Engage with... Education

Get Ready

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Employer Resource Pack

Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership

Working in partnership with the **West Yorkshire Combined Authority**

THE **CAREERS & ENTERPRISE** COMPANY

In partnership with **LIGHTHOUSE** FUTURES TRUST

Creating a Business Case

The aim of this document is to explore the many benefits that working with people with special educational needs can provide to employers.

The Statistics

The employment rate for people with disabilities is 52% compared to 81% for those without a disability (**ons.gov.uk**). However, the definition of 'disability' is very broad and when we look in more detail we see, for instance, that only 5.9% of people with learning disabilities are in paid work (**base-uk.org**).

Why get involved in supporting careers activities for students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)?

Businesses are, increasingly, developing a better understanding of the many benefits that having a diverse workforce brings. For many, working with schools and colleges with students with SEND is part of a wider employer focus on inclusion and/or allows them to take the first steps to increasing workforce diversity.

You probably don't need to be convinced about the benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workforce, but you may not have thought about all the benefits, some of which are detailed below.

Staff development	Helps your staff develop new skills in areas such as project management, stakeholder engagement, leadership, coaching, mentoring, sharing information and listening. It also helps develop their overall confidence in dealing with people with support needs in general.
Reasonable adjustments	Allows you to learn about the type of reasonable adjustments that you can easily make, as an employer.
Deeper understanding	Helps you understand more about the different abilities of people with support needs and the opportunities this could bring as an employer. This, in turn, can help break down barriers within your own organisation and helps your staff develop greater confidence in engaging customers and potential new employees who may have specific support needs.
Insight and communication	Gives your organisation greater insight into how people communicate, learn and engage with others, which helps them develop new methods of communication.
Talent pipeline	Young people in school and college today could be your employees in the very near future. Working directly with young people whilst they are in education could provide a valuable talent pipeline for your business.
Strategy	Supports you, as an employer, to learn more about how you can improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
It's the law!	It is illegal to be prejudiced about employing someone with a disability as enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 – **gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance**.

Individual ability. Research has shown people with a disability can provide:

Diversity of skills	Including: accuracy, focus, dedication, stamina, resourcefulness, systematic approach, logical analysis, pattern recognition, detection of errors; sustained concentration.
Work quality	Often above-average accuracy and attention to detail, particularly with people with conditions such as Autism.
Deeper understanding	On average, employees with disabilities stay in a job 3.5 times longer than non-disabled co-workers which, in turn, reduces your recruitment costs.
Reliability	Tendency to maintain regular attendance with little evidence of absence and low levels of sick leave resulting in lower staffing costs (less need to cover for absences) and higher productivity.

Direct business benefits:

Staff morale	Employees who believe they work for an organisation that cares are likely to be more engaged, so this enhances employee attitudes and retention. Working alongside students with support needs will help your staff overcome misconceptions and realise the many benefits this provides.
Positive corporate image	77% of the public think more highly of companies that make an extra effort to employ people with a disability (Charity Awareness Monitor).
Enhanced reputation	By supporting your local community and demonstrating your organisation as a socially responsible business, you will appeal to customers and consumers, shareholders and investors alike who will appreciate the efforts you are making to be an equal opportunities employer.

Direct business benefits (continued)

Demonstrates social value	Many public sector and other tender opportunities require you to demonstrate what added value you will provide by way of 'social value'. This can include things such as taking on apprentices and using local suppliers but you can also include the work you do with local schools and colleges.
New customer base	With over 7 million people of working age in the UK being disabled or having a health condition, this equates to 17.5%. Harnessing the spending power of this specific market could see a significant increase in sales. What better way of marketing your products or services or identifying a clearer way of sharing information than asking students or employees, with disabilities, about your company?
Neuro-diversity	Having access to people who think differently has obvious advantages when it comes to innovation and finding solutions to complex tasks and issues. It can also have an astonishing effect on a work culture: communication becomes clearer and more efficient, team spirit gains new momentum and employees feel valued for their unique and individual selves.
Savings to the national economy	The National Audit Office estimates that the lifetime support costs of a young person who is not in work is up to £1.5m per person. That cost reduces significantly – and sometimes disappears completely – once they are in paid work. By supporting someone with special educationa; needs into employment, it could increase their income by between 55 and 95 percent, as well as improving their self-esteem.

Business Benefits of Engaging with Young People with SEND

Why work with specialist schools and colleges?

- Inspire young people
- Staff develop new skills
- Learn how to communicate in a different way
- Develop a deeper understanding of diverse needs
- Access a skilled and enthusiastic talent pipeline

Why have a diverse workforce?

