



Pathways to Success: progression pathways for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities

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Contents

Introduction and context.....	3
A review of past students' progression pathways – Pete Jolly.....	4
Social Enterprise as a progression pathway for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities – Alex Wittram.....	7
Project SEARCH – Alex Wittram and Jenn Fuller	12
Employer engagement – Mandy Campbell	15
Conclusion and recommendations	17
Embedding good practice	17
Sustaining good practice	17
Sharing good practice	18
References and useful resources	19
Appendices.....	20

Introduction and context

Special Educational Need (SEN) Reform stated that there are four outcomes that students with SEN should be looking to achieve before they finish formal education.

One of these strands is to support young people with SEN to prepare for employment. There is a need to identify appropriate post 16 pathways that will lead to this outcome for students with learning disabilities.

There are an estimated 900,900 adults with learning disabilities of working age in the UK, of which just 7% have a paid job, 89% a part time one¹.

People with learning disabilities have one of the lowest employment rates of all people with disabilities. Despite this many young adults with learning disabilities aspire to work. Employment brings high self-esteem, confidence, financial security, choices, a feeling of contributing and being part of the community. It is estimated that 65% of people with learning disabilities would like a paid job².

Since the implementation of Valuing People there has been a drive to develop an employment pathway through which people with learning disabilities can move towards paid employment. There has been some success in increasing the skills and employment aspirations of people with learning disabilities, but there has been a relatively small number of people who have gone on to achieve paid work with many remaining in volunteering and training schemes.

This report has been prepared by a team of Supported Learning and Project staff at Petroc. Our project aim is to analyse, embed, expand and spread good practice in delivering Supported Internships and progression pathways for learners with learning disabilities.

The team explored several different aspects of provision to inform our outputs:

1. We interviewed alumni from the last seven years of the Community Link Vocational course to analyse their progression pathways and gather feedback.
2. We interviewed former and current students and parents / carers from our Petroc Catering Social Enterprise programmes as this is a common stepping stone to work placements and employment.
3. We met with current Project SEARCH students and explored options to develop the programme.
4. We looked at employer engagement to increase the number of Supported Internships available for young people.
5. We analysed the number of students on current and future Supported Internship programmes, as well as demand for future programmes.

We have created four short reports to outline results of the research and next steps we will take to improve provision and increase the number and variety of progression pathways.

¹ Chris Hatton et al., (December 2014) *People with Learning Disabilities in England 2013*, Public Health England [online] available at: http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/securefiles/150625_1237//People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20in%20England%202013.pdf [accessed 25/06/2015]

² Department of Health, (19 January 2009) *Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for learning disabilities* [online] available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110601212422/http://www.valuingpeoplenow.dh.gov.uk/sites/dhvpnweb.rroom.net/files/webfm/Valuing%20People%20Now%20Landing%20Page/Valuing%20People%20Now%20Strategy%20.pdf> [accessed 25/06/2015]

A review of past students' progression pathways – Pete Jolly

Petroc's Community Link Vocational programme (CLV) offers a broad curriculum with an emphasis on the development of work-related skills and the further development of personal and social skills. The programme is appropriate for students aged between nineteen and twenty-four years old, who need some additional learning support to enable them to access their learning programme. Progression pathways include further training, supported employment or employment.

Current and previous pathways in supported learning at Petroc have enabled seventeen out of twenty-four former CLV students who responded to this research to source and secure employment. The findings are therefore developmental points that evolve existing good practice.

Methodology

To use action research models to explore the experiences of Community Link Vocational alumni with regards to employment, unemployment and access to the local labour market.

Methods include a postal questionnaire, open events with a range of research tools to engage with, Facebook posts for comment and discussion, focus groups and structured one-to-one interviews. The aim was to enable identification of common themes in job roles and vocational areas as well as skills and college experiences that were identified as important in the respondents' journey into employment. More importantly it is hoped that the results will identify gaps in our current pathways and provision for learners with learning disabilities that we could then look to design and embed.

Key Points

These are the key points taken from the interviews and questionnaires held with CLV alumni. The questionnaire and summary of responses can be found at appendix 1.

1. **Employer visits:** Experiential group visits have been significant in terms of generating ideas and developing an awareness of the local labour market. This is to assist students making choices as to where to complete an individual work experience. Visits tend to be limited larger employers only.
2. **Work placements:** A significant number of respondents undertook a work placement with an employer having visited as a group on an employer visit, see point 1 above. Five out of twenty-four have gained employment with the employer that provided their college work placement, with or without the additional support of another agency such as Pluss.
3. **Volunteering:** Three of the respondents currently volunteer. All of them clearly identify this as 'work'. Four out of twelve respondents advised volunteering to help current students move into work. Some other students had volunteered at some time between leaving CLV and taking part in the research.
4. **Travel:** The respondents used a map to plot their home and employment locations. This demonstrated that we have a wide and rural geographic distribution of students, while also showing two distinct employment hubs, Barnstaple and Bideford. Ten out of twenty-four respondents travel to work by bus, five cycle, five walk, two get a lift and two drive themselves. Three out of

thirteen identified independent travel as a work skill they developed while at Petroc.

5. **Employability skills:** A wide range of responses were given with regard to skills or traits that the respondents felt helped them move into work or help them in work. Confidence was a recurring theme, but also motivation, talking to people, independence, time-keeping and being assertive.

In terms of specific subject areas, Maths, English, job searching skills, CV writing, customer service, communication and listening skills were mentioned.

Specific lessons cited in this area were Bridging Retail, Bridging Coffee Club, Meddard House Café, community-based conservation, Maths and English. The report on Social Enterprise starting at page 7 below provides more detail on the Social Enterprises mentioned here.

6. **Specific training missing,** according to the respondents' experience, some responses specified areas of learning or qualifications that they felt were missing or, when job searching, may have been beneficial. These included catering, housekeeping and cleaning, Health and Safety at Work, Safe Lifting & Handling and Basic Food Hygiene.
7. **Employers:** There have been 26 employers that have employed CLV students at some point in the assessed time frame. Main vocational areas are housekeeping and cleaning (nine), catering (eight) and retail and customer service (five). See appendix 2 for a full list.

Recommendations (summary)

- To develop an explicit and progressive vocational pathway and / or series of lessons that develop skills in the area of housekeeping and cleaning.
- To re-organise and sequence catering lessons across study programmes that demonstrate progression from 'domestic cooking' through to work experience in a professional catering environment.

E.g. domestic cooking / life skills cooking → Coffee Club / Retail Baking → Liberty Café, as a group or individual 'in-house' work experience → Meddard House (community-based café) → individual work experience with an employer.

