



# **NATIONAL SEND EMPLOYMENT FORUM**

## **AUTUMN 2020 QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The National SEND Employment Forum (NSEF) was successful, in August 2020, in receiving a grant from Imperial College London (ICL) who undertook a research project on behalf of NSEF to gain a better understanding of the current landscape nationally. Data was gathered primarily via an online form which was widely promoted by ICL and NSEF members, and others. This report highlights the findings of that research.

We are confident that the findings of our report will be of broad interest to a wide range of stakeholders and others. We have also been able to update our directory which is on the NSEF website ([www.nsef.co.uk](http://www.nsef.co.uk)). It has also been invaluable in helping us decide on our next steps and agree on a workplan for 2021 and beyond. This plan focuses on setting up 6 workstreams, each led by one of the NSEF core groups working alongside 2 interns who are currently enrolled with Lighthouse Futures Trust, a specialist provider based in Leeds.

The workstreams each focus on a specific area of activity and are designed to enable us to: gather further details from providers; develop a series of resources to support learning and best practice; and widen our reach. This will also allow us to focus on gathering data on specific areas that were not included in this initial survey such as: primary health conditions; ethnicity; completion rates; and other areas of interest.

This work will start in January and is initially designed to run until June, when all the results will be shared. The groups are:

- SPI and Charities
- Schools & Colleges
- Data
- Employers
- Families, young people and ambassadors
- Local Authorities

### **2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The National SEND Employment Forum (NSEF) was first established in 2018 by a group of practitioners working to help young adults, with learning disabilities, into employment. Members meet at least every 2 months to share ideas and best practice and to develop more joined-up thinking and working. The partnership has grown considerably, since then, in terms of its size and influence.

Our ultimate aims are to:

- accelerate the growth of supported internships nationally.
- support the sharing of best practice and resources to support each other to deliver the best internships possible for young people.
- provide up-to-date information and advice to government to help inform policy decisions.

### 3. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

A total of 55 completed responses were received from 55 unique organisations, although not all of the organisations answered each question, so not all the scores total 55. Of the respondents, a total of 6 were part of the DFN Project SEARCH project which had 56 separate sites and 515 interns in 2018-19. DFN also kindly shared some of their national data for 2018-19 so some of that has been included in the research as well, as indicated in italics in the remainder of the report.

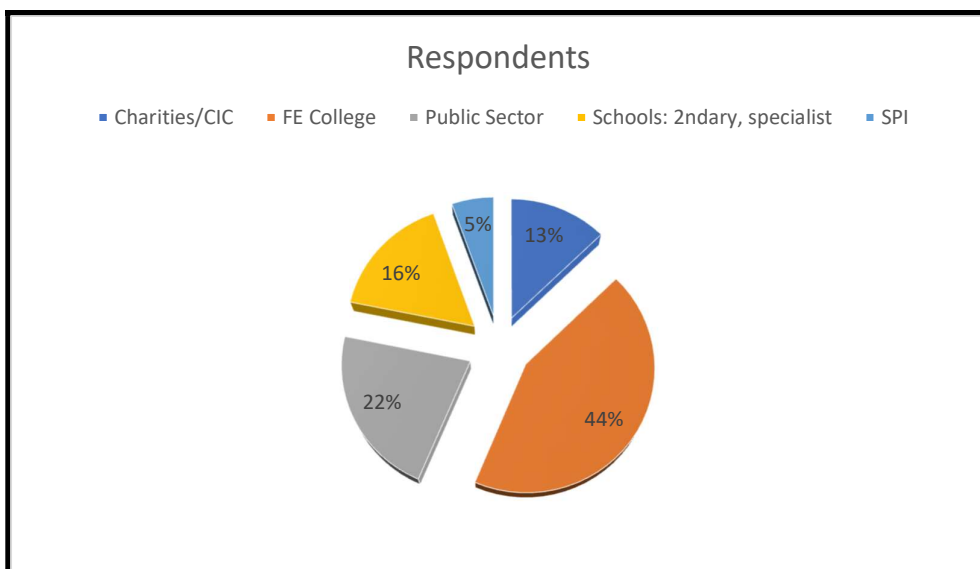
A good broad geography (with the south-west of England being slightly under-represented):

- London: 9
- Midlands/Nottinghamshire: 12
- North-East: 5
- North-West: 7
- South East: 11
- South West: 2
- Yorkshire & Humber: 9

Respondents held a variety of roles in their respective organisations.