- Increased staff morale
- Neuro-diverse workforce
- Access diverse skills and talents
- Above-average attention to detail
- Recruit and retain loyal and reliable employees
- Access a new customer base

Communication

SEND – What does it mean?

The world of education is similar to the world of business in that it is often full of anachronisms and terms that may mean something to a teacher or parent but don't mean a lot to an employer! This guide provides an introduction to some of the terms you may come across.

The letters SEN stand for Special Educational Needs and are used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for children or young people to learn. Sometimes this is written as SEND – with the "d" meaning disability, but many prefer to use the term SEN as not all people with special educational needs also have a disability.

There are 4 recognised areas:

1 **Communication and interaction:** people with speech, language and communication needs who may have difficulty in expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying to them and often find it hard to relate to others.

2 **Cognition and learning:** this includes people with a learning disability or difficulty. They may find all learning activities difficult or have particular difficulties with areas such as reading and spelling.

3 **Physical needs:** this includes people with a medical condition that has an impact on their learning such as a visual, hearing or multi-sensory impairment or a physical disability.

4 **SEMH:** Social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Quite often young people in this area have behaviour issues, suffer from low self-esteem and self-confidence, and may struggle with following rules and knowing how to behave properly.

Many children and young people with SEND have an EHCP – Education Health & Care Plan – which states what extra type of support they need to help them fulfil specific objectives. This usually triggers extra funding for the school or college for them to invest in providing targeted support.

Individuals also have varying degrees of support needs. Someone with mild support needs may have a short-term development delay, which means they just need more time to learn. An accident or illness can impact how people learn and may lead to a temporary support need.

People with a 'learning difficulty' can experience mild issues, which might mean they find it difficult to: learn new skills; communicate with others; remember things; and be attentive. It is a lifelong condition that cannot be cured. This is referred to as a 'learning disability' when the impact on the individual significantly affects their ability to communicate or be independent. It, too, is a lifelong condition. If someone has more than one disability this can sometimes be referred to as PMLD – Profound and Multiple Learning Disability.

Students with mild to moderate support needs are often in a mainstream school or college with extra help provided. Some may attend a 'Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre' or 'Special School', which have more tailored provision for young people with support needs. Others may be at a "Pupil Referral Unit" if they are unable to attend school due to a short- or long-term illness or because they have been excluded.
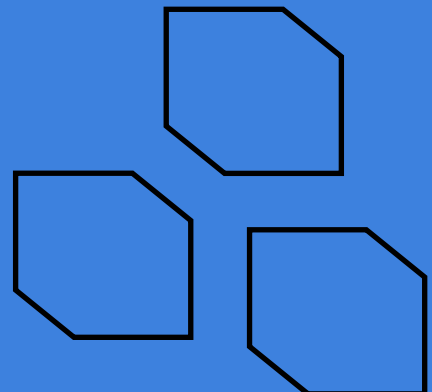
SEND – What kinds of needs are there?

There are over 50 different types of Special Educational Needs but don't feel you need to understand them all, as your education partners will tell you more about any support needs that specific children and young people may have.

1. Auditory and visual

Simply put, this is hearing and seeing. Quite often the support needs are as as having some adaptive technology, wearing sound-enhancing headphones, or having a large computer screen.

- **Auditory:** this can be an impairment, which makes it harder for someone to hear; or a processing disorder, which means the brain has difficulty processing and understanding auditory input.

- **Sensory:** this can be an impairment in how the light signal is carried from the eye into the brain, which means they have more limited vision; or a processing disorder, which means the brain has difficulty processing and understanding the signal.

2. Learning difficulty

This is a broad term that refers to people with a learning problem that affects their ability to learn, get along with others and follow convention. It doesn't always affect their general intellect, but it can impact on learning and literacy and numeracy in particular. Many people are able to progress through life with no or very little support and you may well find that several of your staff have a mild to moderate learning difficulty that you are not fully aware of.

| ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Affects a person's ability to concentrate and control impulsivity. This may present as: inattention, restlessness, inappropriate comments or interrupting excessively.
ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder	Problems remaining focused, so individuals may appear 'dreamy' and not be paying attention. Students can lose track of what they are doing and have poor listening skills.
Dyslexia	Mixing up of letters within words and words within sentences; problems with spelling and reading and sometimes with memory and sequencing.
Dyscalculia	Difficulty developing mathematical skills and understanding quite simple number concepts or symbols such as telling the time, time-keeping etc.
Dyspraxia	Difficulty with fine and/or gross motor coordination and physical skills which might impact on their writing or ability to take part in sport and recreational activities for instance.
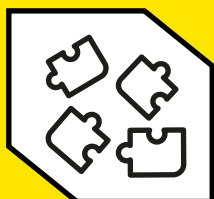
3. Autism

The term Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way in which people understand and react to the world around them. People with autism tend to see, hear and feel the world differently to others, with many seeing it as a fundamental aspect of their identity and a key strength.