- To consider a similar but broader pathway encompassing retail and customer service. This will clearly overlap with catering opportunities, but may give young people more variety when job seeking.
- To embed and work towards a curriculum model with both individuals and study programme groups. Although a 'tutorial' process, within Supported Learning study programmes this would be relevant across the whole programme.
- Continue and expand the existing model of good practice for developing independent travel (walking, busses). Develop more opportunities for rehearsing these skills e.g. using public transport to travel to employer visits if possible. This could also include a basic cycle safety course e.g. Bikeability and bicycle maintenance courses.
- Add stand-alone specific employability qualifications that employers recognise to Year 3 and 4 study programmes such as Health and Safety at Work, First Aid at Work, Safe Lifting and Handling and Basic Food Hygiene.

- To make explicit the notion, value and experiences of volunteering with regard to moving on from college and into work. This could apply to a range of existing community-based activities with other agencies (e.g. Conservation, Meddard House, individual work experience), or in-house Social Enterprise activities. There is scope for follow up work with groups after the volunteering has taken place, for example CV development and interview skills.
- To provide adequate resources to enable the above. Particular roles will include Employment Lead for employer engagement / Job Coaches to support learners in the work place / Personal Tutor to allow an embedded, thorough, individualised and universal employer visit and work experience process, linked with CV and interview preparation.
- For results and recommendations to be disseminated and accessible to peers and managers so that experiential evidence is used to inform, inspire and guide future students and programme design.
- To recognise, value and continue the role of research in and on practice for curriculum and programme development, potentially widening the pool of respondents to alumni from other courses as well as employers who both employ and do not employ alumni.

Social Enterprise as a progression pathway for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities – Alex Wittram

Aim of Research

In this small scale research project we looked at the use of Social Enterprises for students with learning disabilities as a means to develop work skills to put them on the pathway towards employment.

What is Social Enterprise?

The Government defines Social Enterprises as:

“businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the [...] business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners”³.

Petroc Catering Social Enterprises

We have a range of Social Enterprise groups running at Petroc but this research concentrates on the largest area – catering.

At the North Devon Campus in Barnstaple we have a Social Enterprise which cooks a 2 course lunch once a week at a sheltered housing association called Meddard House.

North Devon Campus also has a café and restaurant which runs 5 days a week at The Liberty Centre, a purpose-built building containing a professional kitchen and café area.

Petroc’s Mid Devon Campus in Tiverton runs a take-away service 5 days a week in the centre of the Campus. There is also a recently opened café and restaurant in their new purpose-built building, open to members of the public 5 days a week.

The Research

Research methods consisted of questionnaires for the students involved in the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises (appendix 3); individual interviews (appendix 4) and focus groups about the students’ experiences; a questionnaire for parents/carers to gain their views on the impact of the Social Enterprise on their young adult. The aim is for the parents’ questionnaires to lead to a support group of parents which will become involved in the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises’ ongoing development.

We also contacted Petroc alumni who have previously accessed the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises to see if the skills they learnt have helped them to gain employment or whether they had a different outcome.

The intended outcome of the research is to show us in which areas we have been successful and where we need to improve, thereby informing developments within Petroc Social Enterprises.

³ Social Enterprise Mark, *What is Social Enterprise?*, [online] available at: <http://www.socialenterprisemark.org.uk/social-enterprise/> [accessed 26/06/2015]

Focus Group at Meddard House

Meddard House is a retirement and sheltered housing complex in Barnstaple with eighty-four flats. It was built in 1975. It has non-resident management staff and a community alarm service. Regular social activities at Meddard House include a coffee morning, keep fit and bingo.

Nine students attend a Social Enterprise day every Tuesday. The students are a mixed group: some do this as part of their full-time course, others come in just for the day and some of these pay a fee to access the day. The students' ages range from eighteen to thirty-one.

The group cooks and serves a hot meal every Tuesday in the communal area at Meddard House to those residents who wish to purchase a two course lunch for £5 including tea or coffee.

Students work together in the kitchen to prepare the food. Then a small group of students takes the role of front of house taking orders, serving and collecting the money from the customers. There is also a take-away service for those residents who would prefer to eat in their rooms.

On arrival at Meddard House there were about twenty customers all eating roast dinner. There were three students waiting on tables and undertaking other front of house duties outlined above. One student was delivering take-away orders to the rooms and five students were working in the kitchen. There were five support staff members and one lecturer supporting the activities.

Students were working at various levels of independence but they knew their roles and what was expected of them. All were dressed appropriately for the areas they were working in.

Skills

In the focus group all the students felt they were learning skills which might get them a job in the future.

One student felt that the experience had made her more confident: she was now able to talk to the customers and didn't feel so shy.

Another felt that the skills he had learnt at Meddard House gave him the confidence to look for work placements in catering settings elsewhere.

All the students in the group felt that working at Meddard House had given them a realistic work setting and support to help them learn work skills and to stay safe.

Travel

Students got to Meddard House using a variety of means: the majority walked, two caught the bus, one had a taxi and two were bought by parents/carers.

One student felt he would need to learn a new walking route with support to enable him to get to the workplace if he were to secure a job elsewhere. He felt he could get a bus if again he was given training.

Next steps

When talking about the future the majority felt they would like a job although they all felt they would need help for them to succeed.

A couple of the students felt they would find interviews for work difficult as they were shy and would be very nervous.

One student felt he would like to get a work placement in the kitchens of one of the local hotels in the summer and that if he did well they might offer him a job because of the work experience he'd had at Meddard House.

There were general worries about transport to and from future work for the whole group, as well as whether they would get enough support to help them be successful in the workplace.

Focus Group held at the Exe Café

Students run the newly opened Exe Café in Petroc Mid Devon Campus. They produce a range of lunch options in the kitchen. Students take orders and serve food and drinks throughout the college day. The café is overseen by a lecturer who has a professional catering background and runs her own pub. Some of the students gain work experience in her pub following learning catering skills in the Social Enterprise. Food is not only produced for the café but also a takeaway outlet in the college shop which is also run by students with learning disabilities.

Some students choose to spend days working in the Exe Café as part of their study programme; other students pay to access the catering opportunity. Some students are on an Internship programme within the catering opportunities at the Mid Devon Campus – working in the shop and café. There is a mixture of student levels within the group – some students are Entry Level 1, others are studying Level 1 qualifications including food and hygiene qualifications.

Several of the students had successful work placements in catering settings and one student had just been offered a six month full time placement at the local pasty and pie producers which, if successful, will lead onto employment.

One of the students had had an unsuccessful work placement at a large local business so had returned for an Internship with the Exe Café at Petroc with a view to moving on to the lecturer's pub and then onto a further external work placement. She was working front of house.

