

SEND VIRTUAL WORK PLACEMENTS

EMPLOYER GUIDE



Creating positive career possibilities for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

🕒 1-2 hours

📅 4-5 weeks / 1 day

👤 Ages 14-19

HOW DOES IT WORK?

SEND Work Experience Programme (4-5 x 1-2 hour consecutive weekly sessions)

We recommend that your placement runs over 4/5 weeks, with each session lasting 1-2 hours. All SEND placements will be delivered virtually to groups of students within schools with students supported by their teacher throughout the placement. The sessions will be live and interactive, delivered via our Google Meet Platform. Speakers for Schools will promote your placement to all SEND registered schools, then manage the application onboarding process, so you will simply have to turn up and deliver your placement.

SEND Insight Sessions (2 hours)

We recommend that your placement runs over a shorter period of time, such as a short insight day with a morning and/or afternoon session. These SEND placements will be delivered virtually, directly to students within schools during term time to allow students to be supported by their teacher throughout the placement. The session will be live and interactive, delivered via our Google Meet Platform. Speakers for Schools will promote your placement to all registered schools, specifically seeking SEND students, then manage the application onboarding process, so you will simply have to turn up and deliver your placement.

WHY DELIVER A PLACEMENT FOR SEND STUDENTS?



Strengthen your workforce

People with learning difficulties are dedicated workers, have fewer sick days and often apply to roles more difficult to fill.



Inclusion and diversity

A diverse workforce reflects your customer base, enhances your reputation and improves community relations.



Impact

Support your talent pipeline, embed disability confidence throughout your organisation.



Support growth

Proven to improve levels of performance, productivity, retention and staff moral.

CONSIDERATIONS - MAKING YOUR PLACEMENT ACCESSIBLE

- Make sessions shorter, to accommodate shorter concentration levels.
- Consider appropriate content, keep language simple and understand barriers for young people to access the placement.
- Build extra time into the placement to get to know the students, so you become familiar to the young people taking part.
- Consider (if possible) providing items that could support the experience to make it more hands on and visual.
- Become familiar with tools within Google Classrooms that can support accessibility for young people.
- Always use clear, concise and positive language.
- There will be a series of webinars delivered by Mencap and Ambitious about Autism for all employers to attend, to support you in delivering an engaging and inspirational virtual placement.

SEND INSIGHT SESSION – EXAMPLE FORMAT

Activity	Content	Who
Optional pre-activity	Share information about who the students will meet and ask them to consider questions they would like to ask	
Welcome and setting expectations (5 mins)		Teacher/host employee
Introduction to the company & employee volunteers (10 mins)	Company overview – Outlining the organisation’s purpose and structure	Employee
Employability skills related task and discussion (20 mins)	This could be a brainstorming activity asking them to consider what skills and characteristics your ideal employee has or you could set them mini tasks/challenges/ice breaker type games to practice key skills	Students, teacher, employees
Comfort break (5 mins)		
Work related task/ group activity (30-60 mins)	This could be a problem to solve or brief to work towards that your employees might do (simplified) You may ask them to work in small groups and present back their ideas	Students, teacher, employees
Comfort break (5 mins)		
Career roles & pathways exploration (20 mins)	This could be a Q&A panel of volunteers or key speaker and Q&A - allowing students to get to hear from volunteers about their careers (consider relatable role models)	Students, teacher, employees

SEND WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME – EXAMPLE FORMAT

When	Activity	Content	Who
Week 1	Pre-prep (1 hour)	Aims & objectives, who the students are, their needs, what they might experience, adaptations that might need to be made and communication requirements. Pre-prep for students to complete – A-Z of jobs in your industry.	School's main contact & employer facilitated by Speakers for Schools
Week 2	Icebreaker/ Workplace tour (1-2 hours)	Students & employers practice with technology, introduce themselves, icebreaker then feedback on A-Z of industry roles. Exercise to uncover more hidden roles: treasure hunt, map of the site, what happens here, talking heads, video tour or meet the staff. A small task left with students to complete in class to prep for next session.	Teacher, students & employer
Week 3	Workplace challenge (1-2 hours)	Practical task set by employer eg if you could design/build your own classroom/school what would it look like? (employer to design the challenge).	Students, teachers & employer
Week 4	Check-in (1 hour)	Employers check-in on students to see how they are getting on, are they on the right track and respond to follow-up questions from the students.	Students, teachers & employer
Week 5	Presentation (1-2 hours)	Students present/feedback to the employers. Employers give feedback and pose/answer questions. Complete A-Z of job roles (how different does it look to initial attempt?)	Students, teachers, employer

CONSIDERATIONS – MAKING YOUR PLACEMENT ACCESSIBLE

Your content

- Keep sessions short with plenty of regular breaks
- When planning your content limit the time allocated to presentations/ speaking at students (max 15 minutes at a time) and keep powerpoint slides to a minimum
- Design interactive tasks and activities that students can complete in groups
- Consider appropriate content, keep language simple and understand barriers for young people to access the placement
- Build extra time into the placement to get to know the students, so you become familiar to the young people taking part
- Where possible, involve their teacher in the planning so that they understand the activities and how they can support
- Consider (if possible) providing items that could support the experience to make it more hands on and visual.
- You can include pre-recorded videos. Tours of your workplace, talking heads with staff members who can't support a live session, or a promotional overview of your business (but keep them short and simple
- Familiarise yourself with the Google Classrooms features, and consider how functions can be best utilised to support accessible for students eg. turning captions on

Your volunteers

- There will be a series of webinars delivered by Mencap and Ambitious about Autism open to all employers to attend, to support you in delivering an engaging and inspirational virtual placement
- Recruit suitable volunteers who will be positive role models for the students, those who have specific expertise and/or lived experience is especially beneficial
- If you have employees who have lived experience of SEND who are comfortable sharing their experience, careers pathway, top tips for securing employment with a supportive employer etc you could build in 10-15 minutes to do this

On the day delivery

- Always use clear, concise and positive language- avoid using jargon or acronyms
- Ask questions during presentations to ensure they remain interactive and engage students in the content
- Where there are teachers present, work collaboratively to involve them in the content and to help facilitate engagement from the students
- Be friendly, relaxed and flexible in your delivery- you may need to adapt/ adjust your timings and/or content to respond to the students on the day

TASK EXAMPLES

The more interactive your session is the better. Alongside interactive talks, quizzes, virtual tours etc you should build in one or more activities/tasks for students to enhance their learning and/or develop their skills. These tasks should be relevant to your business or industry so that they are getting a genuine insight in your world of work.

Example tasks based on your workplace:

- Coming up with a new product or idea that helps to solve a business problem
- Responding to a client brief
- Listening to a customer complaint and writing a formal letter to them to apologise
- Creating a presentation on how your business can improve their social media presence
- Researching your key competitors and summarising how they compare
- Creating a presentation on how your organisation can advertise its job roles to young people
- Choosing the best candidate for your job vacancy
- Designing a new futuristic school and pitching their design to a panel
- Watching a recorded meeting and creating meeting notes on key points