



Appointment of Director of Programmes

January 2025 | RBPSB



Contents

- 1 Welcome from Kirsty Matthews, CEO
- 2 About Us
- 3 Our Impact
- 4 Our Impact
- 5 The Role
- 6 Person Specification
- 7 Terms of Appointment
- 8 How to Apply



01 Welcome from Kirsty Matthews, CEO

As the relatively new CEO of DFN Project SEARCH, I am excited to recruit for this important leadership role, which will be instrumental in achieving the ambitious growth targets we have set for the future.

This is a critical time for our organisation. Having experienced rapid growth as a start-up, we are now transitioning to a phase of consolidation and stabilisation, setting the foundations for sustainable success.

We enter this next chapter with confidence, building on strong partnerships and a proven model of impact. Among these partnerships, we remain deeply committed to the Internships Work Consortium with our colleagues at the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and the British Association of Supported Employment (BASE). With support from the Department for Education, this initiative aims to deliver 4,500 high-quality supported internships annually by March 2025.

Looking ahead, our focus is twofold: ensuring the continued success of our existing programmes while strategically expanding to new locations and partnerships, enabling more young adults to benefit from high-quality Supported Internships.

However, growth will never come at the expense of quality. Securing meaningful paid employment for

young people will always be our primary goal. Year on year, over 60% of our programme graduates gain full-time permanent employment, with some sites achieving employment rates as high as 80%-100%. These results are life-changing.

Our success stems from our collaborative approach, operating as a "team of teams" and investing in partnerships across education, local authorities, government, and host businesses.

As a charity, DFN Project SEARCH is on a strong trajectory, making a tangible difference to the lives of young adults with learning disabilities and those who are autistic.

As Chief Executive, I am deeply passionate about our mission and work alongside a fantastic team who share this commitment. We are looking for a new Director of Programmes who is equally dedicated to changing lives and being part of a charity that is making a real difference.



Kirsty Matthews.
CEO

02 About Us

DFN Project SEARCH is a national charity that supports young adults who have a learning disability, are autistic, or both, to transition from education into permanent full-time employment.

We offer a one-year supported internship programme that takes place entirely in the workplace and provides continuous support for young adults aged 16 to 24. The goal for each intern is meaningful paid employment.

Our approach is to combine education and training in a job setting at host employers around the country, so students can apply their skills and learning in context, ensuring that they are ready to move seamlessly from education into the workplace as skilled and effective employees.

It involves surrounding young people with a community of support. We bring together host employers from the public and private sectors, local authorities, education providers, and supported employment agencies.

Our model works. Every year, over 60% of young adults graduating from our internships are offered permanent employment. This is compared to the average in England, where just 4.8% of people with a learning disability, or who are autistic, or both, are in employment of any kind.



03 Why we do it

Alongside our partners, our intention is to build more inclusive workplaces and ensure that all young adults who have a learning disability, are autistic, or both, can attain high-quality permanent employment in their local area and make a positive transition into adulthood.

We want to see a UK job market with much-improved career opportunities for young adults with a learning disability and autistic young adults, where their talent is recognised and they are empowered to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

The Project SEARCH model includes

- A tailored supported internship programme for young people aged 16-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan or equivalent.
- Learners with an EHCP remain on roll at their school or college but are based full-time with a host business.
- Up to 800 hours of structured on-the-job learning with support from teachers, job coaches, managers and mentors.
- Three 10-week rotations across the host business.
- A focused employability curriculum delivered from the workplace.
- Opportunities to learn with prestigious employer partners across different sectors.





04 Our Impact

...speaks for itself. So far, working with over **200 host businesses** around the UK, we have supported over **2,200 interns** into meaningful, paid employment.

Our model helps young adults gain the freedom to lead fulfilled lives because they have an equal opportunity for financial independence through securing full-time, paid work.

However, there is much more to do. Currently, only 1 in 22 young people aged 16 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in England get a chance to participate in a DFN Project SEARCH supported internship programme. Often, these young people face significant social and economic exclusion at a huge personal, social, and economic cost.



05 The Role

Due to the retirement of the current postholder, Carmel McKeogh, who has been a fundamental part of Project SEARCH for many years and instrumental in getting the organisation to its current point in our journey, we are now looking to recruit a new Director of Programmes. This is an exciting role that will help us grow our reach and deepen our impact.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, you will play a key part in our overall success. Leading our ambitious growth strategy, you will ensure that DFN Project SEARCH delivers a financially sustainable, high-quality, high-impact programme, transforming the employability prospects of each young person who participates in it.

You will lead and manage a team with three direct reports covering Operations, Quality, and Advocacy and Engagement. These brilliant colleagues initiate, develop, deliver, and oversee our programmes.

You will work strategically to add new sites to our portfolio by collaborating with senior leaders from the education sector, local government, civil servants, supported employment agencies, and businesses to ensure that the infrastructure for programmes to thrive is nurtured and supported.

In conjunction with the CEO, you will connect with those who can influence the landscape to benefit the young people that DFN Project SEARCH serves.

