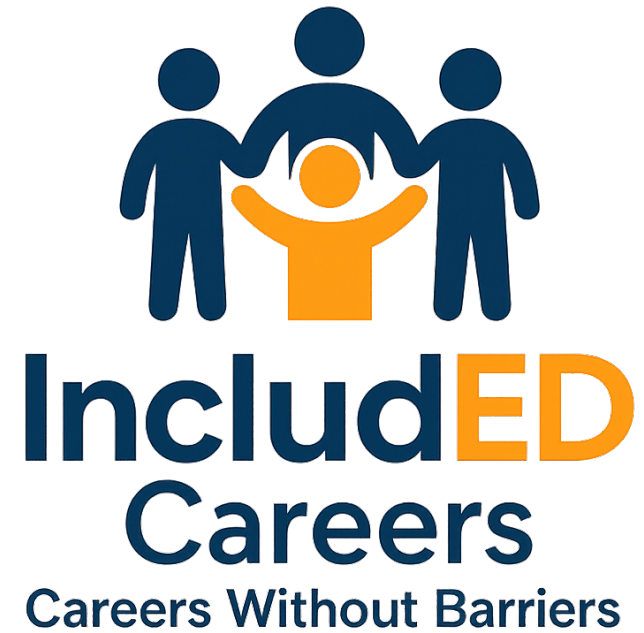




A Future That Includes Everyone

Who are we?

<https://includedcareers.co.uk/>



[HOME](#) [OUR STORY](#) [NETWORK](#) [INSIGHTS BLOG](#) [RESOURCES HUB](#) [SERVICES](#) [TESTIMONIALS](#)
[EVENTS](#) [WMCA RESOURCES](#) [CONTACT](#)

Supporting Development of Inclusive Career Services

To Empower SEND Learners And The Professionals Around Them

[JOIN THE NETWORK](#)

WHO ARE WE?

IncludED Careers was founded to break down barriers in careers education for young people with SEND. Too often, learners are expected to fit into systems that don't fit them. **We're changing that.**



What You'll Gain from Today

1. Understand the principles of SEND-inclusive employer engagement
2. Identify ways to expand employer networks
3. Build confidence approaching employers
4. Adapt employer encounters for SEND learners
5. Develop strategies to sustain employer partnerships

-  Nervous – stand up arms in the air
-  Unsure – stand up
-  Getting there – sit down arms in the air
-  Confident – sit down

Why is Employer Engagement Tricky in SEND?

**On your tables what
do schools /colleges
worry about**

**On your tables what
do employers worry
about**

Our role is to reduce the unknown for employers and build confidence on both sides.

Why is Employer Engagement Tricky in SEND?

Schools often worry about:

- Employer confidence around disability
- Health and safety concerns
- Transport and travel training
- Support needs in workplaces
- Employers lacking understanding of SEND

Employers often worry about:

- “Will I say the wrong thing?”
- “What support will we need to provide?”
- “Will the young person cope in our workplace?”

The Bigger Picture

“Every young person, regardless of need or ability, deserves a clear line of sight to the world of work.”

— Gatsby Foundation

74% of employers say they want to do more to support young people with SEND — but fewer than half feel confident doing so.

Quick reflection

What is your biggest employer engagement challenge right now?

1. Finding employers in the first place – **stand up arms in air**
2. Getting employers to say yes – **stand up**
3. Adapting activities so they work for SEND learners – **sit down arms in air**
4. Keeping employers engaged long-term – **sit down**

Understanding Employer Engagement

So where do we start?

Plan Ahead

Before contacting employers, take time to plan how the engagement will work **for your SEND learners and for the employer.**

- **WHO?** **Who do you want to engage?** Which employers are most likely to be open to inclusive opportunities?
- **WHAT ?** **What type of engagement are you asking for?** Employer talk, workplace visit, mock interviews, work experience, supported internship?
- **WHERE?** – will you engage them (online, in-school, at their workplace)? **Where will the activity work best for your learners?** In school, online, or in the workplace?
- **WHY ?** – **What is the intended outcome for learners?**
Confidence, workplace understanding, skill development, or progression to employment?
- **WHEN ?** – **When will the engagement take place?**
Employers often need plenty of notice and clear expectations.

TOP TIP

Start with employers who already value inclusion

Examples:

- Employers offering **supported internships**
- Local authorities
- NHS
- Hospitality and retail employers
- Social enterprises
- Employers with strong **EDI strategies**



The 5 Ws will give you clarity

When your outreach is **clear and purposeful**, it respects employers' time and makes it easier for them to say yes.

The clearer your WHY, the stronger your employer partnership will be.

Example

WHO: Local café or hospitality employer

WHAT: Deliver a 30-minute employer talk or workplace demonstration

WHERE: In school during a careers afternoon (or workplace visit)

WHY: To build students' confidence, communication skills and understanding of real workplaces

 5 W's of of Employer Engagement	
Who	WHO do you want to engage? Which employers are most likely to be open to inclusive opportunities? Identify target employers, local SME's, parents, alumni, supply chain or existing partners
What	What type of engagement are you asking for? Employer talk, workplace visit, mock interviews, work experience, Define the activity Level- from light touch talks to full placements. Think tiered menu of options
Where	Where will you engage them (online, in-school, at their workplace)? Where will the activity work best for your learners? In school, online, or in the workplace?
When	When will the engagement take place? Employers often need plenty of notice and clear expectations. A menu of ideas different dates and times
Why	Link to learner outcomes, Equalex learning outcomes, is it for student motivation, skill development, NEET prevention, LMI awareness. PFA goals?

