

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 16th September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and
Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community

SUBJECT: Supported Internship Programme (work-based
study programme)

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the Supported Internship (SI) Programme delivered by HBC's Employment, Learning and Skills division (jointly delivered by Halton People into Jobs and Halton Adult Learning), including outcomes of a recent review and outputs achieved for year 3 (2023 – 2024 delivery).
- 1.2 To provide opportunities to members to raise any questions with regards to the Supported Internship Programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background to the Supported Internship Programme

In April 2021 Halton Borough Council were commissioned to deliver the Supported Internship Programme which is a structured, work-based study programme for young people aged 16-24 with special educational needs (SEND) who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

- 3.2 The programme is contracted to deliver 11 Supported Internships each academic year (Aug-Jul).

- 3.3 The programme is a voluntary programme which is aimed at supporting young people with an EHCP to gain paid employment by:

- Supporting them to develop the skills valued by employers.
- Enabling them to demonstrate their value in the workplace.
- Developing their confidence in their own abilities to perform successfully at work.

- 3.4 The four key principles of the programme are that:

- Supported Interns will spend the majority of their time at the employers premises completing a work placement
 - Supported Interns will follow a personalised study curriculum alongside their time at the employer
 - Job Coaches are central to the study programme and provide support to the young person and the employer
 - The primary goal for the young person is paid employment
- 3.5 The work placements that are undertaken are designed to support the young persons goal of finding paid employment. For the young person, the job must fit with their vocational profile, contributing to their long-term career goal and be flexible enough to address barriers where necessary. For the employer, placements should meet a real business need. The employer should be committed to supporting the young person towards paid employment.
- 3.6 Supported Internships are funded as a study programme, and as such the main source of funding is from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Supported Interns can also apply directly to Access to Work for funding to cover the practical costs of the support in the workplace.
- 3.7 The Supported Internship Programme must be identified as a suitable progression route for the young person in collaboration with the young person, their family member, their current education provider, and the Supported Internship Programme Team Leader. Those referred to the Supported Internship programme must have an education, health, and care plan (EHCP). A copy of this should be shared with the programme team for them to be able to best support the Intern.
- 3.8 The Supported Internship Programme lasts for up to 52wks. Interns start the programme in September and work placements should be identified for them to start by the following February at the latest to enable them to complete a minimum of 6 months in a placement with an employer before they complete the programme the following July.
- 3.9 The programme of study delivered by Halton Adult Learning includes English, maths, IT and employability skills with the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification **where appropriate** for the individual learner. Additionally, the group setting supports with the development of communication and team work skills, whilst supporting the individuals in understanding how to keep themselves safe in learning, online and in the workplace. Additional enrichment opportunities are provided to help develop the young people with SEND i.e. cooking, art and craft etc.
- 3.10 Job Coaches are responsible for working with the Interns to identify suitable placements for them to complete. They continue to support them during the placement until the Intern and the employer are satisfied that they can undertake the role safely independently.
- 3.11 Job Coaches also provide travel training to help the Intern get to their education setting and the employers premises when they start on placement.

This involves travelling with the Intern via public transport until the Intern, their parent/family member and the Job Coach are satisfied that they can undertake their travel safely independently.

3.12 Some Interns have multiple/complex barriers in addition to their special educational needs which has included both mental health and physical health conditions. This requires collaborative working with other internal colleagues including Safeguarding, Social Workers, and the Transition Team. Signposting to specialist organisations to address specific barriers also forms part of the support process and wrap around service provided throughout their time on programme.

3.13 Performance/achievement

Contract delivery commenced in September 2021.

Performance is comprehensively managed and monitored through a range of internal and external measures.

Performance to date

	Number started on programme	Number withdrew	Number started a placement	Number secured employment on completion	Number into further education on completion
Year 1 21/22	11	1	10	4	4
Year 2 22/23	9	0	4	2	2
Year 3 23/24	8	3	2	1 1 also started self-employment	1

3.14 Bespoke training has also been sourced for some Interns on the programme to enhance their employability prospects i.e. food hygiene, first aid, make up and beauty workshops/qualification.

3.15 On completion of the programme in July 2024 the following outputs were achieved:

- ✓ 1 young person started self-employment and they also secured a place on a level 2 photography course.
- ✓ 1 young person offered a paid contract of employment.
- ✓ 3 young people referred to other council services to access ongoing support with their next steps i.e. volunteering, social development and access to community services.

3.16 **Review of the Supported Internship Programme (year 3 – 2024)**

Delivery of the Supported Internship Programme during year 3 presented some key challenges that had the potential to impact on other services that are successfully delivered by the Employment, Learning and Skills Division (in particular at Kingsway Learning Centre) such as:

- Difficulties recruiting to key roles within the Supported Internship delivery team (Team Leader)
- Suitability of referrals and understanding that the Supported Internship Programme is a step towards paid employment.
- Emotional and behavioural difficulties that the Interns presented with
- Fewer Supported Interns being able to start a placement with an employer.

