

JOB PACK:

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT LEAD – MEDWAY & SWALE SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS

About Skillnet Group

We are people with and without learning difficulties and/or autism in Kent and Medway working together to achieve equality.

Skillnet Group is also a social enterprise. As a Community Interest Company, all our profit is put back into supporting the work we do.

- We support people with learning difficulties and/or autism to speak up, make choices and become powerful and influential. We support them to gain opportunities and become more independent in learning, housing, work, health, money, travel, leisure and relationships.
- We support people to hear, respect and empower people with learning difficulties and/or autism.
- We promote positive action to challenge negative attitudes about disability.
- We work with local communities so that people with learning difficulties and/or autism become fully included and no longer segregated.

The background to this job

Skillnet Group enjoyed a successful partnership with JobCentre Plus in East Kent for over four years, supporting adults with learning difficulties and/or autism into paid work. We are now bringing our skills and passion for opportunity to Medway and Swale's most disadvantaged young people, using Supported Internships.

A Supported Internship is an employment programme for young people aged 16-24 with learning difficulties and/or autism with the central goal of progressing into high quality, sustained, paid work. Although it is a learning programme funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, it should not be seen as a College course in the traditional sense. Students need to experience the difference. This plays out in features like students applying for time off, with different leave entitlement to school holidays. It will also mean on-the-job learning taking place in a non-classroom setting. We have found many disadvantaged young people are alienated from school and college, and need a workplace in which to thrive.

There are no entry or completion requirements, so the programme can be personalised for each student to provide progression and stretch. There is a major unmet need for such opportunities in Medway and Swale. While 65% of people with a learning disability want to work ([Valuing Employment Now](#)), only 1.9% in Medway and 3.8% in Kent have a job. These are far below the South East average of 6.2%. ([Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework](#)).

This project aims to engage private sector businesses and other employers in and near Medway and Swale to create one-year internships as an asset to this business, and a service to young people and their families and carers.

At this point, we need to invest in employer engagement as a specialism, to realise our ambition to achieve high quality, sustained, paid work for young people with learning difficulties and/or autism. This is an exciting opportunity to take the lead and work at the forefront of this pioneering initiative.

We are presently supporting 14 young people and will provide internships for 22 new young people from September this year. Our intake will rise again to at least 26 in September 2019. We have set the goal of achieving high quality, sustained paid work for 50% of interns during or shortly after the programme. This is an ambitious but achievable goal in the current jobs market. We aim to raise the profile of young people with learning difficulties or autism among Medway and Swale employers as potential employees of

genuine business value. There is also a need to raise the aspirations of young people themselves, together with their families and carers, demonstrating that work is possible and rewarding.

Co-production is a core value and method for Skillnet Group. This means people working equally together to make the most of their respective experience and skills. A typical Skillnet Group project will be led by two people – one with and one without a learning difficulty. This values equally expertise gained from an individual, personal perspective and professional work experience and training. The approach taken to valuing and supporting young people with learning difficulties or autism in this project will be shaped by the leadership given by our Jobs Champion, which is a paid role for a colleague with a learning difficulty.

Further background reading:

<http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-internships>

Apply online here:

skillnetgroup.co.uk/working/pages/jobapplication.php

Closing date for applications: Sunday 18th March

Interview date: Wednesday 21st March

We will contact you via email on Monday 19th March to inform if you've been shortlisted for interview.