In terms of sectors, organisations designated themselves as below:

- 24 respondents from Further Education (FE)
- 12 from Public Sector
- 9 schools (secondary & specialist)
- 7 charities / CIC's (Charitable Incorporated Companies)
- 3 SPI's (Specialist post-16 Institutions)



We asked about enrolment figures for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Number of students	2019-20	2020-21
Zero	6	8
1-9	18	19
10-19	18	17
20-50	10	7
51-100	1 (London-wide group has 90)	2
100-125	1 (national charity has 109)	0
125-150	1 (national programme has 129)	1 (national charity had 140 target)
<b>Total</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>926</b>

*DFN Project SEARCH shared data from 2018-19 when they had 515 students enrolled. Assuming they recruited the same number in 2019-20, that would add a further 462 to the above figures (as the data above already includes answers from 6 of their projects).*

It should be noted that:

- It is encouraging to see that numbers have increased from year to year, despite the challenging circumstances. However, we are conscious that this will include some students coming back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study in 2020-21 (due to Covid), so some individuals will be counted in both years.
- It is important to note that, when we asked for the information, organisations were still in the process of recruiting. The organisation with 90 students in 2019-20, for instance, only had 20 confirmed by the cut-off date for the survey but were confident of enrolling a lot more by September. The actual figures for 2020-21 will be higher than the 926 above.
- When comparing year on year variances within individual organisations: 26 had recruited less in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 9 were the same and 20 showed an increase but, as above, enrolment had not been completed.

To qualify for a Supported Internship programme candidates primarily need to be between 18-25 so there is little to comment about the average age of students. Two respondents said they started at 16 and 1 at 17, the rest all quoted between 18-20.

#### **4. PROGRAMMES**

When asked to say what internship model they followed we can see that 58% have developed their own programme.

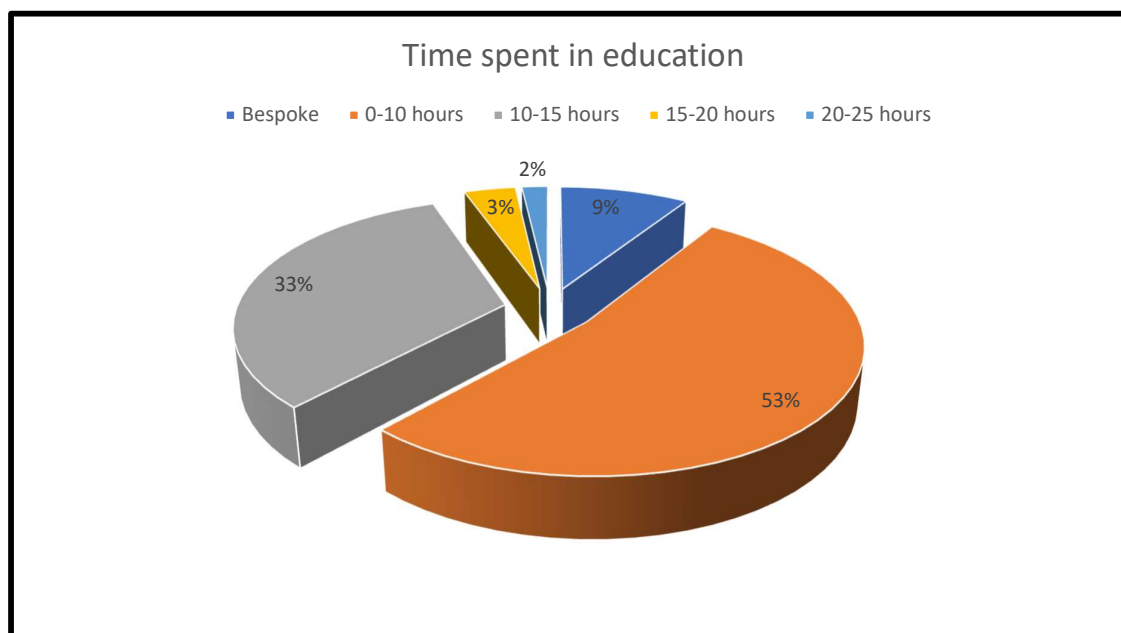
- 4 are not operational yet
- 6 said they followed the EmployAbility - Let's Work Together model (National Grid model)
- 7 followed the Project Choice model (based in the NHS) *although we know there are more than this in existence*
- 6 followed the Project SEARCH model (*we know there are 56 separate sites in the UK*)
- 32 had their own or bespoke model:
  - o one specialises in digital work
  - o 3 said their model followed the government guidelines
  - o 3 said they included some elements of the Employability model

