

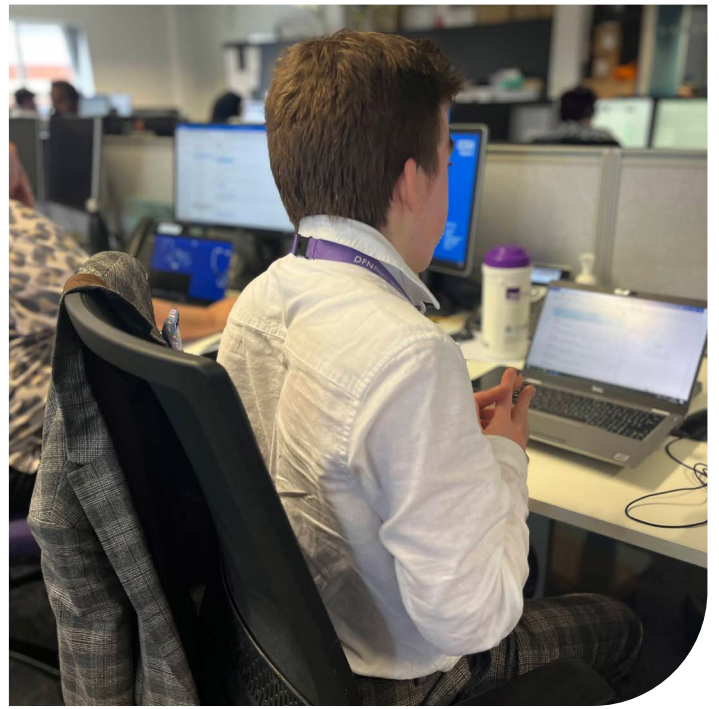
DFN Project SEARCH

Changing Lives Together



Annual Report & Accounts 2023–24





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Legal And Administrative Information

Trustees	M B B Hudson L A-M Kogbara S Rutkowski E M Sun S Mills A R Hyde C Cookson J D L Dickson K J Wright	(Appointed 15 November 2023) (Appointed 8 July 2024) (Appointed 8 May 2024) (Appointed 18 December 2024)
Charity number (England and Wales)	1183834	
Charity number (Scotland)	SC049891	
Company number	11488209	
Registered office and principal address	8-10 Grosvenor Gardens London SW1W 0DH	
Auditor	Dixon Wilson Audit Services LLP 22 Chancery Lane London WC2A 1LS	
Bankers	Barclays 1 Churchill Place Canary Wharf London E14 5HP	CAF Bank Limited 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4JQ
Accountants	Humphrey & Co 7-9 The Avenue Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 3YA	
Solicitors	Macfarlanes LLP 20 Cursitor Street London EC4A 1LT	

A Message From Our Chair & CEO



Mark Hudson
Chair



Kirsty Matthews
Chief Executive Officer

As we reflect on the 2023/24 academic year, our determination to ensure every young adult with a learning disability, who is autistic, or both, has access to the best opportunities for transitioning into paid employment has never been stronger.

The last year can be defined by change, celebration, and growth. As both of us stepped into our new roles as Chair and Chief Executive, we have been inspired by the incredible progress already achieved by DFN Project SEARCH.

We are hugely grateful to our predecessors, David Forbes-Nixon and Claire Cookson, whose leadership has shaped this organisation's mission and impact. David Forbes-Nixon, our Founder and former Chair, bought the master franchise for the transformative Project SEARCH model in 2018, and invested in it to enable its growth. Through his passion and determination, he created a charity that has provided countless young adults with meaningful full-time employment opportunities.

Claire Cookson added to this legacy, leading DFN Project SEARCH through a period of extraordinary growth, increasing the number of programmes in the

UK fourfold and cementing our position as a leader in the field of supported internships. Their contributions have created a powerful foundation that we are proud to build upon as we move forward.

As we do so, our charity mission remains unchanged – to support young adults with a learning disability, who are autistic, or both, into meaningful paid employment and ultimately financial independence. Despite their remarkable talent, too many are confronted by unnecessary barriers preventing them from working towards their employment aspirations as they come to the end of their education. Our work aims to change that. The stories and evidence in this report highlight what can be achieved when barriers are dismantled, and expectations are elevated.

We are proud to have expanded our reach to almost 200 sites across the UK in September 2024, helping more than 2,900 interns transition into employment since our inception. In 2023 alone, 431 interns secured paid employment – the highest number to date. In Scotland, 75% of our interns found jobs, taking on roles as diverse as car maintenance, patient care, and landscaping. These achievements illustrate the unique and valuable

contributions our interns make to the workforce. We have ambitious targets to follow this up – by 2030, we aim to support 10,000 young adults into paid employment.

Our growth has been fuelled by several key initiatives, including our role within the **Internships Work Consortium**, launched in 2022 with funding from the Department for Education. This ambitious initiative aimed to double the number of supported internships in England by March 2025. DFN Project SEARCH has continued to lead the charge in employer engagement, providing training and support to local authorities, businesses, and education partners, and developing over 800 Employer Champions to help create opportunities for young people.

“The stories and evidence in this report highlight what can be achieved when barriers are dismantled, and expectations are elevated.”

A Message From Our Chair & CEO

CONTINUED



We also celebrated our second **National Supported Internships Day**, an initiative created by **DFN Project SEARCH** to raise awareness of the benefits of supported internships. This day saw significant engagement from government and businesses. On the policy front, we were proud to see supported internships highlighted in the House of Lords *'Think Work First'* report, which acknowledged them as a proven way to bridge the disability employment gap. Alongside our partners at The British Association of Supported Employment (BASE), we provided evidence that reinforced the critical role of supported internships in helping individuals furthest from the job market gain essential skills and workplace experience.

We also launched our latest creative campaign under the theme **Don't Stop Me Now**, which reflects our commitment to ensuring young adults don't face a 'cliff edge' as they leave formal education. By bridging the gap between education and employment, we are helping young people step confidently into their futures and enabling them to lead fulfilling lives.

This growth has extended to our engagement with key stakeholders, not least via our Youth Advisory Group (YAG). Each year we recruit a team of interns to sit on the

YAG with the aim of educating employers across UK businesses to develop more inclusive employment practices and embedding their youth voice within our organisation. Engagement with our Alumni Network has deepened our connection with former interns and we have also launched **Parent Champion Training** to empower families with the tools and knowledge to evaluate supported internships and advocate for their young adults.

It has been a positive and successful year for **DFN Project SEARCH** amidst significant change and growth. We have been delighted to see private sector businesses move into strong partnerships with us to create opportunities across the UK. Amazon, ASDA, Compass Group UK & Ireland, ISS, the Marriott hotels, Serco, and Sodexo now all have multiple **DFN Project SEARCH** programmes and see the young adults as an amazing talent pool that they are keen to support and help prepare for the world of work.

These opportunities sit alongside the already well-established partners who offer fantastic placements in local authorities, the NHS, the social housing sector and universities. We celebrate the longevity of these public sector

sites that work to deliver long-term sustained employment for our interns.

Yet, several challenges remain including confronting the funding gap at both national and local government level, uncertainty around government SEND policies, the long-term effect of the Covid pandemic, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the job market, and the ongoing task of reaching a wider pool of young adults who may benefit from supported internships. Fundraising therefore also remains a top priority for **DFN Project SEARCH** to help provide essential funding to expand our programmes, support key initiatives, and develop partnerships that enhance accessibility and sustainability.

Alongside the figures in this report are stories of courage and achievement that remind us why our mission matters so deeply. We look ahead with optimism, knowing that together we can create a society where every young adult with a learning disability or autism can achieve their full potential.

Mark Hudson
Chair DFN Project SEARCH

Kirsty Matthews
CEO DFN Project SEARCH

About DFN Project SEARCH

DFN Project SEARCH is a national charity supporting young adults with a learning disability, who are autistic, or both, to make a positive transition from education into permanent employment.

We offer an evidence-based supported internship model which takes place entirely in the workplace and provides continuous support to young adults between 16-25 years old with an Education Health and Care Plan, or equivalent, in their final year of education.

The goal for each young adult is a transition to meaningful paid employment, which is preferably full time or at least 16 hours per week. Having 16 hours guaranteed in working contracts (unless they themselves want to work fewer hours) is also a key strand of the Real Living Wage standard. The DFN Project SEARCH model provides young adults with structured in-work job coaching and an opportunity to learn employability and life skills.

THE MODEL

Learners are enrolled at their school or college but are based full-time with a host business. The model provides:

- A tailored supported internship programme for young people aged 16-25 years old with an Education, Health, and Care Plan or equivalent.
- Up to 800 hours of structured on-the-job learning with support from teachers, job coaches, managers and mentors.

- Three 10-week placement rotations across the host business in different work settings.
- A focused employability curriculum delivered from the workplace.
- Opportunities to learn with prestigious employer partners across different sectors.

OUR HISTORY — WHAT'S IN A NAME?

DFN Project SEARCH was established by David Forbes-Nixon who has a son with a learning disability. As his son was growing up, David became aware of the lack of effective provision to meet his son's needs and that of other young people like him and was determined to try and make a positive difference.

He initially launched the DFN Foundation to create significantly improved education provision at Undershaw School in Surrey, but then asked the question 'what comes next?'

David brought together a team of experts to research the best practice programmes for supported education and supported employment around the world. He found that in the Project SEARCH programme in the US.

Project SEARCH was founded at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in 1996 by Erin Riehle and Susie Rutkowski. Since its inception, Project SEARCH has grown from a single programme site at Cincinnati Children's Hospital to a large and continuously expanding international network of over 780 sites.

In 2018, David successfully bought the master franchise for UK, Ireland and Iberia for the acclaimed US Project SEARCH model so that he could invest in it, to make it more accessible and expand it to the needs of young people.

David established DFN Project SEARCH as a charity in its own right so that it could develop this quality provision to the young people who need that support to move into the job market and enjoy all the benefits that people in work experience.



DFN
Project | SEARCH

DFN stands for David Forbes Nixon

SEARCH stands for Students Exploring
Alternative Resources at Children's Hospital -
a reference to where the model began in 1996
at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

Our Year In Review

The four seasons of DFN Project SEARCH, 2023 – 2024

GROWTH

AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER — NOVEMBER 2023

Autumn marked an exciting period of growth for DFN Project SEARCH, with a record-breaking expansion in the number of sites and host organisations that we partner with.

More than 50 new sites joined us during this time, thanks to the momentum of the Internships Work Consortium and the continued expansion of our NHS contract.

We marked this growth - and the collective achievements of our network – during our annual conference in Blackpool, bringing together partners from across the country. The event served as both a reflection of our progress and a rallying call to advance the #InclusionRevolution.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

WINTER

DECEMBER — FEBRUARY 2024

As the year transitioned into winter, our focus turned to strengthening relationships with some of the UK's largest businesses.

During this period, we welcomed Amazon and ASDA as new corporate partners, while reinforcing long-standing collaborations with Compass Group UK & Ireland, Sodexo, ISS, and Marriott Hotels, among others. Building robust corporate partnerships alongside our public sector contracts has always been a cornerstone of our strategy, as they create diverse opportunities and career pathways for our interns.

These partnerships represent our shared commitment to fostering inclusive hiring practices and expanding employment opportunities across a variety of industries.

AMPLIFYING YOUNG VOICES

SPRING

MARCH — MAY 2024

Spring was all about empowering young people to lead the conversation on inclusive employment.

The ethos of "Nothing about us, without us" guided our work, as our Youth Advisory Group, comprised of supported internship graduates, played a vital role in shaping employer practices across the UK. Their efforts took centre stage during this year's National Supported Internships Day, which saw young people leading celebrations and advocacy campaigns nationwide.

A highlight was their visit to Parliament, where they met with the Speaker of the House of Commons and other MPs to champion increased employment opportunities for young adults with a learning disability, who are autistic, or both.

