

# Partner with Project Choice



**A guide for NHS trusts, Local Authorities, SEND  
Providers and private business**

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# What is Project Choice?

Project Choice is a specialist **College** providing tailored educational support, and a **supported internship course** for young adults aged 16-24 with disabilities, learning disabilities/difficulties and/ or Autism.

We partner with NHS healthcare settings, local organisations and private businesses to create supported work environments to provide real work experience for our Interns.

Our support is tailored to each Intern, based on their skills and interests.

Interns spend 1 year learning employability skills and attend three, 12-week placements with a Project Choice Partner.

The College is supported by the NHS as part of the ongoing commitment to improving employment outcomes for vulnerable groups.

The College and Internship Programme are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the commissioning Local Authorities through individual Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).



## Our Approach

Project Choice has been supporting Interns for over 15 years. These are our values:

**Person-centred;** considering the individual needs of all Project Choice stakeholders to enable our interns get the best start to their working careers.

**Outcome Focused;** creating positive outcomes for the interns and business partners.

**Quality driven;** ensuring that we maintain a high standard of support and education.

**Excellence;** being the best in our field and transforming societal expectations of people with additional needs.

## Our College

Project Choice is a registered College and provides Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) educational support.

All of our education provision is subject to Ofsted Inspection and DFE regulations.

We teach an ESFA-approved curriculum and National Council for Further Education (NCFE) accredited provision.

Our curriculum includes:

- Employability Skills
- Functional Maths and English
- Preparation for Adulthood
- CV, interview and job search preparation



*“This high-quality Supported Internship programme creates an ambitious challenge for a successful future for the interns.”*

**- Ofsted Report (Jan 2020)**

## Our Success

In 2020 - 2021 Project Choice provided



over

**234**

hours of  
education



of our

**160**

Students



over

**17**

Local areas  
across England



with a

**93%**

course  
completion rate



## Our Supported Internship course

All educational-based delivery is embedded into placement provision completed through the Supported Internship Programme.

This ensures our Interns are actively learning soft and hard work skills in real work environments.

- Project Choice operates 5 days a week, Monday to Friday.
- Educational classes and placement run over the academic year, September to July.
- Placements with Project Choice business partners are bespoke and related to each Interns skills and interests.
- Throughout the year, each week Interns attend 1 full day of education and 4 days of professional placements.
- Interns are given a 2 week full-time induction prior to starting any placements with educational learning including confidentiality, inclusion and diversity and professional expectations.
- Interns attend all additional training as required by their placement partner.
- Local Coordinators complete weekly/ fortnightly reviews and work with partners to develop and maintain the Intern placements.



### Intern Role Examples

- Data Entry
- Human Resources
- Reception
- Information Services
- Gardening and Horticulture
- Catering and Hospitality
- Domestic Services
- Retail assistants
- Care assistants

*Our Interns can do anything with the right support!*

# Why is Project Choice important?

Nationally, employment for people with a Learning Disability is increasing low, in comparison to people without a learning disability. Supported Internships are proven to have economical and social impacts for both the intern and the intern business partner.

In 2020 – 2021 only

5.1%

of adults with learning disabilities aged 18-64



were in **paid employment**

(BASE, 2021)



Research has found that Supported Internships increase

**Self-determination and confidence**

**Participation**

**Reciprocal relationships**

**Social Inclusion in the workplace**

(Hanson et al, 2021)

## The NHS and Supported Internships

Project Choice is part of Health Education England's Talent for Care Strategic Framework developed and published in 2014, recognising that more needed to be done to improve the education, training and development opportunities available to those in the support workforce

This strategic framework focused on ten strategic intentions under the primary themes of:

