

How Does Project SEARCH **at the council Work?**

Project SEARCH is one academic year, and interns start in September and graduate from the programme the following June. It is full time Monday – Friday, 08.30-15.30.

Programme Cycle at a glance

- Start September – 3 weeks classroom work, preparation, induction and interviews for 1st rotation – start 1st rotation – October break – finish 1st rotation December – Christmas break.
- Start back January – 1 week classroom work and interviews for 2nd rotation – start 2nd rotation – February break – finish 2nd rotation March/April – Easter break.
- Start back after Easter – 1 week classroom work and interviews for 3rd rotation – start 3rd rotation – May break – finish 3rd and final rotation mid-June – graduate usually last week in June.

First few weeks are all about induction

Induction is important for anyone starting a new job and so for the first two weeks interns learn the culture of the council and other training e.g. how to work professionally, why things are done differently, how to approach people when problems arise, mandatory H&S training on how to work safely and orientation around the departments. Interns also start their course work on work related units.

Rotations (department placements)

Interns start a new “rotation” or work placement which lasts for about ten weeks at a time, so by the time they graduate they would have done at least 30 weeks’ of real work based placements. Each rotation begins with more job coach support from a member of the Project SEARCH team, but the aim is to gradually withdraw this support so the intern will be working on the job independently.

The job coaches and tutor specialise in supporting people with learning disabilities in employment and will coach them in their work placements.

There will also be a mentor in their placement, who interns can go to with any questions or concerns and we are hopeful they will be excellent role models. During the placements interns are regarded and treated as any employee and during and at the end of the rotation managers will give feedback on their performance, to help them develop and work on improving for the next rotation and their ultimate goal of work.

Each placement builds on the skills developed in the previous role, to help our intern's layer on more skills.

With a Qualification

As well as the work experience rotations, interns are in the classroom every day for an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon, where they complete an employability skills curriculum. This covers for example:

- behaviour and attitude in the work place
- travelling on public transport
- types of jobs
- health, safety and hygiene
- tackling problems at work
- completing CVs and interview practice
- managing money
- staying safe

Applying for Jobs

The focus is on finding and applying for jobs, especially during the 3rd rotation.

Jobs are not guaranteed on Project SEARCH, neither is it expected that the council will employ interns but interns can of course apply [with support] for any suitable and appropriate vacancies when advertised. All interns who find paid employment have done so through showing a good work ethic, determination and hard work.

Interns can find a job at any stage during their year on Project SEARCH.

Whenever an intern finds paid work, they are supported by Virgin Care's supported employment follow along team. Virgin Care will work with employed graduates on a follow-on basis for as long as they can until no longer needed.