CHANGE & CELEBRATION

SUMMER

JUNE — AUGUST 2024

The summer season marked significant milestones and transformative change. It saw the release of our outcome data from those who graduated in the summer of 2023 which was the highest number of interns to move into work since DFN Project SEARCH began, a testament to the hard work and dedication of our interns, partners, and staff.

This period also marked a leadership transition, with a new Chair and CEO taking the helm to guide the organisation into its next phase of growth. More broadly, the UK welcomed a new Government, and we are committed to working closely with its leadership to ensure that supported employment and inclusive hiring practices remain high on the agenda.

Data Outcomes 2022–2023



DFN Project SEARCH supported a record number of interns into work in the most recent cohort (2022/23), with 431 people securing employment.

In contrast to the dire employment statistics for people with a learning disability in the UK (only 4.8% of adults known to their local authority in England are in paid work), we are delighted that 61% of our interns secured paid employment. 85% of these positions were classed as full-time (over 16 hours per week) and non-seasonal.

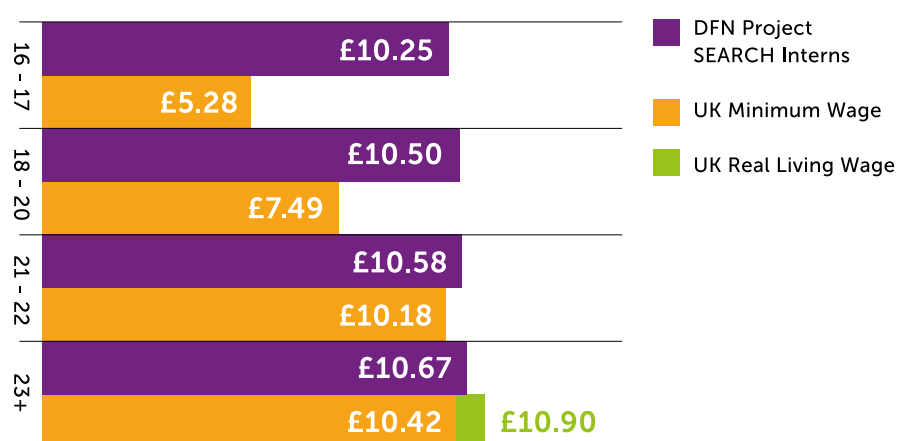
61% of our interns secured paid employment

However, we also note that these outcomes are lower than previous years and the rolling average is now 63%. We are conducting internal research to ascertain why there was a reduction in the 2023 graduate's outcomes in England and Wales and a significant improvement in Scotland and are sharing these learnings with our DFN Project SEARCH partners so that we can learn and improve.

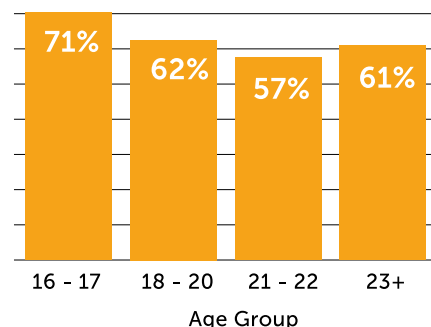
LEARNINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As in the previous years, DFN Project SEARCH interns earned significantly more than the minimum wage for their age group. Interns aged 16–17 earned nearly double the minimum wage for their age group, amounting

DFN Project SEARCH average wage and UK minimum wage (22/23)



Employment rate by age (22/23)



2,947 people supported into work since the first UK site was opened

to approximately £6,800 more annually than people of their age (with or without disabilities) on the minimum wage.

Younger interns also achieved some of the highest employment rates, demonstrating that the programme works well for people who want to move into paid work sooner rather than later.

Interns also have similar outcomes regardless of their primary disability. While the latest cohort showed slightly higher employment rates for those with learning disabilities compared to those who are autistic (62% and 59%, respectively), historical rates are nearly identical at 64% and 63%. Additionally, wages are comparable across both groups, though interns who are autistic tend to work slightly longer hours on average.

Data Outcomes 2022–2023

CONTINUED

SEPTEMBER 2024

57 new programmes

— the largest number of new
programmes in any one year

ONGOING CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges we continue to face is a lack of awareness of supported internships. Despite all of our continuing efforts, interns, parents and carers still report limited knowledge that such programmes exist.

DFN Project SEARCH and our partners believe that at Key Stage 3 (Year 9), all young people and their families should be made aware of what a supported internship is and that the aspiration for paid work should be discussed as a realistic possibility for the majority of people with a learning disability, who are autistic, or both.

Our sites also tell us that mental health issues continue to be the major cause of concern for interns on programme, which aligns with the national trend for young people in general. To combat this, DFN Project SEARCH staff have provided mental health and well-being training to support teachers and coaches, and curated regular sessions for programme sites at our inset day training events, to share ideas and best practice.

CLOSING THE GENDER AND ETHNICITY GAP

In recent years, DFN Project SEARCH has undertaken two comprehensive equity studies — one on gender and the other on ethnicity.

While the gender study published in 2023 revealed that women in our programme had lower employment rates and worked fewer hours, they earned wages comparable to men, bucking the national trend. Since the

gender research was published, the gap in working hours has narrowed substantially, decreasing from 4 hours to 1 hour. However, the employment rate for women in this year's cohort was nine per cent lower than men. Closing this gap remains an area of significant focus for us.

Historically, DFN Project SEARCH interns from ethnic minority groups earned similar wages and worked the same or slightly more hours per week than their peers. The programme has also been highly successful in recruiting interns from ethnic minority backgrounds, significantly exceeding national proportions. While ethnic minority groups make up 18% of the UK population (and 25% of those aged 15 to 24), 30% of the latest cohort were from these groups.

However, their employment rate can still improve: This year, 52% of ethnic minority interns secured employment compared to 65% of white interns. An internal study identified external, structural factors—such as prejudice and limited job opportunities in certain localities—as key contributors to this disparity. Despite these challenges, DFN Project SEARCH interns from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve higher employment rates than their counterparts in the wider UK population.

We remain committed to improving outcomes for women and ethnic minority groups.

OUR FANTASTIC BUSINESS PARTNERS

September 2024 saw DFN Project SEARCH start 57 new programmes - the largest number of new programmes in any one year. This growth supports the ambition of the Government's Internships Work Commission to double the number of supported internship programmes in England.

This growth was made possible largely thanks to the strong relationship that DFN Project SEARCH has developed with several large employers who have multiple sites. These prestigious employers appreciate the evidence-based approach of the model and the professionalism of our staff, alongside the ability to capture data which enables them to be sure that the partnership is delivering excellent results for the young people, therefore meeting their business needs and social value commitments. Businesses such as Amazon, ASDA, Compass Group UK & Ireland, ISS, Marriott Hotels, Places for People, Gulliver's and Sodexo all have multiple programmes and intend to grow the relationship further in future years.

We must also recognise that our growth included many important partners in the public sector, such as the NHS, the Police, local government, universities, HMRC and Ministry of Defence.

**"Only 4.8% of adults
with a learning disability
who are known to their
local authority are
in paid work"**

Scotland — A World Class Leader

THE KEY STATS

- 15 of the 17 sites in Scotland had an employment rate higher than 60%
- Scotland has, on average, more interns per site than other parts of the UK
- 75% of interns who graduated in 2023 moved into paid employment

DFN Project SEARCH sites in Scotland have some of the highest employment rates across the UK and in the world. An amazing 75% of interns who graduated from their programme in Scotland in 2023 had moved into paid employment by Spring 2024.

We have been learning about the factors that contribute to the success of sites in Scotland and have shared these strategies with our partners to support everyone to increase their employment outcomes.

WHAT IS DRIVING THIS SUCCESS?

- There is much greater involvement from local authority leaders in Scotland.
- There is greater accountability for job outcomes because the leadership from local government comes mostly from adult services or economic development leaders who work to employment targets.
- All sites have follow along support from trained, supported employment professionals.
- Supported employment personnel (job coaches and follow along job coaches) are on average paid 50% more than their counterparts in England and Wales. They are better trained and more experienced because they stay longer in their posts.
- Flexible funding facilitates recruitment of interns who need, and are suitable for, the programme using the Project SEARCH rubric to assess their readiness rather than an Education, Health and Care Plan system as used in England.
- Scotland has a national steering group that meets quarterly where the senior leaders share ideas and information and consider what they need to do strategically to ensure that the onsite teams and interns have the best chance of being successful.



Glasgow Council

CONTINUED

CASE STUDY:



Consistency is a key part of the positive outcomes in Scotland. Sites have not only been running for several years but also manage to keep the same team, even when there are changes in the host business.

The two sites supported by Glasgow Council, Clyde College Glasgow and City of Glasgow College, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Royal Infirmary (established in 2013) and University of Strathclyde, established in 2014, are a perfect example of how consistency promotes better outcomes. Overseen by the local authority's main point of contact, who is engaged and has a deep understanding of the sector and of the programme, the two sites have supported over 200 interns into work, with a combined employment rate of 87%.

**Combined
employment
rate of**

87%

Glasgow Council's Supported Employment Service has been running since 2009 and has nine job coaches and one manager. Project SEARCH criteria (full time, paid employment) are an integral part of their mission. Such comprehensive support of the programme is directly linked to higher employment outcomes.

In addition, those two sites provide:

- Follow along and in work support for all interns and graduates.

- Every intern meets the job coaches from the core service throughout the year.
- Soft handover from the programme to the council job coach over several meetings.
- Core job coaches know a lot about each person coming from DFN Project SEARCH including their skills, strengths, aspirations, family support and what support will be required in work.

“ The Robertson Trust is delighted to be supporting the work of DFN Project SEARCH in Scotland and to be part of the difference that they are helping to make to the lives of young adults who have a learning disability or are autistic, or both. It's fantastic to see such great employment outcomes and, as research has highlighted, the transformational impact of high quality, secure employment on wellbeing. ”

Gillian Morton,
Funding Officer, The Robertson Trust

Learning From Scotland's Success

CONTINUED



Guests join the Graduation event in Glasgow

HOW TO DELIVER GREAT OUTCOMES FOR OUR INTERNS – THE MOST COMMON STRATEGIES

1. Practice interviews with interns.

2. Set up reverse job fairs.

3. Build good relationships with external employers and host businesses.

4. Increase the number of rotations with businesses other than the host businesses to show benefits.

5. Find sectors in which interns would thrive and be careful about the first job match in a new business as a successful match could open doors to more interns in the future.

6. Involve the whole team, including wider supported employment services and provide quality supported employment-based follow-along support.

7. Don't be afraid to make cold calls to secure rotations and jobs.

8. Internal communication: ensure that the onsite team and the wider steering group know their roles and what is going on in the programme.

The findings closely align with the conclusions from an unpublished piece of research conducted by Project SEARCH in the USA in 2013. They found that the key factors behind high employment **outcomes** are:

- Well-trained and enthusiastic staff, including the business liaison.

- Well-defined roles and responsibilities for all partner organisations and programme staff.

- Effective and regular communication among all partner organisations.

Our research suggests that staff engagement is critical, especially in areas with limited job opportunities or a very competitive market. A supported, committed and cohesive team will go beyond their job descriptions to ensure a positive outcome.

One of our commitments is to share best practice with all our onsite teams, partners and government. We have been able to take this brilliant learning from our Scotland teams and share it with those who work in – and design – the system.



Our Quality Assurance & Commitment

“ Helping sites achieve the best possible employment outcomes for our interns ”

At DFN Project SEARCH we are committed to continuous improvement and quality delivery.