It was not possible to fully analyse how long each programme lasted because respondents used different terms such as: year, academic year, 34 weeks, 38 weeks, all of which could mean the same period of time. The majority appear to run a full-year programme although: 1 said the programme lasted 1 term; another 7 months; and one said 1-2 years.

Given the predominance of bespoke programmes, it is not surprising to see considerable variety in the format of the programmes although they predominantly share the same elements i.e. a mixture of more formal education and an element of in-work experience.

The primary difference is the amount of time different models give to the core elements. This ranges from one organisation stating students spend c. 5 hours a week with an employer up to 2 organisations stating 25+ hours. Similarly, with education, we see large variances in time spent although most (85%) spent between 0-15 hours (i.e. up to 2 days a week).

	Hours a week with employer	Time spent in education
Didn't say / bespoke	5	5
0-10 hours	2	29
10-15 hours	14	18
15-20 hours	20	2
20-25 hours	12	1
25 hrs plus	2	

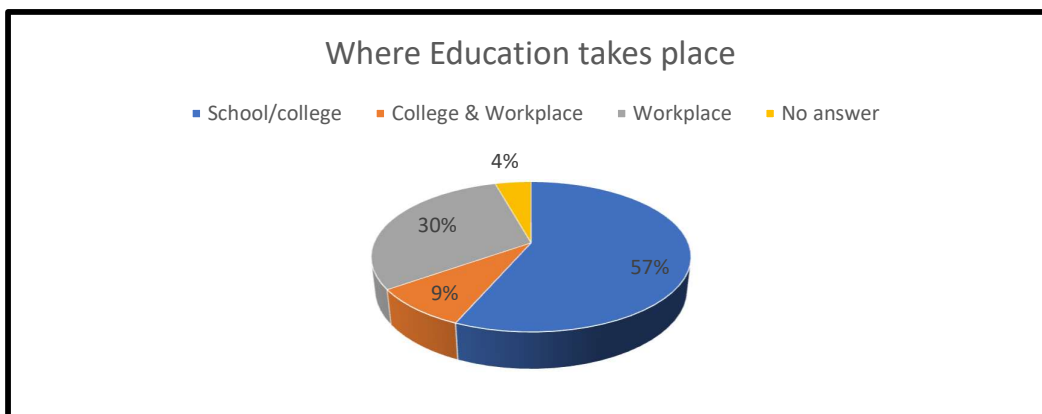


When looking at content, the majority of respondents who gave any detail confirmed that this was mainly around Maths /English and employment skills (cv writing, interview techniques).