One of the Interns was having an interview for external employment next week.

It was felt by the whole group that the skills they were learning from the Social Enterprise would help them gain employment in the future and that learning work skills in a supported setting gave them confidence and the belief that they could work in an employment setting.

Student questionnaires - summary

Thirty students took part in the questionnaires.

All the students felt they had learnt a range of skills doing the Social Enterprise and the majority felt these skills would help them find employment or help in a work placement. However only nine out of the thirty mentioned work placements.

Only seven had taken any catering qualifications and these were all from the Mid Devon Campus.

The students' comments on barriers to finding work mentioned travel, communication difficulties, employers not wanting to employ people with learning disabilities, few jobs and physical disabilities.

Students felt Petroc could help if they could gain work relevant qualifications i.e. basic food hygiene, help with CV and interview techniques, travel training, higher level courses.

Past student questionnaires - summary

Eleven past students completed the questionnaires. They all felt they had learnt a range of skills working in the Social Enterprise.

Only one student had part time paid employment.

Eight of the young people had found finding employment difficult. A range of reasons were given for this but again travel was a high scorer as well as not having the right qualification, and poor numeracy, literacy and communications skills.

Nine of the students felt the skills they had learnt in the Social Enterprise had helped either in Internship, work placements or employment.

Parent/Carer questionnaires - summary

There was a low response from parents with only 10 replies to 50 questionnaires sent. However those that did reply to the questionnaire were extremely positive about the skills that the Social Enterprise had given the students. One parent wrote about her son's experience:

"It has developed his confidence, self-esteem and a sense of pride".

A couple of parents mentioned the idea of Petroc:

"helping support young people that perhaps want to start their own business".

There was also mention of more help with CV writing and interview skills from a couple of the parents.

Parents saw transport/travelling to work, lack of reading and writing skills, poor timekeeping, problems with medication, poor memory, i.e. needing constant reminders, and lack of employers willing to take on young people with a learning disability as barriers to gaining employment.

Results and recommendations

Skills

The results of the students and parent/carers questionnaires showed that students taking part in the Social Enterprise felt they were learning skills that would help them in work placements, Internships or work.

CVs and interviews

More support for students in evidencing their Social Enterprise experience on their CV, and articulating it in interviews, will be worked into their ongoing personal progression.

Volunteering

Volunteering is recognised as a valuable source of experience, but the students all see their main aim as being full time employment.

Self-employment

Self-employment should not be overlooked as a pathway to success for our students with learning disabilities and could be a way to overcome barriers such as communication issues and travel problems. This should be considered as an additional element in the curriculum.

Travel

This is still being identified as a barrier despite being part of the students' learning so more should be included to help them to maintain their independence and broaden their geographical working area.

Employer perception

There was a feeling that some employers were not willing to employ people with a learning disability and that job opportunities were limited. We need to improve employer engagement to overcome this.

Genuine work experience

In the focus groups students generally felt they would like to have more work experience placements outside the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises.

Qualifications

There was a feeling amongst parents and students that they would like to do a relevant qualification like the basic food hygiene certificate, health and safety certificate, first aid and safe lifting and handling to increase their chances of employment.

The next step here is to talk to employers about what they would like to see on a young person's CV, then move to improve the curriculum to reflect this, resources permitting.

Suggested progression model

The most successful progression route talked about was gaining work skills in a Social Enterprise, such as the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises, which equips students to apply for Project SEARCH or similar Supported Internships where their skills continue to develop and work ethos grows in a supported external work environment. This in turn enables them to apply for paid employment in the open marketplace. Job Coaching from Pluss can continue into the new employment area until the young person feels ready to continue without support.

Finally in conclusion this research has shown that all the students are individuals who have different barriers to gaining employment. Petroc Catering Social Enterprises are a valuable resource to enable students to develop work skills and to allow them to acquire the work ethos to be successful in future work placements, Internships and eventually employment. It forms part of a valuable pathway towards employment along which work skills are gained enabling the student to move on to the next stage of their individualised journey. Some young people may never move on to paid work because of their own individual barriers to employment but the Social Enterprise opportunity gives them feelings of self-worth, increased confidence and a sense of pride which they may never have experienced if this opportunity hadn't been available.

Project SEARCH – Alex Wittram and Jenn Fuller

At Petroc we have two models of Supported Internship, the multiple employer model and the single employer model.

The multiple employer model consists of a number of individual students completing their Internships with different employers, coming together at Petroc to attend classes complementing the Internship. This model is limited as each employer only takes on one Intern, so a high number of employers is required to meet demand, resulting in a lot of administration and time to manage the relationships. There is also a requirement for several Job Coaches to travel from employer to employer to support the young people. Staffing and resources are quite high for a relatively low number of students.

Our single employer model, **Project SEARCH⁴** is a very successful partnership with the Northern Devon Healthcare Trust, Pluss and Petroc. The Project SEARCH model suits large employers who are in a position to host a Job Coach and a Tutor at their premises, and to provide space for learning to take place alongside employment.

Our partnership works as follows:

Northern Devon Healthcare Trust provides the Interns with intensive work experience at North Devon District Hospital (NDDH), as well as a base to hold tutorials, and employee training. They provide each Intern with a mentor who is a fellow employee whilst they are on a rotation. Their staff give the Interns detailed feedback.

Pluss, a Social Enterprise that supports over 5,000 people with disabilities and other disadvantages into employment each year, provides a full time Job Coach who is based at the hospital. Pluss is able to help the young people with their job search towards the end of the Internship, along with support into paid employment where necessary.

Petroc provides a full time Tutor who is based at the hospital. The Tutor runs tutorial sessions twice a day, offers extra support to the Interns and provides them with CV and interview skills to support their job search.

The Pluss Job Coach and the Petroc Tutor work very closely together to ensure the Interns are given all the support they need and to make sure they have the best chance of securing employment or a Traineeship or Apprenticeship at the end of the Internship.

At NDDH, the Job Coach and Tutor are based in an Education Room in which the Interns meet twice a day to reflect on their daily learning and attend sessions on a wide range of topics including employability, CVs and applications, politics, and an appropriate level of maths and English. The learning results in a Project SEARCH Certificate which includes City & Guilds Employability L1. Between 9.00am and 2.00pm every day, five days a week, the Interns work in a department in the hospital. They experience three different roles, or rotations, during the academic year and receive feedback from their rotation manager, the Project SEARCH Tutor and the Job Coach. They complete daily reflection and self-assessment.

The partnership between NDDH, Petroc and Pluss is vital to the success of this model.

For more information about Project SEARCH see appendix 6.