Our brilliant and dedicated team leading this work - the Quality Assurance Team - has now been in operation for 2 years. This branch of the DFN Project SEARCH Operations Team works closely with the Programme Specialists who start programmes, to continuously evaluate our impact in achieving meaningful employment outcomes for graduates of the programme. Over the last year, the Quality Assurance team has continued to:

- **Ensure and increase fidelity to the model:** Through delivering Continuous Improvement Reviews in partnership with our associates, supporting sites to conduct self-audits and developing site action plans for continuous improvement.
- **Identify best practice and continue sharing this within our networks:** Through our termly inset days for tutors and job coaches who work directly with our interns.
- **Identify ongoing training needs for programmes:** Utilising the team's evaluations and SWOT analyses to develop additional lunch and learns, inform the content at inset days and at our annual conference.
- **Deliver ongoing training in best practice:** Deliver the Teaching and Training For Success (TTFS) initiatives alongside the Programme Specialists. These modules include training on the model, employer engagement, effectively supporting the interns and other topics.
- **Provide targeted individualised support:** Each site has a Programme Impact Coordinator (PIC) allocated to them. Through effectively using our evaluation tools and SWOT analyses, the PICs utilise their skills and the skills of our wider team to provide targeted support directly to the sites as per their need.
- **Develop evaluation systems:** The team continues to develop systems to ensure that targeted individualised support is as effective as possible and that best practice is identified and shared.
- **Developed a Business Liaison Network:** This network enables the team to support our business with inclusive recruitment best practices and provides a platform for our exemplary business liaisons to share their best practice.
- **Delivered lunch and learns:** On topics such as safeguarding, employer engagement, utilising the curriculum, online safety, how to deliver training to managers and mentors, access to work, delivering family curriculum to engage parents and carers amongst others.
- **Updated resources:** Including creating a range of family curriculum template sessions, updating the steering group agenda template, intern recruitment marketing materials (in collaboration with our marketing team) and developing a relaunch implementation plan to support sites returning from hiatus and other resources.
- **Utilised polls:** At inset days we have utilised polls to identify themes in challenges facing sites, assess adherence to elements of the model and gather information to support our research and continuous improvement.

All of these initiatives have been created to help our sites achieve at least 70% employment outcomes for our interns in terms of gaining employment. In addition, the Quality Assurance Team have:

DFN Project SEARCH & The NHS



2024 saw the final **DFN Project SEARCH** programmes commence in the NHS England and Health Education England contract. The contract created 42 new **DFN Project SEARCH** programmes in England as part of the drive to support Trusts to deliver on the Learning Disability Employment Pledge.

The NHS across the UK has always been a very important partner for **DFN Project SEARCH** as there is nothing that you cannot teach in an acute hospital trust, where most of our NHS programmes are based. There are so many roles that interest the young people on **DFN Project SEARCH** programmes that it makes it an ideal place to learn. In addition, because most of the roles are on one site, the teachers and coaches are better able to support the interns, managers and mentors. Of course, Project SEARCH started in a hospital and so it is perhaps no surprise that the programme works so well in NHS settings across the UK!

The young adults with a learning disability and autistic young adults thrive in our NHS programmes and more than a third of interns who found employment were hired by the NHS. Most of the young people who move into work through an NHS programme (88%), gain employment that

meets the **DFN Project SEARCH** criteria, in that the young people work at least 16 hours and are paid the prevailing wage for the work they do. Interns hired by the NHS are also paid a slightly higher wage on average than other interns, and considerably above the minimum wage for their age group.

To date, 1,383 interns have experienced a **DFN Project SEARCH** internship in an NHS setting and 413 (33%) of them have gone on to work in the NHS in key roles. The average outcome

for interns in an NHS setting for the 2023 leaver cohort was 65%, which is slightly higher than the average for all programmes at 63%. This demonstrates that interns working in the NHS are learning transferable skills valued in other sectors. We know that the NHS will always remain a valuable partner, not only because it makes sense for them to access this amazing hidden talent pool but also because they understand the importance of employment to the health and well-being of adults with a learning disability and autistic young adults too.

“ At the University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust we have been delighted to support young adults with a learning disability and/ or who are autistic through the DFN Project SEARCH model. Working in partnership with Ellesmere College, Gateway College and the Local Authority we have provided work experience to enable them to shine and reach their full potential. The young adults have made such a difference to our organisation and we enjoy learning from them as much as they enjoy learning with us. They are truly inspiring. I would urge all employers to explore this as you truly do make a difference to the young adults and their families. ”

Jo Dawson, Project Manager for NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

A Thriving Programme At ASDA

Written by Andy Evans, General Store Manager,
ASDA Colne, Lancashire

CASE STUDY:

ASDA

INTRODUCTION

The DFN Project SEARCH programme at ASDA Colne has been a remarkable success story, providing young people with learning disabilities and/or autism the opportunity to transition from education to meaningful and sustainable paid employment. ASDA Colne has made a significant impact not only on the interns and their families, but also on my ASDA colleagues, customers, and the wider community – adding value to our store.

FOLLOWING THE DFN PROJECT SEARCH MODEL

The ASDA Colne programme has meticulously followed the DFN Project SEARCH model, ensuring that the interns benefit from a well-structured and nurturing environment that fosters their skills and knowledge development.

This model focuses on three key rotations within ASDA Colne host business, allowing interns to gain hands-on experience in various departments. Each intern follows an individualised plan that combines classroom instruction with practical workplace training. The structured approach has enabled interns to gain essential employability skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The use of Individual Support Plans,

Voc Fit assessments, and close collaboration with ASDA Buddies and Section Leaders means the interns are working towards ensuring a smooth transition from education to employment. They have been truly embedded in the ASDA business and commented recently that they feel part of the 'ASDA family'. The programme at ASDA Colne has provided interns with a sense of independence and confidence, empowering them to take the next steps to live their 'gloriously ordinary lives'.



IMPACT ON INTERNS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The transformation observed in the interns has been profound. Families have reported increased confidence, independence, and motivation in their young people. Parents and carers have expressed their gratitude for the programme, acknowledging that it has provided their young people with opportunities they never thought possible. The transition from education to employment has not only improved the interns' prospects but also positively influenced family dynamics, and provided a pathway to greater independence.

IMPACT ON ASDA STAFF AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The implementation of DFN Project SEARCH at ASDA Colne has significantly changed the perceptions of my staff members towards individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism. The programme has fostered a culture of inclusion and diversity, enhancing employee engagement and morale. Staff have embraced the interns with enthusiasm, providing mentorship and support that goes beyond the workplace. Managers and mentors have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in the programme, highlighting how it has enhanced their leadership and coaching skills. The

A Thriving Programme At ASDA

CONTINUED

Written by Andy Evans, General Store Manager,
ASDA Colne, Lancashire

CASE STUDY:

ASDA

experience of working alongside interns has created a more empathetic and understanding workforce, reinforcing ASDA's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement.

IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The presence of interns within ASDA Colne has had a positive ripple effect on customers and the local community. Customers have responded positively to seeing the interns in action, praising ASDA for its commitment to inclusivity.

The interns' dedication, work ethic, and friendly presence have contributed to an enhanced customer experience, fostering a deeper connection between ASDA and the community it serves. Moreover, the onsite team are marketing the programme locally with the aspirations for other local businesses to consider inclusive employment practices, demonstrating the viability and benefits of providing opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism.

CONCLUSION

The DFN Project SEARCH programme at ASDA Colne stands as a beacon of success in transitioning young people from education to employment. The programme's adherence to the DFN Project SEARCH model has created a robust and sustainable pathway for interns, while also transforming the culture within ASDA and influence the wider community. With ongoing support and commitment from all partners involved, the programme continues to thrive, leaving a legacy of inclusivity, empowerment, and opportunity.



Nuneaton ASDA



Rallying Around Interns At HMRC

Written by Tracy Etherson, Business Change Manager HMRC

CASE STUDY:



HM Revenue
& Customs

The experience of having interns with a learning disability and/or autism has had a hugely positive impact on HMRC staff.

We have been raising awareness within HMRC's India Buildings of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) conditions. We worked with Sian Foster, Head of Operations from DFN Project SEARCH, to deliver Employer Champion training, allowing us to be more representative of the communities we serve. Business areas have rallied around interns to support them/make them feel welcome and part of the team, each intern has a buddy within their work area to help interns when they have any questions and offers inclusivity within the team. We also have a team of volunteers who assist the interns over and above their day job. We are highly invested as an organisation in the success of this project and want to see it thrive not only in Liverpool but nationally and across government.

The Civil Service Recruitment efforts to attract diverse candidates, highlighted the fact that our recruitment and selection processes have been sub optimal and actively discouraged applications from a whole cadre of high-quality candidates with SEND conditions because they haven't historically interviewed well – we are now reviewing our wider recruitment strategy within HMRC using DFN Project SEARCH as an exemplar of how people with SEND conditions can flourish with the right support.

We have worked with the Cabinet Office to have DFN Project SEARCH recognised as an Exemption under Life Chances which means we have an avenue to be able to offer paid employment to those who are successful and meet the criteria.

The success of interns at HMRC Liverpool is reflected in the offer of 4 temporary fixed term agreements across a variety of business areas. Our business has continually promoted and encouraged more business areas to participate, as this offers more placements for young people and wider variety of roles. We have promoted DFN Project SEARCH through local linkages to media such as Radio Merseyside and Birkenhead News. This widened our pool of interest resulting in the programme

doubling in the number of interns that joined us in September 24. We have made links within DWP, Buckland Review and Cabinet Office. DFN Project SEARCH was mentioned to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Number 10 update from HMRC.

The impact on the local community /families of interns and rise in aspirations to work for HMRC from young adults with learning disability, who are autistic, or both, has been a humbling experience having the opportunity to work with young adults as they settle into working life. It doesn't only impact their lives but the lives of their families who have worried that their child wouldn't be able to enjoy the benefits from a paid career.

NEXT STEPS

DFN Project SEARCH is under active preparation in Manchester with other Regional Centres interested in commencing, we have produced comprehensive guidance and process maps to be uploaded to our standing HR guidance and will be sharing with other Regional Centres/Outreach leads with a view to other HMRC sites starting their pilot years in 2025 and 2026, following in the footsteps of our pilot site, India Buildings, Liverpool.



Internships Work

Internships WORK

The Internships Work Commission from the Department for Education (DfE) focuses on an overall goal of doubling the number of supported internships in England. This goal is set in the context of key objectives that include; improving quality by establishing standards for internships to ensure they provide valuable experiences for participants, promoting equal access to internship opportunities, supporting employers by providing guidance, resources and monitoring implementation measures to track the effectiveness of internship programmes. The Commission was awarded to a consortium made up of the National Development Team for Inclusion, the British Association of Supported Employment and DFN Project SEARCH.

During the commission, DFN Project SEARCH's main activities included creating 5 days of training available to all local authorities in England to support them to create and develop supported internship forums that would bring together education partners, supported employment partners, business, young people and families and carers. One of the most successful programmes is the '7 step selling' training programme that was designed by DFN Project SEARCH to support

tutors and coaches to reach out to businesses and engage them in supporting the young people on their programmes at the local level. Each month we regularly have around 50 attendees who book onto the online event and feedback is excellent.

DFN Project SEARCH has also delivered training to employer ambassadors. The purpose of this training is to provide some guidance and resources to managers and mentors who

already support young adults with a learning disability and/or, who are autistic. The training enables and encourages them to reach out to others inside their businesses and in their wider sector to enthuse them and ask them to consider engaging with supported internship programmes themselves. In this way we increase awareness amongst employers and create more opportunities for young adults with a learning disability and/or, who are autistic.

