

Written by Amicia Nelson, Year 12 student at St. Thomas More Catholic School and Sixth Form College, who participated in a work experience placement within the Warwickshire Skills Hub.

On 12th July 2024, the Warwickshire Careers Hub, in conjunction with the Careers and Enterprise Company, hosted a SEND conference at Warwick Racecourse. Delegates were from the Warwickshire secondary schools and colleges, including careers leaders, careers advisers and SENCO's. Employer representatives were also in attendance. The aim was to emphasise the importance of making careers accessible and attainable to SEND students, and to explain the methods that are engaged to do so.



After an update from the Warwickshire Careers Hub, National Grid representatives Louise Saunders and Aimee Mann introduced their employability programme “Let’s Work Together”, which highlights the value of supported internships, which are offered by their organisation. The programme allows for young people (16-24) with SEND to develop key and transferrable skills and to gain paid employment via work experience and onsite learning. The internships run for 6-12 months alongside a personalised study programme with the end goal of increasing the number of young people with disabilities in active employment.



Louise Saunders and Aimee Mann – National Grid



Ellie Clarke – The Warwickshire Academy

Later, Ellie Clarke from The Warwickshire Academy spoke about their holistic approach to careers that integrates a significant amount of parental engagement into education, in order to improve the quality of life for SEND children. To aid this endeavour, The Warwickshire Academy provides ‘parent handbooks’ (which were shared with conference delegates) which details the needs and required materials for the students throughout the year. They also utilise a Careers Passport for students aged 11+ to document their experiences with work and careers.

These measures are both vital in encouraging and supporting future careers across the younger ages (11-24) and making the prospect of paid employment an achievable goal – over 65% of people with learning disabilities want to work (source Mencap) yet only 4.8% of employees are people with disabilities. Programmes like these then are so important in getting these employment opportunities that are clearly desired but not readily supplied.



Delegates at the Warwickshire Careers Hub SEND Conference

The last activity of the day was the workshop which entailed the delegates coming up with 3 priorities for development in their own school or college careers department's and 1 priority for the careers hub for the academic year 24/25. This yields feedback which is key in the progression of careers support in individual institutions across Warwickshire, further improving the schemes that make careers for SEND students achievable and sustainable.

The event demonstrated well the power of working together and the collective high impact those in the room could have on the future destination of SEND students, this event hopefully being the first of many!



Amicia Nelson – Guest Columnist

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