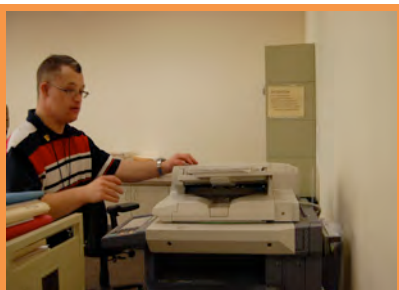


Our Story



Sixteen years ago, in 1996, while working as the Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Erin Riehle was frustrated with the high turnover rate in entry-level jobs that involved restocking supplies. At the same time, Cincinnati Children’s had adopted a major diversity initiative, taking a policy statement from the American College of Healthcare executives, which reads, “Healthcare organizations must lead their communities in increasing employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and advocate on behalf of their employment to other organizations.” Erin wondered if people with disabilities could fill the entry level jobs she had. Not knowing anyone with a disability she turned to the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development and asked if her idea was possible. Together with these organisations the idea of filling a handful of jobs in Cincinnati Children’s Emergency Department evolved into a comprehensive programme model—Project SEARCH.

Project SEARCH has grown from one original programme site at Cincinnati Children’s to over 200 across 40 states and four countries. Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital with their partner Serco hosted the first UK programme. Some of our business partners include but are not limited to: The US Departments of Education and Labor, Fifth Third Bank and Medtronic England - GlaxoSmithKline Global Headquarters, the County Council of Bath and North East Somerset and Derriford Hospital, Plymouth Scotland - Wishaw General, Monklands and Hairmyers Hospitals, NHS Lanarkshire. Project SEARCH’s primary objective is to secure full time, paid employment for people with learning disabilities.

Project SEARCH is a partnership between a host business, education and adult supported employment. The goal is to provide on-site internship experiences, acquire necessary skills for young adults with learning disabilities leading to competitive employment.

- **Host Business:** Provides an on-site classroom and a variety of internships that teach core skills related to that business or organisation
- **School or College:** Provides an instructor, employability skills curriculum and student interns from the local area
- **Council:** Provides care management, individual life planning guidance and individual budgets for job coaching and other supports
- **Supported Employment Agency:** Provides job coaching and job development for interns at the host business and in their initial job
- **Department of Work and Pensions:** Provides Access to Work funding for job coaching and other follow on supports



The Transition Programme is a one-year internship for students with learning disabilities, in their last year of school or college. It is aimed at students whose goal is competitive employment. Project SEARCH interns spend their entire day on site at the host business. Total immersion in the host employer site facilitates the teaching and learning process as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable work skills necessary for employment at the host employer or other community business. Interns participate in three rotations to explore a variety of job and career paths. They work with a team that includes their family, teacher and supported employment specialist to create an employment goal and supports the intern in their successful transition from school to work through continuous feedback and acquisition of skills.

BENEFITS of Project SEARCH:

Benefits to the Students:

- ❖ Participate in a variety of internships in a high-status local business
- ❖ Acquire competitive, transferable and marketable job skills
- ❖ Gain increased independence, confidence, and self esteem
- ❖ Obtain work based individualised instruction, coaching, support and feedback from the instructor, job coach and host business managers and mentors
- ❖ Develop links to adult support agencies

Benefits to the Host Business:

- ❖ Access to a new, diverse, talent stream with skills that match labour needs
- ❖ Gain interns/employees with disabilities who serve as a role model for customers which is well-reflected in satisfaction surveys
- ❖ Access to a demographic of the economy with buying power: people with disabilities represent a fast growing market segment
- ❖ Experience increased local, regional, and national recognition through marketing of this unique programme
- ❖ Performance and retention in some high-turnover or hard-to-fill posts increase dramatically

Benefits to Educators and Supported Employment Agencies:

- ❖ A seamless approach to transition that develops critical adult skills
- ❖ Partnership between education, adult employment services and Councils ensures a whole life approach to supporting young people in transition
- ❖ Sharing human and financial capital saves time and overall resources
- ❖ Participation in career exploration, working interviews and employability skills increases the overall skill level of job seekers and likelihood of job success and retention

In the UK, we have Anne O'Bryan working as an advisor to help facilitate the growth and success of Project SEARCH. There are currently 17 sites in England and Scotland.

Contact us as soon as you have one or more partners (from education, supported employment services or local government) interested in setting up a Project SEARCH site:



One of Project SEARCH's most unique attributes is its emphasis on collaboration. Project SEARCH is driven by partnerships and a network of special needs teachers and tutors, job coaches and job developers and business leaders that play an integral role in executing our goal of obtaining paid employment for individuals with disabilities.

- ***Teresa Tanner, Fifth Third Bank's Vice president of Human Resources***, says that when businesses identify the strengths of employees with disabilities, then put them in jobs that match their skills, "those employees turn out to be faithful, low-turnover, hard-working employees."
- "I feel hugely privileged to be part of this fantastic partnership, which is just the first step in helping to get these students into paid employment. My commitment to each and every one of them is to provide help and support along the way and there are lots more people in the Trust who are willing to do the same. I absolutely believe we should be doing this in all NHS organisations. The NHS needs difference; difference makes us a better organisation."
Torbay Hospital Chief Executive, Paula Vasco-Knight, recently appointed as National Lead for Equality for the NHS Commissioning Board
- "I would recommend Project SEARCH to anyone who needs it. I now have a job with the Council and I am enjoying every minute of it. I did not have the confidence to believe I would ever get a job but when I started and began my first internship I started to believe anything was possible and working was not as frightening as I thought." ***Ralph Hemus, Administrative Assistant & Project SEARCH Graduate, Bath & NE Somerset Council***
- "Project Search is exactly what we wanted; it brings together the worlds of education and community services and expands options and opportunities for students with developmental disabilities as they transition from school to the work world." ***Ann Costello, Director, Golisano Foundation***
- "There's a misconception that you can only give people with disabilities the easiest work. But that's not true. When we're trying to match people with businesses, we look for complex work that's systematic" ***Erin Riehle, Director, Disability Services & Project SEARCH, Cincinnati Children's Hospital***