If the relationship grows → workplace visit → work experience → supported internship.

Confidence

What stops you from feeling confident when approaching employers about opportunities for SEND learners?

Confidence

**Most of this isn't
about confidence...
it's about clarity.**

Confidence in Approaching and Engaging Employers

Confidence comes from preparation, clarity and purpose — not personality.

Which of these do you feel you need MOST right now?

Know your value

You're not asking for a favour — you're offering access to future talent.

Start Small and Build Trust

Begin with low-pressure opportunities

What's the smallest thing an employer could say yes to?

Be clear and confident in your message

This is your 5 W's — this is where confidence actually comes from.

Preparation Builds Confidence

What would make you feel more prepared?

Knowing contact name

Knowing their business

Having a clear ask

Employer engagement isn't about being persuasive — it's about being purposeful.

Finding and Approaching Employers

You've planned.

You've built your confidence.

Now let's connect with employers.

Start With Who You Know

Existing Contacts - Reconnect

Employers you have
worked with before

**Tip: clear, time-
limited
opportunity**

Warm leads - Introduce

People connected to
your school/setting
or partners

**Tip: introduction or
small first activity**

New leads- Research

Employers you
haven't worked with
yet

**Tip: Research the
employer and start
small**

Contact Audit



Use the chart below to map your contacts

EXISTING CONTACTS

Examples

- Employers you've worked with before

Why they matter

- ✓ Easiest to contact
- ✓ They know your setting and your learners
- ✓ They already trust the school
- ✓ Strong starting point for SEND-friendly engagement

Typical approach

- Reconnect with a clear, simple request
- "Could you support a taster day?"
- "Could you speak to a class for 20 minutes?"

WARM LEADS

Warm leads are people or organisations who don't know you well, but there is some type of link.

Examples

- Local suppliers you buy from
- Businesses in the school's supply chain

Why they matter

- ✓ They have a reason to say "yes"
- ✓ They're aware of your school
- ✓ Often open to partnership

Typical approach

- Ask for a short introduction meeting
- Suggest a small, low-commitment project

NEW LEADS

These are employers you have never worked with before and have no existing link to the school.

Examples

- Local SMEs (small/medium businesses)
- High-street businesses
- Larger companies in your area

Why they matter

- ✓ Help you grow your network
- ✓ Help diversify industries and roles accessed by learners
- ✓ Important for preparing learners for the wider world of work