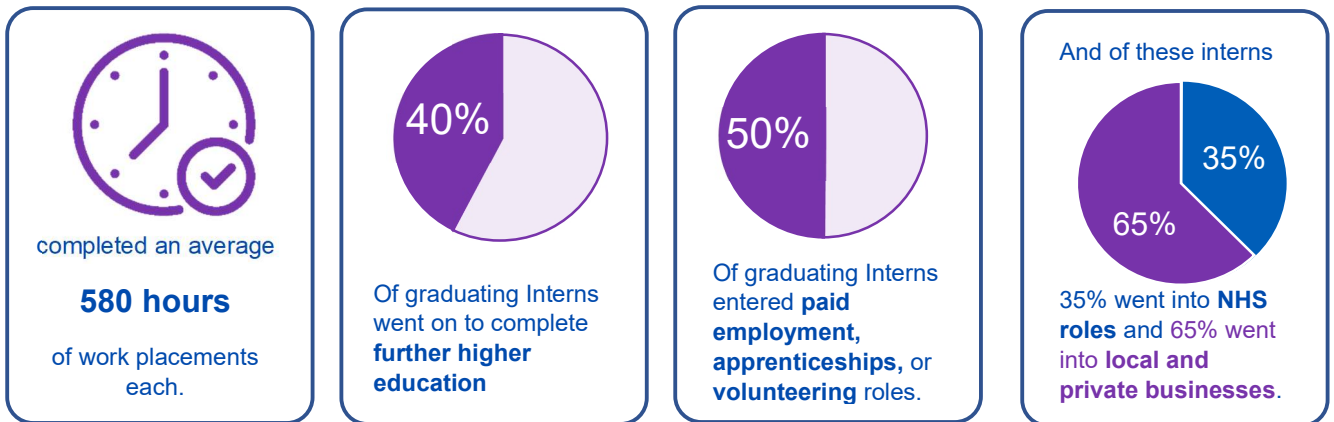
**Get In** - opportunities for people to start their career in a support role

**Get On** - support people to be the best they can be in the job they do

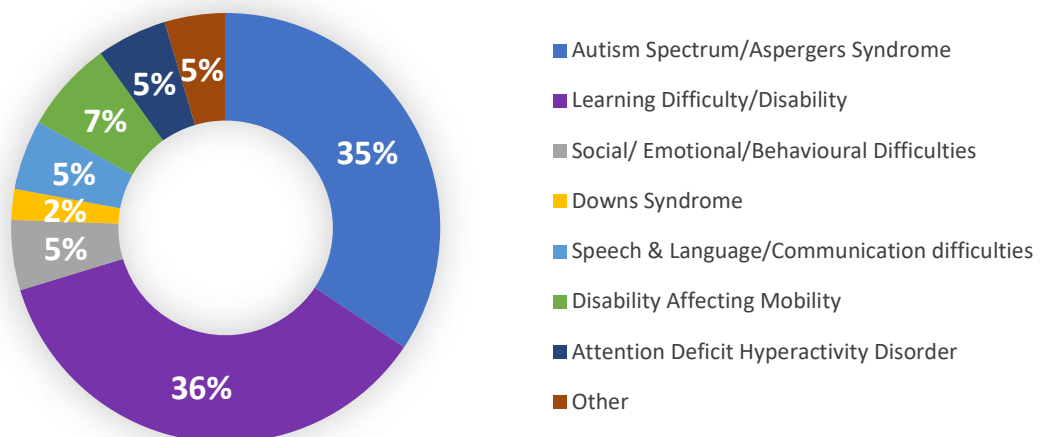
**Go Further** - provide opportunities for career progression, including into registered professions.

# The Project Choice impact

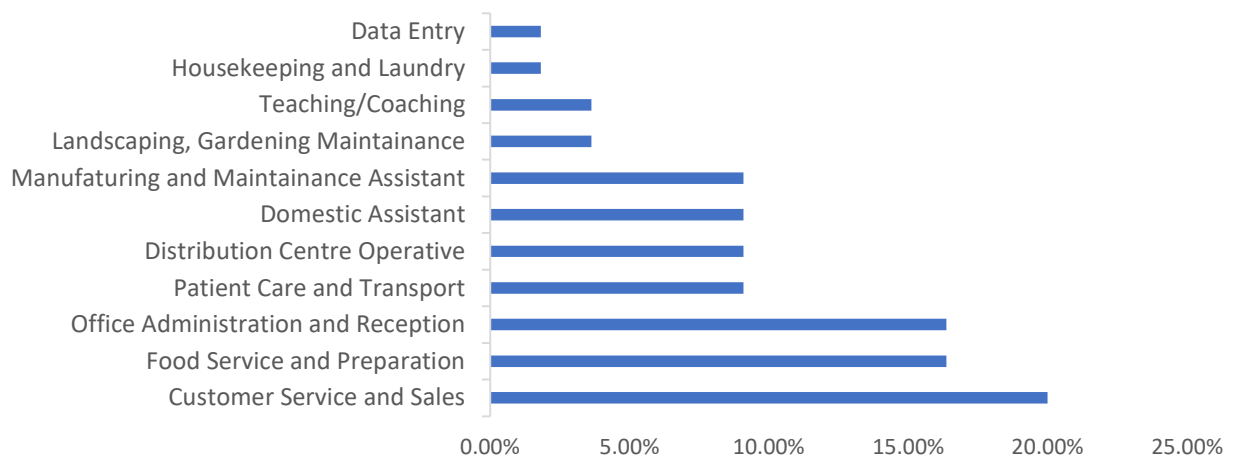
Nationally, in 2020 – 2021 academic year, Project Choice Interns...



