

# United Response's submission to the House of Lords Public Services Committee's Inquiry into the transition from education to employment for young disabled people

## Introduction

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Since 1973, United Response has been supporting people with learning disabilities, mental health or physical support needs to live their life to the full. Our staff team of 3,400 people work across 330 locations in England and Wales to support around 2,000 people aged 16 to 65+. We campaign to ensure the people we support have equal access to the same rights and opportunities, as well as challenging the negative attitudes and discrimination they face.

We deliver a range of [personalised and accredited learning programmes](#) that support students to transition into adulthood. We do this by developing independent living skills, providing therapeutic input and building employability skills. We are well placed to comment on the transition from education to employment for young disabled people, which is all too often an incredibly challenging time.

We have co-produced this submission with our colleagues from our supported employment services and our UR Consultants who are young disabled people that help businesses and other organisations to communicate better with people with learning disabilities and autism. The majority of our UR consultants have experienced considerable barrier transitioning from education into employment.

## Executive Summary

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### The Department for Work and Pensions should . . .

- Develop advice and guidance for young disabled people about their rights under the Equality Act 2010 and entitlements in accessible formats and work with employers, supported employment provider, charities and others to raise awareness.
- In close collaboration with the Department for Education, invest in the delivery of a public awareness campaign amongst public sector employers about the benefits of recruiting a disabled, autistic, and neurodiverse workforce through an apprenticeship route.
- Continue to develop a robust data collection system that monitors employment barriers for disabled job seekers, the experiences of disabled employees and their employers, and the impact of evolving support provisions.
- Continue to proactively involve disabled, autistic, and neurodiverse voices during consultation processes, with particular attention directed to communicating information and facilitating participation via accessible formats.
- Invest in a pilot scheme administered through the Access to Work support programme to help employers subsidise the cost of in-work assessments for autism and other neurodiverse conditions.

### The Department for Education should . . .

- Reform the national curricula across the UK's respective regions to integrate technical and vocational skills, with special attention towards providing further education opportunities to disabled, autistic and neurodivergent school-leavers.
- Encourage teachers working at second-level to participate in formatted CPD courses which integrate the teaching of employability and CV-building skills to all pupils from Year 10.
- Devise a bespoke training programme for SEND teachers to engage their pupils on their employability skills and the transition from education to employment, in close consultation with students, families, schools, and clinical professionals.

### Public Service employers, managers, and recruiters should . . .

- Promote the use of alternative assessments during recruitment processes via the Disability Confident Scheme, such as workplace trails, portfolio assessments, or job shadowing, rather than or complementary to the traditional interview format.
- Institute Easy Read training for human resources and recruitment professionals as part of their respective accessibility policy.
- Structure Supported Internships and Supported Employment schemes to specifically target hiring autistic, disabled, and neurodivergent young people to expose workplaces to neurodiversity and reach neurodiverse employees' talents.
- Collaborate more closely in Supported Employment schemes with their respective local authorities and social care providers.

### Job coaches, education providers, and employment advisers should . . .

- Spend time identifying their autistic clients' individual strengths and focus on careers that align with them.
- Devise better transition plans with autistic, disabled, and neurodivergent school-leavers and graduates for entering the workforce.

## General

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What barriers do young disabled people face when leaving education and entering the job market and workplace? Does this differ between different conditions or disabilities, and if so, how?

*"[There's a] **lack of knowledge and awareness around Supported Employment** both from the young people themselves and employers. This will very much depend on the areas they live in and the services available in their areas."*

*"People [we support] have often had a **traumatic time at school with bullying, high stress levels, and a lack of support from the school**. This can mean they may need a break after leaving school [but] lose momentum and independence."*

*"**Lack of transition support from schools, lack of social workers and competent Disability Employment Advisors at Job Centres** can mean that it's left to parents to arrange*

*what happens next. This means that the resources, skills and tenacity of the parent indicates their success, disadvantaging others.”*

*“**Not being independent travellers** or lacking the skills and financial means to commute to and from the workplace. Supports like the Disabled Bus Passes are only valid after 9:30AM.”*

– responses gathered from United Response support staff working directly with autistic, disabled, and neurodivergent young people aged 16 – 25

*“Education systems have **too much focus on qualifications**, numbers and certificates being the most important ingredients for successful employment – **this needs to be shifted more towards having the right skills**, training and preparation to equip more people for the world of work.*

*“Some **people can struggle with either motivation or uncertainty over how to begin searching for work** due to never having had to do it before . . . they may not be aware about the different routes available to them and how they may [avail of] these.”*

– Niall, a United Response Consultant (age 19)

How far do barriers to young disabled people accessing other public services, such as health and care services, present a barrier to young disabled people accessing the workplace?

