



## DFN Project SEARCH Changing Lives Together

A business-led, one-year transition to employment programme for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

### ■ Transforming Lives

DFN Project SEARCH believes that everyone deserves the right to aspire to the very best future, yet nationally **less than 6% of people with a learning disability** who are known to local authorities go on to secure full-time paid employment.

Our vision is to ensure that everyone with a learning disability or autism can attain high-quality, integrated employment in their local area.

Offering a high aiming one-year transition to work programme in their final year of school or college, our approach is so much more than work experience, it is education and training at its very best!

Students get to use and apply their skills and learning every day, ensuring that they are ready to move seamlessly into the workplace as skilled and effective employees.

### ■ Best Practice Education and Training

DFN Project SEARCH is a business-led, one-year transition to employment programme for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

70% of our graduating interns secure paid employment with an impressive average of **60% securing full-time roles**, creating life changing opportunities and transforming outcomes for young people with additional learning needs.

We offer an evidence based model and professional resources that deliver results through developing great relationships with high aiming and committed partners. DFN Project SEARCH students throughout the country are already seeing the benefits of the innovative learning experience and the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the host business.

**Our unique programme is changing lives for the better, bringing students:**

- Competitive, transferable and marketable job skills
- Increased independence, confidence, and self-esteem
- 800 hours of structured support from teacher, job coaches, host business managers and mentors

## ■ Social Value

Evidence shows that being in employment improves health and wellbeing and is central to individual identity, social roles, and social status.

People in work tend to enjoy happier and healthier lives than those who are not in work.

- Once a DFN Project SEARCH partnership is established, it is sustainable year after year and keeps delivering increasing numbers of full-time paid jobs and careers.
- Over time, community expectations are raised along with the belief that people with learning disabilities can work in many different skilled jobs.
- The pathway from childhood to adulthood and work becomes smoother for young people and their families.
- A variety of local businesses benefit from the talent pool created, they can access a new, diverse, workforce with skills that match labour needs.

Transitioning people from education straight into competitive employment also saves money for health and social care by creating opportunities for people with learning disabilities to become **net contributors** rather than recipients of adult social care and health services.

- This opportunity transforms the life chances and improves social mobility of young people with additional needs.
- Communities become more inclusive and people with learning disabilities more visible.
- Social justice is achieved for people who have been frequently marginalized from the world of work.



## ■ A Team of Teams

DFN Project SEARCH is a partnership between a host business, education, and professional adult supported employment. The goal is to provide on-site internship experiences that

allow necessary skill development opportunities for young adults with learning disabilities to compete for employment.

- **Host Business:**  
Provides an on-site base and a variety of internships that teach core skills related to that business or organisation.
- **School or College:**  
Provides a teacher and student interns from the local area.
- **Local Authority:**  
Commissions appropriate partners and ensures access to the programme across a community. Individual life planning guidance,

- care management and individual budgets for job coaching and other support.
- **Supported Employment Agency:**  
Provides professional job coaching and job development for interns at the host business.
- **Department for Work and Pensions:**  
Provides 'Access to Work' funding for job coaching and other follow on support. Provides advice to the young person and their family about better off in work calculations.

## ■ Benefits to Local Authorities:

- Evidence value for money and track positive employment destinations.
- Invest to save, research shows that £3.96 is created for every pound of investment when 60% of DFN Project SEARCH interns move into paid work of more than 16 hours per week.\*
- Continue to drive standards. 70% of DFN Project SEARCH interns move into paid work with the opportunity to increase those hours over time and develop their independence skills.
- Support transition from education to employment at a time that is appropriate for individual learners. On average 19% of DFN Project SEARCH interns are aged 18, 21% are aged 19, and 17% are aged 20 when they join and will see their plans cease on completion of the programme year.

Taking a range of college courses until aged 24 is not necessary as interns as young as 16 or 17 years old have the same (or slightly better) chances of finding employment.

That means they find a career early and have much better chance of an independent and fulfilled life!



\* Social Value Lab, SROI Evaluation Project Search for North Lanarkshire Council, April 2013 p 20

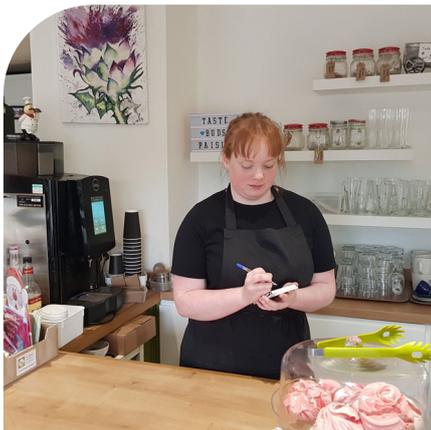
## ■ Benefits to Education:

- Full access to a best practice International Employability Curriculum.
- Full access to world's largest vocational profiling tool for people with SEND which allows you to track and measure progress against learner skill acquisition.
- Robust and clearly evidenced data demonstrating in year Intent, Implementation and Impact relating to learner progress and aspirational destinations.
- A seamless approach to transition that develops preparation for adulthood skills.



## ■ Benefits to the Host Business:

- Organisations gain access to a new, diverse, talent stream with skills that match labour needs.
- Departments improve communication and teamwork.
- Businesses experience increased local, regional, national and international recognition through marketing of this unique programme.
- Organisations dramatically improve performance and retention in some high-turnover or hard-to-fill posts.



**Find out more:** To find out more or to partner with DFN Project SEARCH, please email: [admin@dfnprojectsearch.org](mailto:admin@dfnprojectsearch.org)