⁴ Project SEARCH (2011-12) About Project SEARCH [online] Available at: <http://www.projectsearch.us/About.aspx> [Accessed 25/06/2015]

Focus Group – Project SEARCH Supported Internship

Alex met with six of the Project SEARCH Interns at NDDH (see appendix 5 for individual case study). All the Interns had attended Petroc prior to starting Project SEARCH and been involved either with the Liberty Café and Restaurant and/or Meddard House apart from one. The students do three rotations in different departments of the Hospital, each lasting ten weeks. These include cleaning, portering, record keeping, finance, retail and catering.

Skills

Students felt that many of the skills they had learnt when working in the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises helped them succeed in the Internships.

Several mentioned the cleaning skills and also making drinks which they now do for patients.

They also felt the Social Enterprises had given them a feel for work and helped them understand what work would be like but with more support than the Internship.

Internship compared to Social Enterprise

The Interns all felt the Internship was a more realistic working environment as they were working with older people and were expected to behave in a professional and responsible manner as representatives of the hospital staff. They work with mentors who support them in their job roles and this has enabled them to now start to apply for paid employment.

Next Steps

In partnership with Pluss, Petroc and NDDH, Interns were having support to write CVs, work on their interview skills and also to take a City and Guilds Level 1 in Employability. Pluss would be able to put Job Coaches in place to support them in any future employment for the period they were in need of support. The students were extremely optimistic about their employment opportunities.

Project SEARCH outcomes

From the 2013/14 cohort, six out of the seven Interns found sustainable employment and/or further training. Examples of the positions secured include:

- Permanent contracts with the Sodexo Group, the organisation with whom a rotation of Internship was spent.
- Full time NHS Sterile Service contract, a department with whom a rotation of the Internship was spent.
- Traineeships in health care and other related industries.

Increasing provision – challenges and possible solutions

There is high demand for places on Project SEARCH. The numbers have increased as follows:

2013/14 – eight Interns started.

2014/15 – ten Interns started.

2015/16 – fourteen applicants, intending to start in September.

The challenges with this are:

Resource – the hospital has limited space to offer as a base for the Interns. Any more than fourteen Interns could not be accommodated.

Capacity – the hospital can only offer so many opportunities for rotations and there are only a limited number of vacancies at any one time that the Interns can apply for at the end of the Internship.

Solutions we are considering include:

Opening up a similar single employer model Supported Internship with another large employer.

Looking to work with other employers in conjunction with NDDH and Pluss to provide one of the rotations at a different employer to widen the Interns' experience and create extra capacity.

Creating a stronger link to Traineeships and Apprenticeships so that there is a further opportunity for Interns to gain work related experience and training. We already have seen several Interns move on to Traineeships and we expect to see more as we increase promotion of these opportunities to Interns in the coming academic year.

Employer engagement – Mandy Campbell

For students with additional needs to have more access to Further Education and in particular work experience and Supported Internships, employer partnership is key – it cannot happen without it.

Employability skills can be taught in college but students cannot always transfer these to the workplace, they need experience in a working environment with co-workers. The majority of young people with a learning disability or an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are experiential learners and we as educators need to continue this way of teaching throughout their learning and into employment.

Employers need to be shown that students can do a job, have the time to explore this and feel confident that they will receive support and understanding whilst offering this opportunity. Supported Internships enable this to happen and employers are beginning to ask about Supported Apprenticeships. Many want to pay young people while they are learning but there does not appear to be a framework to enable this to happen particularly as many learners work at Entry Level English and Maths.

Challenges

Time is the biggest single challenge encountered when attempting to undertake this research.

- We arranged a lunch, inviting twenty-five companies but only two were able to attend although those two were very positive and it is hopeful opportunities for learners will come from both.
- From the outset of the project we requested, through a business Petroc currently works with, that Mandy Campbell meet with the HR Forum from the local area, which they agreed would be beneficial but to date still has not taken place, although it will happen in the near future.
- Even when undertaking the employer survey only 25% of the employers had time to respond. See appendix 7 for results.

Outcomes

Employer Consultation Forum

Local employers contacted have shown interest in being part of an Employer Consultation Forum. We will go forward with this as it will give Petroc a platform for understanding an employer's needs and build this into our curriculum, offer training to local businesses and build that most important relationship for the future.

It should meet the need for joint working within the college to ensure that the same employers are not visited by a number of people and that everyone shares the same good practice requirements that have been highlighted through this research.

Online Employability Discussion Area

Throughout the duration of this project, other organisations have been in contact and we have discussed ideas and good practice that can be used by all. The idea of having an online area that could be shared with employment focussed members of Further Education was mooted and definitely something we will aim to implement during the coming academic year.

Key points

- **Communication method**

From the employer survey and other contact with employers, there was clear identification that the best method of communication with employers is initially via email or telephone to arrange a face to face meeting.

- **Continuity of contact**

A key element of employer requirements was that the same college representative be primary contact for all work experience related enquiries. The relationship between college and employer is paramount to successful placements as an understanding of the employer's business ensures correct students are put forward for a placement. Trust is also built which can assist with early intervention; if an employer feels confident to speak with someone with regard to a problem it is more likely this problem can be solved preventing a placement from breaking down.

This approach will require more collaboration between different departments at the college. For instance, if you have an organisation taking on Supported Internships, work experience placements, Traineeships and Apprenticeships, ideally there would be one key contact managing the relationship with this particular employer.

- **Job matching**

The process of job matching was raised by a number of employers and they felt that this did not always take place. In the past students from a range of college courses, not just the Supported Learning department, were sent along with no idea of what the business did or what was required of them. They were not clear about the role and had no particular aspiration to undertake it. This had the impact of a business not wanting to take part in work experience or related activity in the future.

- **The importance of familiarity training**

Employers have been invited to training delivered by NAS and those who attended found this very beneficial. Research shows that many employers are still not taking up the offer of free familiarity training. This is primarily due to time constraints and rotas within a business.

- **Job Coaches**

Job Coaches were also thought of as being important IF required. Not all businesses want them as they do their own training but do not really know what they do.

- **Supported Internships onto the agenda**

None of the employers we spoke to at the Business Expo, see appendix 8, had heard of Supported Internships. This must be addressed.

- **Reluctance to take on unpaid staff**

Some employers have mentioned that they are uncomfortable with taking on a Supported Intern for a whole year without paying them and mentioned the idea of having an Apprenticeship that followed the same principles so that they could offer a salary.

Conclusion and recommendations

The above research papers outline some clear steps we need to take to develop provision and build on best practice to meet the needs of our students who have learning difficulties who want to get into paid employment, Apprenticeships and Supported Internships.

Embedding good practice

Curriculum development

Feedback from former and current students, parents, carers and employers has allowed us to develop curriculum and strengthen progressions pathways.