“ I am proud to be an ambassador for young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism because I have seen firsthand the positive impact it has on both individuals and the organisation as a whole. We have seen enhanced engagement among staff members and managers have become more supportive, understanding, patient and accommodating. This not only benefits individuals with disabilities but also helps to create a more cohesive and productive team. Furthermore, there is a great sense of pride that comes from seeing someone with a learning disability or autism achieve their desired job role and excel in their work. It serves as a reminder that with the right support and opportunities, individuals of all abilities can thrive in the workplace. ”

Linda Hawkins, Marriott Hotels

Government Affairs & National Supported Internship Day



SPREADING THE MESSAGE THROUGH ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS RAISING

This year our advocacy efforts have been centred around raising our profile, empowering young adults and influencing change. We've made remarkable strides in government and parliamentary engagement with each of these pillars in mind, ensuring that supported internships remain a priority in policymaking. We facilitated 17 MP visits to our sites, building and developing relationships and engaged with over 40 additional MPs to raise awareness of our work.

Building relationships has proven fruitful as we were invited to join the Labour Party's Social Policy team ahead of the general election, bringing critical sector challenges to the forefront of their agenda. We've also reached out to every new MP representing constituencies with **DFN Project SEARCH** supported internship sites to further the development of local support and advocacy.

Beyond individual outreach, our influence has shaped national conversations. We submitted evidence to the House of Lords Public Services Committee and became instrumental in its concluding report titled "Think Work First" where three of its top 10 recommendations focused on supported internships. This is the first time in parliamentary history that supported internships

have been formally recognised as a solution to part of the SEND employment crisis and it is clear we were instrumental in securing this recognition. These achievements underscore our commitment to being a driving force behind progressive policy changes that benefit young adults with a learning disability and/or who are autistic.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed by government leaders. In the first five months of the new government, we secured three ministerial visits representing the Department for Health and Social Care, Work and Pensions and Transport, providing opportunities for direct engagement and advocacy. Importantly, we've also empowered young people to actively engage with MPs, strengthening their voices and promoting greater understanding of their capabilities and contributions.

NATIONAL SUPPORTED INTERNSHIP DAY (NSID)

A highlight of the year was hosting our second annual National Supported Internship Day (NSID), which garnered backing from several MPs, including the Speaker of the House of Commons. This year's theme was "elevating the voices of our young people", and as a result we hosted a reception and a workshop for interns and graduates in the House of Commons where they got to share their stories with their local MPs. We also hosted a drop-in session for MPs to learn

more about Internships Work and a roundtable for business leaders to discuss the challenges our sector faces and how we may overcome them. Continuing to build on last year's momentum, we also launched a digital campaign that reached an incredible 9.8 million people online with NSID-related content, raising awareness, sparking conversations, and driving support for supported internships across the UK and beyond.

Key Achievements

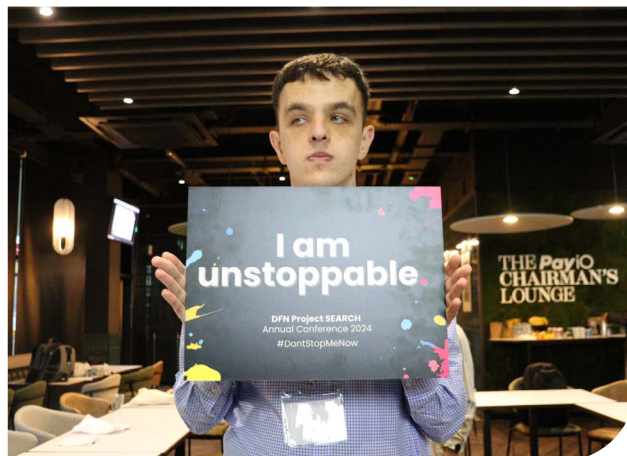
- 3 Secretary of State visits to **DFN Project SEARCH** sites
- 17 Member of Parliament visits to their local **DFN Project SEARCH** site
- 3 Parliamentary Recommendations based on our supported internship programme
- 1 Parliamentary Select Committee Report shaped by us
- 2 Government consultations contributed to
- 4 National Supported Internship Day Events

Adam's Story

DFN PROJECT SEARCH GRADUATE

CITY HEALTHCARE PARTNERSHIP, HULL

GRADUATED 2024



Adam is a DFN Project SEARCH graduate working full-time as a finance administrator.

"I joined DFN Project SEARCH in September 2023 because I have always wanted a paid job and I am so glad they took a chance on me. I discovered DFN Project SEARCH by chance when I was at college."

During his time with DFN Project SEARCH, Adam undertook two rotations that helped him develop essential workplace skills and discover his passions. His first placement was in the Volunteer Hub at City Health Care Partnership, where he honed his organisational abilities and learnt to collaborate effectively with a team. For his second rotation, Adam ventured into finance — a field he quickly realised he loved. After he graduated, with the support of his job coach and tutor he gained a paid job as a finance administrator in July 2024, reflecting on this Adam said:

"I love it! I love my manager Esther and all my lovely colleagues. DFN Project SEARCH gave me something I always wanted, which was a paid job"

Now employed on a one-year contract, Adam is determined to extend his role and continue contributing to his organisation. His journey serves as a powerful example of what can be achieved when ambition is met with opportunity and support.

"I'm proud of what I've achieved so far and grateful for the skills and experiences DFN Project SEARCH gave me... I'm excited to see what the future holds."

One of Adam's favourite parts about the programme and being part of our DFN Project SEARCH community is that he got to visit Parliament for National Supported Internship Day, reflecting on the day Adam said:

"I loved it. I love Politics and getting to go to the Houses of Parliament was the best experience ever."



Advocacy & Engagement



DRIVING OUR DECISIONS — ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS & CARERS

Our advocacy and engagement with young people, parents and carers is crucial to ensure we grow and develop our model. We are led by the voices and experiences of the incredible people connected with our programmes.

YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

We continue to work closely with our YAG to ensure that we develop and review our programme in response to the experiences of those who are currently participating in a programme.

Our YAG meet with us monthly and have shared their experiences of a supported internship, as well as their views on key topics such as mental health and employment equality. In addition, we deliver support, guidance and activities to complement the learning and development the YAG are already experiencing as part of their supported internship.

In 2024, members of the YAG shared their experiences by presenting in team meetings, contributing to planning of events, delivering sessions at the **DFN Project SEARCH** Conference and sitting on a panel. Representatives also attended the reception

and workshop in the House of Commons for National Supported Internship Day where they shared their experiences with MPs.

In February the YAG also attended an away day in Birmingham, coming together to discuss the meaning of inclusion. One YAG member, Jacob, said:

"My favourite part of the Youth Advisory Group was going to the in-person meeting in Birmingham. It was a really great experience."

ALUMNI

Last year we launched our Alumni offer to create a network of **DFN Project SEARCH** graduates. As of August we had 65 members of the Alumni group, many of whom are keen to share their story and inspire other young adults to start a supported internship. We delivered eight workshops to our Alumni community this year on key topics such as Accessing the Hidden Job Market and Interviews Skills. We also facilitated peer connection across the UK via online social events and quizzes.

Several Alumni members attended the National Supported Internship Day celebrations and attended the **DFN Project SEARCH** Conference where a number of Alumni delivered sessions to share their journey through a supported internship and beyond.

PARENTS AND CARERS

It is vital that we partner with parents and carers and we want to ensure their experiences are highlighted and listened to. This year we have established a community of parent/carers who have agreed to share their stories and views. We aim to meet with this community quarterly and provide a platform for them to share experiences and advocate for the value of a supported internship with other parent/carers.

We have also held discussions with partners including the DWP to share key information with parents, including benefits information and discussions about Health Adjustment Passports.

Juned's Story

DFN PROJECT SEARCH GRADUATE

QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

GRADUATED 2023



Juned is a DFN Project SEARCH Graduate and active member of our Alumni network.

Before joining DFN Project SEARCH, I attended a sixth form for young people with special needs. But honestly, it didn't feel like the right environment for me. I always knew I wanted to join DFN Project SEARCH, ever since secondary school. I heard about it through a teacher, but I had to wait until I was 18. That wait wasn't easy, but I kept my head up no matter what. And in the end, I got the job.

When I finally joined DFN Project SEARCH in 2022 at Queen Mary University, it was a big moment for me. During my time in the programme, I gained experience across three rotations. On campus, I worked in both administration and retail. My third rotation was at a GP surgery, and that's where I work now. During that time, I learned how to interact with the public and, more importantly, how to keep my composure in all kinds of situations.

Now, I work as a patient coordinator and administrative assistant. My job involves booking appointments for patients and teaching them how to use the

NHS app to book appointments themselves. It's a role I'm really proud of because I get to help people and make a difference in their day. I am also a member of the DFN Project SEARCH Alumni and I shared my journey on a Panel at the DFN Project SEARCH Conference in November 2024. My favorite part of being part of DFN Project SEARCH was the people—the team, the other interns, and the friends I made along the way. Being part of a supportive group like that made a huge difference for me.

DFN Project SEARCH has completely changed my life. At first, my mum was reluctant about me starting the supported

internship, but when she saw how well I was doing, she was proud.

Now, I earn my own money. I don't have to ask my family for things like I did when I was younger. If I want to buy a video game, food or nice clothes, I can just go out and get it. I can also contribute in my family and pay for holidays or go to live sporting events like boxing or football.

I can't believe where I am now—I've kickstarted my career from the age of 18, and I'm thriving. I'm 20 years old, and my goal is to keep progressing in my career, work towards higher roles and, someday, get married.



Beth's Story

DFN PROJECT SEARCH GRADUATE

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL & PARTNERS

GRADUATED 2024



Linda & Giles England

(Beth's parents)

"Beth started **DFN Project SEARCH** at the Blackpool Council & Partners site in 2023. Beth surprised us in terms of her willingness to try different roles that were on offer. Prior to **DFN Project SEARCH** Beth was quite limited in her outlook and would be reluctant to try new experiences.

One of the placements involved working in a laboratory environment - Beth not only accepted the placement, but

actually enjoyed the work and the social aspects of the role. The job Coaches and Tutor seemed very adept at matching Beth's personality and strengths to the work placements on offer.

Beth secured a role with Club3000 Bingo as a direct result of the **DFN Project SEARCH** experience. Beth loves her job, gets on well with her colleagues, which has provided her with more social activities (she is going to a colleague's wedding) and enjoys chatting to customers. She seems to fit in very well.

We would highly recommend **DFN Project SEARCH**. We always worried about Beth's future and how she might struggle to find and secure a job she would be able cope with. She has previously tried working in cafes etc. but her needs were never fully accommodated. **DFN Project SEARCH** has given her the opportunity to live a fuller life and feel a valued staff member & a member of her local community."

Beth England (Graduate)

"Before I started **DFN Project SEARCH** at Blackpool Council & Partners, I was at college, and I wasn't sure about my plans for the future. When I found out I had been accepted to **DFN Project SEARCH** in 2023 I felt happy and excited to start.

My favourite part of my supported internship was getting to know everyone and trying different placements. I learnt a lot during my placements, including skills

like auditing, customer service and money handling. I noticed that my confidence improved during the year. I now work five days a week as a Customer Care Assistant at Club 3000 Bingo.

I enjoy my job, and I particularly like helping elderly customers who sometimes have difficulty using the technology. I get along really well with my team, and I have recently been invited to my colleague's wedding and hen do which I am really looking forward to. I am enjoying earning my own money and I am trying hard to save it up,

although I also like spending some of my money on seeing my friends!

" **DFN Project SEARCH** has helped me come so far in life and the staff supported me to come a long way. I would encourage others to sign up because hopefully, they will get a job at the end of it too."

David's Story

DFN PROJECT SEARCH GRADUATE

MOORFIELDS EYE HOSPITAL

GRADUATED 2024



David was directed and supported to gain access to the DFN Project SEARCH programme through Think Forward, an organisation that has previously partnered with the Moorfields Eye Hospital partnership to help support several interns gain access to the DFN Project SEARCH programme at Moorfields Eye Hospital.

David started his journey in September 2023. Through the discovery process and vocational profiling, the job coaches from Kaleidoscope Social Enterprise LTD worked with David on his existing skills, knowledge, and experiences to identify his first rotation, which was in the pharmacy department at Moorfields Eye Hospital. David was supported by an incredibly supportive team that helped build the foundation for his career. David worked on the hatch and took payments for medication, managed patient queries, and delivered outstanding customer service while upholding Moorfield's vision and values.

