



Talent City Programme



What does success look like?

Young people with learning disabilities and autism have many skills and talents to offer employers, bringing richness of diversity into an organisation. It is the difference between being a valued member of society or facing a lifetime of exclusion, loneliness and poverty. A life changing opportunity for the individual, their family and the organisations they work within.

Many young people are now flourishing in successful careers in major organisations after completing our year-long Talent City internship programme. The programme allows individuals to develop and demonstrate their skills and capabilities, so employers can see their contribution clearly. It's not a charitable act, it just makes commercial sense.

Aims

The programme aims to bring positive change and significant impact, for the interns, their families and the employers, including:

- Allowing every young person to find their own skills and talents.
- Moving those furthest from employment out of the benefits and poverty trap.
- Creating sustainable careers ideally suited to the individual.

- Helping young people and families to develop aspirations and have a positive outlook for the future.
- Creating a wider talent pool of young people included within society.
- Up-skilling partner companies' abilities to include those with additional needs.
- Changing HR processes to be more inclusive and remove unnecessary barriers.
- Changing organisational and national perceptions so organisations want to be involved until it becomes the norm.

Getting Started

Strong relationships with educational partners are vital, to provide the foundations for a well planned and supported pathway into the programme. Successful programmes start with careful preparation with 3 different stakeholder groups and then gradually bringing them together to work as one. These are the Students, their families and the employers:

Students and Families

Currently, within specialist education, activities such as building aspirations, awareness of employment pathways and providing rich experiences and opportunities with employers are not well served, resulting in many students not being work ready.

The programme has created a series of supported micro-businesses to deliver a full year's foundation internship called **Talent City 1**. Students work within the supported businesses to gain confidence and develop their work skills for one day a week. Supported businesses include:

- **Keepers Coffee and Kitchen** - a café serving home-made vegan and gluten free food, selling gifts and re-loved clothing and offering diverse roles from barista skills to social media for 20 interns a year.
- **Branching Out Grounds Maintenance and Gardening Services** - develops students with more physical and practical skills.
- **Keepers Create** - where commercial quality candles, soaps, cards, scarves are designed, developed, marketed and sold by students.

Because they are supported, businesses students flourish, making rapid progress and are generally ready to move onto Talent City 2 - a full time 1 year internship with a major employer.

Talent City 2 is where our interns are specifically matched to the right employer and roles are designed around their skills and talents using a job carving technique to ensure there is a perfect match, within their capabilities and interests, and will continue to develop and motivate them. To ensure success the employer visits their educational setting to talk about what they do. The students are invited for a tour and if interested employers invite them to a work inspiration

day at to try out a series of roles.

Once selected for a role, job coaches work with them and the employer to ensure they succeed both in the role and within personal targets, hopefully all the way to gaining employment.

The Family

Not all families are used to building aspirations for their children as there has not been a lot to aspire to in the past, so it is key that they are part of this journey. Often one parent has not been able to work in order to manage their children's needs and their child may be supported through benefits which can be frightening for a family if these suddenly cease so it is vital that they come on the journey with us and meet the employer and start to believe that their young person can achieve paid employment.

The Employer

Ideally the employer engages at board or very senior level so that whole organisational buy in is gained at the outset. This can take between 6 to 18 months with many meetings and presentations and tours of live programmes for them to feel confident to come on board. We provide programme management nurturing them all the way from 'go-live' and through to employment at the end. We work with all parties and deliver safeguarding training, workshops and training around working with young people with autism or learning disabilities, risk assessments, monitoring and evaluation, target setting and appraisals and many more key activities that lead to employment.





