

Gaining support from different stakeholders

When you are undertaking any form of activities with young people it is important that everyone involved understands the commitment, this is especially important when working with young people with SEND. For any activity to be successful the full support of everyone involved is paramount no matter what their level of involvement might be.



Gaining Colleague Support

Supporting students with SEND is a hugely rewarding experience for your employees. Not only from an employee developmental perspective, but also from a personal perspective, as it can give them an added sense of satisfaction and achievement, knowing they are supporting a group of young people that are often disadvantaged and vulnerable when it comes to seeking employment.

The following tips will help you in gaining support from employees to plan and deliver the activity, as well as ensuring your organisation and employees gain maximum benefit from the experience:

- Communicate and share with your leaders and employees that you will be supporting local SEND students. Even if you already have a team of employees wanting to support, this will help in encouraging others to get involved, or you may find it encourages a different team to engage with another SEND school/college. Utilise your communication channels such as internal newsletters and social networking platforms. It doesn't matter at this stage if you don't know what the specific activity will be, just sharing your intention to support SEND students is a great story and you can follow-up by sharing how it went and the benefits it delivered.
- Dependent upon the level of commitment in resource and/or cost for the work encounter or experience of the workplace you plan to deliver, you may need leadership buy-in and/or approval. Guidance on how you can achieve this is in the Gaining Senior Leadership Buy-In section.
- If you have an employee resource group for disabilities, invite them to get involved. You may find they already have experience of supporting others with learning disabilities and can help you communicate what you plan to deliver across the wider organisation as well as supporting the activity itself.
- Engage your human resources team as they may be interested to know what you're planning and get involved. The experience may provide them with a greater understanding of how to ensure your organisation is inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities and how those with SEND can offer a range of skills and abilities needed in your industry.

- If you have a graduate or apprenticeship programme, consider asking those employees to get involved. This is a fantastic opportunity to increase the disability awareness and confidence of your younger employees at the start of their career.
- Use this experience as a development opportunity for employees. Typical skills used will be:
 - Organisation and planning
 - Project management
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Coaching
 - Leadership
 - Innovation
 - Problem solving.

Employees are more likely to get involved if they can see that they will benefit as an individual and that their employer recognises this activity as part of their performance.

- Ensure line managers of those employees wanting to get involved are supportive and will allow them the time away from work to volunteer.
- This activity may align with your organisation's corporate and social responsibility values. If so, use this link to promote what you/your team are doing. Dependent upon the activity you deliver and the impact it has on your organisation, the students and the school/college, you may consider going for a business recognised award. The Careers and Enterprise Company holds annual awards, with categories for both small and medium, and large employers, that are delivering their own tailored programme to schools or colleges. Whether you consider awards on a national or local basis, they are a great publicity opportunity for your organisation and demonstrates your commitment to supporting your local community and improving social mobility.
- Consider engaging with your supply chain partners. This is a great opportunity to strengthen relationships and can open up another pool of resources that may want to support you.



Gaining Senior Leadership Buy-In

Many organisations are already focused on improving the diversity and inclusion within their workforce and ensuring they are a responsible business, often with leadership backed strategies in place.

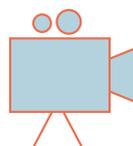
Engaging with SEND students will support these strategies, as it will provide you with a greater insight into the benefits of having a diverse workforce and being a fully inclusive employer. Your employees will improve their disability confidence and learn skills they can utilise in both their working and personal lives. You will be supporting your local communities and improving social mobility, as research shows that delivering meaningful work encounters and experiences of the workplace greatly increase the employment outcomes, and this is particularly key for those with SEND.

If you don't currently have strategies or values such as these in place, or you wish to deliver a long term, more involved activity, you may need leadership approval to proceed.



Here are some tips on making a compelling case:

- Mention the compelling case for businesses to support young people with SEND, as only 5.9% of people with learning disabilities are in work and young people who have had 4 or more encounters with employers, are 86% less likely to become NEET (not in education, employment or training).
- Link the activity you are wanting to deliver to existing business strategies/objectives.
- Include the benefits that employees and the business will gain from the experience. Where possible, include examples from other employers. You may find the school/college can put you in touch with employers they already engage with.
- Include information on the resource requirement and if there are any costs that will be incurred.
- If you already have support from employees and/or other teams and colleagues, mention this.
- Identify any key risks that you think leadership may be concerned with and include mitigating actions.



Watch this short video of [Mark Pickles](#) from National Grid, sharing how they gained senior leadership buy-in when setting up their EmployAbility supported internship programme.