- More work related qualifications such as Basic Food Hygiene; Health and Safety at Work; Safe Lifting and Handling; and similar.
- Develop progression pathways to incorporate retail and customer service to meet local employment demands.
- Introduce basic skills surrounding self-employment as this is the preferred option for some.
- Our travel training is good, but even more would be useful, particularly planning travel to employer visits.

Employer engagement

Employer engagement is key to developing effective progression pathways.

- We are working on having a single key contact for each employer when dealing with work experience type activity, rather than a separate individual for work experience, Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Internships, work place visits etc.
- There is still a lack of awareness about Supported Internships as a valuable part of progression for young people with learning disabilities. The work we have done on this project has addressed this to an extent and more will be done to sustain this.

Sustaining good practice

Growth

Growth in Supported Internships is a key outcome and something we will continue to build on over time as demand grows.

Raising awareness

Raising awareness of Supported Internships and Job Coaches is also important and will be part of our Employer Consultation Forum meetings.

Capacity building

Capacity building relies on employer engagement and will be part of the Employer Consultation Forum. Recognising that time is limited for employers, we are considering methods for hosting this forum online.

Review

We are committed to reviewing curriculum on an ongoing basis to ensure that it still meets the students' needs and equips them with relevant skills for jobs that they want to do, and that are obtainable in the local area.

Innovative funding ideas

Petroc Social Enterprises not only give students valuable experience, but they also make funds that go back into the Social Enterprise allowing the activity to sustain itself.

Sharing good practice

The results of this research will be shared as follows:

Internal

Departmental meeting with staff, students and research respondents present to discuss implementation of changes and ongoing review.

Petroc Scholarly Activity Conference open to all staff and member of the public. We will run a workshop presenting results of this research and inviting feedback and ideas from those present.

External

Our Online Employability Discussion Area is taking shape and will be an ideal forum for sharing ideas from this research and future developments and reviews.

EDI Good Practice Fund Conferences in London and Manchester will enable us to share results with partner projects, delegates and stakeholders.

We will share this report and additional resources with our existing networks.

This report and additional resources will be accessible online at www.petroc.ac.uk

Limited printed copies of outcomes will be available.

Any future research that takes place to sustain the development and good practice in Supported Learning will be shared similarly at future events.

References and useful resources

References

Chris Hatton et al., (December 2014) *People with Learning Disabilities in England 2013*, Public Health England [online] available at:
http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/securefiles/150625_1237//People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20in%20England%202013.pdf [accessed 25/06/2015]

Department for Education, (June 2014, revised December 2014) *Supported Internships*, [online] DFE-00430-2014, Crown copyright 2014, Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-Internships-for-young-people-with-learning-difficulties> [Accessed 26/06/2015]

Department of Health, (19 January 2009) *Valuing People Now: a new three-year strategy for learning disabilities* [online] available at:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110601212422/http://www.valuingpeoplenow.dh.gov.uk/sites/dhvpnweb.rroom.net/files/webfm/Valuing%20People%20Now%20Landing%20Page/Valuing%20People%20Now%20Strategy%20.pdf> [accessed 25/06/2015]

Pluss *Project SEARCH* [online] available at: <http://www.Pluss.org.uk/project-search> [accessed 25/06/2015]

Project SEARCH (2011-12) *About Project SEARCH* [online] Available at:
<http://www.projectsearch.us/About.aspx> [Accessed 25/06/2015]

Social Enterprise Mark, *What is Social Enterprise?*, [online] available at:
<http://www.socialenterprisemark.org.uk/social-enterprise/> [accessed 26/06/2015]

Useful resources

Department for Education guidance on Supported Internships

Department for Education, (June 2014, revised December 2014) *Supported Internships*, [online] DFE-00430-2014, Crown copyright 2014, Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-Internships-for-young-people-with-learning-difficulties> [Accessed 26/06/2015]

Preparing for Adulthood - their website has a whole section on Supported Internships which is most useful.

Preparing for Adulthood (2015) *Supported Internships* [online] Available at:
<http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/supported-Internships> [Accessed 26/06/2015]

Job Coaching

The British Association of Supported Employment and Pluss both have more information about Job Coaching:

www.base-uk.org

www.pluss.org.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1	CLV interview questionnaire and results summary
Appendix 2	CLV alumni progression destinations
Appendix 3	Social Enterprise questionnaire results
Appendix 4	Individual Case Study – Meddard House
Appendix 5	Individual Case Study – Project SEARCH Supported Internship
Appendix 6	Supported Internships and Project SEARCH information
Appendix 7	Employer engagement survey results
Appendix 8	Employer engagement Business Expo results

Appendix 1

CLV interview questionnaire and results summary

One way you could take part in the research is to complete the questions below. If you need support you could ask someone to help you or write the answers for you. If you would like me to help you complete it then get in contact and I will arrange a time with you.

You can choose more than one option for some questions. You should choose all the answers that apply to you.

When you have completed it, please put it in the addressed envelope and post it back to me. You do not need to put a stamp on it.

Thanks for taking the time to take part.

Name: _____

At the moment...

1. Are you: In work
 Volunteering
 Out of work
 On a course (college or somewhere else)

2. If you are working, where do you work? _____

3. What is your job (role)? _____

4. Are you: full time part time

5. Do you have a contract? yes no

6. Is your work paid voluntary

Visual questionnaire:

'Who prepared you for work'?

Respondents answered with a coloured sticker for each organisation showing their choice of the following options:

Very helpful; Helped a bit; No help; Unhelpful

The answers were as follows:

	Very helpful	Helped a bit	No help	Unhelpful	Notes
College	12	1	0	0	
Me (i.e. the respondent themselves)	11	2	1	0	
Job Centre Plus	2	3	3	5	This may be because they did not approach JCP
Friends	3	6	3	0	
Family	6	4	2	1	
Pluss	4	1	4	3	This may be because they did not approach Pluss

'Other' answers included:

- My tutor
- My partner
- Facebook x 2
- Westward Pathfinder – a local charity that supports the unemployed
- The internet
- Social Worker
- Clic Sargent x 3

