

update



Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE LAUREL TRUST

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Welcome to Update – Winter 2024

Welcome to the Winter edition of Update which once again highlights some of the constructive and supportive work done in our schools. Throughout the Autumn Term our Trustees and Consultant Director have been visiting all of the Projects currently active and we are shortly looking forward to seeing the final reports of the current developments and impact of this work. Trustees continue to recognise the hard work that has taken place in these trying times and we don't underestimate the commitment of all of the school staffs involved. The Trustees send their good wishes for the festive season and hope that you all manage to have a very enjoyable break from professional activities.

Bill Goddard | Chair of Trustees | The Laurel Trust

Note: all images in this publication are stock images except where indicated.

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Sen.se

Imagine the possibilities

Enhancing Somerset's successful routes to employment offer

Introduction by Maggie Roger

Dreams can come True... I feel privileged to write an introduction to this very special project. The Laurel Trust is working with Fairmead School and its partner special schools/pupil referral units and Sen.se to foster their ground-breaking work on creating viable routes to employment which will bring success for young people with special educational needs. The work is underpinned by a passion to ensure improved life chances and well-being for all their young people with special needs - and in many cases to fulfil their dreams.

The dynamic project team do not accept barriers or negative responses to their work and have a great track record of over-turning these. They are supported by an ever-increasing group of partners including local industries and businesses, hospitals, the Somerset Constabulary and a sports/activities partnership. Their recent conference in Taunton at which young people spoke was inspirational and heart-warming. They were the stars of the show!



Tracy Felstead
Head of the Lead
Research School



Julie Walker, Julie Young & Emma France
lead team on the developments of supported
employment opportunities in this project in Somerset

CONTEXT: Sen.se (Special Educational Needs. Somerset Expertise) is a collaborative partnership between all the special schools and 3 pupil referral units (PRUs) across Somerset. We have been working together for over 10 years, whilst also working in partnership with a wide range of external organisations, to promote the best possible outcomes for our young people with SEND and their families.

NATIONAL PICTURE



4.8% of people in England (and 4.1% of people in Scotland) with a learning disability and/or who are autistic and are known to local authorities go on to secure paid employment, compared to 80% of their peers

SOMERSET PICTURE



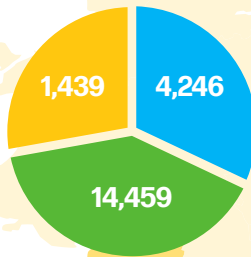
14,459 children and young people living in Somerset identify as having a Special Educational Need and Disability



Of those 4,246 have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)



Of those 1,439 are post-16 young people with an EHCP and are closest to work force (August 2022)



Our project was put in place to help us gain a better understanding of the barriers preventing young people accessing the supported employment opportunities available in the rural county of Somerset.

A multidisciplinary group has been diligently working to create enhanced employment prospects for young individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). However, despite the figures shown above both highlighting the need nationally and for Somerset, it has proved a challenge to find young people who are ready for and want to access these opportunities. Where are the 65% of young people who want to work and how do we support them into these opportunities?

STUDY AND RESEARCH FOCUS

The project is in its early stages, with the ambition to enable the maximum number of young people in Somerset with SEND to access great lives by creating opportunities, changing culture, improving communication and ultimately moving them into permanent employment.

As a start we identified what we believe to be some of the challenges and barriers in getting young people with SEND to access work opportunities:

1. Aspiration of parent/carers and some school/college staff with regard to young people gaining employment is low – they have never imagined their child living this scenario.
2. Potentially losing benefits (or the perceived perception that this may happen) negatively impacts on employment decisions for parent/carers.
3. There is a perception that students with an EHCP need to stay in education for as long as possible before thinking about employment pathways – meaning that young people often get stuck repeating years of education unnecessarily and not moving into employment in a timely manner.
4. Opportunities and pathways need greater marketing and publicity – it's not yet part of the SEND pathways culture.
5. The 'pathways to employment' curriculum needs further development, more progressive stages included and implemented – so that the flightpath towards employment is embedded and expected for all those on this trajectory to work.
6. The National Curriculum does not prepare our young people well for employment.
7. Effective transition at certain key stages can be a challenge, especially at Post 16 and Post 18 – and the EHCP process can inhibit or delay progress towards employment outcomes.
8. The challenging geography of Somerset.



The question persists: Where are these eager job seekers? Are they waiting in the wings, yearning for opportunities that align with their aspirations? Perhaps they are having to navigate a maze of challenges, seeking pathways to meaningful employment? The quest to connect these motivated individuals with suitable work environments continues, fueled by a determination and commitment to inclusivity.