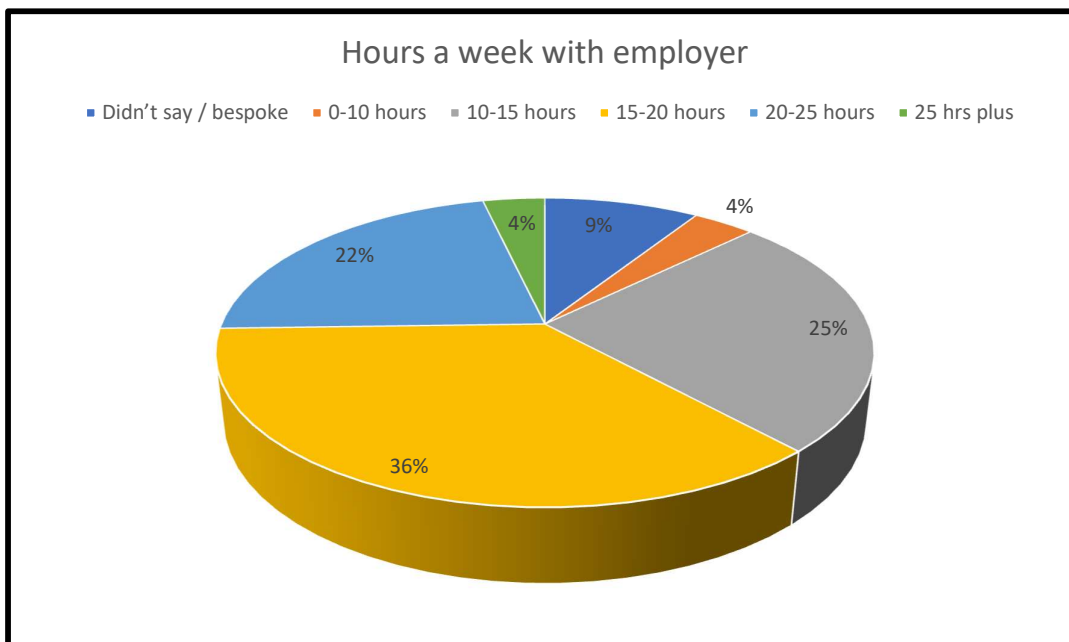
Other answers included:

- Following RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) based on criteria linked to Preparing for Adulthood. This includes sessions on: Community Inclusion, Health and Well-being , Independent Living, Employment.
- Another respondent said the education programme included a focus on "soft-skill" or "professional-skill" development Communication; Self-Motivation; Leadership; Responsibility; Teamwork; Problem Solving; Decisiveness; Time Management; Flexibility and Negotiation & Conflict Resolution.
- Two mentioned the need to incorporate travel training (although this was not asked in the questionnaire and we anticipate a lot more of the organisations do provide travel training)

When answering where the students were based for the educational elements, we see that 57% (26 respondents) undertake this in school and college but 30% (14 respondents) do so in the workplace.



There was a reasonably large range in terms of time spent in the work-related elements of the programme with most (84%) saying students spent between 10-25 hours a week “in work”.



Other observations include:

- In the majority of instances, students spent more time in the workplace than in the education setting.
- With some the ratio changed, over time, with students spending more time in the workplace as the programme progressed (and, presumably, as they developed greater skills and self-confidence).
- One model was to spend 4 weeks at college, 30 weeks on an internship (2 days a week) and then 2 weeks in college.
- Another spent the first term in the classroom, and then went onto placement where the education element was delivered.
- One didn't appear to have a formal work placement but, instead, had employers coming in to deliver workshops and regular, weekly field trips to spend time at different employers.
- Another set a team business challenge in term 1. Students choose a project (i.e. raising funds for a charity) and then work together (with some staff support) to find solutions, create ventures, manage events, monitor and feedback their experiences. This was supplemented by weekly visits to different employers so students could see the variety of roles in different parts of the business. ; Then from term 2, they spent 1 day a week in College and 2-3 days on placement in a local business.

It was interesting to note that, at different parts in the questionnaire, several respondents made reference to the “work-readiness” of some students for a full internship and the potential need to have a “bridging the gap” version so providers can more effectively prepare more students for the full version necessary due to changing levels of ability in cohorts.