Typical approach

- Research the company
- Personalise the ask

Contact Audit



Use the chart below to map your contacts

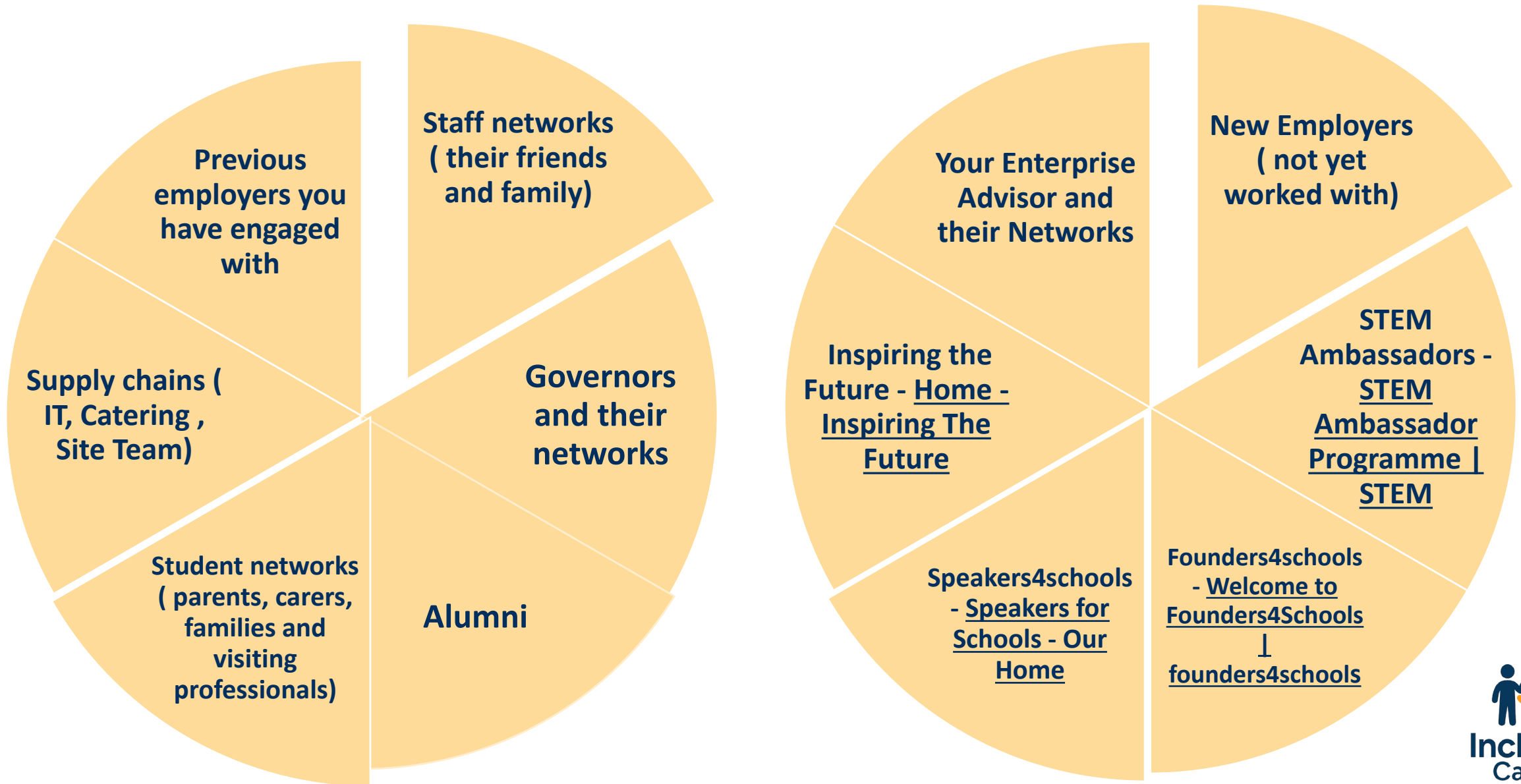
EXISTING CONTACTS

WARM LEADS

NEW LEADS

Take five minutes to map your contacts into these three categories.

Lets take a look at all at all the ways you can engage



Who should you contact inside an organisation?

- HR Directors / HR Teams
- Early Careers / Recruitment Teams
- Learning & Development Managers
- Skills or Workforce Development Roles
- Education Engagement Roles
- Community Outreach / Social Value Leads
- Heads of Recruitment
- Training or Apprenticeship Managers



Tip:

If your first contact isn't the right person, ask:
"Who would be the best person to speak to about working with schools or supporting young people?"

Employers will often **redirect you internally**.

These are the people most likely to support **student engagement, work experience and early careers pathways**.

Table 1
Media and professional networks

School website and newsletters
Social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook)

Table 3
School and Community Networks

Staff networks internal colleagues
Parent and carers
Governors and trustees
Alumni

Table 2
Professional Networks

Local employers close to setting
Connect through your Enterprise Adviser and Careers Hub

Table 4
Employer Engagement Platforms

Speakers for Schools
STEM Ambassadors
Founders4Schools
Inspiring the Future

TABLE 1 – Media & Professional Networks(Social media, newsletters, LinkedIn etc.)

- How could you use this to attract employers — not just share information?
- What would make an employer actually respond to a post?
- What could you realistically post in the next month?
- What are the common mistakes schools make when using this?

TABLE 2 – Professional Networks(Local employers, Enterprise Adviser, Careers Hub)

- Where would you find these employers locally?
- How would you approach them for the first time?
- What would you ask them to do first (low pressure)?
- What are the barriers — and how could you overcome them?

TABLE 3 – School & Community Networks(Staff, parents, governors, alumni)

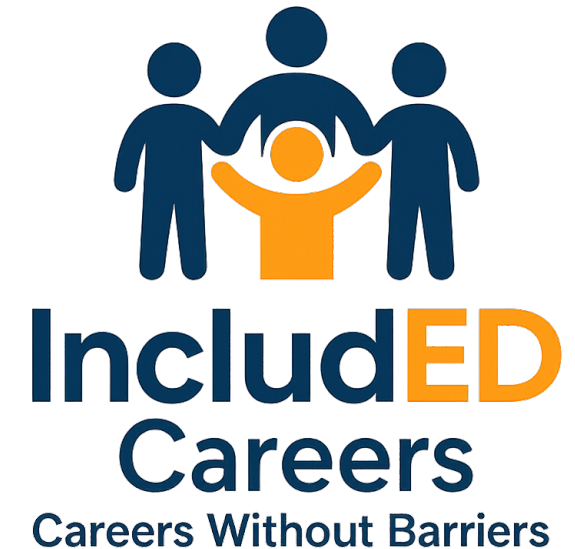
Who in your school community could connect you to employers?
How would you actually ask them for support?
Why are these networks often underused?
What's the easiest quick win from this group?

TABLE 4 – Employer Engagement Platforms(Speakers for Schools, STEM, Founders4Schools etc.

- When would you use a platform instead of your own contacts?
- What type of opportunities could you set up quickly using these?
- What are the benefits of using platforms?
- What might stop people using them — and how do you overcome that?

Table 1

Media and professional networks



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Why Social Media Matters

LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), Tik Tok and YouTube.

Social media is often the first place employers see what your school is doing. Use it to:

- Showcase what your students can do
- Celebrate employer partnerships and workplace experiences
- Invite local employers to get involved
- Thank and tag employers publicly



When employers can see inclusion in action online, they are far more likely to want to be part of it. Every post is an open invitation for new employer partnerships.

Pick the Right Platform for the Message

You don't need to use every platform — pick one or two that feel manageable and match your audience.