In this pursuit, the team has been at the forefront, fostering initiatives such as Supported Internships. These full-time, structured work-based educational programmes cater for young people aged 16-24 with identified additional needs. Within these internships, participants spend the majority of their time in actual workplaces, gaining practical experience and honing essential employment skills. Expert job coaches provide guidance and support, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

Notable employers, including Leonardo/Kuehne+Nagal/Sodexo, Hinkley Point C, Trowbridge Garden Centre, Yeovil District Hospital and Musgrove Park Hospital, participate in these programmes, with more opportunities on the horizon across Somerset. New programmes that have been developed for September 2024 are Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) and Young Somerset Internships.

As we strive to unlock the potential of these aspiring workers, we are continuing to champion their cause, ensuring that the road to employment is accessible, supportive and filled with promise.

We have more businesses who are ready to offer these opportunities, which in itself is an achievement



as Somerset is a predominantly small business economy. As of 2021, there were 47,200 small to medium sized enterprise's (SMEs) in Somerset. This accounts for 99.78% of all businesses in the county.

WHY BEING ABLE TO WORK IS SIGNIFICANT:

Gaining employment through a Supported Internship programme can be a life changing experience for young people with SEND empowering them with work and independence skills and a brighter future. Not just because of its positive impact on self-esteem and confidence, but also the enhancement of communication and interpersonal skills through interacting with colleagues and customers. The routine and structure that work provides can foster a sense of responsibility and time management skills.

We all want to choose who we live with and where we live, we want people with SEND to know people in the community and not just those that are family or are paid to care for them. Through

Gaining employment through a Supported Internship programme can be a life changing experience for young people with SEND...

being employed and being part of a team, teamwork and collaboration become necessary aspects of many jobs promoting social interaction and the workplace can provide a safe space to build relationships, friendships and develop professional networks.

The ability to earn their own income allows young people to make purchases, plan and participate in social activities independently. However, through this project we are discovering that the potential loss of benefits impacts on employment decisions for some parent/carers. We are working with our community to change the narrative around this. If a young person is working

and living at home one would usually expect them to contribute to household costs and we are working with the DWP about the best way the 'Better Off' calculator can be used to support families to see that a child in employment can impact positively, both financially and in many other ways.

We know that moving parents/ carers from the medical model of disability (looking at the persons SEND and focusing on what they are not able to do) to the social model (which seeks to remove unnecessary barriers which prevent people with SEND participating in society, accessing work and living independently) is a journey and the sooner we commence that journey the greater distance we will travel and the individual will be able to live their best adult life. We know we need to start these conversations much earlier with families changing expectations and aspiration for all involved, putting the individual with SEND and their family at the centre of the conversation/journey.

A key element is an appropriate curriculum which focuses on the four preparation for adulthood outcome areas - see graphic right.

A young person who is on a trajectory to employment needs to be identified earlier and the curriculum back chained to be ready to access the opportunities for work.

Key to this is appropriate high-quality specialist careers information and guidance. This does need to be delivered by an appropriately qualified Careers Advisor (level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance & Development) with additional high-level skills, knowledge and confidence of working with young people with SEND.

EVIDENCE BASE

There is an evidence-base which identifies five key areas that a successful transition programme



should focus on:

- 1 Start young and maintain support across the life course or until the young person is established in the labour market.
- 2 Ensure access to support and relevant developmental activities (this can include career guidance, teacher support, agency support and specific skills training).
- 3 Involve families in the transition.
- 4 Provide encounters and experience with employers, working people and workplaces.
- 5 Ensure that career and employability learning and support continues in the workplace.

Four sets of factors seem important in determining successful outcomes of the transition process:

- 1 Young people's capacities and characteristics.

- 2 The level of familial inclusion and support.
- 3 The nature and effectiveness of local support systems.
- 4 The range of local opportunities available to young people.

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING TO CHANGE THE CULTURE

We have developed a range of initiatives and resources to help communicate and promote Supported Employment, including:

- We continue to raise aspirations across our communities and will be sharing the success stories of young people with SEND who have been supported into the workplace that we are gathering, including through a new bespoke 'Imagine the Possibilities' SEND Alumni Network platform which will house profiles of all our Somerset Supported Interns/ Apprentices.