- At least 3 are considering/already have an introductory model or a pre-internship.
- One respondent stated that pre-internship involved students spending 1-2 days at work and the rest in college and, when moving onto the internship, the ratio flipped to being 4 days at work and 1 in college.
- One referred to a model for students for whom attending a college was not possible – perhaps due to negative prior experiences/other circumstances. In these instances, they did enrol with a college but didn't attend or do Maths & English qualifications. Instead they did 600 hours (over a year) in a work placement.
- The programme of another respondent varied according to the size of the company. Students working in larger organisations would spend 3 days at work with an on-site Job Coach, and 1 day a week in college. Students in smaller organisations would spend 2 days a week in work, with regular visits from Job Coaches.
- One organisation solely focuses on digital work and is a fully operational Digital Agency staffed by SEND learners and industry professionals.

## **5. PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

The terms used to describe the Job Roles of professionals involved in supporting students varied considerably. Anecdotal evidence from discussions with respondents outside of the context of this questionnaire also confirms that different organisations have a range of models regarding ratios of staff: students and the seniority of staff involved at different stages.

For the purpose of the analysis below, we are using the term Job Coach to refer to people who provide 1-1 support to students on a regular basis.

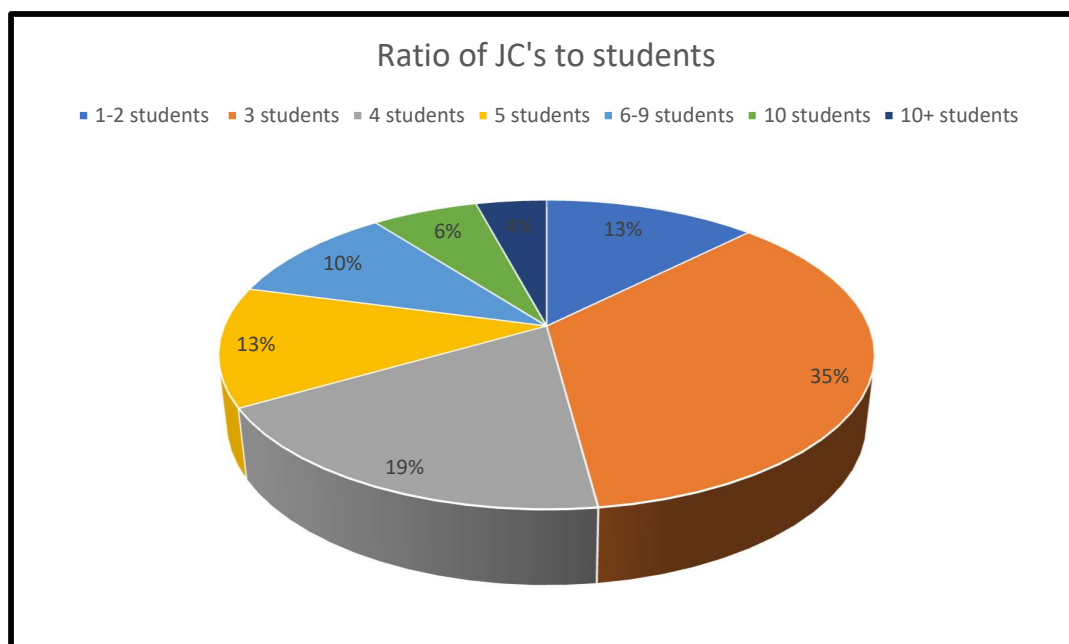
### 3.1 Number of Job Coaches

The number of Job Coaches that each organisation has clearly varies according to the size of the student cohort, but answers revealed a total of 182 Job Coaches were employed with 40 respondents saying they had up to 5. Four said they had none, five had 6-10 and six had more than 10.

### 3.2 Ratio of Job coaches to students:

There was a reasonable variation in terms of how many students a single Job Coach would support. Some didn't reply and 6 said that this varied according to individual need. However, a total of 66% support between 3-5 students.

Answers	No of respondents
1-2 students (three said 1, two said 1-2, one said 2)	6
3 students	17
4 students	9
5 students	6
6-9 students	5
10 students	3
10+ students (one said 12, one said 30)	2



### 3.3 Qualifications of Staff

Again, it is not surprising that there was little consistency in this answer, given the fact that so many programmes are bespoke. Different terminology was also used so it is possible that some of the references below should be combined as they are, potentially, the same qualification. The most “common” qualification is the Level 3 diploma.