Platform	Best For	Tips
LinkedIn	Professional networking, employer shout-outs, recruitment opportunities	Tag local employers and use hashtags like #InclusionAtWork #SENDCareers
Facebook	Local community connections and parent networks	Share event photos, celebrate employer partnerships, tag local businesses
Instagram	Visual storytelling, student projects, success moments	Use carousel posts to show workplace visits or learning journeys
X (Twitter)	Quick updates, tagging partners and Careers Hubs	Share short updates during events or work experience days
YouTube / TikTok	Short videos and learner reflections	Keep clips short, captioned and positive – e.g. <i>“My first day at work experience”</i>

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is one of the most effective platforms for connecting with local employers. **Over 28 million people in the UK** use LinkedIn for professional networking.

Use LinkedIn to:

- Find local employers and professionals
- Share employer partnerships and workplace visits
- Showcase what your students can do
- Thank and tag businesses who support activities



Profile Tips

- Use your personal profile to build relationships Connect it to your school or organisation page
- Be clear about how you support young people and employers

Remember:

people connect with people, not logos

What to Post: Practical Ideas - Content That Attracts Employers

1. Short clips of students preparing for work or role-plays (“Ready for the World of Work!”)
2. Employer visits, talks, or workshops — tag and thank them.
3. Student quotes about what they learned.
4. Behind-the-scenes photos of school enterprise projects.
5. “Did You Know?” posts linking SEND strengths to workplace skills.
6. Calls to action: “Could your business host a short taster session? Get in touch!”

Posts that show real learners doing real things are powerful.

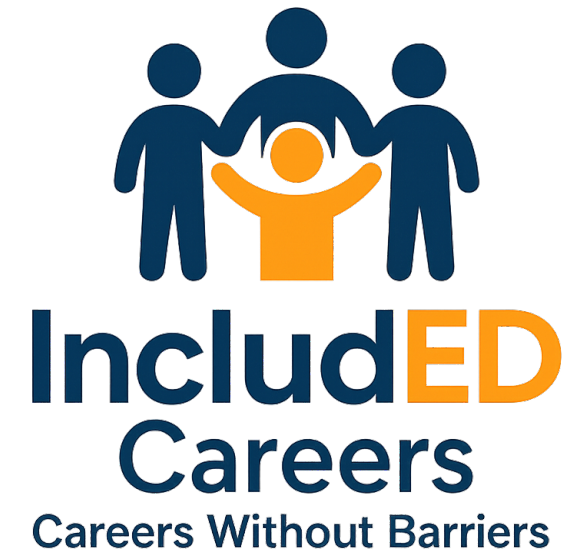
Use imagery and language that celebrate capability — not labels.



Table 2

Professional Networks

EA and local Employers



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Ask your EA to help

Enterprise Advisers can be a powerful connector between schools and employers. Ask them to:

- **Connect** you to their network - Local businesses, employers, and professional contacts.
- Bring employer **insights** - Share knowledge about industries, skills needs and career pathways.
- **Map opportunities** in their organisation - Explore departments such as HR, marketing, finance, IT and supply chains.
- **Promote opportunities** through their networks - Including social media and professional contacts.
- **Support school engagement activities**• Attend careers events or parents' evenings• Speak to students about careers• Help staff link to employer networks



Because you've made it useful for THEM — not just you.

Start with local businesses

- Use **Google Maps or local directories** to identify nearby employers
- Visit or contact businesses close to the school
- Invite them to utilise school building

Use your school space to build relationships

- Offer tours of the school or careers provision
- Host employer networking sessions or training
- Option to use premises for conference, meetings team building activities

Ask career lead or SLT to meet businesses that use the space

- Once the business attends school ask CL or SLT to offer a tour
- Make them feel really welcome
- If a career activity is taking place take them to watch

Present your career programme – where can they support?

- Make them feel welcome and introduce them to staff and students
- Show real careers activities in action
- Share **ways they can get involved**

Table 3

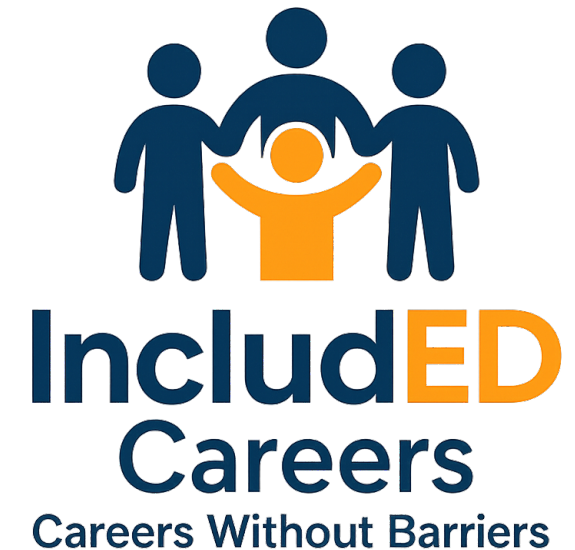
School and Community Networks

Staff networks internal colleagues

Parent and carers

Governors and trustees

Alumni



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Using Alumni to Build Employer Connections

Former students can be powerful advocates and role models for current learners.

How to stay connected

- Collect contact details before students leave
- Use social media or alumni groups
- Include updates in school newsletters
- Keep an alumni page on your website

How alumni can support your careers programme

- Share their career journey with students
- Take part in career talks or Q&A sessions
- Offer workplace visits or insights into their industry
- Connect you with employers in their organisation

Alumni who have navigated education or work with additional needs can be particularly powerful role models for SEND learners.