Challenges

- **Helping students to become 'work-ready'** to successfully start a supported internship. For many specialist education providers, the delivery of a careers framework, whole school employability curriculum and quality work experience provision are in their fledgling stages. Close partnership working is enabling leaps forward, but funding limitations are an on-going barrier to jointly manage and overcome.
- **Getting employers engaged** – we have been running a Supportive Employers Forum for 12 months now and it takes a lot more than a leap of faith for them to get involved. We are being successful and sharing best practice on how we have done this and supporting many authorities to do the same but it takes time and resources to do this.
- **Paid work at the end** – a key criteria for an employer is that they will potentially be able to offer paid work at the end, however if there are recruitment freezes, change of personnel, restructures, mergers or take-overs etc. in an organisation it can impact on the outcome. It is not impossible but highly labour intensive and time consuming to find employment for a successful intern as a new organisation will not have had the journey with them and therefore appreciate their skills and talent.

Progress Made

Within the first year of launching the first micro-business, Keepers Coffee and Kitchen, in November 2015 14 students successfully completed the programme, developing their work-based skills by following the BTEC Work Skills programme.

- **The majority of these student went on, with confidence, to college** and undertook vocational courses which they otherwise would not have done.

- **4 students moved onto Lighthouse Futures Trust's first supported internship programme** based in Yorkshire Water. Interns worked in finance, shared services, catering and HR.
- **All 5 interns got paid employment within Yorkshire Water.** One was responsible for spotting fraud and errors on 28 multi-million-pound bank accounts and he was so fast and accurate in his role he gained a full-time role within the finance team. One gained work in data migration with a new team that had just set-up and the others worked in shared services on HR projects.
- **The second microbusiness, Branching Out,** launched in 2016 delivering grounds maintenance and gardening services to safeguarded environments including schools, care homes and some residential properties.
- **By 2017 the programme had developed highly prestigious companies ready for involvement in the programme** with KPMG, Carillion, John Lewis and a repeated programme with Yorkshire Water. Each organisation had 5 - 9 interns.
- **During 2017 programme figures had grown** to 32 on Talent City 1 and 16 in Talent City 2.
- In response to the successful growth **the charity set up its own recruitment arm** - Talent Recruitment - to ensure paid work for all. So far this has resulted in 9 successful job offers and paid work.
- **A total of 76 students have now completed the programme** creating life-changing experiences for all, but in particular to employers who have all been able to see the benefits of a wider and more diverse pool of talent available to them.

Key learning

- Schools and colleges cannot afford the additional staff required for job coaching, therefore Access to Work is vital to success.
- If the employer cannot offer paid employment at the end it takes 10 times the amount of effort to find work elsewhere.
- The programme created a supply of opportunities with employers, but the demand was limited by learners not being work-ready enough to enter the Talent City 2 stage.

Next Steps

As well as recruiting young people to the foundation and full supported internships, the programme is further developing its microbusinesses and has presented to over 250 companies and already has a vibrant Supportive Employers Forum.

Following conversations with its regional PfA group and Leeds City Council, the Lighthouse Futures Trust has developed a proposal to establish a Yorkshire and Humber regional supported internship centre for excellence.

The centre of excellence will encompass a regional network of local authorities committed to improvement and innovation in delivering supported internships. It will tap into the abundance of skills, knowledge and strategic intent across the region to learn, share, develop and collaborate.

It will also build regional capacity of job coaches, develop and share best practice and develop networks with employers at local and the regional level.

Membership of the regional supported internship centre of excellence includes:

- Training in Level 3 Job coach qualification and TSI: Training in systematic instruction.
- Mentoring for the job coaches to support CPD and build confidence in their role.
- Access to a regional network of job coaches.
- Access to a regional network of strategic leaders responsible for rolling out internships in their area – to share, learn and problem solve together e.g. how to commission supported internships, developing effective employer networks, regional QA system, building micro enterprises to enable access to high quality work experience as a pathway into supported internships etc.
- 5 places at regional conference – celebrating and showcasing best practice and learning from across the region.

An Awards Event is also being planned for graduates across the city in July 2019.

The programme is also working in collaboration with a group of special schools in the Midlands and South to liaise regarding best practice, share national employers and maximise opportunities to gain and learn from each other.

More Information

Visit <https://lighthousefuturestrust.org.uk/>