- Several didn’t respond or it was in-house
- 4 quoted BASE (British Association of Supported Employment)
- 2 said coaching qualifications
- 2 said IAG (Information, Advice, Guidance)
- 1 said CIPD level 3 (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development)
- 1 said health
- 1 said level 4, 1 said level 2
- 17 referred to TSI (Training in Systematic Instruction)
- 7 organisations referred to staff having a Level 3 diploma/qualification in Job Coach Training or Supported Employment or Teaching and Learning with 1 reference to having Level 4 Job Coach training

### 3.4 Qualifications for Students

This is an area in where a considerable degree of inconsistency was found with only 2 Awards being quoted by more than 5 respondents (RARPA and BTEC). Some respondents didn’t answer. A total of 11 did make reference to students gaining Functional Maths & English, with 4 also saying some studied for GCSE’s.

AIM – Assisted Internship Model	1
Apprenticeship	1
Award in Work Preparation Level ½	1
Work Skills Level 1	1
SEPDT	1
Skills for Employment	1
City & Guilds	2
Employability Level 1 or 2	2
NCFE	2
NOCN	2
Open Awards	2
NVQ	3
Vocational	3
RARPA	5
BTEC	7
No formal qualification	7



## 6. POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN 2018/19 AND 2019/20

We didn't capture information about how many students each organisation had in 2018-19 so we cannot analysis positive outcomes in comparison to the total number of students. Some respondents gave a percentage outcome result (not a fixed figure), so we had to use the figures they have for 2019-20 to gauge an estimate.

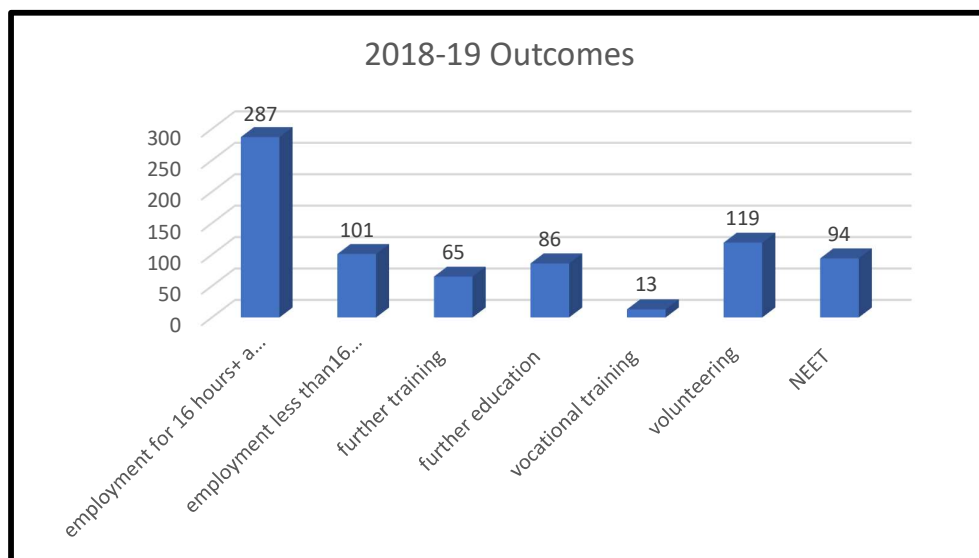
Any detailed analysis and comparisons would inevitably have been skewed by the current context in which we are operating and the timing of the questionnaire coinciding with the time when some students were being supported into employment.

Nevertheless, the results for 2018/19 are extremely encouraging for the 765 students where information was provided with 51% (388 individuals) moving into employment and just 12% being NEET (Not in Employment Education and Training).