Why alumni engagement works

- Students relate to people who were once in their position
- Alumni often feel proud to give something back
- They can open doors to new employer networks

Your strongest employer connections often start within your own school community.

Parents and Carers

- Ask for support at parents' evenings or events
- Share opportunities through newsletters and social media
- Run short parent careers sessions
- Ask parents if their workplace could support activities

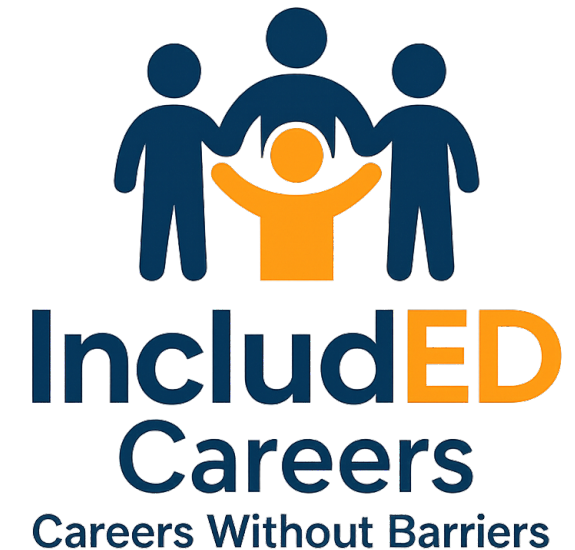
Governors and Trustees

- Present your careers programme and employer needs
- Invite governors to careers events or employer activities
- Ask them to share opportunities within their professional networks

Internal staff and supply chains

- Ask staff to share contacts in their personal networks
- Send a short all-staff message asking for employer connections
- Engage suppliers (IT, catering, site teams) who may have employer links

TABLE 4 – Employer Engagement Platforms



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Online Platforms

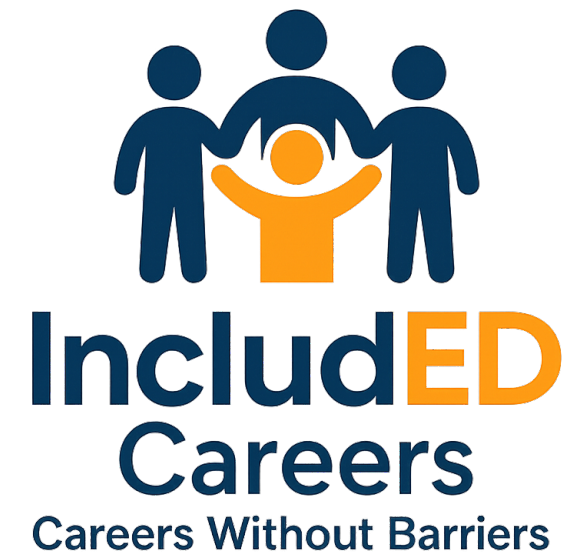
Founders4Schools



- **STEM ambassadors** - Connect with volunteers from science, engineering and technology industries.
- **Founders4schools** - Link with local business leaders who can speak to students about careers and entrepreneurship.
- **Speakers4schools** - Access virtual talks, employer encounters and work experience opportunities.
- **Inspiring the Future** - Invite volunteers from a wide range of professions to speak with students.



**What are the most
common things
employers say when you
reach out?
*Objections***



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What employers **REALLY** mean when they say...

We don't have time = I don't understand how this will work

We've never done SEND = I'm worried about getting it wrong

Just send me an email = I'm not convinced yet

ACKNOWLEDGE

Show you've heard them
(build trust)

"I completely
understand..."

"That makes sense..."

"A lot of employers say
that..."

REASSURE

Remove the fear /
unknown

"You wouldn't be doing
this alone..."

"We fully support you..."

"We prepare students
beforehand..."

KEEP IT SMALL

Lower the barrier to
entry

"We can start with
something really
simple..."

"Just a short session..."

"Even 20 minutes would
make a difference..."

Role Play



Time / capacity - We don't have time." "We're really busy at the moment." "We don't have enough staff to support this."

Confidence / fear "We've never worked with SEND learners before." "What if we say the wrong thing?"

Uncertainty / lack of clarity "What would we actually have to do?" "How much support will they need?"

Gatekeeping / deflection "I'm not the right person." "Just send me an email." "We'll have to think about it."

Perceived risk "What if it doesn't work out?" "What if a student struggles?" "We've had a bad experience before."

SEND-Specific Employer Engagement

What Helps Employers Feel Confident Supporting SEND Learners?

