

## Report Template

### DFN Project SEARCH Adult Programme Proposal

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

- a) To propose that XXX Council commence an adult DFN Project SEARCH programme for people with a learning disability, autistic people or both who aspire to move into employment.
- b) To trial its effectiveness over a three-year period with a view to creating a sustainable pathway for adults with a learning disability, autistic people or both into work

#### 2. Background to DFN Project SEARCH

- a) DFN Project SEARCH is a transition to work programme that started in 1996 in the United States of America. There are now over 650 programmes in 10 countries and there are 74 active programmes in the UK as of October 2021.
- b) DFN Project SEARCH is an evidence-based programme that produces strong and sustainable results in the UK where 60% of graduates move into full-time paid work of over 16 hours per week and 70% move into paid work above and below 16 hours per week.
- c) In the UK the programmes are delivered to young adults at the point of transition from education to employment. It is designed to be the young person's last year of formal education and is totally focused on them obtaining work through a combination of the delivery of curriculum-based employment and life skills delivered each day alongside in work-based learning taught inside a large host employer with the help of a specialist job coach and work buddies or mentors.
- d) However, in the United States the teams operate the programme with older adults and successfully move them into employment with the same outcome levels as are achieved for young adults. The levels of complexity of the interns on an adult programme mirror those on the programmes for young adults. DFN Project SEARCH is designed to support people with moderate learning disabilities and those with more complex needs. People must need a full academic year of support to become work ready to benefit from the programme.
- e) In the UK we have some evidence that older participants can benefit from the programme as in Scotland there is greater flexibility on the age of participants and from that data it is evident that a 30-year-old is as likely as a 21-year-old to be able to make the step into paid work.
- f) DFN Project SEARCH programmes work on the premise that starting a site will create a sustainable pathway to work for people with a learning disability, autistic people, or both and indeed many programmes in the UK have celebrated 10-year anniversaries since 2020. The reason for being concerned with sustainability is that it is evident that people with a learning disability, autistic people or both and their families have had their aspirations for employment dampened and it takes time to support people to see themselves as capable of employment and to feel that they have a realistic opportunity to attain it. Initiatives that 'come and go' are not likely to build lasting aspiration and create a clear pathway that people can use to be successful in finding and keeping a job.
- g) The sustainability of the programmes that transition young people from education to employment is underpinned by funding from education based on each students needs

(as described in their Education, Health and Care Plan in England and Personal learning Support Plan in Scotland) to support the appointment of a full-time on-site tutor/facilitator and access to work funding to support the appointment of job coach(es).

- h) The reason why DFN Project SEARCH programmes have not developed adult programmes in the UK is specifically related to funding challenges. That is because the education funding is not available to adults at anything like the same levels and access to work funding is also not available for interns who do not have an education, health, and care plan.

### 3. Background in (Name of Local Authority area)

- a) State here the aspiration of the LA to provide life chances to people in the LA area
- b) Link to the council's visions, values and aspirations
- c) State here the numbers of people in the community with a Learning Disability and Autism or both
- d) State here the health outcomes and life chances for people within the LA area with Learning Disabilities and Autism or both
- e) State here information from the transforming care partnership about how many people with a Learning Disability, Autism or both want to work and how many of them want to work
- f) State here the average cost of providing day services or other services per person for people with a Learning Disability, Autism or both

### 4. Starting and funding an adult DFN Project SEARCH programme

- a) To start a DFN Project SEARCH programme in XX the following resources would be required for a 10 person programme (DFN Project SEARCH programmes typically have 8-12 participants and costs can be adjusted accordingly) :
  - I. A host business with over 250 employees at one location
  - II. A tutor/facilitator from a local college
  - III. Two job coaches
  - IV. A DFN Project SEARCH license – this includes project management support, training, guidance, curriculum, progress over time data, outcome data and quality assurance
- b) In the planning year prior to the commencement of a programme the approximate costs associated would be:

Item Line	Cost	Oncosts	Total
Tutor/Facilitator for 1 month	£2,084	£834	£2918
Supervisory and planning support from the college	£2,500	£1,000	£3,500
Job Coach for 3 months	£5,250	£2,100	£7,350
Half Time Job Coach for 3 months	£2,625	£1,050	£2,730
Supervisory and planning support	£2,500	£1,000	£3,500

from the supported employment provider			
DFN Project SEARCH License	*£3,500		£3,500
Total Cost	£18,459.00	£18,459.00	£23,498.00

\* The license fee is Payable as £10,000 before programme commencement and £3,000 in September of the third year of operation and each year thereafter.

