

HEALTH
EDUCATION
ENGLAND

Project Choice

Making a **Difference**

Key information for employers, Trusts, local authority commissioners and SEND services




Ofsted
Good
Provider

NHS

Health Education England

What is Project Choice?

- **Project Choice** is a Specialist Post-16 College providing work experience as well as a supported internship programme that helps young adults between the ages of 16-24 with disabilities, learning disabilities, difficulties and/or Autism gain work experience and improve employability and independence skills. The College is NHS-based within Health Education England.
- We provide internships within healthcare settings and other NHS partner organisations, creating supported environments and helping to get Interns ready for the working world.
- Our support is tailored to each Intern and we match employment options to each Intern's skills.
- Our Interns spend 1 year learning work skills in three placements, each placement is up to 12 weeks long.



"Without exception, Project Choice students have showed an unparalleled work ethic. The time invested in their training has shown dividends in the department and it has been a pleasure working with them"
(Employer Directorate Manager)

Our approach

We provide a bespoke service and appreciate that not one size fits all when it comes to work placements. We take a person-centred approach, assessing each individual Intern and sourcing a placement which aligns with their personal interests that will help develop their skills and confidence in a work environment, as well as tailoring all of our placements to match Interns' needs.



We are equally committed to supporting our host organisations and Mentors as we are to our Interns. We work with Mentors to put in place clear work plans for an Intern to reach their targets.

Project Choice is directly funded as a college by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the commissioning Local Authorities.



What does the Supported Internship consist of?

- **Project Choice** operates a 5 day per week programme, comprising 1 full day of education and 4 days of placement activity in professional working environments.
- We offer a 2 week full-time induction, including corporate trust induction.
- **Project Choice** also provides 80hrs per week of support from specialist staff.



What support will be provided?

Project Choice offers robust stakeholder training which can include:

- Mentor training
- Mental health first aid
- Autism awareness training
- Training in systematic instruction
- Job coach training

We also use job coaches where Interns require additional support.

"Having our student over the past few weeks has been a godsend. Our student carried out tasks which take a lot of my time and has enabled me to free up time to deal with patients"
(Employer Mentor)

Types of roles

Project Choice interns have provided valuable assistance in a huge variety of roles, including:



- Care
- Pharmacy
- Clinical Coding
- Medical Records
- Occupational Therapy
- Human Resources
- Information Services
- Portering
- Education
- Grounds Maintenance
- Physiotherapy
- Linen Room
- Receptions
- Domestic Services
- Catering
- Post Room
- Sterile Services
- Central Stores

Our core values

We have a wealth of experience gained over the 15 years since Project Choice's inception. In addition, many of our staff members have lived experience of disabilities, learning disabilities, difficulties and/or Autism.

- We take a person-centred approach
- We have a diverse College team with specialist skills
- The College is sustainable
- Our completion rates are exceptional
- We are outcome-focused
- We are quality-driven
- We strive for excellence



How do we measure success?



While success could be measured purely in terms of gainful employment secured, the ESFA and the College take a person-centred view.

For us, success for our Interns encompasses:

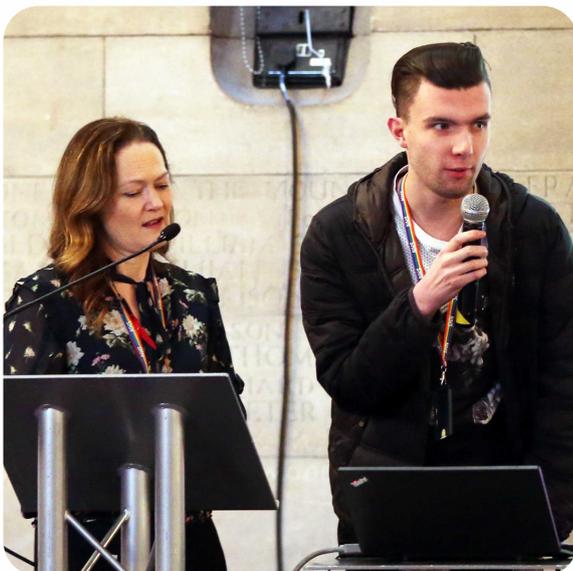
- Securing jobs
- Securing apprenticeships
- Going on to volunteering opportunities
- Achieving increased skills for independence
- Enjoying improved mental health and wellbeing
- Making progress on preparations outlined by the Preparing for Adulthood programme

Getting Results



We are a multi-award winning provider and over the past 15 years have achieved significant results for our Interns. Some of our ex-Interns are now nine years into employment, and we employ three ex-Interns within our own team.