*The DFN Project SEARCH data was similarly impressive in 2018-19:*

- 515 interns enrolled and 477 completed (93% retention rate)
- Of the 477, a total of 64% secured a paid job, with 60% being full-time

When you look at this data – with at least 388 from the 55 respondents and 274 from DFN Project SEARCH (adjusted to allow for those already included in the original respondents), we see 662 interns securing employment. It has been estimated that for each intern moving into employment, this can save the state approximately £1m in terms of lifetime support costs, not taking into account the many health benefits that being in employment brings. This means that Supported Internships, in 2018-19 alone, potentially delivered over £660m in reduced costs!



Understandably the results for 2019/20 were not as good with many students coming back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Despite that, of the 908 students that were enrolled a total of 111 did move into employment of over 16 hours a week which, at 12%, is very encouraging (compared to 37% in 2018-19).

## 7. BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

There is little to say about the size of businesses involved in programmes:

- 4 didn't say
- 20 included SME with 5 saying National and SME (Small & Medium Enterprises)
- 9 said range
- 22 said national / international

There is a considerably variety of types of businesses / sectors that employ students

Sector	Number of references from respondents
Retail	29
Hospitality / catering	29
Health / care	14
Facilities / maintenance / warehousing / logistics	14
Public Sector	5
Education	4
IT/ technology	4
Media / creative	3
Manufacturing	3
Sports / leisure	3
Customer Service	3
Cleaning / housekeeping	3

Others that were mentioned just 1 or 2 times

- Childcare
- Construction
- Energy
- Finance
- Hair & Beauty
- 1 Horticulture
- Recruitment
- Travel
- Mechanics / motor vehicles
- Office
- Small animal care

*The data from DFN Project SEARCH showed key sectors (in terms of number of interns) in order were: Healthcare, Councils, Distribution, Universities, Private Sector, Hospitality and Housing. The top 5 specific Job Roles were: Office Admin, Food Service, Distribution/Operative, Food Preparation & Domestic Assistant.*

## 8. FUNDING AND COLLABORATION

Only 21 responded to this question, with most saying we needed to speak to someone else in the organisation. The range was significant, from £1,275 to £25,000.

- 8 said under £10k, with 5 saying £6k
- 8 said £10k-£15k
- 4 said £16k-£20k
- 1 said £25k

Funding sources varied with references including ESFA (Education & Skills Funding Agency), Access to Work, Local Authority and other charitable grants.

When asked if they were part of a Network, 17 didn't reply and 18 said no. Other results included:

- Project Choice - 1 reply
- Project SEARCH – 4 replies
- BASE – 3 replies
- DFN – 2 replies
- EFT and PTA – 1 reply
- NATSPEC – 1 reply
- NDTI Preparing for Adulthood – 1 reply
- DfE's Supported Internship Providers network – 1 reply

The following regional networks were also referred to:

- Greater Manchester Internship Network
- Scarborough & District
- Staffordshire
- Northamptonshire SI Forum
- Birmingham City Council
- Essex County Council/Southend Borough Council
- Cheshire East, West, Chester, Warrington
- West London Alliance

## 9. WHAT TO CHANGE

In the final question we asked what people would change and there were a variety of responses. Single suggestions included: the need for increased awareness, the potential for pre-internships, getting earlier referrals from school/college.

- Employers: 18 said we need to change this area– 2 mentioning disability awareness, 1 saying needing a national campaign, 1 saying national companies shouldn't limit work experience to 80 hours
- Resources: 12 responses
  - o 5 said funding – more of it / simpler to access
  - o 4 said improvements to Access to Work
  - o 1 just said resources
  - o 1 said laptops
  - o 1 said more Job Coaches
- Collaboration: 4 responses including references to working better together locally and around training & coaching

- Accreditation: 7 references
  - Need national standard as too many are being enrolled who are not ready
  - 2 mentioned apprenticeships, 1 said T-levels
  - 4 mentioned guidance
  
- Policy suggestions
  - Make SI's open to anyone with SEND not just EHCP
  - Change rules so that more people can work part-time / minimum wage
  - Make SEND internships mandatory for large companies
  - Introduce tax incentives for companies offering placements