Appendix 2

CLV alumni progression destinations

Employer	Job Role	FT / PT	Contract	Paid / Voluntary	Support in to work?	Duration
Burger King	KP / Front of house	PT	No	Paid	Job Centre Plus	Finished (9 months)
Norboard	Operative	FT	No	Paid	Family	Finished (1 month)
Torrige Volunteer Bureau	Enabler	PT	No	Voluntary	Torrige Volunteer Bureau	Finished (1 year)
Cedars Inn	KP	PT	No	Voluntary (PLUSS placement)	PLUSS	6 weeks
	KP	FT	Yes	Paid	PLUSS	2 years 6 months
Tex Plastics	Operative	FT	Yes	Paid	Family	4 years
Dunelm Mill	Sales assistant	PT	Yes	Paid	Family	5 months
South West Metals	Yard Operative	FT	Yes	Paid	PLUSS	2 years 4 months
	Dairy hand	PT	No	Paid	-	4 months
Tesco (Taw View)	Customer service / Trolleys	PT	?	Paid	PLUSS	4 years
Hartland Quay Hotel	KP, Cleaner	FT	?	Paid	Family	2 years
Merry Harriers Garden Centre			?	Paid	-	Finished
Hoops Inn	Housekeeper		?	Paid	-	Finished
Squires	KP	PT	Yes	Paid	Family	8 years
Asda	Trolley Porter	PT	Yes	Paid	PLUSS	3 years
? Hotel, Blackpool	KP, Housekeeping	PT	No	Paid	Family	9 months
Calaca Loco	KP	PT	No	Paid		1 year 6 months
Sodexo, NDDH	Housekeeper	PT	Yes	Paid	PLUSS	3 years
George Hotel, Braunton	Housekeeper	PT	No	Paid		Finished (1 year 6 months)
Queens Theatre	Cleaner	PT	No	Paid	Family	Finished (4 years)
Petroc	Cleaner	PT	Yes	Paid	College, Tutor	5 years
NDDC, Civic Centre	Cleaner	PT	Yes	Paid	PLUSS	4 years

Greenfields	Cleaner	PT	No	Paid	-	Finished (9 months)
Pathfinders	Receptionist	PT	No	Voluntary	Pathfinders	9 months
BJ's Value House, Barnstaple	Garden and shop floor assistant	FT	Yes	Paid	College, Work placement coordinator	3 years 2 months
Barnstaple Heritage Centre	Front of house assistant	PT	No	Voluntary	-	4 years 6 months

Appendix 3

Social Enterprise questionnaire results

Parent/Carer Questionnaire

Number of parents taking part	10			
Skills learnt in Catering Social Enterprise				
Cooking	10			
Cleaning	9			
Setting and clearing table	6			
Using the till	6			
Health and safety	9			
Using the coffee machine	7			
Taking orders	6			
Talking to customers	9			
Laundry	4			
Waiting on table	8			
Other	Team Work			
Do you see Social Enterprise preparing the young person for -	Work placement 5	Internship 2	Work 5	Moving into the community 3
Can you think of barriers to employment	Yes 10		No	
Barriers listed	Travelling to work (living a long way from work opportunities) 5 Time keeping 1 Money skills 1 CV writing 1 Reading and writing 1 Lack of jobs 2 Employers not wanting to take on employees with learning disability 1 Information of options 1 Poor memory so instructions need repeating 1 Employers prefer Internship as they can exploit young people without offering paid work 1 Physical disability (wheelchair user) 1 Not being able to read and write			
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petroc to look for other local businesses in the area that are able to support people. • Petroc supporting people to start their own business. • Social Enterprise has developed confidence, self-esteem and a sense of pride. 			

Past Students Results

Number of students taking part	9		
Students now in			
Paid employment			
Part time paid employment	1		
Voluntary work			
Internship	8		
Not working – what doing			
Skills learnt in Catering Social Enterprise			
Cooking	8		
Cleaning	4		
Setting and clearing table	6		
Using the till	6		
Health and safety	8		
Using the coffee machine	6		
Taking orders	9		
Talking to customers	9		
Laundry	1		
Waiting on table	3		
External Work Placement			
Yes	8 Kitchen Barnstaple Hotel Tesco Sainsburys Jigsaw Pets at Home The Big Sheep The Secret Garden CoOp Doves Café North Devon Hospice Lawrence House Queens Theatre		
No			
Have skills helped in work placement?	Yes 6	No 1	
Have you found it difficult to find work?	Yes 3	No 2	Haven't looked 4
Possible reasons difficult to find work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of my learning disability 3 • CV skills and interview Process 1 • Not many jobs 2 • Travel 3 • Not good at money • Reading and writing not good 3 • Physical disability 			

Current Students Results

Number of students taking part	30			
Students Course				
Community Link Team Enterprise	10			
Community Link Vocational	1			
Integrated Work Skills	1			
Self-funded Day	2			
Skills for Life and Work	15			
Project life	1			
Skills learnt in Catering Social Enterprise				
Cooking	30			
Cleaning	28			
Setting and Clearing table	15			
Using the till	16			
Health and Safety	26			
Using the coffee machine	17			
Taking orders	21			
Talking to customers	20			
Laundry	15			
Waiting on table	18			
Have you taken a catering qualification?	Yes 5 Edexcel 2 Food Hygiene	No 22		
External Work Placement				
Yes	9 Stepping Stones Children's Nursery National Trust x 2 Phoenix The Donkey Sanctuary Charity Shop x 2 Halfway House Café At the Royal Hotel waitressing (3hrs paid)			
No	19			
Have skills helped or would help in work placement?	Yes 26	No 4		
After this course you plan to	Work 12	Internship 2	Another course 4	Other 1 1 go out with carers 1 Pluss work choice
Possible reasons difficult to find work:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of my learning disability 8 • CV skills and interview process 3 • Not many jobs 3 • I might find it hard to try • People don't give me a chance • Not wheelchair friendly workplaces 1 • My disability 1 				

- I don't know how to get there 1
- Having a problem with transport
- Too many people applying for jobs 1
- Not much work about 1
- Too shy for interviews 1
- Need a job within walking distance 1
- Need help with my communications 2
- Can't walk very far – physical disability 1
- Bit shy – interviews difficult 1

Anything you could do at College to make it easier for you to find work?