Job Description

- Main aims:** Engage employers in Medway and Kent to develop strong placements for interns with learning difficulties and/or autism. Continue engaging employers to maximise prospects for high quality, sustained, paid work following the internship.
- Salary:** **£20,000-£24,000** per annum pro rata to a full-time week depending upon experience, track record and existing business networks in Medway and Kent. **Strong business contacts which can be used straight away to develop placements will attract a job offer at the top end of this scale.** A full-time week is 37 hours. Salaries are normally paid one month in arrears, but we can consider revising this arrangement in situations where delayed payment causes difficulty for individuals in our workforce.
- Hours:** **24 hours** per week, worked flexibly through the week. There are opportunities to cover annual leave / sick leave in this programme and other Skillnet Group projects. We aim to strike a fair, reasonable balance between the project's needs and the post-holder's, bearing in mind this is a part-time post. For example, the role may suit a parent/carer who needs to drop-off and pick-up children from school. Skillnet Group is an employer that understands and values family life. At the same time, meetings may be planned at any time during the normal working week, occasionally at times that clash with other regular commitments. Applicants who have other regular commitments in the working week are welcome to apply and must give details of these commitments in their application.
- Location:** In Medway, we are running the programme from Chatham and in Swale we are based in Sittingbourne. However, much of the working time will be out in the Medway / Swale area engaging employers. You will be able to claim for travel costs

incurred during the working day using our expenses policy and procedure. We do not reimburse any travel costs for the first and last journey of the day unless it exceeds 30 miles, at which point you can claim for any additional mileage. We will provide a laptop and mobile phone to support mobile working. There will be occasional travel to other locations in Kent where Skillnet is based, including Dover, Canterbury and Maidstone.

Duration:	Permanent
Probationary Period:	6 months
Annual leave:	25 days per annum pro rata plus eight public holidays pro rata, payable in lieu.
Other benefits:	Pension scheme, Childcare vouchers
Line management:	Head of Supported Employment – Helena Jennings

Main responsibilities:

Lead for the Supported Internships team on identifying opportunities with employers for internships likely to lead to high quality, sustained paid work. As far as possible, ensure all new learners have a bespoke placement ready for the start of the academic year.

Start, develop and sustain relationships with employers. Take responsibility for our employer database. Maintain regular contact to keep employers engaged and 'warm'. Communicate responsively, monitor progress and resolve problems.

Develop a network of supportive 'friends'/advisors with influence in the business world to connect us with opportunities. Maintain excellent relationships with this network.

Develop ways to add value to employers, e.g. training, support with policies/procedures. Ensure employers understand Supported Internships and the role of work coach.

Use, and lead improvement, of our business case to employers. Develop excellent marketing materials for employers. Responsible for writing employer case studies and using these in marketing materials.

Develop a network of existing employers as 'peers' that newly identified employers can approach for feedback on the Supported Internship programme, to help develop trust and confidence in what the programme offers to employers.

Lead on creative initiatives to raise our profile with Kent and Medway businesses, for example developing an 'inclusive employer of the year' category in KEiBA. Work with other colleagues to attract funding and investment for profile-raising. Organise events to attract and engage businesses.

Work closely with students at the referral and vocational profiling stages to develop strong matches with bespoke work placements, and move-on strategies from the internship into paid work.

Ensure work coaching continues after the internship into paid work, using

Access To Work and either our, or externally provided, work coaching.

Ongoing feedback with employers about the quality of our work coaching and overall support for employers.

Monitor, and develop knowledge of, the local jobs market and what employers need.

You will work according to Skillnet Group's Policies and Procedures throughout your employment, including lone working.

Support employers to understand the Equality Act 2010 and make [reasonable adjustments](#).

Themes throughout the role include:

Supporting employers to adapt their recruitment processes to make them accessible for people with learning difficulties.

Ensuring students have maximum prospects for progress from internships into high quality, sustained paid work.

Raising the profile of people with learning difficulties or autism among Medway and Swale's employers as potential employees of genuine business value.

Developing a good, practical working knowledge of learning disability and autism based on [Skillnet Group's values](#).

Maintaining strong knowledge of the factors affecting work prospects for people with learning difficulties or autism, including the law, government policy and developments with disability and work-related benefits.

Promoting best practice in Supported Employment and work according to the [National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment](#).

Promoting creative recruitment as an outcome of internships, including Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Extended Work Experience and Corporate Mentoring etc.

Managing workload, tasks and priorities using Skillnet's online teamworking system [Podio](#).