- Somerset Supported Internships & Apprenticeships guides:*
- **YOUNG PERSON INFORMATION**
 - **EMPLOYER INFORMATION**
 - **PARENT/CARER INFORMATION**
 - **PRACTITIONER INFORMATION**
 - **EDUCATORS GUIDE**

- The guides to Supported Employment (above) have also been developed.
- We have piloted the completion of vocational profiles for EHCP students in mainstream schools from Year 9, so we know our future cohorts of Interns and their career aspirations. This will be rolled out across the county next year to help us plan and meet future needs more effectively.
- Through the launch of the Somerset Educators Guide, we hope that schools gain clarity around expectations at each stage for a young person on a trajectory to work in order for them to be well prepared. This includes:
 - **Back chaining**
 - **Framework**
 - **Curriculum resources**
- Building Work Experience opportunities into the SEND curriculum is essential, so that a gradual building up of a young

- person's skills and workplace attributes help prepare them for eventual employment. To support this we have created a SEND section on the Somerset Work Experience Database which highlights SEND-friendly opportunities and placement resources.
- We are using technology to help young people with SEND find employment and inform parent/carers about the opportunities, developing an 'Imagine the Possibilities' section on the new Somerset focused CiCi Careers App.
 - Worked with the SEND team at Somerset Council to review and re-write the Annual Review and EHCP paperwork templates to have an increased Preparation for Adulthood focus/Employment focus and intention.
 - Development of the 'Imagine the Possibilities' website that hosts

We need to start these conversations much earlier with families changing expectations and aspirations for all involved and putting the individual with SEND and their family at the centre of the conversation and journey.

- our resources and provides a noticeboard for our Supported Internship vacancies. Imagine the Possibilities (somerset-ebp.co.uk)
- Sponsorship of two annual Imagine the Possibilities Awards (Best Supported Employer and Best Supported Intern).

Despite the short time this project has been running we have also undertaken other work to increase understanding including:

- Delivering a Supported Employment Conference – to all key stakeholders and getting their buy-in to support this pathway.
- Creation of a substantial Communication Plan and timelines for delivery
- Heatmap of current and future opportunities and where our next cohorts of young people are living in Somerset.
- Creation of a Supported Employment Agency – that will provide additional capacity to manage and quality assure current and future Supported Internship programmes, help with the identification of EHCP students and make sure that their paperwork reflects their employment journey.
- Training Somerset Employment Hub staff to understand and promote Supported Employment routes.
- Creating Enterprise Opportunities – through the setup and delivery of Special School PopUp Shops – with goods made by Special School students then sold in the shops which are staffed by students and their teachers.
- Working with our SomersetWorks (NEET prevention and reengagement service) staff to run pre-employment support and skills development programmes for those who are struggling to engage.

MOLLIE'S STORY:

“I’ve been in crisis throughout my life, I reached a breaking point where I couldn’t even manage basic life skills. Thanks to support from Discovery’s Supported Employment Team, I now have:

1. A job working in a supermarket.
2. Friends my age.
3. Passed my driving test.
4. Moved into my own place.
5. Learned to do washing, cooking, cleaning and pay bills.
6. Improved my mental health, confidence and esteem.



discovery
Get more from life

IMPACT

From September 2024 we will have tripled the number of Supported Internship programmes and we have noticed an increase in young people applying for the opportunities and more parents and carers being aware of these opportunities and supporting their young person to apply and succeed.

We understand that it will take time to change the culture, to build a momentum towards this route, so that it becomes the norm and an aspiration for our young people, shared by all key stakeholders – young people, their families, schools, SEND staff and our wider communities. We will continue to evaluate and record our progress and share our findings, especially when we have found any solutions to removing barriers to participation. ●

Looking ahead... a book to change hearts and minds

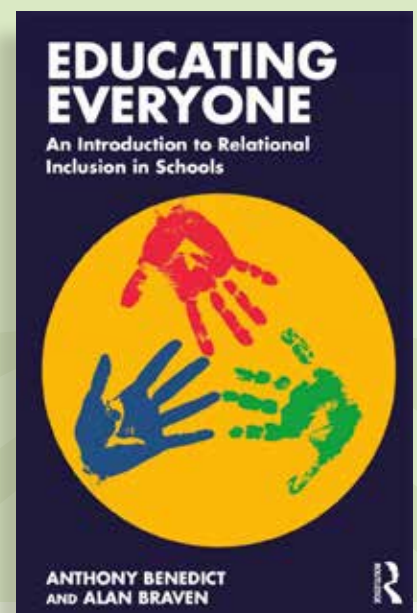
EDUCATING EVERYONE: An Introduction to Relational Inclusion in Schools.

Anthony Benedict is the headteacher of Tameside Pupil Referral Service, part of Victorious Academy Trust. He is currently completing a Laurel Trust research project. His book is an important and an engaging read.

Anyone who has taught children with challenging behaviour will immediately engage with the narrative and want to continue reading!