Help me

Doing a higher course

More training

Get the right qualifications 2

Good training 6

Having good training and work experience

Job coaching in work experience

Having a certificate

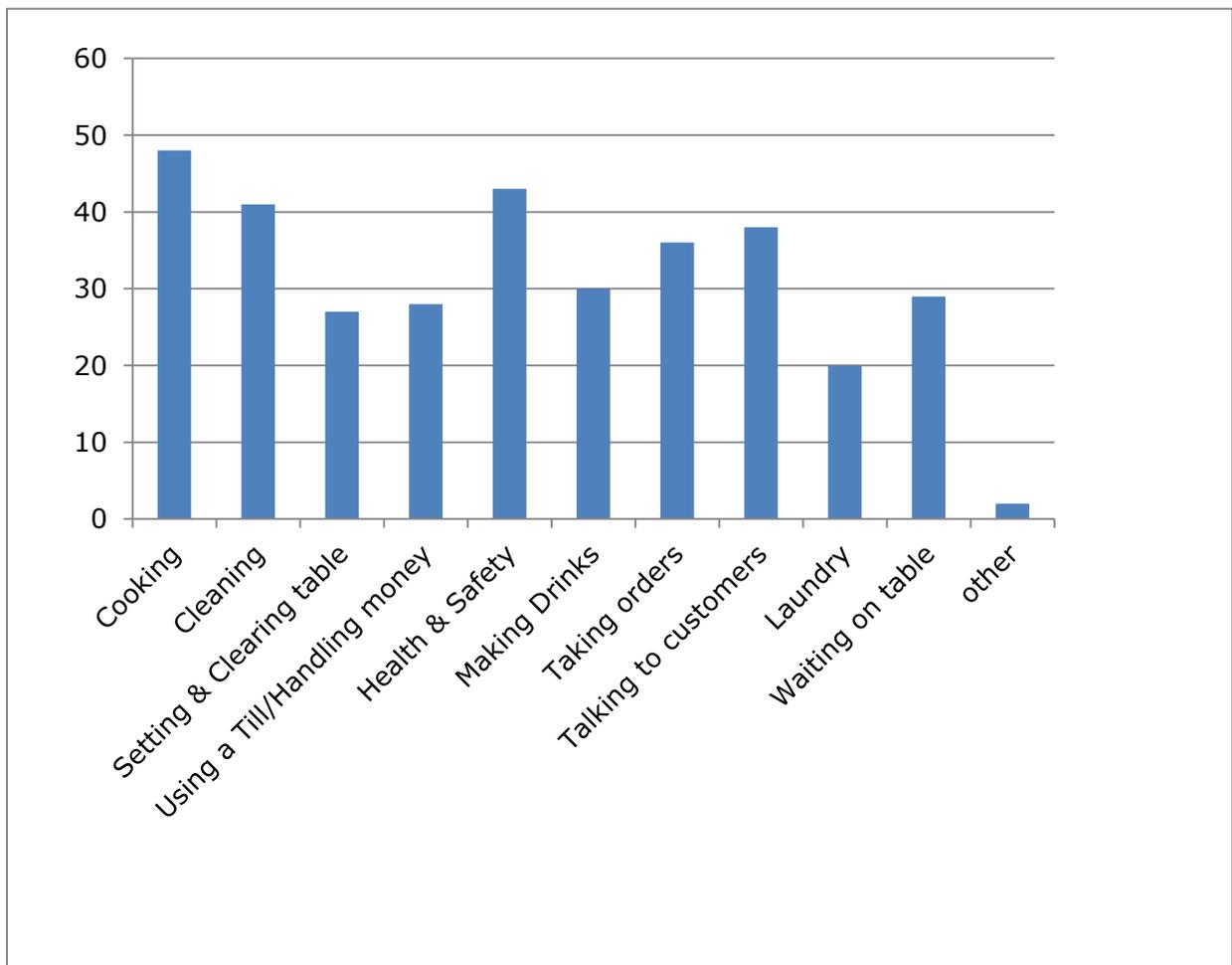
Travel training for using a bus

Build my confidence – don't like interviews

Practising interviews

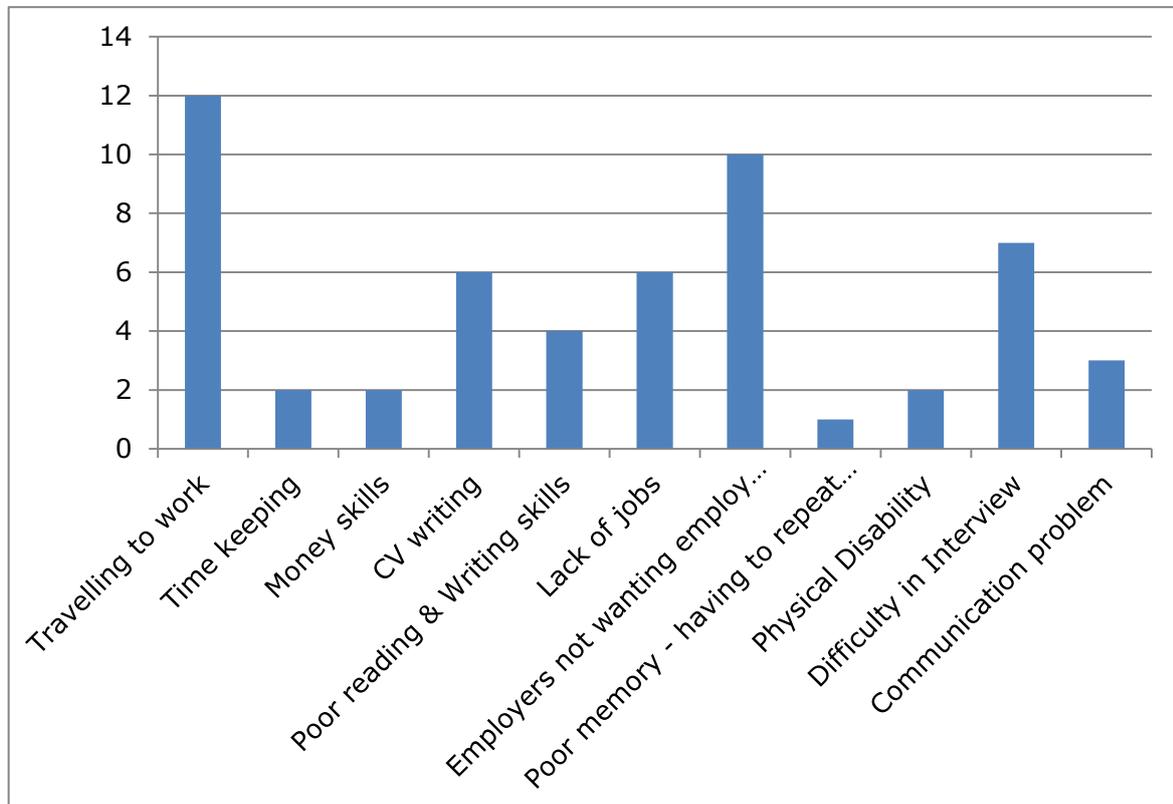
Skills Learnt in Social Enterprise

Skills Learnt	
Cooking	48
Cleaning	41
Setting and Clearing table	27
Using a Till/Handling money	28
Health and Safety	43
Making Drinks	30
Taking orders	36
Talking to customers	38
Laundry	20
Waiting on table	29
other	2



Barriers To Employment

Barriers To Employment	
Travelling to work	12
Time keeping	2
Money skills	2
CV writing	6
Poor reading and writing skills	4
Lack of jobs	6
Employers not wanting to employ people with learning disabilities	10
Poor memory - having to repeat instructions	1
Physical disability	2
Difficulty in Interview	7
Communication problem	3



Appendix 4

Individual Case Study – Meddard House

Alice who is 31 attended Petroc on an Entry Level course until she was 19. She then went to an Independent Specialist Provider for 3 years where she learnt to work in an equine setting. On her return to the area she now lives in supported living in her own flat. Alice works for 2 days a week at stables unpaid. She also works for 3 hrs a week paid in the kitchens of a local hotel. Alice pays to come to the Meddard Social Enterprise every Tuesday and feels that the skills she learns in these sessions help her with her paid work in the hotel. She is hoping to increase her hours at her paid job. Alice feels she is learning and developing her skills in a supported work environment which will hopefully enable her to increase her paid employment hours per week.