David's second rotation was based within the Data Quality team. This was identified through the vocational profiling sessions to identify the skills and experience that David had developed in Pharmacy. When starting in the Data Quality team, David had to complete training on PAS and Open Eyes. David had an incredible amount of support from the Data Quality team who supported building on his work-based foundation as well as enhancing it to the next level. David took on the challenge of updating GP records, addresses, dates of birth and many more administrative-based tasks.

The Moorfield's Eye Hospital Partnership through DFN Project SEARCH then developed an opportunity with ISS at Liverpool Street within a corporate bank. ISS opened an opportunity to have an external rotation as a workplace coordinator which David excelled at with the support of ISS and Kaleidoscope. From this external rotation opportunity, David then secured a paid opportunity of 40 hours per week within ISS, continuing his work within the workplace team.

David has continued to be supported by ISS and Kaleidoscope to ensure that he can be successful in his job. David has currently been working for ISS for nearly a year.

In November 2024 at the DFN Project SEARCH conference David received 'The Jurgen Donaldson with Amazon Award' in recognition of Graduate of the Year.

"I learnt about emails, what to expect in the workforce – how to act professionally. The coaches always recognised my potential and my passion to get to where I want to be. Three words I would use to describe my time on the programme would be honoured, grateful, and recognised."

DFN Project SEARCH's Sustainability — A Decade Of Delivery



DFN Project SEARCH is a sustainable programme that creates a pathway to employment that young people and their families can rely on. We know that making the decision to transition into work is a big one for young people and their families and so it is important that we partner with organisations who want to make a lasting change.

Here at DFN Project SEARCH, we have 19 programmes in the UK and Ireland that started their programmes over 10 years ago and are still going strong and achieving great results for the young people they support.

This year at the DFN Project SEARCH conference in November the following programmes reached their 10-year milestone and received an award for their commitment to sustainability. The City of Edinburgh Council and Virgin Hotels, University of Strathclyde and the East Sussex Healthcare Trust at Eastbourne District General Hospital, were all recognised for their achievement.

The City of Edinburgh Council and Virgin Hotels team held a celebration at the Council's prestigious City Chambers on the 14th of August 2024 and were joined by interns from all the years that the programme has been in place. They shared their stories and captivated the audience with their commitment to work and their achievements so far.

Here at the City of Edinburgh Council we are committed to changing the lives of young adults with a learning disability and autistic young adults and we are in it for the long term! We were thrilled to have the Chief Executive of the Council open our 10 year celebrations at the City Chambers and then to have our interns from across the years take over and chair the event and share their brilliant stories. It was a very special evening and fantastic to hear how much the graduates from our programme had achieved.

We have the support we need all through the Council; our Senior Politicians and our Chief Executive provide strategic support, our job coaches and their managers provide professional support and the managers and mentors right across the council share their knowledge and experience with the young people to ensure that they learn marketable transferable skills. In addition, we have the full support of our excellent partner, Edinburgh College who provide education to the interns that is second to none and enables the interns to develop those 'soft skills' that are an essential part of everyone's role.

We know that young people in Edinburgh with a learning disability and/or autism need a robust and sustainable pathway to help them achieve their ambition to work and they can count on us to be there for them when they are ready for that next step

On behalf of Edinburgh Council

Making Progress Against Our Business Plan



PROGRESS AGAINST OUR STRATEGIC LEVERS AND BUSINESS PLAN

The Department for Education funded programme, Internships Work, created the opportunity to double the number of supported internships in England over the three-year period ending March 2025. DFN Project SEARCH made a significant contribution to this goal by doubling the number of programmes that we facilitate and supporting others in the sector to improve their programme offering. This has increased the breadth of provision for young people in England. We must now also work hard so there is universal awareness of this provision among young people, parents and carers.

We have been inspired by the number of host businesses that have stepped forward to work with us to deliver the DFN Project SEARCH model, however our greatest challenge currently is bringing the optimum number of interns into each programme. This is due to the legacy of Covid, the cost-of-living crisis and a lack of funding or understanding of the benefits of a supported internship programme to allow these young people to thrive. We are committed to working tirelessly through the coming years to reverse this position.

Mid-year in 2024 it was determined that starting 65 new DFN Project SEARCH programmes a year would not be a realistic target given the changing market conditions and challenges our sector faces. We therefore adjusted the targets to start 50 programmes a year. However, thanks to the incredible work of our teams in September 2024 DFN Project SEARCH started 57 new programmes. This is the highest number of new programme starts in the UK in any one year and we are delighted to have achieved such growth in partnership with our education partners, Local Authorities and incredible new host businesses such as Amazon, ASDA and Compass Group UK & Ireland, alongside growth with longstanding partners like the NHS, ISS and Sodexo.

Our understanding of the environment we work within led us to re-set our target for the number of young adults with a learning disability or autistic young adults in work as 10,000 by 2030. As a result of the SEND crisis, government are reviewing strategies to determine how young people and their families can best be served and so we will need to reflect on that situation and establish targets that reflect the landscape as it is now and how it might change in the future.

Key Ambitions

Sustainable
organic growth
to reach

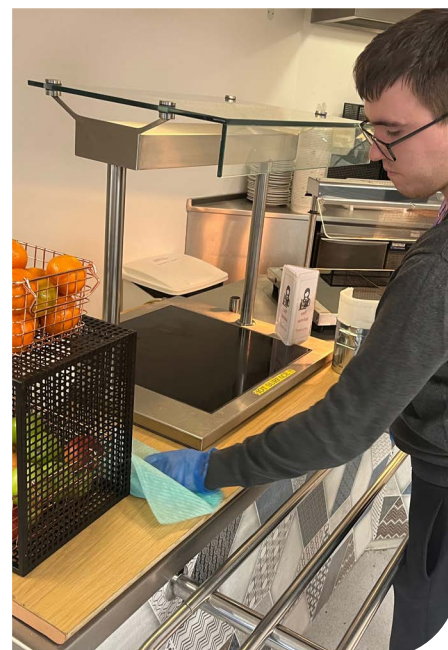
**500
sites**
by 2030

Delivering
jobs

10,000
by 2030

Increase the annual number
of interns from

1,000 to 4,000
every year



Making Progress Against Our Business Plan

CONTINUED

5 Strategic Levers



1. CONSOLIDATE – INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR CURRENT PROGRAMME SITES

During this year we saw a drop in our outcome that relates to young adults moving into employment at the end of their supported internship programme from 68% to 61%, our overall outcome rate is now 63%. Whilst this is disappointing, we have examined the reasons why and developed smarter ways to predict performance and encourage our programme sites to monitor the outcome progression throughout the year. In addition, we have invested in extra resources to explore whether there is anything additional DFN Project SEARCH can do to support interns who are still seeking work at the end of their programme remotely. Scotland's sites shone with brilliant 75% outcomes which are featured in this report and we continue to learn and develop across all our sites from their approach and practices.

2. EVOLVE – OUR MANAGEMENT, ORGANISATION, & GOVERNANCE TO SUPPORT GROWTH

As our organisation has grown in line with our increased site and intern numbers, our focus has been on the recruitment, retention and support of our teams of Programme Specialists and Programme Impact Co-ordinators. We have looked at ways to improve the wellbeing of all our staff to help them maximise their positive impact on the population we are here to serve. Under the guidance of our new Chair our Board of Trustees has started a review of its approach to Governance to ensure our organisation is well led. Our Advocacy and Engagement Team has worked to strengthen co-production with young adults who have taken part in our

programmes and we are strengthening our approach to building an Alumni network.

3. GROW STRATEGICALLY – FOCUSING ON HIGH POTENTIAL SITES & REGIONS WITH THE GREATEST NEED

Throughout this year we worked with national employers such as Amazon, Asda, and Compass Group UK & Ireland to support the replication and expansion of our model across the UK.

Together we built commitment to the model so that all partners were clear about what they can expect and the standards to be met. The brilliant data recorded through our portal allowed those partners to monitor their own performance so that they know they are doing the right thing for the interns and can be sure that they are creating social value in communities across the UK.

4. HARNESS LEARNING & DATA USING TECHNOLOGY

DFN Project SEARCH remains steadfast in its commitment to full equity, as demonstrated by two in depth studies—one on gender and the other on ethnicity. These studies reveal that, despite the structural challenges faced by these populations in the UK, DFN Project SEARCH has successfully recruited diverse interns and achieved comparable outcomes across most key areas. We have shared our findings externally and continue to collaborate with our partners to achieve full equity.

We have also completed our second intern satisfaction survey to better understand their experience in our programme. We were pleased to find that participants reported significant improvements across

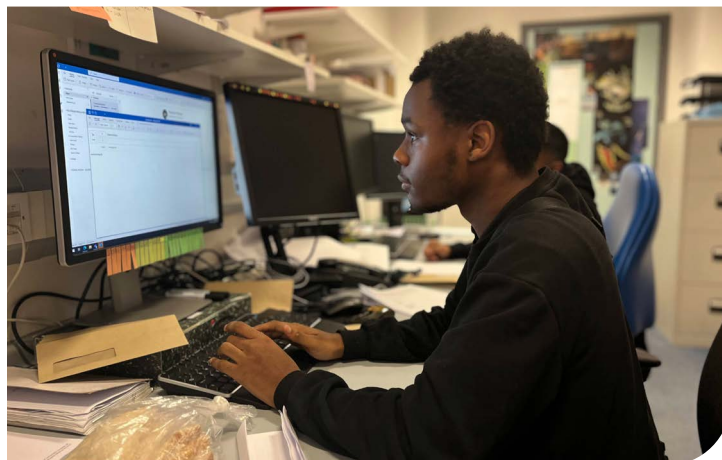
all 10 assessed areas, including wellbeing, interpersonal skills, and workplace competencies.

Data has been instrumental in our strategic growth, providing robust evidence of our impact. Our data analysis system enables us to extract meaningful insights from thousands of data points within minutes, allowing us to disaggregate data by geography, partners, outcomes, programme longevity, and other key variables.

5. INFLUENCE FUNDING & POLICY

In 2023/24, our influence in the supported internship sector continued to expand, reinforcing our commitment to driving meaningful change. National Supported Internship Day provided a pivotal platform to raise awareness, celebrate success, and advocate for greater recognition of supported internships within education and employment policy, allowing us to reach 9 million people. We also continued to work on targeted yet meaningful impact, having made a submission to the House of Lords Public Service Inquiry on the transition from education to employment. The outcome of this was a report published in October 2024 where we secured 3 of the top 10 recommendations to government for our sector. By leveraging our growing networking of policymakers, we began a targeted approach of working with policymakers who have vested interests in our work (sites in their constituency) to help enable a passion for advocating for the work we do.

Thank You To Our Partners



2023 – 2024 marked another successful year of fundraising with total fundraised income received during the year being just under £1.3 million.

As a charity, fundraising is vital to **DFN Project SEARCH**, accounting for around three-quarters of our total income. It provides essential seed funding to expand our programmes across the UK and supports key initiatives such as the Youth Advisory Group, alumni network, and engagement with parents and carers. Additionally, fundraising is developing strategic partnerships that will help to reduce the costs for local authorities, making our programmes more accessible and sustainable.

We are extremely grateful to all our funders and sponsors. Your support, in a particularly challenging year due to the cost-of-living-crisis and the challenges being faced by local authorities, meant that we were able to serve more young adults who have a learning disability or are autistic, or both, to make positive transitions during their final year of education to full-time paid employment. With that positive transition, they can live more independent, healthier and happier lives.