Anthony’s co-author is his colleague, Andy Braven.

The book will be published by Routledge in Spring 2025. ●



Meet the new Consultant Director

Introduction by Maggie Roger

It gives me real pleasure to introduce the new Consultant Director of The Laurel Trust, Derrick Brett. Derrick's pen portrait is below and he brings a rich wealth of experience in schools and a fresh perspective to the work of the Trust. He has a personal understanding of our work and values and of our continuing passion for improving the life chances of children and young people and their families in areas of educational and social disadvantage. Derrick supported a research project on the language development in early years - stepping in with flair and professional generosity when a colleague moved to another academy headship. Until the Spring of next year Derrick and I will be working together. I am enjoying his wry sense of humour and the new thinking he brings to us.

I wish Derrick every success in this unique and very special role.



Derrick is an education consultant with over 30 years of experience in teaching and educational leadership in the North East, the South East and the South West of England.

Derrick's interest in action research was sparked while undertaking his Master of Education degree at Cambridge University and his involvement in the "Improving the Quality of Education for All" initiative. This inspirational Cambridge University led work highlighted the profound effect that personal involvement in research could have on school colleagues, their commitment

to life long learning, their collaboration with others and their capacity to challenge themselves.

Since his time in leadership roles, including College Principal, Derrick has always developed a whole school approach to action research as a vehicle to professional development, whether through in-school initiatives, or in support of middle leadership and senior leadership qualifications.

As Executive Director of a multi-academy trust, Derrick identified partner organisations with common interests and working with them, devised and

led projects to address barriers to learning, social mobility and improving life-chances beyond the classroom across the towns and villages covered by the MAT.

Derrick is proud to be working as a consultant for the Laurel Trust. The research projects undertaken by the participating schools are always innovative and the results pertinent to the educational climate. He finds the trust's role in facilitating such projects and disseminating findings inspirational.

Derrick is a trustee on two educational charities in Devon. ●



You too can get involved



Since 2015 I have been involved with the UNESCO Global project on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), particularly through representing a European network of teachers. UNESCO is the United Nations lead agency for ESD and is responsible for the implementation of ESD for 2030. This takes up and continues the work of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD (2015-2019).

Bill Goddard, Chair of Trustees, The Laurel Trust.

Climate change education is the main thematic focus of ESD and through its ESD programme UNESCO works to make education a more central and visible part of the international response to climate change. It produces and shares knowledge, provides policy guidance and technical support to countries, and implements projects on the ground.

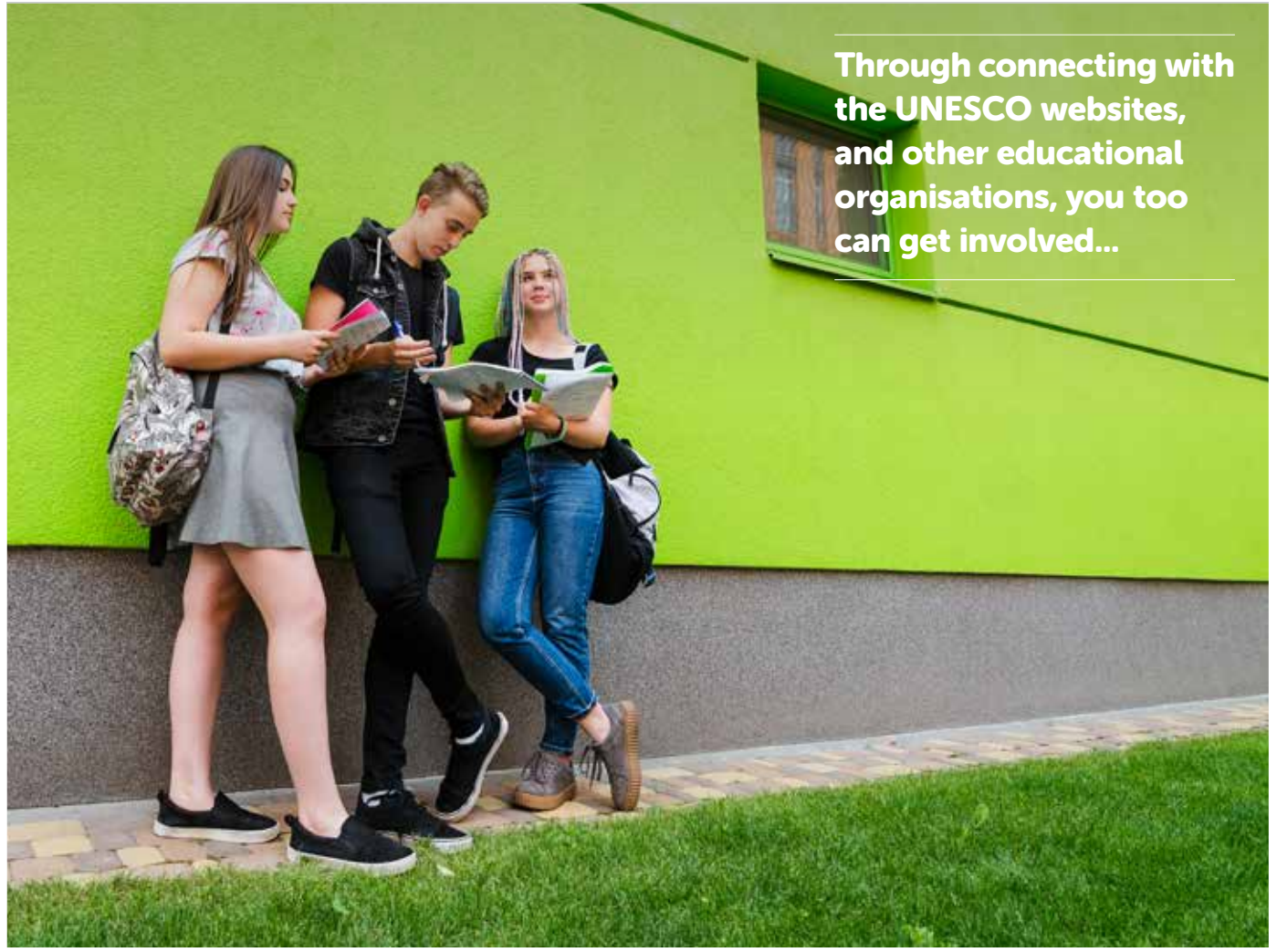
UNESCO has produced an ESD for 2030 roadmap and developed