In general, people with an ASD diagnosis are likely to need support in the following areas:

- Non-verbal and verbal communication: they sometimes have a very literal understanding of language, meaning metaphors and sarcasm are hard for them to recognise.

- Social understanding behaviour: people can behave in socially inappropriate ways and may find it hard to empathise with others or play or communicate with their peers.

- Imagining and thinking and behaving flexibly: may have particular interests in specific topics or activities which may become obsessive; often find change difficult to cope with and prefer a set routine.

Asperger's Syndrome is a specific type of autism. The term **High Functioning Autism** refers to individuals with high cognitive ability but who are likely to have difficulties with flexible thinking and social interaction.
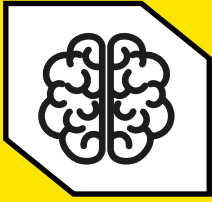
4. Brain and genetic conditions

Understandably, illnesses that affect the brain or happen as a result of injury can have a major impact on how someone learns and behaves, as can people born with genetic conditions.

- **Cerebral palsy:** a malformation of the brain which occurs either naturally (in childhood or birth), or as a result of illness or injury. Key symptoms include: muscle weakness, stiffness or floppiness; random and uncontrolled body movements; balance and coordination problems.

- **Cystic fibrosis:** a genetic disorder which can affect the respiratory, digestive and reproductive organs and is often linked to difficulties with absorbing adequate nutrition.

- **Down or Down's syndrome:** a genetic condition which occurs as a result of having an additional chromosome. People often display characteristic physical features but the extent of their learning difficulties can vary significantly.

- **Hydrocephalus:** a build-up of fluid and resulting pressure on the brain which can be present at or after birth. This can cause development delays and other learning difficulties.

- **Spina bifida:** a spinal deformity which occurs during the first month of development of pregnancy and commonly results in a gap in the spine.

- **Tourette's syndrome:** a condition which affects the brain and central nervous system and results in a person losing control over their movements and speech. The involuntary movements or vocalisations are generally referred to as 'tics'.
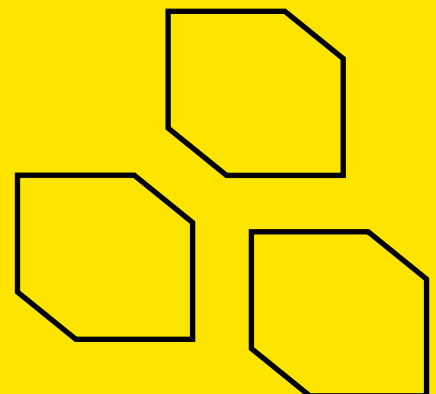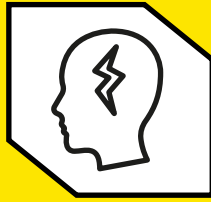
5. Behavioural difficulties and anxiety

The use of the term SEMH stands for Social, Emotional or Mental Health difficulties.

Current statistics show that approximately 1 in 3 people will have a mental health support need at some point in their lives and, unfortunately, this is now becoming more prevalent in children and young people. Whilst this is particularly severe, it can become a barrier to a young person's ability to engage in normal day-to-day activities and, in some instances, can result in a SEND diagnosis.

There are a range of specific 'types' of anxiety including:

- separation anxiety
- attachment disorder
- social phobia
- food phobia
- panic disorder.

Children and young people with behaviour difficulties tend to show emotional or behaviour responses which are different from that generally accepted. They may include disruptive behaviour, anti-social behaviour, aggression and difficulties maintaining relationships. Staff in special educational provision develop a range of techniques to enable them to learn and develop, such as:

- working in small groups
- providing a calm environment
- having structure and routine.