Alice felt otherwise without the opportunity of accessing Meddard House she would be sat at home losing her skills and feeling depressed.

Alice is transported to Meddard House by her carer in the morning and catches a bus home.

Appendix 5

Individual Case Study – Project SEARCH Supported Internship

Ben is 24. He attended Petroc on Entry Level courses until July 2014.

Ben worked in the Liberty Café and Restaurant and Meddard House before starting on Project SEARCH in August 2014. Ben spends Monday to Thursday as a cleaner and on a Friday works as a porter. He lives in South Molton and catches the bus to Barnstaple. He has recently moved to South Molton Hospital on his final rotation but then attends NDDH for his key skills and qualification work with the Tutor from Petroc and the Pluss Job Coach. Ben is studying City and Guilds Employability Skills Level 1. Ben plans to find a paid job at the end of his Internship. He has recently completed a job application for McDonalds in Barnstaple and is waiting to hear back. His Petroc Tutor and Pluss Job Coach helped him with his application and CV writing and are giving him interview experience with mock interviews. However if his placement at South Molton Hospital is successful there may be employment opportunities here which will make travelling to and from work much easier.

Ben feels he has been well prepared to become job ready and that for him the Petroc Catering Social Enterprises gave him the skills and the confidence to apply for the Internship. After a settling in period Ben now feels he has the experience to enable him to get a job and for him to succeed in paid employment.

Appendix 6

Supported Internships and Project SEARCH information

Supported Internships

Supported Internships are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer. They are intended to enable young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve sustainable, paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work through learning in the workplace. Internships normally last for a year and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. Students complete a personalised study programme which includes the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications, if suitable, and English and maths to an appropriate level.

Although similar in aims to a traineeship or Apprenticeship, Supported Internships differ in key ways. Young people on Supported Internships are expected to require *a higher level of support* than a trainee or apprentice, and to be offered workplace support in the form of a job coach, as well as support for their non-workplace learning.

A key difference to traineeships is that Interns are expected to need *a longer programme* than a trainee, for whom the maximum programme length is six months.

The above information is taken from *Supported Internships*⁵.

Project SEARCH in Devon with Pluss

*Project SEARCH*⁶

This is a well-established partnership with input from Petroc, North Devon District Hospital on a senior level and amongst staff who work with the Interns, and Pluss who provide a Job Coach and support in finding employment towards the end of the programme.

Where did it all start?

Find out about the origins of Project SEARCH and find a Project SEARCH near you at the original website, www.projectsearch.us⁷

⁵ Department for Education, (June 2014, revised December 2014) *Supported Internships*, [online] DFE-00430-2014, Crown copyright 2014, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-internships-for-young-people-with-learning-difficulties> [accessed 26/06/2015]

⁶ Pluss *Project SEARCH* [online] available at: <http://www.Pluss.org.uk/project-search> [accessed 25/06/2015]

⁷ Project Search US [online], available at: <http://www.projectsearch.us/GetINVOLVED/FindaProgram.aspx> [accessed 25/06/2015]

Appendix 7

Employer engagement survey results

A SurveyMonkey survey was prepared and sent to 28 employers with whom Petroc has, or has had, contact. There were 7 responses.

Q.1 Do you currently employ someone with a learning disability or Autistic Spectrum Disorder?

Yes	42.86%
No	57.14%

Q.2 Do you offer work experience opportunities to students with additional needs?

Yes	85.71%
No	14.29%

Q.3 What would be the best method of approach for a College to approach an employer?

By telephone or email to arrange a meeting	85.71%
All undertaken by email	0.0%
All undertaken by telephone	14.29%

Q.4 Would it be important to have continuity of contact? The same person throughout?

Yes	100%
-----	------

Q.5 Would the offer of free staff training encourage you to offer a placement to students with additional needs?

Yes	28.57%
No	14.29%
Possibly	57.14%

Q.6 Would you value a job coach to support a placement to minimise the impact upon your staff?

Yes, this would be important	85.71%
No, we like to use our own staff	0.00%
Maybe	14.29%

Q.7 What could colleges do better to prepare students with additional needs for the workplace?

- They need to be quite worldly and able to communicate well.
- Having already undertaken students I believe Petroc do a good job at preparing students already – keep doing what your doing – it works!

Q.8 What skills, other than academic, are important in your business and should be taught in college?

- Social skills, expected behaviours
- Interpersonal skills, communication skills

Q.9 What are the barriers you see to employing/offering a work placement to someone with additional needs?

- Health and safety high importance of manufacturing site, as long as the individual has good understanding – no barriers.
- We are a very intense business by nature and it is not always possible just to drop someone into the mix.
- As a small company of less than 150 staff and a very low turnover of staff we would struggle to accommodate numbers, but are happy to work with the college wherever we can.
- H&S issues relating to awareness and understanding of work going on around them. Physical or mental ability to understand task and undertake effectively, without needing constant staff supervision.
- All our vacancies go through an approval process and we advertise either internally or externally which would mean the student could apply also. With regards to a work placement it would depend on which Service area and if they would be able to accommodate a student.

Q.10 If approached, would you consider being part of an employer engagement group in partnership with the College?

Yes	71.43%
No	28.57%

Appendix 8

Employer engagement Business Expo results

Our curriculum representative attended a Business Expo and briefly spoke with 10 businesses asking similar questions.

7/10 Did not employ someone with a learning disability or ASD.

4/10 Would offer work experience to some with additional needs.

3/10 Had never been asked to provide work experience.

- Through conversation with the businesses it became clear that the best way to communicate would be via email to arrange a face-to-face meeting.
- Continuity of contact through the same person was also key, everyone was very quick to answer this questions that it would be very important to avoid multiple contacts from different people within Petroc.
- Free familiarity training, for example from the National Autistic Society, and job coaching to support young people with learning disabilities would be welcomed.

No-one our curriculum representative spoke to at the Business Expo had heard of Supported Internships.