Many employers are open to supporting SEND learners — they just need reassurance about how it will work. Employers feel more confident when they know:

- **Clear expectations** - What the activity involves and how long it will take
- **Support from the school** - Staff support, preparation and someone they can contact if needed
- **Small first steps** - Starting with short activities such as talks, Q&A sessions or workplace visits
- **Simple adjustments** - Many SEND learners succeed with small adaptations, clear instructions or structured tasks
- **Positive experiences** - Once employers have one good experience, they are far more likely to stay involved

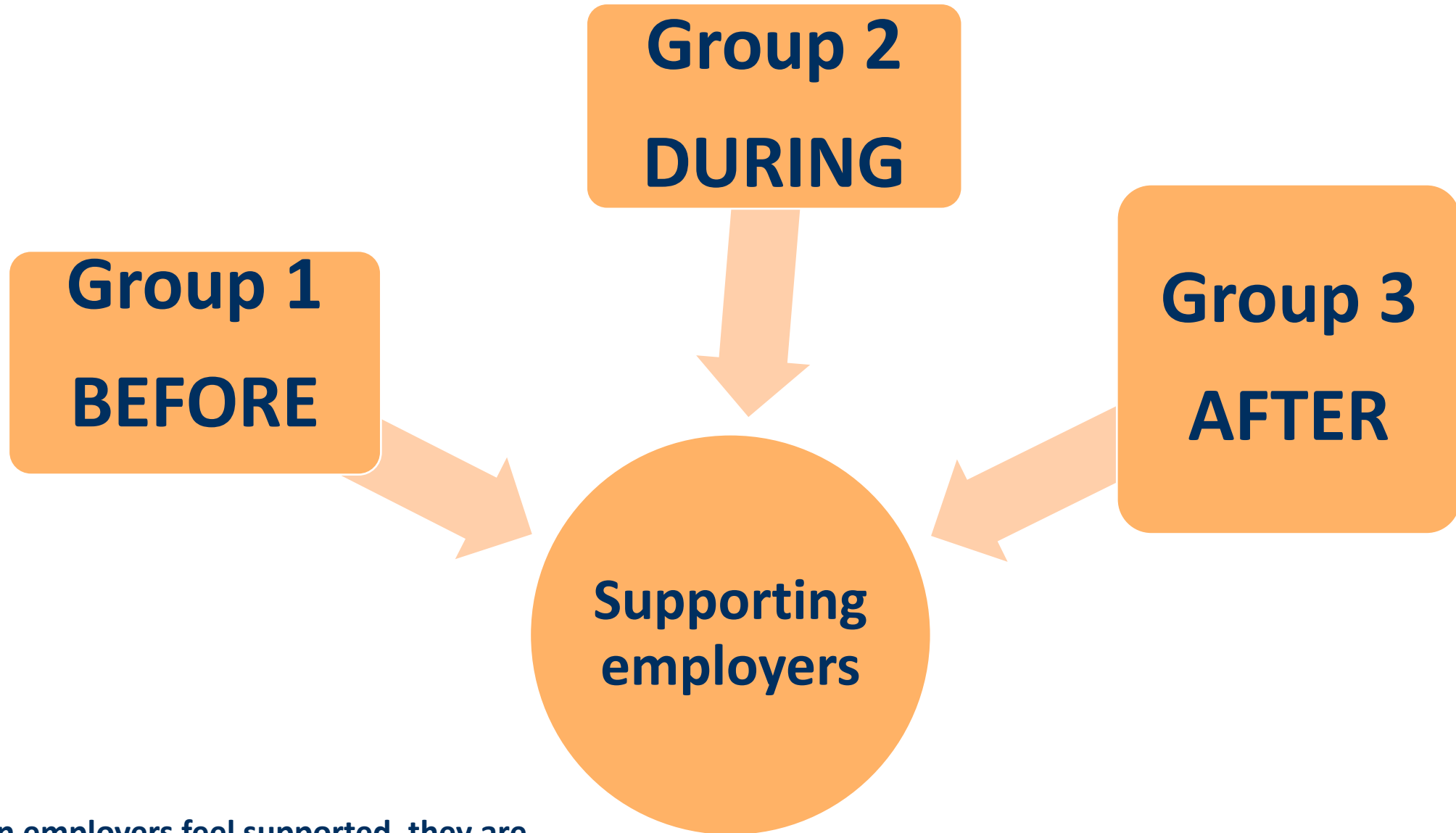
Most employer concerns come from uncertainty — our role is to reduce the unknown.

Building Confidence in Employers - Small Steps Build Big Confidence



Think about your current employers — where do they sit?
What do they need to move to the next stage?

start small
Preparation
Follow-up



When employers feel supported, they are far more likely to engage again.

Group 1
BEFORE
Feedback



Supporting
employers

**When employers feel supported, they are
far more likely to engage again.**

BEFORE

- Give employers a simple student profile
- Prepare the employer (not just the student) Short SEND awareness guidance (keep it simple, not jargon-heavy)
- Prepare the student properly
- Plan reasonable adjustments in advance
- Clarify roles and support
- Pre briefing sessions
- Co-design the session (where possible)

Be honest — which of these do you already do consistently?

When employers feel supported, they are far more likely to engage again.

Top 10 Universal Adjustments

1. Visuals over words
2. Consistent routines
3. Plain, concrete language
4. Clear start and finish to each task
5. Predictable schedules
6. Extra time for transitions
7. A calm, patient mentor
8. Movement or sensory breaks
9. Positive feedback for effort
10. Pre-briefs and debriefs every time

**Small changes,
big impact**



MAKING CAREER EDUCATION OUTREACH INCLUSIVE

*Practical Adaptation Guide for Employers Supporting SEND Learners
Simple steps, quick wins, and confidence-building strategies for inclusive
placements and encounters.*

Welcome

Thank you for offering your time, experience, and opportunities to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This guide provides quick, practical advice to help you feel confident and supported when welcoming SEND learners for encounters, visits, or work placements. You don't need to be a SEND expert — just willing to listen, communicate clearly, and adapt where needed. Small changes make a big difference.