## Intern demographics



## Intern job roles



# What are the benefits of Project Choice?

## Interns

- Preparing young people for higher education and / or employment
- Increasing confidence and self-determination.
- Having choice, control and freedom over their lives.
- Opening doors and opportunities that were once not attainable.
- Participating in society, including having friends and supportive relationships
- Participating in, and contributing to the local community
- Being as healthy as possible in adult life

## Families

- Reassurance that there are opportunities for their child when leaving school
- Decreases pressure on family involvement when supporting to find employment.

## Local Authorities

- Meets the requirements of the Preparing for Adulthood Agenda
- Simplified transition framework for SEND school leavers.
- Employment opportunities and working young people increases economic impact of the LA.



## NHS Trusts

- Meets the Talent for Care agenda to increase employment for vulnerable groups.
- Project Choice and Supported Internships are included in the NHS 50 year strategic plan.
- Labour and skills support for already stretched NHS workforce.



## Local Business

- Additional staff and support for your business.
- Free training on disability awareness and mentoring
- Support with Access to work applications
- Direct links to the local community and the NHS.



## National Business

- Additional Staff and support for your business.
- Meets the requirements of Disability Confident Employer commitment.
- Strengthening your Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Free training on disability awareness and mentoring to staff.
- National recognition as being a partner with the NHS.



# Why become a Project Choice partner?

Joining with Project Choice to become a business partner for placements is the best step when increasing your social inclusion and disability participation in the wider community.

We provide support for every Intern placement to ensure we maintain our relationships and create opportunities for young people with disabilities, learning disabilities/ difficulties and Autism.

The Intern should cost  
**£0.00**



And should always be of benefit to your business



We provide  
**60 hours**  
of placement support  
per week

## The support we provide

We know that supporting Interns can be daunting and we are here to help you.

We support our partners and Interns by:

- Training designated staff within your organisation to be **Mentors**
- Working with you to create bespoke roles and responsibilities that match the Intern's skills and the needs of the business.
- Conducting weekly or fortnightly reviews to ensure the quality of the placement for both your business and the Intern.
- Being available at any point to assist with any issues that arise from the placement.
- Provide a one-to-one Job Coach on site where required.
- Direct contact to a local Project Choice Area Manager and Coordinator that are available whenever needed.

# Our offer and recognition

Project Choice recognise that without our partners we would not be able to meet the needs of our Interns or offer the diversity of experience that they need to succeed in the working world.

## 1. Training

### Inclusive workplace team training & mentor induction

Our Mentor Induction is mandatory to understand the individual needs of the Intern. This is offered to all staff that work with our students and we offer information and strategies on how to support people with a learning difficulty/ disability and/ or Autism.

### Optional Training

- Disability Awareness
- Training in Systemic Instruction Awareness Session

## 2. Partner Recognition Scheme

### Industry Awards:

Each year we apply for 5 industry awards on behalf of our College, partners and/or students.

## 3. Publicity

Where agreed, we will support or organise:

- Social Media posts including case studies of your Intern work
- Linking your business through stories in the NHS Talent for Care industry news.
- Linking with local or national media to promote both Project Choice and your business through the Internship Course.

# The next steps

Are you interested in becoming a partnered NHS Trust or Business?

We have outlined the next steps of the process to ensure that all policies and procedures are followed.

1



## Documentation

- NHS Placement Agreement
- Health and Safety Checklist

2



## Staff Engagement

- Key staff nominated as mentors
- Project Choice staff conduct training and mentor induction
- Go through One Page Profile of Intern and any reasonable adjustments or work strategies discussed

3



## Meet and Greet

- Project Choice coordinate a meet and greet for the Intern and your staff.
- Complete a local orientation checklist
- Create a work plan and timetable provided to the Intern.

4



## Placement start and continuous engagement

- Project Choice staff will attend weekly, then fortnightly to review the placement and get feedback.
- You can contact the Project Choice team at any time for any support.

## Intern Case Study

Megan has special education needs and disabilities including a genetic disorder called 22Q11 Deletion Syndrome (or Di George Syndrome) and ADHD.

