the student a number of questions about their hobbies, skills, strengths and areas for development, support needs, and critically, the fields of work they are interested in. This includes the broad field of work i.e. Office-based work, Catering, Animal Care etc as well as specific roles and responsibilities i.e. Filing, Customer Service, Food Preparation, Shelf-stacking, Administration etc. Once the career aspirations of the students have been ascertained, those tasked with finding the work placements can engage with employers who may be able to provide suitable work. Employers are also assessed to ensure that they can meet the student's needs, for example, by providing them with further work-related training, a risk assessment of the premises, any needs for reasonable adjustments and the availability of work that meets a real business need.

How long is the usual internship placement and how long is the normal working day?

This is flexible and depends on the needs of both the student and the employer. For example, one student may be reasonably able to complete an 8-hour working day, whereas another student may be reasonably able to complete a 4-hour working day. This is established through communications between the student, their job coach and the employer, and may also be influenced by how much work the placement has to offer. The usual S.I.P placement lasts for a year, and the minimum amount of time spent at a work placement is 6 months. Both the length of the placement and the length of the working day are tailored to the individual student and their placement.

Are the placements every day during the working week? Can it sometimes be outside normal working hours or during the weekend?

This is dependent on the structure of the programme and the work placement itself. Students on the S.I.P are required to complete educational courses (such as English, Maths and Employability) alongside the work placement as part of the programme, therefore it is unlikely that the student will attend work every day. Their days at the work placement will be planned around their day(s) in college, so that they can complete both aspects of the programme. In terms of the days they attend work and their working hours, this is dependent on the company that they work for. For example, if a student were to work in a restaurant which opens after 12:00 hours, they may be required to finish work later than a student in a placement which works within the usual office hours. However, hours can be negotiated with the employer to ensure that the needs of the student are met.

Will the student's particular requirements be fully considered before a placement is agreed?

Absolutely. The needs of the student are at the heart of the entire programme, throughout each step of the programme, to ensure they are provided with the best possible support in beginning their journey towards paid employment.

Can students still attend college for other days if the placement is not a full week?

It is possible for the student to attend college and study other courses alongside their S.I.P. This must be discussed with the education provider at the earliest possible opportunity, when planning the student's curriculum for the next year. This may vary between different education providers.

Will students get an opportunity to do more than one placement to see what sort of environment works best for them?

Yes. This should be discussed with the education provider, and students do not have to if they do not wish to. Some models of the S.I.P enable students to complete up to three different placements on a rotation basis, to enable them to experience different types of roles and fields of work. This will enable them to understand their own aspirations and needs and help them to make their own choices. They may complete one placement and realise that it isn't for them, but may complete another placement and find that they have discovered the field of work they wish to move into. Some students may prefer to remain at one placement throughout the duration of their programme, whereas others may find it beneficial to work within different placements either at the same time (two different roles within one week) or after a period of time (one placement for a number of months, followed by a different placement for a number of months). As the S.I.P is a tailored study programme, the wishes of the student must be taken into consideration. This does, however, depend on the availability of work placements.

What happens if a placement doesn't work out?

Communication between all parties concerned including the student, their employer, their family and their job coach is key to managing this. All efforts will be made to ensure that the student is supported so that they can achieve success in their placement. However, if a particular placement does not work out, then an alternative placement will be sourced for them. If the overall programme does not work out and is not suitable for the student, the student will be supported in finding an alternative such as further education, an apprenticeship, or another programme.

What are the transport options for students to get them to the workplace or would parents/carers need to arrange this?

Some education providers require the students who are enrolling on the programme to be independent travellers, or willing to work towards gaining independence in travelling to and from work. For students who are unable to, or are highly unlikely to, achieve independence in travelling, Access to Work funding can be applied for. Access to Work funding may be able to assist in covering the costs of travel for the student to and from work, for example, in funding a taxi to transport them. To find out more about Access to Work funding, speak to the education provider. Alternatively, visit <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work> for more information.

What are typical examples of placements available in Bexley?

In Bexley, as of 2018 – 2019, a number of Supported Internships have been established in various fields of work, including office-based and administrative roles, commercial roles, nurseries, allotments and libraries. This list is not exhaustive. Placements are sourced according to the career aspirations of the student and their suitability for the roles.

How many organisations support the internship programme? Are there any new placements in Bexley becoming available?

As of 2018 – 2019, there are three main providers of the Supported Internship Programme available to residents within the London Borough of Bexley (as detailed within this booklet). These providers are:

- The Learning and Enterprise College Bexley (www.lecb.ac.uk)
- London South East Colleges Bexley (www.lsec.ac.uk)
- Shooters Hill Sixth Form College (www.shc.ac.uk)

Will the Supported Internship Programme have the funding to make this programme sustainable?

The Supported Internship Programme is an initiative which developed in the United Kingdom as a result of the 2011 SEN Green Paper entitled Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability. In 2012, the first Supported Internships were trialled in the UK. Since then, the programme has grown and developed throughout the UK, and is now broadly established. It is expected that Supported Internships will continue to remain a key programme for preparing students for adulthood and the workplace.

Will internship placements balance student aspirations with being realistic about what they can honestly achieve?

Absolutely. This is integral to the success of the programme for each individual student, and is part of the reason why it is a personalised study programme: it is informed by each individual's needs and aspirations. This is also considered prior to the process of job-matching. When trying to ascertain each student's career aspirations, sometimes it is necessary to understand what it is about the job they want when trying to manage expectations.

What would placements / employers like to see on student CVs and who can help them get this ready?

There are no entry requirements for this programme, and previous work experience is not necessary in order to enrol. Often, the Supported Internship Programme is a student's first stepping stone into the workplace. However, as with any job application, it is always beneficial to have some experience in the workplace prior to beginning a role, and to have this clearly detailed in a professional CV. Help with the creation of a CV can be provided by education provider's career support services (where applicable), or may form part of the educational aspect of the programme.

Does each placement have a risk assessment?

Employers are responsible for managing the risks in their workplaces and are best placed to assess whether or not they need to do anything additional for a young person joining them.

Schools and colleges, or those organising placements, should ask sensible questions, in proportion to the level of risk, to satisfy themselves that appropriate arrangements are in place.

What support is available in the workplace if students experience any difficulties or have an incident at their placement?

A 1:1 Job Coach will be assigned to each student to support them in the workplace where required, and if the student experiences any difficulties or any incidents, the Job Coach will be on hand to support them. They will also be supported by their colleagues and line managers in their placements, and if Job Coach support has been withdrawn, all parties will have their contact details should a need to contact them arise.

In the right circumstances do the placements sometimes lead to offers of a proper job opportunity?

Absolutely. The overall aim of the Supported Internship Programme is for students to enter paid employment at the end of it. When first establishing a placement, this is discussed with the employer. In cases where the employer is unable to offer a paid role at the end of the placement, they will at least provide references for the student in support of any future job applications. However, many students who have completed the Supported Internship Programme across the UK have then progressed onto paid employment.



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