

## Stage 1 Work Experience Information Pack

For placements and mentors



## What is Stage 1 – Work Experience

This is a programme led by Health Education England in partnership with NHS organisations and private sector companies.

This stage of the Project Choice programme offers young people aged 16-24 with learning difficulties/disabilities or autism (LDDA) the opportunity to gain work experience through half-termly placements. During their placement each student is assigned a mentor who is a member of staff from the department where the student is working. All mentors undertake the role on a voluntary basis, in addition to their usual job, and receive training and support.

The work experience we provide has demonstrated an improvement in learner attitudes and confidence. The learners themselves believe it builds confidence and helps them understand about the world of work and how to interact with work colleagues.

The teachers have identified a change in attitudes, positive approaches and a clear understanding of the world of work. Staff mentors have identified a clear understanding of students' needs and an improved understanding of working with and supporting people with LDDA.

Project Choice provides direct, supported training which leads to preparation for jobs in the labour market. The project enables an untapped labour market to become competitive active members of the public / private sector workforce.

**Project Choice** is a programme that helps young adults gain work experience and improve employability and independence skills.

The programme provides internships within healthcare settings and other NHS partner organisations in supported environments getting you ready for the working world.

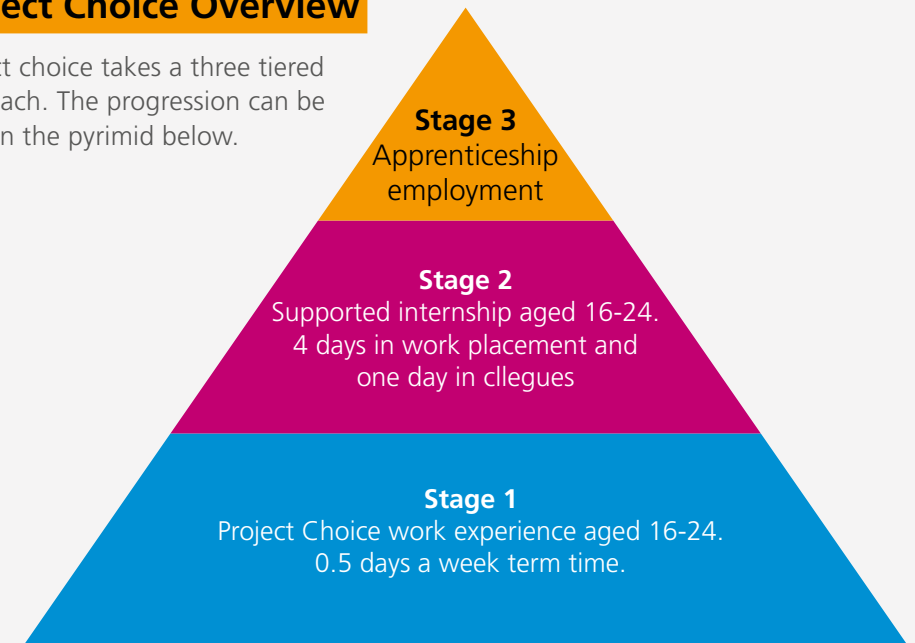
The support given is tailored to each person and we match employment options to each person's skills.

## The core aims of Project Choice Stage 1 are:

- ▶ To empower learners with their rights as individuals in the workplace.
- ▶ To raise awareness of the opportunities for young people in the labour market.
- ▶ To develop an understanding of what work means.
- ▶ To develop communication skills and independence.
- ▶ To raise awareness of the high impact, high quality, high calibre and high performance that a person with a learning difficulty can bring to the workplace.
- ▶ To bring equality into the workplace.
- ▶ To provide the learners with a life experience outside of the home and school.
- ▶ To create a viable pathway to work through partnerships with other organisations.

## Project Choice Overview

Project choice takes a three tiered approach. The progression can be seen in the pyramid below.





## How do learners get a placement?

Their School/College would provide the coordinator with a profile for every learner that they want to put forward for placements that academic year

Two weeks before every half term schools nominate learner for placements for the coming half term, they are matched to the available placements by the coordinator.

## How long does a placement last?

Placements are in half-termly blocks.

Slight variations in start and finish times are possible with everyone's agreement.

## How does a placement begin?

Learners begin their placement with a "Meet and Greet". This is a time when the student and mentor can get to know each other and ask questions in an informal environment.

The learner is accompanied by a teacher/carer on the first week. It usually lasts about 45 minutes to an hour. The mentors will be provided with the learners profile prior to this.

## What type of placements are available?

We have a variety of placements in admin/clerical and practical settings in the public sector. The range and variety of placements we offer is always being expanded.

## How many placements are available?

The number of placements available varies substantially with mentor availability, department workloads etc. Most schools/colleges nominate three learners and the co-ordinator will try and accommodate as many as possible.

## How does a placement end?

Every learner and their mentor are invited to a certificate presentation to celebrate the end of their placement.

Every learner receives a certificate.

## What is a profile?

A profile is a pen portrait of the learner set out under a series of headings. This is available to the mentors prior to the Meet and Greet. It's great to have a profile that is as detailed as possible. This is used as the basis for trying to match the learner to a placement. It is also essential information for us to ensure we know the support needs of the individual.

## What is the school's responsibility?

Schools are responsible for nominating learners for placements and submitting their profiles within the deadlines requested by the coordinator.

Schools are required to return a Project Choice work experience agreement to us stating that you will do your best to tell us in good time when learners aren't going to be able to make a particular session. In the past we have lost valuable placements because managers and mentors have made arrangements to take a learner and that learner hasn't arrived. Mentors often arrange their shift patterns to accommodate a learner and it's unfair for them to be left waiting for someone who is not going to arrive with no explanation.

If the learner has any events (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh etc) diarised for times when they should be in placement – please let us know. We have had learners who have started placements and only actually been able to do one or two sessions because

they have been scheduled to do something else with that time.

Schools and mentors are asked to help the learner record what has happened on the placement by completing a simple diary. Many diaries contain photographs of the learner working and therefore parental permission for photography needs to be obtained.

## What about transport?

The transportation of learners is the responsibility of the schools/colleges. Many learners can travel independently to placements.

## What is the role of the co-ordinator?

The Work Experience co-ordinator is responsible for sourcing placements, training mentors, providing support during the running of the placements in each area, visiting schools to promote the scheme and general administration of the day to day running and development of Stage 1 of Project Choice.

## Who are the mentors?

All mentors volunteer to be part of Project Choice. They work at all levels of our partner organisations. The vast majority have had no or very little experience of working with people with learning disabilities/difficulties/autism before becoming mentors.

## Do mentors get any training?

Mentor training consists of a one hour session. This is often conducted centrally and potential mentors are invited. Alternatively it may take place in the mentor's place of work.

The main focus is a relaxed exploration to enable a learner to reach their potential and how.

## How are mentors supported?

The coordinator is always available to support mentors either via the telephone, e-mails or in person. Mentors are free to ask questions at any time.



## What about risk assessment?

Public sector organisations have risk assessments for every department and for specific areas within those departments. Learners on stage 1 fit under these assessments and are subject to them. You in accordance with your school policies are free to do any additional assessments of placements with the agreement of the department, the coordinator will facilitate this.

Mentors are always present when the learner is on placement and this along with profiles, matching and an induction checklist form a robust risk reduction strategy.

For any further information please contact:

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