Understanding Common SEND Needs

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) - Learners may take longer to grasp new information and benefit from clear, structured tasks and repetition.

Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) - Learners may need high levels of support and simplified, hands-on activities with strong routines.

Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) - Learners often have significant physical or sensory needs and benefit from short, sensory-based experiences.

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) - Learners may prefer predictable routines and clear communication; sensory environments can be challenging.

Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) - Learners may find it hard to process or express spoken language, needing visual support and extra thinking time.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) - Learners may experience anxiety, frustration, or low confidence and respond best to positive, consistent relationships.

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs – Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia) - Learners may have difficulties with reading, writing, coordination, or sequencing but strong verbal or creative skills.

Sensory or Physical Needs - Learners may need adjustments to the environment, equipment, or layout to move and participate safely and comfortably.



Adaptation Ideas by Need

MLD

Use step-by-step visual task lists. Repeat instructions and break down complex tasks. Offer practical, hands-on work with routine and structure. Allow extra time to process new information.

SLD

Use concrete, hands-on activities with repetition. Communicate with body language and modelling. Offer one-to-one support or small group tasks. Use familiar routines and sensory materials.

PMLD

Focus on sensory experiences (sound, light, touch). Use simple cause-and-effect activities. Keep sessions short with clear beginnings and endings. Work closely with staff who know the learner well.

ASC

Share photos and a 'what to expect' guide before visits. Keep environments predictable and minimise sensory overload. Provide quiet areas for breaks. Assign a calm, consistent mentor.

SEMH

Offer a consistent adult mentor. Provide positive feedback and celebrate effort. Include movement breaks or outdoor tasks. Maintain structure but remain empathetic.

SLCN

Speak slowly and clearly; avoid jargon. Use visuals or key-word cards. Allow processing time before expecting responses. Model tasks visually rather than explaining verbally.

Sensory or Physical Needs

Ensure full accessibility (ramps, lifts, toilets). Adjust lighting, sound levels, and seating. Provide adapted equipment or assistive tech. Offer flexible pacing and rest breaks.

SpLDs

Provide written info in plain fonts (Arial, size 14+). Use checklists or flow charts instead of long text. Allow verbal or practical responses rather than written. Provide extra time for reading or sequencing tasks.



Top 10 Universal Adjustments - Small Changes, Big Impact

1. Visuals over words
2. Consistent routines
3. Plain, concrete language
4. Clear start and finish to each task
5. Predictable schedules
6. Extra time for transitions
7. A calm, patient mentor
8. Movement or sensory breaks
9. Positive feedback for effort
10. Pre-briefs and debriefs every time

Inclusive Communication Tips for Employers

Small adjustments to the way we speak and listen can remove barriers instantly.

✓ Do:

- Speak clearly and slowly. Use plain language, avoid long sentences, and check understanding regularly.
- Use names. Address the learner directly to build connection and trust.
- Give one instruction at a time. Break down information into simple steps.
- Show rather than tell. Demonstrate tasks, use visuals, or model examples.
- Allow thinking time. Pause before expecting a response — silence is okay.
- Use positive body language. Smile, encourage, and stay calm even if the learner hesitates.
- Check understanding gently. Try "Can you show me what you'll do next?" rather than "Do you understand?"

✗ Don't:

- Assume comprehension. Always check for understanding rather than asking yes/no questions.
- Use slang, idioms, or sarcasm. Phrases like "pull your socks up" or "give it a shot" can confuse.
- Talk about the learner instead of to them. Always include them in the conversation — they should lead their own experience.
- Overload with instructions. Too much information at once can cause anxiety.
- Raise your voice. If someone doesn't understand, rephrase rather than repeat louder.



How Schools and Colleges Can Support You

You can ask the school to provide the following to help ensure success:

- A short learner profile (strengths, interests, communication preferences).
- A pre-placement briefing call or meeting.
- A named staff contact or job coach during visits.
- Visual task cards or step-by-step lists for learners.
- A clear daily schedule and key contact details.
- Advice on any sensory or physical adjustments required.
- Feedback templates or reflection forms after the encounter.

Remember — this is a partnership. You are not expected to manage SEND support alone. The school/college will guide and assist you at every stage.

Employer Confidence Checklist

Before the Encounter

- ☐ Received learner profile and contact details from school
- ☐ Confirmed activity, timings and location
- ☐ Checked accessibility and space layout
- ☐ Briefed staff or mentor supporting the learner
- ☐ Prepared visuals or examples of tasks where possible

During the Encounter / Placement

- ☐ Welcomed learner warmly and introduced team
- ☐ Used clear, simple instructions and visuals
- ☐ Offered reassurance and positive feedback
- ☐ Allowed short breaks if needed
- ☐ Checked learner understanding regularly

After the Experience

- ☐ Shared feedback with the school
- ☐ Reflected on what worked well
- ☐ Expressed interest in future involvement

Final Thoughts

Inclusion isn't about doing more — it's about doing things differently. Every small adjustment helps create a workplace that welcomes everyone. Thank you for opening your doors to SEND learners and helping shape their future.