an ESD for 2030 toolbox which provides an evolving set of selected resources to enable developmental activities across the globe.

One of the most recent initiatives has been UNESCO's Green school quality standard which looks at four key areas in schools and the steps that can be taken to make schools more green. The four key areas relate to school governance, facilities and operation, teaching and learning, and community

UNESCO has produced an ESD for 2030 roadmap and developed an ESD for 2030 toolbox...

engagement. UNESCO has also launched another important resource – the Greening Curriculum Guidance. The aim of both of these guides is to equip the entire education community with the knowledge, skills, values, habits, and



Through connecting with the UNESCO websites, and other educational organisations, you too can get involved...

infrastructures needed to address climate change and promote sustainable development in and through education.

Recent global data reveals that over 50% of young people feel unprepared to deal with climate change, and only 40% of surveyed teachers feel confident in their ability to teach the subject effectively. You can join the conversation to change this through #GreeningEducation

There is a lot of information and examples of work done in schools on the UNESCO ESD website which can enable curriculum development. Much has already been done in our schools but of course there is always more. The Futures of Education initiative is the latest UNESCO forum for development. Another website worth a look.

Recent global data reveals that over 50% of young people feel unprepared to deal with climate change...

In support of this work in the UK there are two organisations which make a key difference. One is the long-standing Centre for

Alternative Technology, based in Wales, and the NGO SEED (Sustainability and Environmental Education), both of whom provide a multiplicity of ideas and practical ways forward.

Through connecting with the UNESCO websites, and other educational organisations, you too can get involved in progressing the curriculum for the future. ●



Funding available for innovative school-based projects



Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

for more information visit:
www.laureltrust.org.uk



The Laurel Trust sends a heartfelt thank you to every school for all they have achieved for children and communities. It wishes to offer collaborations of schools in all phases including early years and special schools/settings an opportunity to apply for funding. The proposed research must focus on improving the life chances for children and young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. The theme of this year's research is Effective Transitions: educational readiness for every child at every phase.

The grants are designed to support groups of schools to work together to re-imagine education in our current world, and to place emphasis on a culture rooted in emotional and academic resilience.

Online briefings will be held to support schools which are thinking of making an application. Details of the briefings are on the following page.

Further information and details of how to apply are available on the Laurel Trust website.

The application round will close at 5pm on
28 February 2025

Closure of The Laurel Trust Briefings January 2025



Because of the exceptionally high demand we have now had to close the online January Briefings.

However, if you require general advice on making an application, we can still help by offering a telephone briefing to you.

To arrange this please contact one of our Consultant Directors:

Derrick Brett:

Brett.Associates@outlook.com

Maggie Roger:

maggie.roger@outlook.com