She commenced the Project Choice Internship in September 2019, and completed two placements at the in her local NHS Hospital.



Megan overcame challenges relating to self confidence and made excellent progress on the Internship, receiving positive feedback from both placements.

In February 2020, she secured a job as a domestic services assistant at ENGIE Soft Services, supporting the NHS during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Intern Case Study

Liam attended a specialist ASD school and Sixth Form before starting a Supported Internship with Project Choice in September 2019.

He worked hard and excelled in both of his work placements, and during the year his confidence improved, learning many valuable work and independence skills.



Despite the Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown, Liam continued to receive support from Project Choice staff with applying for jobs, and his hard work paid off: he's now secured paid employment at a food manufacturer in his local city.

“

*“Having our student over the past few weeks has been a godsend. Our student carried out tasks which take a lot of my time and has enabled me to free up time to deal with patients” - **Employer Mentor**, 2021*

*“The student we have worked with fitted into the office atmosphere with ease. It was a great experience for both us and for him too.” - **Employer Mentor**, 2020*

*“The sense of seeing someone improve in such a short space of time is very rewarding” - **Employer Mentor**, 2021*

”

“

*“We are very grateful to Project Choice for the very caring and down-to-earth way they have provided for our daughter” - **Parent of Intern***

*“This project is the best thing she has ever done. The plan is for her to do a childcare qualification at the end of this project and the nursery are keen for her to stay on with them; she is on cloud nine” - **Parent of Intern***

”



## Find out more



### About Project Choice



Gateshead Region: [Project Choice - YouTube](#)



London Region: [Project Choice - giving young people a chance to work - YouTube](#)

### Why join Project Choice?

Video for employers **COMING SOON!**

Website:

### Follow us on Social Media

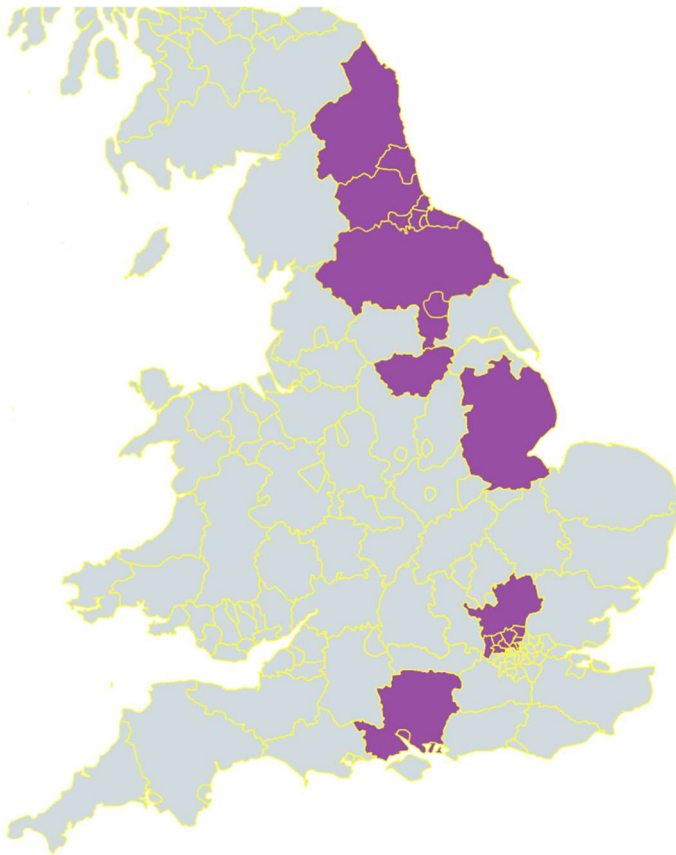
@ProjectChoiceHEE



# Our Locations

Project Choice is currently in local areas across England.

We are expanding every year into new areas across the country. If you would like a Project Choice in your area, please contact us.



## North

- Darlington
- Durham
- Hartlepool
- Middlesbrough and Redcar
- Newcastle
- North Tyneside
- Northumberland
- South Tyneside
- Stockton
- Sunderland

## Yorkshire and Humber

- York
- Doncaster
- Sheffield
- Lincolnshire

## London

- Barnet
- Brent
- Camden
- Enfield
- Haringey
- Harrow
- Hillingdon
- Islington

## South

- Hertfordshire
- Hampshire
- Portsmouth
- Southampton

**Contact us about starting new locations**



If you would like further information about Project Choice please get in touch with our team at the address below:

## CONTACT US

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**Health Education England**