During this year we implemented some new programmes to diversify our fundraising strategy, support the continued growth of our

programmes, and ensure financial sustainability. We started to build funding partnerships with some of our host businesses and are particularly grateful to: Sodexo for being our Standout Partnership award sponsor; DPD for being our Elaine Cameron Equality and Diversity award sponsor; the Leo Lion Foundation for being our Data for Impact award partner; and Youth Futures Foundation for being our Thought Leadership Partner: inclusive recruitment and workplaces at our annual conference and awards in November 2023.

In March 2024, as part of National Supported Internship Day we ran a corporate roundtable with our new Business Leaders group. This session provided incredible insight into the journey to delivering DEI in the workplace. In this session we explored the role that companies

and the group collectively play in achieving our shared purpose and ambition, namely to raise awareness amongst young people and their families about supported internships, influence local and national government, and what **DFN Project SEARCH** can do to further support host businesses.

Our work relies on successful partnerships with employers and businesses who share the same values and purpose as us and we are looking forward to bringing some transformational partnerships to fruition in 2024 – 2025.

Trusts and foundations continued to make up the largest proportion of our fundraised income, including a new multi-year pledge from the City Bridge Foundation to support our charity work in London.

“ We are delighted to be able to provide DFN Project SEARCH with funding to support the delivery of the Project SEARCH internship programme for 16–25-year-olds with learning disabilities and/or autism. Funding will ultimately help London based sites to achieve long-term and sustainable employment for young adults with disabilities, improving employability outcomes for many. ”

Lara Rufus-Fayemi, Funding Manager at City Bridge Foundation

Thank You



We are also extremely grateful to those trusts and foundations and other supporters who provide unrestricted support, such as the DFN Charitable Foundation and the Pears Foundation.

This provides added value to us through the provision of flexibility to invest the funds where they are most needed and has been critical in supporting our growth and ability to serve more young adults.

We would like to thank all of those who have generously supported our work this year, including:

DFN Charitable Foundation

The Henry Smith Charity

Youth Futures Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The Robertson Trust

Pears Foundation

City Bridge Foundation

Garfield Weston Foundation

The Leo Lion Foundation

Westminster Foundation

Cheyne SVC LLP

Amazon

The Linden Family Foundation

And our funders who wish to remain anonymous.

DFN Charitable Foundation

The Henry Smith Charity
founded in 1628

youth futures
FOUNDATION

phf Paul Hamlyn Foundation

The ROBERTSON Trust

Pears Foundation

CITY BRIDGE FOUNDATION

Garfield Weston FOUNDATION

Leo Lion Foundation
Formerly known as the COINS Foundation

amazon

Acknowledgements

“ Together with our community of partners, DFN Project SEARCH has the potential to help every young adult with a learning disability, who is autistic, or both to fulfil their potential through work. ”

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to all our delivery partners and networks.

Without you, our work and our impact would not be possible. Here is a small sample of all the fantastic organisations we are grateful to for their support:

Proud to be members of:



Strengthened by working in partnership with:



Trustees' Report On Financial And Other Statutory Matters

For the year ended 31 August 2024

Trustees' Report On Financial And Other Statutory Matters

For the year ended 31 August 2024

The Trustees of DFN Project SEARCH are pleased to present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2024, which have been prepared to meet the requirements for a Directors' Report and Accounts for Companies Act purposes.

The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts and comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charity Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the Charities Act 2011, the Charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association and the "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to Charities preparing accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019).

DFN Project SEARCH was registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (No. 1183834) on 11 June 2019 and is a company limited by guarantee (No. 11488209); the company was incorporated on 27 July 2018. DFN Project SEARCH was registered with the Scottish Charity Regulator (No. SC049891) on 23 January 2020.

Charitable objectives

DFN Project SEARCH's charitable objectives are specifically restricted to the advancement of the education of young people with additional needs in vocational and employability skills so as to develop their capabilities that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society. Activities in support of this include:

01

Granting licenses to partner organisations to deliver the DFN Project SEARCH programme in their local area

02

Providing training and support to partner organisations to deliver the DFN Project SEARCH programme: and

03

Conducting quality assurance and improvement of every programme to ensure that the DFN Project SEARCH programme is being carried out effectively.

Demonstrating public benefit

The Trustees are aware of the Charity Commission guidance on Charity and Public Benefit and confirm that they have complied with the duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to it. The Trustees consider that the information contained within the Trustees' Report about the Charity's aims, activities and achievements demonstrates the benefit to the public.

Financial Review

During the financial year, DFN Project SEARCH generated income from the DFN Project SEARCH programme of £720,510 (2023 £1,542,564) as set out in note 4. This reflects a combination of licence fees, the Internships Work commission plus training courses. The drop in programme income was expected due to the payment structure of the Internships Work commission.

Income generated from fundraising activities amounted to £1,099,588 compared to £1,684,093 raised in the previous year. Of this amount £443,717 (2023 £493,124) is in the form of restricted funds and £85,050 (2023 £156,296) in the form of donated goods and services from the Social Business Trust as set out in note 3. Whilst 2023 was a successful year for the fundraising team, grants and donations in the 2023 Financial Statements included forward pledges, as required by the Charity SORP, which were paid during 2024, resulting in a drop in reported grants and donations in the 2024 Financial Statements.

Total income for the period is £1,954,256 compared to £3,272,677 in 2023.

Total expenditure amounted to £2,142,013 (2023 £1,934,103) with the increase predominantly due to an increase in direct staff costs enabling the roll out of Project SEARCH to reach more beneficiaries.

The Trustees report a loss for the year of £188,365 for the period (2023 surplus of £1,339,482). Funding received through the Internships Work programme and the success of the 2023 fundraising campaign allowed DFN Project SEARCH to expand the charity's reach and increase the spend on charitable activities in 2023/24, providing more supported internships to beneficiaries across the United Kingdom, Ireland and Iberia. By the year end DFN Project SEARCH had set up almost 200 sites across the UK. As a result of the increased charitable spending DFN Project SEARCH generated a loss in the 2023/24 financial year which was anticipated by the Board and supported by the charities existing reserves.

Use of resources

The Trustees consider it prudent to maintain resources at a level to enable the Charity to continue to fund its core services over a period of time in the event of a significant drop in funding. During the year the Trustees reviewed the reserves policy and considered that a period of three to six months remains an adequate time frame (2023 three to six months) for this purpose. At the current level of operations this indicates a level of reserves in the range of £750,000 to £1,500,000; at the year-end general unrestricted funds total £1,116,894, and a designated fund makes up £600,000. The designated fund is expected to be expended by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

The Trustees continue to monitor the level of reserves taking into account future expenditure and the challenging economic environment impacting SEND education and employability. Additionally, the Trustees are mindful of the need to hold sufficient reserves for the remainder of the Internships Work contract which concludes in March 2025. In light of the above, the Trustees are content with the current level of reserves. In order to guarantee the future of DFN Project SEARCH the Trustees are focused on securing multi year grant funding to ensure the programme can continue to support young adults far into the future.

Risk management

The management team have developed a register of significant risks that the charity is, or potentially could be, exposed to. There is an established risk assessment process which includes practical operational mitigation procedures. Responsibility for each class of risk is reflected within the register.

The Trustees and CEO regularly review the register to address any changes in the likelihood and impact of each risk and risk mitigation measures are considered. The register is updated regularly to reflect new and changing risks.

Diversity Risk management

Respecting diversity is one of DFN Project SEARCH’s key values and we are committed to being an inclusive organisation where diversity is welcomed and valued. Through our programmes, DFN Project SEARCH strives to promote a culture where people treat each other with mutual respect regardless of age, disability, gender, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief or sexual orientation.

Fundraising standards information

DFN Project SEARCH’s main fundraising approach is to establish a small number of larger partnerships with trusts and foundations, statutory funders, companies and high net worth individuals. We don’t currently make appeals to the public. We don’t contract fundraising to external third parties but do put in place commercial participator agreements and other contracts and gift agreements as and when required.

We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and comply with its Fundraising Code of Practice. Fundraising is also carried out in line with our Ethical Fundraising Policy, which also references how we protect vulnerable people when fundraising. We have not received any fundraising complaints during this accounting period. Our fundraising complaints process is set out on our website.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 27 July 2018 and was registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (charity number 1183834) on 11 June 2019.

The charity was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company (as amended) and is governed under its Articles of Association. The charity was registered with the Scottish Charity Regulator on 23 January 2020 (charity number SC049891).

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance of the charity and meets as a board at least three times a year. In addition, various sub-committees meet regularly to address financial and operational issues reporting to the Board.

The Trustees, who are also directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| • D Forbes-Nixon | (Resigned 20 June 2024) |
| • M B B Hudson | |
| • L A-M Kogbara | |
| • J L Riehle | (Resigned 30 September 2024) |
| • S Rutkowski | |
| • E M Sun | |
| • T L Scott | (Resigned 8 May 2024) |
| • S Mills | |
| • A R Hyde | (Appointed 15 November 2023) |
| • C Cookson | (Appointed 8 July 2024) |
| • J D L Dickson | (Appointed 8 May 2024) |
| • K J Wright | (Appointed 18 December 2024) |

The number of Trustees shall not be less than three.

None of the Trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work for the charity. Expenses incurred by the Trustees in the performance of their duties are reimbursed. None of the Trustees has any beneficial interest in the company.

Trustee selection and induction

The Trustees review regularly the composition of the Board and its various sub-committees. When a vacancy arises, the Trustees look at the blend of experience and skills of Trustees to ensure that these meet the needs of the charity and instigate a recruitment process if required. This will involve advertising both locally and nationally as well as more informal approaches to individuals who have the relevant skills and experience.

All new Trustees are invited to attend induction training with the Executive Chair and CEO. New Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, on their role and responsibilities as Trustees, the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, the content of the governing document, the decision making process, the business plans and recent financial performance of the charity.

Statement of Trustees’ responsibilities and corporate governance

The Trustees, who are also the directors of DFN Project SEARCH for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees’ report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) including FRS 102 “The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland”.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial period which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of those resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period.

In preparing these statements, the Trustees are required to:

- 01

Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- 02

Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- 03

Make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- 04

State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- 05

Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Charity’s transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment Act (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Account (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (as amended). They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity’s website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

Dixon Wilson Audit Services LLP were appointed as auditor to the charitable company and a resolution proposing that they be re-appointed will be put at a General Meeting.

Disclosure of Information to Auditor

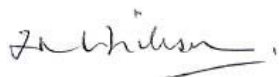
The Trustees who were in office on the date of the approval of these financial statements, having made reasonable enquiry, have collectively confirmed that, as far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information undisclosed to the company's auditor and that they have taken the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to the auditor.

This report was approved by the Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf by:



Mark Hudson (Chair)

Dated: Tuesday 6th May 2025



J D L Dickson

Dated: Tuesday 6th May 2025

Independent Auditor's Report To The Members Of DFN Project SEARCH

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of DFN Project Search (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 August 2024, which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102, the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 August 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- meet the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our

other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material

inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the Trustees' report;
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept;
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of Trustees

As explained more fully in the Trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 37, the Trustees (who are also directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and section 44(1)c of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

We gained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the charitable company by considering, amongst other things, the sector in which it operates, and considered the risk of acts by the charitable company that were contrary to applicable laws and regulations, including fraud. We designed audit procedures to respond to the risk, but recognised that the risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion.

We focused on laws and regulations which could give rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements, including, but not limited to, the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

Our tests included agreeing the financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation, enquiries with management and enquiries of third parties.


