

# FAQs for: Supported Employment

## ? Will my son/daughter still be able to claim benefits?

- Whilst on Project SEARCH any benefits your son/daughter receives are unlikely to change as a result of their involvement, until they commence employment. We can signpost you to a benefits advisor who can give you specific advice about your situation, who will have the most up to date information about benefits.
- It is important to note that on finding paid employment, any benefits your son/daughter receives may change. This depends on the type of benefit they receive, the number of hours they work and the amount of money that they earn. Your son/daughter may be entitled to a different benefit once in paid employment. Alternatively, the amount of benefit they receive may lower in-line with their earnings increasing.

## ? What impact will transition from benefits have on our family, and is this worth it?

- There are lots of really good outcomes from being in employment, in addition to the wages being received. Being enrolled in an employer pension scheme, receipt of national insurance contributions and access to other schemes from an employer can all contribute to significant positives. Some employers offer staff members to be part of schemes which allow discounts with some shops/brands.
- If other people who live in the same household receive benefits, and there is a possibility that their benefits may change as a result of your relative being in paid employment, we will signpost you to some specialist benefits support.

## ? What will happen when they get a job?

- When a Project SEARCH graduate successfully finds a job, Hft offer Follow On Employability Coach support. This means that we can provide initial 1:1 support on the job to help the graduate learn the role and settle in. We can continue to provide support whilst they are in employment as needed, for example, with training or with learning new tasks. We have a leaflet which explains more about what this support involves.
- Hft understand the importance of not only finding a paid job, but sustaining it, and continue to be available to provide support when needed.

## ? What if my son/daughter doesn't get a job?

- Project SEARCH offers a really positive opportunity for graduates to find paid employment, and has really good success rates. However, employment is not guaranteed. Hft are able to offer a Job Club after graduation, and work with graduates to help them continue to search for and find paid employment after their year on Project SEARCH has come to an end, for 9 months after graduation. Job Club will usually run once per week. Support is also provided to prepare for and attend job interviews. We have a leaflet about Job Club which explains more about what this support involves.

## ? Why am I being asked to attend "Job Development Meetings" regularly?

- Job Development Meetings are vital sessions held six times per academic year. The purpose of these meetings is to form a plan to allow everyone who is supporting an intern to work collaboratively to help them to progress on their employment journey. The first meetings focus heavily on skills acquisition during the Project SEARCH placement opportunities, and how the skills being developed align to the employment market. There are often skills which can be developed at home to help this process. Later, the focus shifts more onto the specifics of finding paid work- selecting the right types of vacancies with the right types of employers. It is important to explore all avenues, using the networks and contacts of professionals at Project SEARCH, the host business, but also family contacts as well.
- Sometimes an intern experiences challenges whilst at Project SEARCH. It is important to address these challenges and help to reinforce understanding about particular processes that might be in place within the work setting- it is helpful to have as many people supporting the intern as possible to aid this.
- Job searching takes place at Project SEARCH and at Job Club after Project SEARCH ends, however, interns and graduates need to ensure that job searching is not just limited to these times to maximise their chances of success. Interns/graduates need to keep regular checks on their emails to ensure they don't miss invitations to interviews.

There may be vacancies which arise locally to home which would benefit from CV drops, or vacancies which arise over a weekend, or in between Job Club sessions- to ensure opportunities aren't missed, it is important to do some job searching work from home- attending Job Development Meetings is helpful to understand what type of support Project SEARCH provides and how this can be extended to home as well.

- We appreciate that many families are balancing supporting their relative with their employment journey alongside other responsibilities. We will aim to arrange these meetings at a time which works well for all, and can arrange meetings via video call or telephone if needed. Whilst our wish is for parents/carers to attend all of the Job Development Meetings, we understand if you are unable to attend all.

## **? How will my son/daughter stay safe whilst travelling to Project SEARCH/work, and whilst at Project SEARCH/work?**

- On successfully being offered a new job, Hft's Follow On Employability Coaches can look at supporting graduates to travel safely to their place of work until they are able to do this independently.
- Each intern/graduate's situation is unique- please speak to your local Project SEARCH team to talk about what support there is available for travelling to Project SEARCH.
- Whilst on Project SEARCH/in employment, interns/graduates will be supported to undertake training in the work place around health and safety. Risk assessments will be completed.

## **? What if my son/daughter loses their job?**

- Hft offer Follow On Employability Coach support. This support will aim to address any problems that arise on the job and offer the graduate the support needed to overcome any challenges.
- Jobs can end for a variety of reasons, most usually due to short term contracts. Whilst permanent paid employment is preferred, often the route into a job might be a fixed term contract.
- Graduates who are coming to the end of a contract, their place of employment is closing, or who are keen to move into a new role can receive support from Job Club to search for new opportunities.

## **? What is Access to Work?**

- Access to Work funding is a government led employment support programme that helps people with disabilities to start and sustain paid employment. Access to Work funding is applied for to fund Hft's Follow On Employability Coach support. Graduates do not pay for this support. Hft support graduates to make applications for Access to Work funding based on the support we anticipate we would need to provide. Funding is usually agreed for a set time frame of between 6 and 12 months, and would be reapplied for on an ongoing basis.
- It is important for graduates to inform Hft of any correspondence with Access to Work so that Hft can ensure that the funding is processed.

## **? Does Access to Work affect earnings or benefits?**

- Access to Work does not affect earnings or benefits being received.

## **? Does my son/daughter have to pay for your support?**

- No, this is funded through the education partner and Access to Work whilst on the Supported Internship, and funded through Access to Work when in paid employment.

## **? My son/daughter wants a job at specific times, on specific days, in a specific location (or combination of these), how can you help?**

- Project SEARCH doesn't have access to multiple job opportunities which we then fill with interns/graduates- all of our jobs are found via multiple different methods. Finding the right job for an intern/graduate can happen quickly, or take some time depending on the type of role being sought and the local employment market. Finding a job is not guaranteed after Project SEARCH (although we do have very good success rates). Therefore it is important that we encourage our interns/graduates to be as flexible as possible when seeking employment, whilst also being mindful of preferences.
- We understand that it might be preferable for a graduate to work 9-5, but if the role they are seeking is within catering, many vacancies may involve some evening work. If the intern/graduate is able to do this work safely, we would encourage them to consider options such as this as it widens the number of appropriate opportunities for them.
- Every individual is different and we the support given to a graduate around their preferences would take this into account, for example ,there may be some locations which are not suitable/ safe to explore due to challenges around travel/public transport, and we would not encourage an intern/graduate to apply for a vacancy in these circumstances.