Myths and Misconceptions

This guide aims to dispel some myths and misconceptions and help employees feel more comfortable in their communication with young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Most people with disabilities strongly believe that it's not their own 'difference' that is a barrier, but the existence of barriers in society. These can be physical (no accessible toilets, lack of lifts etc) but can result from people's negative attitudes that can be based on prejudice or stereotype.

| Possible Concern	Solution
I might say something wrong or use the wrong term and that might upset someone.	Don't worry, the teachers and support staff can and will easily help you understand the right terminology and, if you are not sure, just ask and they will be happy to explain. In general, avoid defining people by their 'condition'. Instead, use positive and non-judgemental language. So, you might call someone 'visually impaired' rather than 'blind', or say someone is a person with a disability or autism rather than calling someone autistic or disabled.
What happens if the students don't understand what I am saying?	This is a common concern but can easily be overcome: - Focus on using plain, simple language. - Avoid jargon and overly technical language. - Don't use acronyms or abbreviations. Experience and practice will improve your communication skills both in the classroom and in business.
Our office isn't very accessible.	Before any students come onto your site, one of the school or college staff will want to visit and do a 'risk assessment', as this is a requirement of the local authority. This will look at a range of areas including access to the building or an office but will also include other areas that may need taking into account, such as bright lights or a noisy office. It may be that students can only access parts of your premises, but your education partner will help you with this.

Possible Concern	Solution
Regular visits will disturb my staff.	If you are concerned about disturbing staff by having lots of school visits, why not film a virtual tour of your building, meeting some staff along the way?
It's just too complicated and will require lots of pre-planning and paperwork.	Your education partner is likely to have organised visits before and will help you complete any of the necessary paperwork, such as risk or health & safety assessments.

They will always bring a number of staff to accompany the students and will have spoken with any of your staff, in advance, around any presentations, speeches or tours you might be including. |
| Making special adjustments is going to be very expensive. | All employers need public liability if people are visiting their premises and, if students are on work experience, they will also need employer's liability. There should be no need to take out any extra insurance.

Sometimes your education partner may ask for a 'reasonable adjustment' for a student coming on work experience. This is often quite simple, for example, a larger computer screen or an adjustable seat allowing them to use headphones etc. All of this will be discussed with your education partner. |
| We lack sufficient internal expertise in supporting people with SEND. | Don't worry, you are not expected to have any specific expertise as this will be provided by your education partner and your staff will develop greater confidence even after the first meeting.

If a student is likely to have particularly challenging behaviour or specific needs, they would always be accompanied by a trained member of staff who will intervene if required. |
| We don't have any formal training in Disability Awareness. | There are several organisations that will provide training. On a national level, there is Disability Rights UK (**disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help**) but your local education partner may have access to specialists in Yorkshire. |

Guide to Appropriate use of Language

We sometimes hear from employers that they are concerned about saying the wrong thing or using the wrong terminology when talking about students with special educational needs. The aim of this guide is to provide some suggestions of what to consider.

This is much more than political correctness – the use of appropriate language in any situation is key for 2 main reasons:

- Making sure that the people you are communicating with (in any format) understand what you are saying.

- Avoiding using terminology that might offend someone, either by misusing term in a colloquial conversation and/or using the wrong terminology, because this can often help to further embed stereotypes about people with disabilities that become barriers to them achieving their full potential.
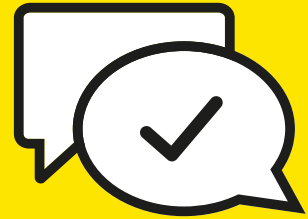
Colloquial Language

Many words and phrases have made their way into our modern language that are, in reality, technical terms for different types of mental and physical disability. It may, therefore, be seen as an insult by someone with a disability, whilst the speaker may be completely oblivious to the implications.

Terms like 'blind spot' or metaphors like 'falling on deaf ears' can perpetuate false ideas about what living and working with a disability is like.

A more typical phrase may be the use of the term 'crazy' when you are busy, i.e. I had a crazy day at work today. In technical terms, crazy can mean having a mental illness or psychological disability and your use of the term in connection with a negative work setting above may seem like an insult, as it perpetuates the false notion that having a mental illness or psychological disability is horrible and undesirable.

The same is true of metaphors, i.e. you could say you were crippled by the amount of work, but the term cripple is a technical term for someone with physical disabilities so, instead, use overcome or frozen by.

Another area to think about is the use of phraseology around physical ability. Whilst it may seem fine to start a meeting saying, "Let's all stand up and move around the room", if there is a wheelchair user, this can exclude them. Instead, use more inclusive language – you can either stand up and move around the room or remain seated and move different parts of your body. (Again, a note of caution, this may still not be appropriate for someone who has no body movement.)