3.17 Following the review in year 3 the following actions were agreed and implemented in preparation for year 4 delivery:

- Team Leader recruited following approval to extend the end date of the job (meeting funding requirements)
- Creation and recruitment of a Supported Internship Pastoral Coach to support Interns with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Creation of a dedicated SEND Tutor role to teach the Interns (recruitment to this is ongoing and interim delivery arrangements will be put in place for September delivery)
- Change to the eligibility criteria from 16-24 to 18-24 to ensure young people with SEND are more suitably referred to the programme.
- Changes to marketing and presentations to key partners to emphasise the importance of suitable referrals to the Supported Internship Programme and Interns/parents/carers understand that a placement is a step towards paid employment.
- Commitment to support 100% of Year 4 Supported Interns into a placement (year 4 delivery starts in September)

3.18 **Supporting the wider SEND agenda in Halton for both young people and adults**

During 2023 – 2024 we have been able to support the wider SEND agenda in Halton around access to employment, learning and skills.

- Presentations delivered at the Halton SEND employment forum and ALD board to a wide range of key partners.
- Closer working with services that support young people with the transition to adulthood including employment and skills.
- Collaborative working between 14-19 team, Family Hubs, Schools, Riverside College, and the Supported Internship team to create a SEND hub at Brookvale Children Centre/Family Hub
- Addressing key themes/barriers that can impact on young people progressing towards paid employment:
 - Parent/carer fear
 - Employers real/perceived perceptions
 - Social and communication

3.19 **Key Successes**

This is the third year the Halton Employment, Learning Skills division has

delivered a Supported Internship Programme. The knowledge and skills of the delivery team has enhanced the experience that the Supported Interns received.

3.20 Feedback from the Interns and their families/parents has been really positive stating that the support they received on the programme has been life changing.

3.21 Key issues

Recruitment of sufficiently qualified and experienced front-line staff to deliver the programme has been a challenge. Advertising currently for a dedicated SEND Tutor to deliver the academic side of the programme including maths, English, IT, and employability skills.

3.22 Concluding comments

The team that delivers the Supported Internship Programme have worked hard, showed passion and commitment to improve the lives of young people with SEND. The team are currently working with 7 young people to prepare them for start the programme in September where we are committed to ensuring 100% of the Interns start a placement with an employer that could lead to paid employment in the future, this includes placements within HBC. We are keen for senior managers to help raise the profile of Supported Internships and increase opportunities for young people with SEND within HBC so we can lead by example (HBC has level 3 leader status under the Disability Confidence scheme).

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Key policy implications have related to Safeguarding Children & Young People. Policies have been reviewed and continue to be updated in line with guidance to keep young people safe.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Supported Internships are funded as a study programme, and as such the main source of funding is from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Supported Interns can also apply directly to the DWP's Access to Work programme for funding to cover the practical costs of the support in the workplace.

5.2 High Needs funding is also used to support the delivery of the Supported Internship Programme

5.3 Income and expenditure are closely monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Supported Interns will be signposted to various health and wellbeing initiatives that are delivered by Halton Borough Council and other external agencies including the Health Improvement Team to support individuals with a range of complex health barriers. Health and wellbeing modules are also covered as part of their learning programme. Promoting and supporting greater independence is a key aim of the Supported Internship Programme.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The fantastic achievements that have come out of the various programmes delivered by Halton Borough Council's Employment, Learning and Skills Division increasing qualification levels and getting so many people into work are a very positive outcome for the local economy. Many of the individuals that have accessed the programme have also gained vital maths, English, IT, and employability skills along the way, in addition to sector specific qualifications such as food hygiene, hair and beauty etc. Signposting to partner organisations to support has been a key part of the programme. Delivery of the Supported Internship Programme will continue to build on the success we have had previously.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The Supported Internship Programme supports both young people aged 18-24 with SEND and their families (parents/carers). Key elements of the programme help young people develop a wide range of skills that help in the workplace and at home i.e. communication, social, team building, goal setting and practical skills such as cooking.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The Supported Internship Programme supports vulnerable young people with SEND that need support to access paid employment. The Supported Internship team liaises with Halton Employers to tackle inequality and source placements for the Interns that they deserve equal access to.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Supported Internship Programme supports young people aged 18-24 with SEND and their families (parents/carers) to access opportunities and help in the community. Placements can take place in community venues such as Adult Learning and Library Services to help Interns value the services available within the community.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The management of the Supported Internship Programme has been meticulous and close monitoring both internally and externally to ensure any risks identified are carefully mitigated, with clear action plans in place to address any underperformance, quality, and compliance factors

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.