Recording detailed information on employers using Podio and any other systems and formats required by the accredited learning environment.

Communicating responsively using a mobile phone and a work email address using the [Gmail](#) platform.

Working flexible hours to support the needs of the project. This may mean occasional work in early mornings, evenings or weekends if this advances opportunities for someone you are supporting.

Supporting other areas of Skillnet Group's work if required, advancing equality and opportunity for people with learning difficulties and/or autism

Actively pursuing personal professional development, including studying for and achieving the [Level 3 Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners](#). This will involve three two-day visits to London for group study. Skillnet Group will fund the course fees of £1,800 plus travel expenses. The six group study days will count as paid working time. Because this accredited course is a substantial personal benefit, we expect extra personal study to achieve the Certificate to take place in unpaid personal time. An agreement will be drawn up between the post-holder and Skillnet Group committing the post-holder to reimburse a fraction of the cost of course fees to Skillnet Group if they resign within the following timescales:

The whole course fee (£1,800) if the post-holder resigns before 6 months of service

Two thirds of the course fee (£1,200) if the post-holder resigns before 1 year of service

One third of the course fee (£600) if the post-holder resigns before 18 months of service

Person Specification

It is essential:

To have experience in developing relationships with other businesses, generating leads and meeting targets.

To be able to identify and develop creative strategies to meet employers business needs.

To be a natural, experienced networker and partnership builder.

To understand Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Young People.

To be a strong communicator and able to communicate well and clearly with different kinds of people and organisations.

To have strong verbal and written English.

To be able to record information clearly and to a high standard.

To be highly motivated and able to motivate others.

To use computers, especially the internet, social media, email, word processing and spreadsheets.

To be able to produce regular reports and to write employer case studies.

To review and develop marketing materials ensuring a professional, high quality product.

To review and develop an effective employer engagement strategy.

To be able to capture essential data and maintain up to date records.

To be driven by a passion for equality and overcoming disadvantage, particularly for young people with learning difficulties and/or autism.

To be committed to working alongside people with learning difficulties and/or autism as true equals, supporting self-determination over their lives and futures.

To believe in the potential of people with learning difficulties and/or autism as genuine assets to a business.

To be confident in effectively and tactfully breaking down barriers that employers often have around taking on interns with a learning difficulty and/or autism.

To have an understanding of recruitment processes.

To be able to work autonomously and independently, with plenty of initiative.

To work flexibly according to the needs of the project. This may require occasional availability to work in evenings or weekends.

To have, or be willing to work towards, the Level 3 Certificate for Supported Employment Practitioners (see above). This includes personal study in your own, unpaid time.

It is extremely important that you are organised and reliable. Many employers have had negative experiences of unreliable agencies who do not follow through on their promises.

To be sensitive and tactful but also able to give an honest opinion.

To be committed to personal professional development, increasing your knowledge and skills.

To work ethically, minimising your, and your project's, negative impact on other people and the wider environment.

To have a clean driving license and the use of a car with business insurance.

It is desirable:

To have experience supporting people with learning difficulties and/or autism.

To be experienced and well-connected with Medway and Swale businesses, which could mean a proven track record working in recruitment, business support, sales or marketing.

To have prior knowledge and experience of Supported Employment, especially supported internships or similar models of work-based learning.

To understand the law and government policies that relate to disability,

learning difficulties and autism.

To have strong knowledge of the barriers people with learning difficulties and/or autism face with employment.

To personalise support for individuals, making the most of resources to minimise a 'one size fits all' approach to support.

To have an understanding of Access to Work.

To have knowledge of the benefits system in relation to employment.

To be trained in Health and Safety assessments in the workplace.

To have experience of writing effective risk assessments.

To understand the ethics and value of co-production.

To understand Equality and Diversity and put these ideas into practice.

To be aware of Prevent and Channel.

To have experience of supporting young people with preparation for adulthood and into employment.