Alternative Wording

Avoid this Term	Alternative
Autism (or other specific condition).	Autistic people – rather than saying people with autism.
Deaf-mute or deaf and dumb	Deaf person, non-speaking deaf person, hard of hearing person, non-verbal person with a speech impairment.
Handicap(ped)	Disabled person, physically disabled person, wheelchair user, person with a disability.
Wheelchair-bound	Wheelchair user; uses a wheelchair, in a wheelchair.
Victim	Survivor is a good alternative in some instances or change the phrasing, so burn victim becomes someone with scarring from burns.
Several words are used in conversation that technically refer to someone's mental state.	
Bonkers; crazy; cuckoo; deranged; idiot; insane; imbecile; loony; loony bin; lunatic; madhouse; madman; maniac; mental case; moron; nuts; psycho; spaz; wacko	Wild, confusing, unpredictable, impulsive, reckless, fearless, lives on the edge, thrill-seeker, risk-taker, out of control.

You may want to work with your education partner to develop some alternative wording.

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General Hints and Tips

Your education partner will help you with any specific communication needs which students may have, but here are some general hints and tips.

1   Keep it simple

Avoid using technical terms or jargon: instead, use clear, simple language.

Think about how your documents look: avoid using too many colours but do include images, photos and colour where you can. Make use of photos and images, consider a 2-column format to break text up, use a sans serif font such as Arial or Calibri and avoid using less than 12pt font size.

Check the wording and style: This should be clear and easy to read. Write as you would speak in a simple and clear fashion, using short sentences. Use numbers rather than words i.e., 6 not six.

2   Keep it engaging

The teaching staff will advise if information needs to be shared in a specific format either in general presentations and/or when communicating with a specific student

If talking to a group of people or in an assembly, slow your speech down and speak loudly and clearly – perhaps check that people can hear you before you launch into your presentation.

Think more about what the audience may be interested in hearing rather than what you want to say.

When speaking to students, avoid using closed questions which may just give a yes or no answer and try to find somewhere quiet without lots of background noise or distractions.

3   Keep it bite-sized

Think about breaking your presentation up into smaller bite-sized chunks. Don't overload the audience with too much information – your presentation is usually meant to engage and inspire not overwhelm.

How Should I Prepare?

The aim of this guide is to think about the very first steps you need to take when considering engaging with students with support needs.

The important thing to say is that all schools and colleges will really welcome an approach and offer of help from employers.

Supporting students with SEND is hugely rewarding from a personal and work perspective, as well as being an ideal way to develop skills of individual staff members. It also provides a potential new talent pipeline for your own organisation.

It's important that you don't just see this work as part of your community engagement or community activities as there are significant business benefits and a huge, untapped talent pool of future employees you have just not yet met.

Working with a special school is often the all-important first step towards becoming an employer with a more diverse and inclusive workforce, one that feels more loyal, to you, because they see you as an employer who really cares. It also potentially opens up a whole new client base as well.

Here are some of the initial stages you may want to consider.

1. Find out where you can get help and advice

- West Yorkshire Combined Authority has a specialist team working to link employers and schools or colleges. Contact: **the-lep.com/skills/the-schools-partnership-team/**

- Contact schools or college(s) you arealready working with and see if they have any students with SEND.

- The local council website will have a section that is usually called 'local offer' which will list the specialist educational establishments in your area.

- Contact the Careers & Enterprise Company network.

2. Recruit an internal champion

- Identify someone in your organisation who you think would be a good person to make the first steps. They may be a parent of a child or young person with special needs, or be someone with an interest in the area. Perhaps their role includes responsibility for diversity, inclusion, training or recruitment. This may be an ideal opportunity for them to develop new skills and could be a key part of their individual development plan, for instance.

- Alternatively, you might choose to recruit a team of people from different parts of the business or focus on a department or team that has the most capacity and interest. Take a look at our Job Description for some ideas of how to recruit team members.

3. Create a business case

If you are an employee who wants to support this kind of programme but are struggling to get buy-in from your senior leadership team, you might want to create a business case to show them all the benefits. There is a separate factsheet on business benefits but some things to consider are:

- all organisations need to look at improving diversity and inclusion in the workforce to demonstrate they are a responsible employer

- employees will develop better understanding of working with people with disabilities and will learn new skills

- you will be showing support for your local community.

Recruiting an Internal Champion

[Company name] is committed to being a diverse and inclusive employer, one that reflects the communities in which we are based. One new initiative is working more closely with some of the students with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) at [school or college name].

Wanted: Internal Champions

Role: Liaise with (school or college) to set up some joint activities

Requirements:
- Good organisational skills
- Passion for working with children and young adults
- No prior knowledge of working with SEND, full training to be provided

Benefits:
- Develop skills in: project management; communication; events planning.
- Create links for [company name] with local community and raise our profile.
- Find our future employees and leaders and help create a more diverse workforce.

For further information, contact: [contact name and details]

The aim of this guide is to be used as an internal advertisement for you to recruit your own ambassadors. Feel free to use the wording above to create your own internal job advert.

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