*“It’s not possible to prioritise work when there is a lack of stability, health and wellbeing for an individual. **If individuals and parents are battling public services for the basics their child needs, they are very unlikely to have the bandwidth to prioritise supporting with employment also.**”*

– Emily, Supported Employment Service Manager

## Scope of the Inquiry

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The Public Services Committee has not focused this inquiry specifically on the experiences of young people with an Education, Health, and Care Plan when they leave education and enter employment. What are your thoughts on this approach, and are there particular benefits or drawbacks to it? What other focused approaches could the inquiry take?

*“Those without an EHCP **can’t access Supported Internships, so this limits their options when leaving education** as they may not have had the same opportunities as those with an EHCP to experience the world of work. Comparisons between those with/without an EHCP and their experiences leaving education into employment may be a good approach.”*

*“EHCPs are another area where **there is unequal access to support** depending on the school and resources, skills and tenacity of the parents and competency/resources of the local authority. Therefore, [it’s] sensible to include those who do not have one.*

*“Focus on the experiences of employers and use that information to support them to provide more opportunities; **the biggest barrier is the lack of opportunities and prejudice from employers.**”*

– responses gathered from United Response support staff working directly with autistic, disabled, and neurodivergent young people aged 16 – 25

## Support for young disabled people

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How far do employment support mechanisms such as Access to Work or Disability Employment Advisors meet the needs of young disabled people entering the job market for the first time? How could these services be improved and what examples of good practice are there in the UK and abroad?

*“I believe this varies from school-to-school. From my experience, **there is varying knowledge and experience of Supported Internships.** This is a programme that those with an EHCP can join generally in their final year of education, where around 70% of their time is spent in a host business and 30% in the classroom learning employability and softer skills.*

*“Supported Internships can be set up by schools and colleges themselves but they need to work with Supported Employment providers and job coaches [like United Response]. **This allows the job coach to discuss with the employer any reasonable adjustments, carry out a job analysis and if needed job carve roles that make those reasonable adjustments for the young people.***

*“United Response in Trafford work with two local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools on a work experience programme for Years 10 to 13. We work with a cohort of young people to find work experience opportunities, liaise with employers to create these opportunities and monitor them whilst on placement, being there to advise both the young person and employer.*

*“We also offer World of Work Days where a group of young people from those schools visit local employers in different sectors to understand what they do, what type of jobs are available and what skills they require.”*

– Joanne, Development Services Manager

*“**DEAs have caseloads that are too large to provide person-centred support** to the people they are supporting. Their focus is too much on programmes to upskill the individual, rather than working with employers to create opportunities.*

*“**Young people are unlikely to know about Access to Work**, particularly Access to Work Plus. Not enough is done to publicise it.”*

– Emily

Do staff in schools and other education settings providing careers guidance and advice have the appropriate training and resources to support the needs and aspirations of young disabled people?

*"I think **all teachers across education institutions . . . should have some training integrated into their programmes that [covers] how to appropriately approach and support neurodivergent communities in their pathway to success . . .** also, there should be . . . a select number of staff who take on additional 'careers advice' training – if this was to happen, another idea could be opened up to run an 'employment help' service that was optional for pupils to attend . . . designed to equip them with all of the knowledge, skills and advice they could need to gain a much better insight as to what they would like to do after leaving Year 11."*

– Niall

What is the first point that a young disabled person would engage with an employment support scheme, and how are such schemes communicated to young disabled people?

*"In my view, **the most effective time for neurodivergent people to be first introduced to Employment Support is around about late Year 9/Year 10 time**, as in their earlier years they have more to deal with in adjusting to high school life and their new surroundings . . . also, they may not be at an age where they're ready to start thinking about what their later career and lives might look like. This should be the period where a higher focus on only 'essential GCSEs' is prioritised."*

– Niall

## Support for employers

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How effective are government programmes which support or encourage employers to employ disabled people, particularly young disabled people? Does this differ by condition or disability? How could they be improved?

*"I think more employers need to start looking at the wider picture of how editing and tweaking some of their practices can lead to them experiencing the whole range of benefits autistic [and disabled young] people can bring to their organisations. One strategy, for example, would be . . . trying to focus more on what inspires each individual. This could achieve better results, and to maybe consider 'showing' rather than explaining or expecting them to know any answers."*

*"Other things that could positively support their development are: provision of clear but sensitive instructions, educating staff they are working with about how to best approach their strengths, and adopting a more 'strengths-based approach' in understanding disability."*

– Niall

*“Supported Internships are not being taken on with the spirit of hiring the person at the end; this needs to be addressed with more commitment from employers. Supported Employment programmes need more support from government and local government with engaging with employers and incentivising them to create roles.”*

– Emily

## Contact

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