- c) The approximate financial costs of delivering the programme per annum for the three-year pilot would be:

Item Line	Cost	Oncosts	Total
Tutor/Facilitator	£25,000	£10,000	£35,000
Supervisory Support for the Tutor/Facilitator	£5,000	£2,000	£7,000
Contribution from the College Adult Education Funding			Please put minus figures here for the amount that the college can draw down through adult funding.
Job Coach	£21,000	£8,400	£29,400
½ time Job Coach	£10,500	£4,200	£14,700
Supervisory Support for the Job coaches	£5,000	£2,000	7,000
DFN Project SEARCH License	*£3,500		£3,500
Total Cost			

## 5. The Case for change

- a) People with a learning disability, autistic people or both are largely excluded from work and local authorities report that less than 6% of the people known to them are in paid work. There is substantial evidence that work is good for you and that it creates a sense of purpose, provides financial security and that there are very many natural supports that employees benefit from including developing friendships, being able to access advice, as well as accessing things like pensions and employee support programmes.
- b) The median age of death for people with mild learning disabilities is 62 and moderate 63 which is over 20 years less than the general population. It is likely that there is some correlation between the lack of employment opportunities and these poor figures when you reflect on generally poor health and life outcomes for people who do not have work in their lives.
- c) Many people with a learning disability, autistic people or both become more dependent on adult social care services as they get older. They may live with parents who themselves become less able to offer support or they may become depressed due to social isolation and a lack of purpose in their lives. In XXX Council the expenditure on services for adults with a learning disability, autistic people or both amounts to approximately XX per annum per person for those with mild and moderate learning

disabilities. Moving people into work would significantly reduce that expenditure in the short and the long term

- d) DFN Project SEARCH have been working in the UK for more than 10 years and there are many graduates who have jobs, their own transport, their own homes and who have married and had children. Employment creates an opportunity for people to have the sort of lives that most people take for granted. XX Council wants to meet the aspirations of people with a learning disability, autistic people or both and that is clearly described by them in the transforming care partnership plan.
- e) The council will work with the college and the host business to select students who are in receipt of adult social care funding and evidence of the savings achieved by referring people to the programme will be retained for evaluation purposes.
- f) There is no question that moving people into work will create a significant saving to the public purse. In terms of DWP benefits and the most basic level of adult social care support the saving in a lifetime is likely to be in the region of £1 million per person. In addition, partners in health will also make savings if people with a learning disability, autistic people or both are in employment and benefiting from the supports that come with that.
- g) You will also find a link here to some independent research conducted on Project SEARCH which shows a social return on investment of £3.80 for every £1 spent.  
<http://www.socialvaluelab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SROI-Report-Project-Search-Final.pdf>
- h) It will be important to work with the local DWP Disability Employment Advisor to ensure that the benefits of people on the programme during the DFN Project SEARCH year remain in place and that better off in work calculations have been completed to ensure that people joining the programme will be motivated to move into work from a financial perspective as well as from a developmental perspective.

## **6. How is DFN Project SEARCH programme for adults structured**

- a) The programme is considered a full-time course of study and people coming onto the programme should be able to continue to receive benefits, providing that they are in receipt of disability related benefits.
- b) The DWP state that if you are disabled and have limited capability for work and are getting:
  - Personal Independence Payment
  - Disability Living Allowance
  - Attendance Allowance
  - Armed Forces Independence Payment

Then you may still be able to receive Universal Credit when on a full-time course of study.