In fact, we can boast the following statistics from 2017-2020:



Over 500 students supported



Over 200 placement providers sourced



83% success rate

126 Project Choice interns have been employed since 2017.

The estimated saving to the public purse, for some disabled people, who secure employment of more than 16 hours a week can be as much as £1 million over their lifetime, when both care costs and financial benefits are taken into account.

Why take part?

We are funded by the ESFA and commissioning local authorities, therefore there is no cost associated with becoming a placement host.

Acting as a placement host brings with it many benefits, such as:

- Staff trained as mentors, increasing their skill set
- Delivering on Corporate social responsibility
- Increased awareness of needs of people with LDD and Autism
- Promotes inclusivity and diversity of workforce
- Increased pool of talented staff

"The student we have worked with fitted into the office atmosphere with ease. It was a great experience for both us and for him too."

(Employer Mentor)

Our College

Project Choice is a Specialist Post-16 College and we deliver the Internship, employing specialist tutors directly. We have an ESFA-approved curriculum, and link into additional NCFE accredited provision.

All educational-based delivery is embedded into placement provision.

"This high-quality Supported Internship programme creates an ambitious challenge for a successful future for the interns."
- Ofsted Inspection Report (Jan 2020)

All of our education provision is subject to Ofsted Inspection and DFE regulations. In January 2020 **Project Choice** was awarded a Good Provider Rating by Ofsted.

Preparing for Adulthood

Our team at Project Choice are well-versed in the Preparing for Adulthood agenda. Project Choice delivers an aspirational curriculum designed to support our Interns in making progress on all preparations outlined by the PfA programme:

- Preparing young people for higher education and / or employment
- Independent living – this means young people having choice, control and freedom over their lives and the support they have, their accommodation and living arrangements, including supported living
- Participating in society, including having friends and supportive relationships, and participating in, and contributing to, the local community
- Being as healthy as possible in adult life

Post-Internship

Our staff continue to support our students post completion of the Internship. Sustaining employment is key to us, and we are committed to helping Interns achieve their goals.

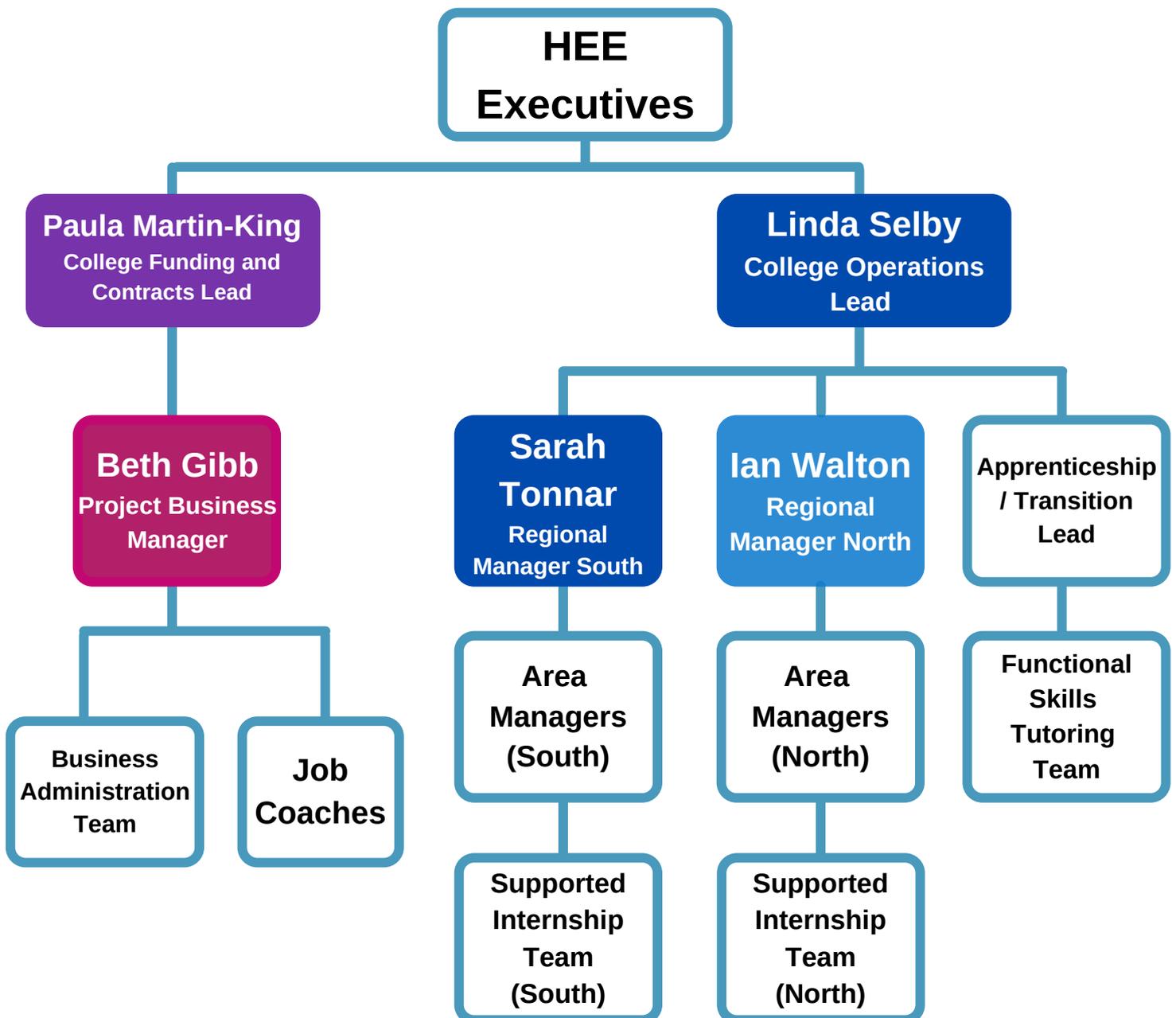
This support includes:

