

Project Search

Less than six per cent of children in the UK with learning disabilities will go into employment as an adult, so the council has set up a new scheme to help more young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) into work.

Project Search was set up by the council in partnership with the Marriott Hotel, Heathrow and Meadow School, Uxbridge to provide young people with SEND with a full year's internship to gain experience for future employment. As part of the programme, young people learn invaluable skills in the workplace such as working as part of a team and dealing with customers, as well as everyday tasks like waiting tables and housekeeping.

The interns also undertake job interviews and get help updating their CV to prepare them for working life. As a result of the scheme, four young people have already been offered full-time employment, and all other interns have job interviews lined up.

Michael Vickery, aged 22 from Ickenham, is autistic and has just accepted a permanent full-time job at the Marriott. Michael said: "Before I started the internship I didn't communicate well, but now I speak to lots of different customers. Project Search is all about learning new skills so that you are ready to apply for jobs, and it's helped me to be more confident. I really enjoy working at the Marriott as I like to be busy and do lots of different things in my job."

Jason Mann, aged 20 from Ruislip has moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties. Jason has just been offered a job at a company in Heathrow where he will be taking on a customer service and cleaning role. He said: "Guests like my service as a concierge at the hotel, and I like booking cabs for people and taking luggage to their rooms. I went for an interview for a job and I was really nervous but my experience from the internship helped me to succeed. I get two buses and a train to my new job and now I feel confident being independent."