- c) The programme lasts for one academic year and is based in a large prestigious host business with between 8 and 12 interns on each annual cohort
- d) The aim of the programme is to move participants into full time work, that is work of 16 hours or more per week.
- e) The interns have curriculum delivered to them for three weeks during their induction and then for one week between terms and each day between 9.00 AM and 10.00 AM and from 3.30 PM – 4.00 PM.

- f) They undertake three work-based rotations, one per term where they learn competitive, marketable skills that are taught to them by the trained job coach. The interns will have a vocational assessment and the rotations are relevant to the persons career goals and layer on skills so that the intern is fully skilled in all areas of the work they are interested in by the end of the academic year.
- g) From halfway through the programme each intern will have an intentional employment plan and the intern, and the team start the process of looking for employment
- h) At the end of the programme any intern who has not yet secured a role will be referred to XXX who will be appraised of their skills and aspirations and the job search activity will continue.
- i) General outcomes from programmes where participants are between the ages of 17 and 25 suggest that on average 70% of people on the programme will move into employment and 60% will move into full time paid work. The average number of hours for participants is 25 hours per week.

## **7. Evaluation**

- a) It is anticipated that the programme will be successful as it is in the United States and that 70% of the adults on it will move into paid work. The success rates will be monitored by DFN Project SEARCH and can be compared to the rest of the cohorts across the UK.
- b) The Adult Social Care team will collect data about the savings/costs for the council by referring the intern to the programme during the DFN Project SEARCH year
- c) The Adult Social Care team will estimate the savings for the council per annum created by the intern moving into employment.
- d) Qualitative data from the interns and families and carers with regards to the benefits and issues involved in the programme will be collected by the adult services commissioner in consultation with DFN Project SEARCH and the onsite team
- e) Qualitative data from the host business with regards to the benefits and issues involved in the programme will also be collected by the adult services commissioner in consultation with DFN Project SEARCH and the onsite team

## **8. Summary**

- a) Through the transforming care partnership, we know that people with a learning disability, autistic people or both in our community see the lack of employment opportunities as a key issue and they have told us that they want more support to achieve employed status.
- b) At XXX Council there is a commitment to support residents of working age to achieve meaningful employment. People with a learning disability, autistic people or both are the most excluded from work and need the most support to break through the barriers that stop them from sharing their valuable skills and talents.
- c) DFN Project SEARCH is the world's largest transition to work programme for people with complex Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Conditions. It is evidence based and it works for older adults as well as younger adults transitioning from education. The only reason that it is not available to adults in the UK is that the funding regime is more challenging and needs greater local authority investment.

- d) From an economic perspective moving people with Learning Disability and Autism into employment makes sense for the system. It removes or decreases reliance on benefits for the individual making them net contributors to the system and creates financial independence for the individual. There are savings to the benefits system as a result. In addition, there is decreased pressure on local authority's budget as the need to support people with day services is lessened. In the longer-term the need for such support increases as people age, become bored, have little sense of purpose and are unstimulated – people in work are less likely to follow that trajectory again creating savings to the system.
- e) The health of people in employment is significantly better than for those who are unemployed. It is expected that the health outcomes of people with Learning Disability and Autism who work will be significantly better than those who are not in employment. This creates both a financial benefit for the health system but is also the right thing to do from a moral perspective.

## **9. Recommendations**

- a) Support a three-year pilot of an adult DFN Project SEARCH programme designed to offer the opportunity for people with Learning Disability and Autism who are over 25 or under 25 but not in education and are known to XX local authority and in receipt of services.
- b) Provide the necessary funding to support the pilot programme for that period.
- c) Work with DFN Project SEARCH to identify an appropriate Host Business for the programme.
- d) Identify an appropriate Further Education partner to support the delivery of the programme (This could be the council's own adult learning service)
- e) Review the success of the programme using the evaluation criteria described above
- f) Determine by December of the third year of operation of the pilot if the programme has been successful and determine if it will become a sustainable pathway to work for this group of people and become a permanent fixture of the local offer