- Pastoral support
- Professional support in meetings, e.g. appraisals, occupational health, etc.
- Coaching preparation for progression interviews
- Offering two-way support through Project Ambassadors and Mentors for new Interns

"This project is the best thing she has ever done. The plan is for her to do a childcare qualification at the end of this project and the nursery are keen for her to stay on with them; she is on cloud nine"
(Parent of Intern)

Our team structure

Project Choice is composed of a network of teams and their respective managers. Get to know some of the key members of the **Project Choice** team overleaf.



Meet the team

Our over 40-strong team brings leading expertise in educational delivery to each and every Intern and employer Mentor we assist. Meet some of our key team members below.

Linda Selby
College
Operations
Lead

Linda has a background in biomedical science along with a BA in Further Education. In 2011, Linda was awarded an MBE for Services to Special Needs Education related to her work for Project Choice. Linda brings four decades of experience of working in the NHS, adult education and lived experience of LDD to her work.

**Paula Martin-
King**
College Funding
and Contracts
Lead

Paula has 25+ years of special education needs experience gained across both public and private sectors. She previously worked in a Specialist College supporting adults with autism and managed ESFA funding for students with high needs within the Education Funding Agency. Paula has 12 years experience with Project Choice, working on funded project delivery while at LSC/EFA, then moving to work directly with the College in 2017.

Ian Walton
Regional
Manager
North

Ian has been working with young people and adults with learning disabilities and/or Autism for over 30 years. He's worked alongside Health, Social Care and Education agencies to ensure disabled people's voices are heard and receive equal opportunities, and has also worked with a Local Authority Statutory Assessment and Review Service in relation to the production and delivery of Education, Health and Care Plans.

Sarah Tonnar
Regional
Manager
South

Sarah has 20 years experience working in the NHS, within sexual health and safeguarding. She has a Diploma in Learning Disability Nursing (RNMH) and a BSc (Hons) Health and Social Science, Diploma in Epilepsy Care.

Beth Gibb
Project
Business
Manager

Beth joined Project Choice full time in 2016 as a coordinator, having previously acted as a Mentor between 2013-2016. In January 2019 she started supporting the national management side of the College which progressed to a full time business management role in Summer 2019.

"The sense of seeing someone improve in such a short space of time is very rewarding"
(Employer Mentor)

"We are very grateful to Project Choice for the very caring and down-to-earth way they have provided for our daughter"
(Parent of Intern)



Project Choice

Making a **Difference**

If you'd like further information about **Project Choice**, please get in touch with our team at the address below:



project.choice@hee.nhs.uk