Website: <https://includedschools.co.uk>

Email: InfoED@includedschools.co.uk

Follow: IncludED Careers CIC on LinkedIn

Group 2
During
Feedback



Supporting
employers

**When employers feel supported, they are
far more likely to engage again.**

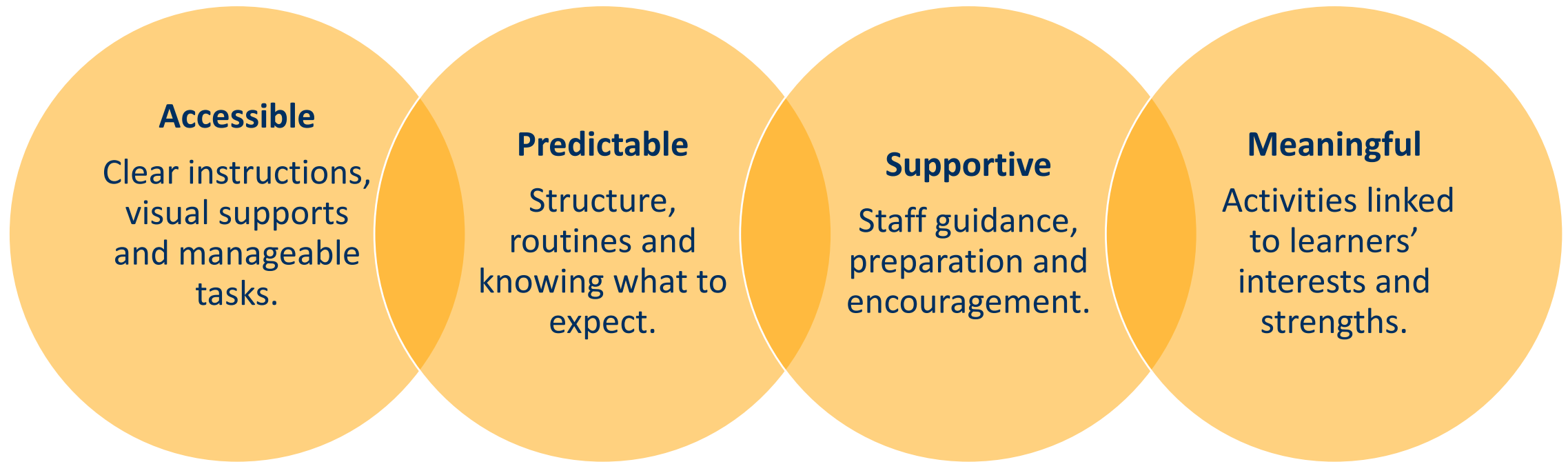
DURING

- Keep regular contact
- Actively facilitate (don't sit at the back)
- Support the employer to support the student
- Encourage feedback (simple + structured)
- Be responsive
- Structure student participation and support
- **Adapt encounters for different needs**

When employers feel supported, they are far more likely to engage again.

Be honest — which of these do you already do consistently?

Adapt encounters for different needs



Adapting opportunities doesn't lower expectations — it creates the conditions for success and helps employers feel confident to say yes.

**Group 3
AFTER
Feedback**

**Supporting
employers**

**When employers feel supported, they are
far more likely to engage again.**

AFTER

- Build the relationship (this is key)- Stay Connected
- Recognise and Celebrate
- Build in reflection so employers know what worked what support they need
- Share feedback or quotes from students
- Celebrate the employer on social media or newsletters
- Build Long-Term Relationships - Create a “Wall of Employers” or recognition board Host a small Employer Thank-You Breakfast

When employers feel supported, they are far more likely to engage again.

Be honest — which of these do you already do consistently?

Think of employer engagement as a cycle — not a single event. After every interaction ask:

“How can I make it easy for this employer to come back?”

Final Thoughts – Making Employer Engagement Work for SEND

Partnership, not placement

Build relationships — not just tick boxes.

Clarity builds confidence

Be clear about your ask and the support you provide.

Flexibility is inclusion

Adapt opportunities to suit learners and employers.

Appreciation sustains engagement

Thank, showcase and celebrate employers.

Inclusive employer engagement often starts with one conversation — and grows through trust.

Reflection and Action

Reflection Activity: Your 3 Actions

What will you take away from today?

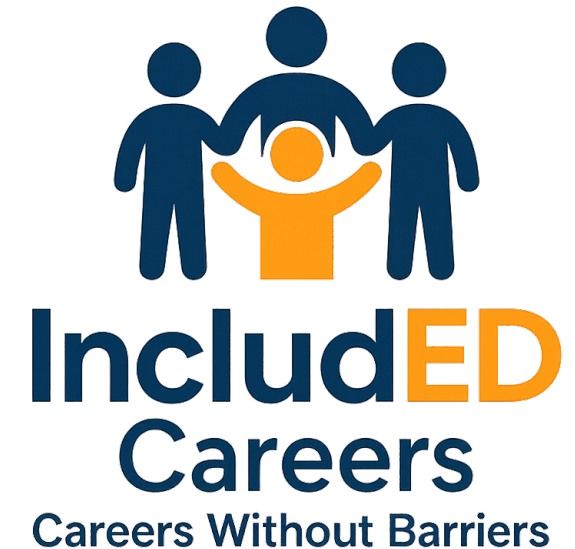
1. Something you will start doing

A new idea or approach you want to try.

2. Something you will stop or rethink

A practice that might not be working.

Thank you for taking part!



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