As in all our audits, we also addressed the risk management override internal controls, including testing journals and evaluating whether there was any evidence of bias by the Trustees that represented a risk of material misstatement due to fraud.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above and, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely we would become aware of it. We did not identify any key audit matters relating to irregularities, including fraud.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/ auditor's responsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's Trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and regulation 10 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's Trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's Trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Dated: Friday 9th May 2025

Dixon Wilson Audit Services LLP - Statutory Auditor

22 Chancery Lane
London
EC2A 1LS

Dixon Wilson Audit Services LLP is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

Financial Statements For The Year Ended 31 August 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the year ended 31 August 2024

Current financial period	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted operations funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
<u>Income and endowments from:</u>						
Donations and legacies	3	655,871	-	443,717	1,099,588	1,684,093
Charitable activities	4	720,510	-	-	720,510	1,542,564
Investments	5	30,596	-	-	30,596	-
Other income	6	103,562	-	-	103,562	46,020
Total income		1,510,539	-	443,717	1,954,256	3,272,677
<u>Expenditure on:</u>						
Raising funds	7	164,127	-	-	164,127	170,938
Charitable activities	8	1,225,942	250,000	501,944	1,977,886	1,763,165
Total expenditure		1,390,069	250,000	501,944	2,142,013	1,934,103
Net income		120,470	(250,000)	(58,227)	(187,757)	1,338,574
<u>Other recognised gains and losses:</u>						
Other gains/ (losses)	14	(608)	-	-	(608)	908
Net movement in funds		119,862	(250,000)	(58,227)	(188,365)	1,339,482
<u>Reconciliation of funds:</u>						
Fund balances at 1 September 2023		997,032	850,000	220,085	2,067,117	727,635
Fund balances at 31 August 2024		1,116,894	600,000	161,858	1,878,752	2,067,117

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the year ended 31 August 2024

Prior financial period	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Unrestricted operations funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
<u>Income and endowments from:</u>					
Donations	3	1,190,969	-	493,124	1,684,093
Charitable activities	4	1,542,564	-	-	1,542,564
Other income	6	46,020	-	-	46,020
Total income		2,779,553	-	493,124	3,272,677
<u>Expenditure on:</u>					
Raising funds	7	169,972	-	966	170,938
Charitable activities	8	1,314,237	-	448,928	1,763,165
Total expenditure		1,484,209	-	449,894	1,934,103
Net income		1,295,344	-	43,230	1,338,574
Transfers between funds		(850,000)	850,000	-	-
<u>Other recognised gains and losses:</u>					
Other gains/ (losses)	14	908	-	-	908
Net movement in funds		446,252	850,000	43,230	1,339,482
<u>Reconciliation of funds:</u>					
Fund balances at 1 September 2022		550,780	-	176,855	727,635
Fund balances at 31 August 2023		997,032	850,000	220,085	2,067,117

BALANCE SHEET

As at 31 August 2024

	Notes	2024		2023	
		£	£	£	£
Current assets					
Debtors	15	340,636		1,083,959	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,828,554		1,268,352	
		2,169,190		2,352,311	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(285,938)		(273,194)	
Net current assets		1,883,252		2,079,117	
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	17	(4,500)		(12,000)	
Net assets		1,878,752		2,067,117	
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	20	161,858		220,085	
Unrestricted funds - general	21	1,116,894		997,032	
Unrestricted funds - operations fund	21	600,000		850,000	
		1,878,752		2,067,117	

The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 August 2024, although an audit has been carried out under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements under the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on Tuesday 6th May 2025.



.....
M B B Hudson
Trustee



.....
J D L Dickson
Trustee

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended 31 August 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	24	529,606	497,307
Investing activities			
Investment income received		30,596	-
Net cash used in investing activities		30,596	-
Net cash used in financing activities		-	-
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		560,202	497,307
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		1,268,352	771,045
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year		1,828,554	1,268,352

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 August 2024

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES**Charity information**

DFN Project Search is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is 8-10 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH.

In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)". The Charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in pounds sterling, which is the functional currency of the Charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

The Trustees consider that at the end of the period the Charity has sufficient resources to undertake planned projects in the next 3-5 years. The Trustees do acknowledge the ongoing uncertainty faced by many charities and businesses as a result of recent events, including increases to employers National Insurance contributions plus the pressures faced by local authorities particularly in regard to SEND funding, and the impact this will cause to funding and overheads.

The Trustees are therefore appreciative of the David Forbes-Nixon Family Charitable Foundation which has indicated its willingness to support the operations of DFN Project SEARCH (subject to conditions) if required in the future.

Accordingly at the time of approving the financial statements, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity will have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements. The Trustees consider there are no material uncertainties about the Charity's ability to continue.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Designated funds comprise funds which have been set aside at the discretion of the Trustees for specific purposes. The purposes and uses of the designated funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the Charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the Charity has been notified of an impending distribution. Other donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the Charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Assets given for use by the Charity are recognised when receivable at the fair value of the assets received. Donated services are recognised when the Charity has received the service and is measured as the amount the charity would pay on the open market for an alternative service that would provide an equivalent benefit.

Where the Charity has entered into a contract for the supply of services over a period exceeding one year, income is recognised within the accounts based on the most reliable estimate of the right to receive payment for the work performed:

Project SEARCH licence fees - on a time-apportioned basis associated with the expected delivery of that service over the life of the contract.

Internships Work commission - on the basis of monthly receipts agreed with the customer to match the expected delivery of that service over the life of the contract.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES (CONTINUED)**1.5 Expenditure**

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the Charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the Charity in the delivery of its charitable activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs are associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory arrangements of the Charity, including external audit and the cost of preparing statutory accounts, the cost of Trustees' meetings and other costs involved with the Charity's strategic management.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the Statement of Financial Activities on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Wherever possible, costs relating to a particular activity are allocated directly; others are apportioned on the basis of the ratio of resources expended in respect of each charitable activity.

Irrecoverable VAT is included with the items of expenditure to which it relates.

1.6 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.7 Financial instruments

The Charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the Charity's balance sheet when the Charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash

and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.8 Employee benefits

Where material the cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employees' services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the Charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.9 Retirement benefits

The Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for employees whereby the assets of the scheme are held separately within an independently administered fund.

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

1.10 Foreign exchange

Transactions in currencies other than pounds sterling are recorded at the rates of exchange prevailing at the dates of the transactions. At each reporting end date, monetary assets and liabilities that are denominated in foreign currencies are retranslated at the rates prevailing on the reporting end date. Gains and losses arising on translation are included in net income/(expenditure) for the period.

2 CRITICAL ACCOUNTING ESTIMATES AND JUDGEMENTS

In the application of the Charity's accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

Critical judgements

The Board do not feel that any critical judgements of a material nature have been made in the process of applying the Charity's accounting policies, other than those including estimation, that have had a significant effect on the amounts reported in the financial statements.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty**Deferred income**

As set out in note 1.4 above, in respect of the Project SEARCH licence fees, where the Charity has entered into contracts for the supply of services over a period exceeding one year, income is recognised within the accounts on a time apportioned basis associated with the expected delivery of that service over the life of the contract.

In applying this policy the Board acknowledge that the recognition of income under each Project SEARCH Licence agreement is dependent on the completion of each stage under the contract.

To the extent that timing of the delivery of each stage of the contract is not known with certainty the Board have applied estimates based on the expected timing of the delivery of the service.

As at the year end, income of £19,500 (2023 £108,000) has been deferred to subsequent periods in accordance with the above, as set out in note 18.

Donated services

The value of donated services is an estimate of the market value of the services based on similar projects. As set out in note 3, the value of donated services received by the Charity in the year was £85,050 (2023 £156,296).

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

3 INCOME FROM DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Donations and gifts	570,821	443,717	1,014,538	1,034,673	493,124	1,527,797
Donated goods and services	85,050	-	85,050	156,296	-	156,296
	655,871	443,717	1,099,588	1,190,969	493,124	1,684,093

Donations and gifts includes forward pledges from funders for amounts receivable in future years of £50,000 (2023 £250,000) as required by the Charity SORP.

4 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Charitable activities		
'Internships Work' commission	482,934	1,136,852
Project SEARCH licence fees	218,500	350,833
Training courses and other programme-related work	19,076	54,879
	720,510	1,542,564

During the year DFN Project SEARCH provided services to the Department for Education through the 'Internships Work' commission in partnership with NDTi and BASE. The contract, worth £1.7m to DFN Project SEARCH, covers the period from September 2022 to March 2025. Income has been recognised under the recognition principles set out in note 1.4.

5 INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Interest receivable	30,596	-

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

6 OTHER INCOME

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Services provided to the DFN Foundation	18,583	16,313
Other sales	27,235	2,381
Reimbursement of support worker costs from Access to Work	57,744	27,326
	103,562	46,020

7 EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total funds 2023 £
Fundraising and publicity						
Governance Costs	3,329	-	3,329	4,329	-	4,329
Staging fundraising events	-	-	-	3,772	-	3,772
Other fundraising costs	17,757	-	17,757	12,381	966	13,347
Staff costs	123,110	-	123,110	114,933	-	114,933
Support costs	19,931	-	19,931	34,557	-	34,557
	164,127	-	164,127	169,972	966	170,938

8 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Charitable activities 2024 £	Charitable activities 2023 £
Direct costs		
Staff costs	891,930	745,720
Other direct costs	262,226	170,833
Bad debts	8,325	20,064
UK conference costs	79,515	40,772
Overseas conference costs	11,543	12,592
Franchise fee and support costs	74,495	87,099
Support worker	48,851	46,045
	1,376,885	1,123,125
Share of support and governance costs (see note 9)		
Support	568,466	603,224
Governance	32,535	36,816
	1,977,886	1,763,165
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds - general	1,225,942	1,314,237
Unrestricted funds - operations fund	250,000	-
Restricted funds	501,944	448,928
	1,977,886	1,763,165

9 SUPPORT COSTS ALLOCATED TO ACTIVITIES

	Basis of allocation	Fundraising 2024 £	Charitable activities 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Staff costs	Direct allocation	-	171,518	171,518	115,284
Management costs	Direct allocation	-	127,190	127,190	133,282
Website costs and hosting	Resources expended	-	-	-	1,493
Staff travel and accommodation	Direct allocation	-	5,340	5,340	5,394
IT and communication costs	Direct allocation	-	19,247	19,247	49,303
Training and recruitment costs	Direct allocation	-	49,940	49,940	4,558
Strategy and consulting	Resources expended	7,894	77,156	85,050	192,315
Public relations	Resources expended	6,357	62,139	68,496	85,027
Safeguarding and GDPR	Direct allocation	-	646	646	1,483
Administration costs	Resources expended	5,680	55,290	60,970	49,642
Governance		3,329	32,535	35,864	41,145
		23,260	601,001	624,261	678,926

GOVERNANCE COSTS COMPRISE:

	2024 £	2023 £
Audit fees	15,763	15,886
Accountancy	10,284	16,037
Legal and professional	5,433	3,937
Board meeting expenditure	4,384	5,285
	35,864	41,145

Strategy and consulting includes £85,050 (2023 £156,296) of donated services from the Social Business Trust (note 3).

The Trustees have reviewed the level of support costs and are satisfied that the support base is both adequate and streamlined for an organization of the Charity's size. Over the past two years, the Charity has experienced significant growth, with the average number of employees increasing from 11 to 27 between 2022 and 2024, to facilitate the rollout of Project SEARCH across the UK, Ireland, and Iberia.

The scope of DFN Project SEARCH encompasses programme implementation through its various sites, as well as data analysis to evidence impact and social return on investment. Additionally, the Charity engages in policy work and government advocacy, raises awareness across the sector, employers, and the general public, and relies on fundraising to support the program and maximize its reach.

The Trustees therefore believe that the current cost base is reasonable and well-positioned to support future activities.

10 AUDITOR'S REMUNERATION

Fees payable to the charity's auditor and associates:

	2024 £	2023 £
For audit services		
Audit of the financial statements of the charity	15,763	16,800

11 TRUSTEES

None of the Trustees received any remuneration from the Charity during the year (2023 £nil).

Two Trustees were reimbursed expenditure, or had expenses paid by the Charity on their behalf, in the year totalling £1,976 for travel, accommodation and subsistence for DFN Project SEARCH meetings and events (2023 £486: three Trustees).

