



### **Who we are:**

Project Choice is a specialist post-16 college providing person-centred, individually tailored, supported internships to young adults with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or autism. Through the internship, 16–24-year-olds gain work experience, develop independence skills, and increase their employability.

### **What we do:**

Our service is bespoke, offering tailored support to each intern, and employment opportunities are matched to the individual's skills. Project Choice aims to empower interns and build their confidence as individuals in the workplace, while also offering life experience beyond their home and school environments.

### **What is the engagement process?**

Project Choice holds formal awareness sessions at schools, colleges and other local authority venues but we are also happy to come and speak with interested young people and parents and/or carers in other settings, e.g., at home or school on a one-to-one basis.

### **Who can apply for the Internship?**

The internship is for 16–24-year-olds, with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or autism. There are no academic requirements to join the internship, however individuals will need to have an aspiration to work and have a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place. Project Choice will need to be named in the EHCP, so parents and/or carers will need to be in discussion with the local commissioning authority for this to be arranged.

### **What is the assessment process?**

Potential interns will be invited to a fun day for us to meet the young person and assess whether Project Choice can meet their needs.

### **How long is the internship?**

The internship can comprise up to three placements, usually lasting 10-12 weeks each, throughout the academic year. Students who successfully complete their internship will leave the college with an employability qualification accredited by NCFE. Where appropriate, students will also be supported to reach the next attainment level in maths and English up to level 4 GCSE.



### **What support is provided?**

Interns are supported by a workplace mentor, a project coordinator and a project manager. Job coaches can also be accessed where appropriate.

### **What kind of work experience roles are available to Interns?**

The Project Choice supported internship is delivered within NHS organisations, the independent sector and private business. Project Choice interns have provided valuable assistance in a huge variety of roles, including:

- Digital Services
- Care
- Portering
- Pharmacy
- Clinical Coding
- Human Resources
- Information Services
- Education
- Grounds Maintenance
- Receptions
- Domestic Services
- Catering
- Post Room
- Central Stores
- Warehouse
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Hospitality
- Sports and leisure
- Animal welfare

This is not an exhaustive list.

### **What does a typical week look like for a Project Choice Intern?**

Interns spend up to four days per week in work, with one day in the classroom. In the classroom, interns develop employability skills related to their work placement, as well as having study time to improve maths and English.

### **How are staff trained to support Interns?**

Project Choice offers robust stakeholder training which can include:

- Mentor training
- Mental health first aid

We also use job coaches where interns require additional support.

The college employs specialist tutors directly. We have an ESFA-approved curriculum, and all of our education provision is subject to Ofsted Inspection and DFE regulations. In January 2020 Project Choice was awarded a good provider rating by Ofsted.

### **What support is available at the end of the Internship?**

Our staff continue to support our interns post completion of the internship. Sustaining employment is key to us, and we are committed to helping interns achieve their goals.

This support includes:

- Pastoral support
- Professional support in meetings, e.g. appraisals, occupational health, etc.
- Coaching preparation for progression interviews

## **Testimonials**

**Interns:**



“Project Choice has made me have hope and also it gave me an idea of what I want to do when I leave the course”



“I feel like an adult. I have travelled to work independently, done my job and travelled home independently – just like the other workers. I’m so proud of myself, I want to keep working”





**Parents and Carers:**

“The Project Choice Team have gone the extra mile to help him, and I can’t thank the programme enough for helping him make steps to increase his chances of not just having a job, but of reaping all of the benefits that having a job bring”

“We are very grateful to Project Choice for the very caring and down-to-earth way they have provided for our daughter who has moderate learning disabilities and is on the autistic spectrum... We have been especially impressed that she was found a very appropriate work placement at the local hospital and that there appears to be close cooperation and coordination between the Project Choice staff and its management”

“The difference in my son is enormous; he is proud and excited to go to work. He has a purpose, and it has transformed his life.”

**Employers:**

“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. It was a pleasure to see his confidence grow as he became more involved in the day-to-day operations”

“Without exception, Project Choice students have showed an unparalleled work ethic. The time invested in their training has shown dividends in the department and it has been a pleasure working with them”

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