DFN Project SEARCH incurred expenses amounting to £1,937 for Board meeting costs and safeguarding training for the Trustees in fulfilling their duties for the Charity (2023: £nil: no Trustees).

12 MANAGEMENT COSTS OF THE CEO

As in the previous reporting period DFN Project SEARCH employed the services of the CEO in a dual role with the DFN Foundation. The roles were combined in 2020 to serve the education and employability objectives set out by DFN Project SEARCH, in conjunction with the DFN MoveForward programme (operated within the DFN Foundation).

All employment costs of the CEO were met by the DFN Foundation and the proportion of the employment costs relating to DFN Project SEARCH were recharged.

The total costs recharged from the DFN Foundation during the period amounted to £123,356 (2023 £131,652), plus irrecoverable VAT relating to the recharges amounting to £3,834 (2023 £1,630). The total costs incurred from the CEO recharge are therefore £127,190 (2023 £133,282).

These costs are disclosed within note 9. Costs of £32,703 (2023 £65,826) are expended by the restricted funds disclosed in note 20.

The CEO's employment at DFN Foundation ended in June 2024, leading to the end of this arrangement with DFN Project SEARCH. Carmel McKeogh was appointed as interim CEO of DFN Project SEARCH from July 2024 until the year end on a consultancy basis. Kirsty Matthews was appointed as new CEO of DFN Project SEARCH in September 2024.

13 EMPLOYEES

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
Productive	21	18
Management	4	2
Fundraising	2	2
Total	27	22

Employment costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Wages and salaries	1,025,580	844,704
Social security costs	105,407	82,480
Other pension costs	55,571	48,753
	1,186,558	975,937

The number of employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000 is as follows:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
£60,000 - £69,999	1	-
£70,000 - £79,999	1	1
	2	1

In the year to 31 August 2024, one employee received remuneration between £60,000 - £69,999 and one employee received remuneration between £70,000 - £79,999 (2023 £70,000 - £79,999: one employee). Remuneration for this purpose includes gross salary and the homeworking allowance. Contributions totalling £11,740 (2023 £2,642) were made to defined contribution schemes on behalf of employees whose emoluments exceed £60,000 (2023 £60,000).

During the year the cost of a Finance Director was shared with David Forbes-Nixon Family Charitable Foundation. The DFN Foundation was invoiced for a proportion of the employment costs incurred as set out in note 6.

The employment costs recharged to the DFN Foundation for the Finance Director's services during the period totalled £18,583 (2023 £16,313)

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Aggregate remuneration	284,246	131,652

Key management personnel comprises the CEO and other members of the Senior Management Team. In the previous reporting period, key management was considered to be the CEO only.

14 OTHER GAINS OR LOSSES

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Gains/(losses) upon:		
Foreign exchange	(608)	908

15 DEBTORS

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade debtors	134,302	112,268
Other debtors	188,050	943,869
Prepayments and accrued income	18,284	27,822
	340,636	1,083,959

16 CREDITORS - AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Other taxation and social security		50,874	41,492
Deferred income	18	15,000	96,000
Payments received on account		7,527	20,814
Trade creditors		11,417	23,076
Other creditors		117,931	-
Accruals		83,189	91,812
		285,938	273,194

17 CREDITORS - AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income	18	4,500	12,000

18 DEFERRED INCOME

	2024 £	2023 £
Arising from services provided	19,500	108,000

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	15,000	96,000
Non-current liabilities	4,500	12,000
	19,500	108,000
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 September 2023	108,000	361,000
Released from previous periods	(96,000)	(263,000)
Resources deferred in the year	7,500	10,000
Deferred income at 31 August 2024	19,500	108,000

Licence Fees

Working within the framework of the Franchise Agreement a one off fee is charged for the creation of a Project SEARCH Site to contribute to the costs of establishing the partnership and the support network vital to each unique project. Once established ongoing services, support and training is made available for which an annual fee is charged.

In setting up each site, and in working with the site partners, each Programme Specialist undertakes a series of tasks commencing in the preparation year prior to operation and concluding with a mandatory Continuous Improvement Review and follow up consultation in the year after the first year of operation; overall a three year cycle.

In keeping with the guidance in the SORP part of any fees received for the set up of each site is deferred to subsequent periods on the basis of the proportion of the work to deliver the programme over a three year cycle.

19 RETIREMENT BENEFIT SCHEMES**Defined contribution schemes**

	2024 £	2023 £
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	55,571	48,753

The Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the Charity in an independently administered fund. The company contributes a specified percentage of payroll costs to the retirement pension scheme to fund the benefits. The only obligation of the company with respect to the scheme is to make the specified contributions.

20 RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 September 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 August 2024 £
Charity Running Costs	75,665	194,985	(198,871)	71,779
West Midlands Development	88,063	100,000	(100,108)	87,955
Youth Advisory Group	6,627	33,000	(39,627)	-
Strategic Growth in Scotland	15,154	50,000	(65,154)	-
North and North West England	34,576	-	(32,452)	2,124
Quality Improvement	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
Supporting London Outcomes	-	50,000	(50,000)	-
National Supported Internship Day	-	5,732	(5,732)	-
	220,085	443,717	(501,944)	161,858

Previous year:

	At 1 September 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 August 2023 £
Charity Running Costs	89,357	250,124	(263,816)	75,665
West Midlands Development	68,945	100,000	(80,882)	88,063
Youth Advisory Group	18,553	33,000	(44,926)	6,627
Strategic Growth in Scotland	-	50,000	(34,846)	15,154
North and North West England	-	60,000	(25,424)	34,576
	176,855	493,124	(449,894)	220,085

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

20 RESTRICTED FUNDS (CONTINUED)**CHARITY RUNNING COSTS**

The restricted fund consists of grants from The Henry Smith Charitable Foundation, the Youth Futures Foundation and the Westminster Foundation towards the charity's running costs.

The Trustees express their continued appreciation to The Henry Smith Charitable Foundation for the grant of £629,000 pledged in 2021 for a period of four years, subject to performance related conditions. The instalments of the grant are recognised once the performance related conditions for each payment have been met.

The Trustees continue to be grateful to the Youth Futures Foundation for their pledge of £194,250 in 2021, since uplifted to £202,882. At the year end instalments had been received totalling £202,882. Each instalment of the grant has been recognised once the performance related condition has been met.

The Trustees thank the Westminster Foundation for their grant of £10,800 towards the Fivefields office in London for a period of three years, subject to performance related conditions. The instalments of the grant are recognised once the performance related conditions for each payment have been met.

WEST MIDLANDS DEVELOPMENT

The Trustees are thankful to the Garfield Weston Foundation for their commitment of £290,000 over three years. The grant is aimed at development within the West Midlands region of the UK and instalments of the grant are recognised when performance related conditions have been met.

At the year end expenditure of £100,108 had been incurred in respect of the above fund.

YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation generously pledged £90,000 over three years in 2022, subsequently uplifted to £96,000 to reflect cost of living increases, to support the Youth Advisory Group, subject to performance related conditions. Each instalment of the grant is recognised when specific performance related conditions have been met. At the year end £39,627 has been expended for the Youth Advisory Group.

STRATEGIC GROWTH IN SCOTLAND

The Trustees are thankful to The Robertson Trust for their pledge of £250,000 over five years to support strategic growth in Scotland. Each instalment of the grant is recognised once specific performance related conditions have been met.

At the year end expenditure of £65,154 had been incurred in respect of the above fund.

NORTH AND NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Funds restricted to support the expansion of the programme in Northern England totalling £34,576 were brought forward from the prior period. During the year £32,452 was expended in respect of this fund.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Trustees thank The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund Foundation for their grant of £10,000 to fund the Quality Improvement Team supporting DFN Project SEARCH sites to achieve the best possible employment outcomes.

SUPPORTING LONDON OUTCOMES

The Trustees are thankful to the City Bridge Foundation for their pledge of £250,000 over five years to fund the Quality Improvement Team supporting DFN Project SEARCH sites to achieve the best possible employment outcomes in London. The instalments of the grant are recognised once the performance related conditions for each payment have been met.

NATIONAL SUPPORTED INTERNSHIP DAY

The Trustees thank the Youth Futures Foundation for their grant of £5,732 supporting the National Supported Internship Day 2024. During the year £5,732 was expended in respect of this fund.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

21 DESIGNATED FUNDS

The unrestricted funds of the Charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the Trustees for specific purposes.

	Balance at 1 September 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	Balance at 31 August 2024 £
Operations fund	850,000	-	(250,000)		-	600,000
General unrestricted funds	997,032	1,510,539	(1,390,069)	-	(608)	1,116,894
	1,847,032	1,510,539	(1,640,069)	-	(608)	1,716,894

Previous year:	Balance at 1 September 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	Balance at 31 August 2023 £
Operations fund	-	-	-	850,000	-	850,000
General unrestricted funds	550,780	2,779,553	(1,484,209)	(850,000)	908	997,032
	550,780	2,779,553	(1,484,209)	-	908	1,847,032

The operations fund represents the amount designated by the Trustees to support the costs of the expanded operations team following the investment in additional staff members to support existing site growth and delivery of the Internships Work programme. Further details on the Internships Work programme are included on page 20 of this report.

In the year to 31 August 2024 DFN Project SEARCH has received £1.6m of the total £1.7m of funding due under the 30-month contract with the Department for Education. This amounts to 94% of the total proceeds of the contract, despite being 80% through the time period.

In 2023, the Board were minded to designate a proportion of unrestricted funds to cover the cost of the operations team throughout the remainder of this contract and beyond.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued)

For the year ended 31 August 2024

22 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**David Forbes-Nixon Charitable Foundation**

In accordance with the Charities SORP the David Forbes-Nixon Family Charitable Foundation (DFN Foundation) is considered a related party following the appointment of a joint CEO. The joint CEO's employment at DFN Foundation ended in June 2024.

The transactions between the two organisations are:

- Charges made at cost for the services of the CEO of £123,356 (2023 £131,652) exclusive of VAT as reported in management costs within note 12.
- The DFN Foundation paid for the services of the Finance Director employed by DFN Project SEARCH for which invoices were raised for the equivalent employment cost of £18,583 (2023 £16,313). The income for these services is reported within other income in note 6.
- At the period end DFN Project SEARCH owed £117,931 to the DFN Foundation (2023 DFN Foundation owed £44,474 to DFN Project SEARCH).

David Forbes-Nixon

During the year, the Charity continued to employ the son of Trustee David Forbes-Nixon. Remuneration for the period totalled £9,849 (2023 £8,599).

David Forbes-Nixon resigned as Trustee on 20 June 2024 and remains founder and patron of DFN Project SEARCH.

23 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

Fund balances at 31 August 2024 are represented by:

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds operations fund	Restricted funds	Total funds
	2024 £	2024 £	2024 £	2024 £
Current assets/ (liabilities)	1,121,394	600,000	161,858	1,883,252
Long term liabilities	(4,500)	-	-	(4,500)
	1,116,894	600,000	161,858	1,878,752

Fund balances at 31 August 2023 are represented by:

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds operations fund	Restricted funds	Total funds
	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £
Current assets/ (liabilities)	1,009,032	850,000	220,085	2,079,117
Long term liabilities	(12,000)	-	-	(12,000)
	997,032	850,000	220,085	2,067,117

24 CASH GENERATED FROM OPERATIONS

	2024 £	2023 £
(Deficit) / surplus for the period	(187,757)	1,338,574
Adjustments for:		
Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(30,596)	-
Foreign exchange differences	(608)	908
Movements in working capital:		
Decrease/ (increase) in debtors	743,323	(645,295)
Increase in creditors	93,744	56,120
(Decrease) in deferred income	(88,500)	(253,000)
Cash generated from operations	529,606	497,307

25 ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

The Charity had no debt during the year.