Through your leadership, you will change the lives of young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism by creating opportunities for them to secure meaningful employment in a manner that will have a lasting impact, not just on their lives but on their families and broader society.

05 The Role – Key Responsibilities

1. Organisational Leadership

- Contribute to strategic planning and organisational success to deliver growth of our programmes.
- Drive expansion, continuous improvement, and embraces change so that our work is delivered in the most resource effective way.

2. Team Leadership

- Inspire and motivate a geographically dispersed team to deliver high-quality programmes.
- Foster a positive, partnership-focused environment so that our model of working through others is effective and efficient.

3. Stakeholder Management and Relationship Building

- Nurtures partnerships with key stakeholders across sectors so that we have the maximum reach to achieve our 2030 ambition.
- Works with diverse partners to delivery a high quality, high impact programme.

4. Horizon Scanning and Strategy

- Identifies needs and opportunities in the wider sector and adapts the Project Search model to respond to them.
- Demonstrates strong commercial acumen so we deliver maximum impact.

5. Overseeing Effective Delivery of Programmes, Including Evaluating Impact

- Build on our success to date, with a mindset of continuous improvement so that our programmes achieve positive results for all our interns, their families and for those we partner with.



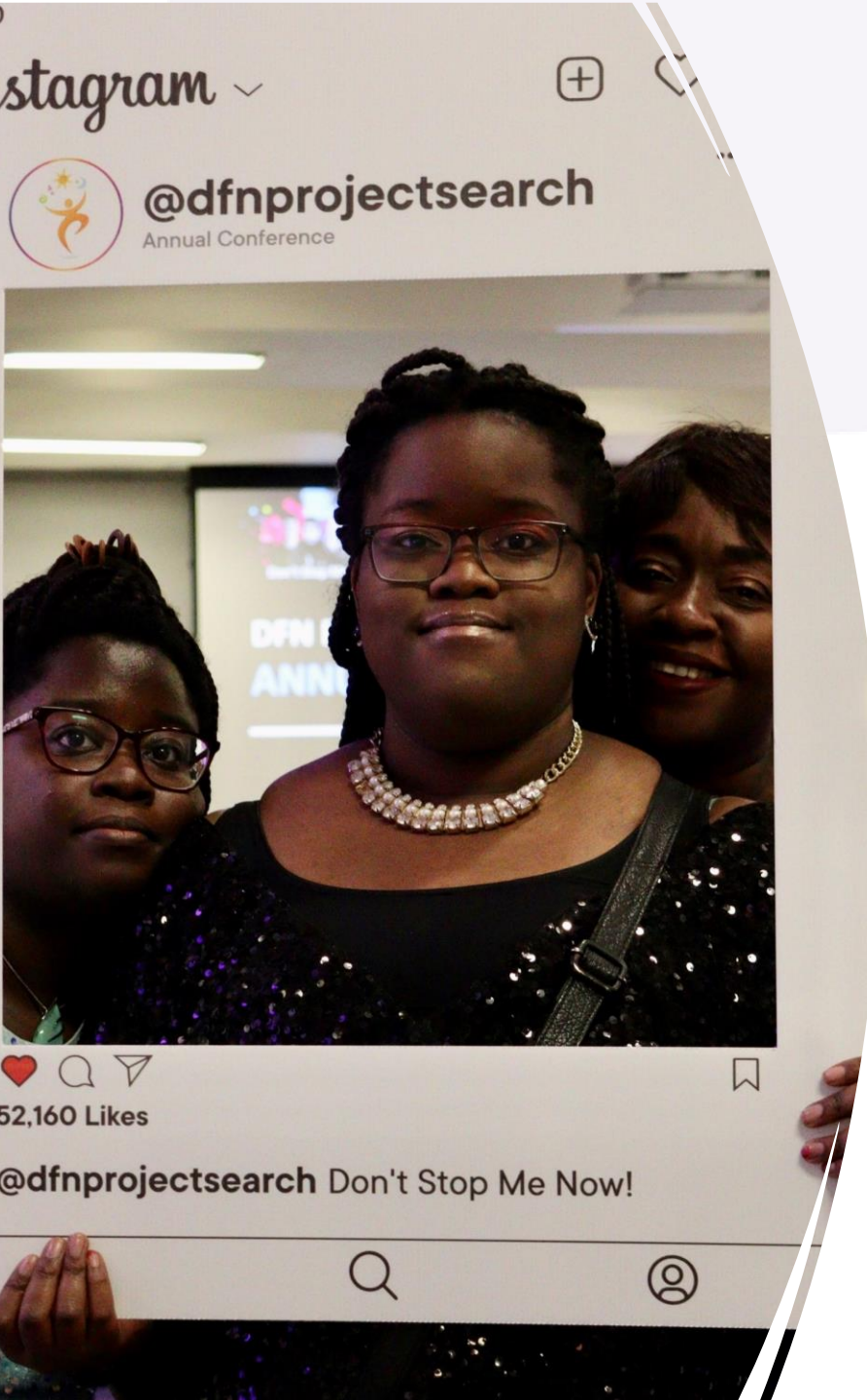
We have bold ambitions for the future: by 2030 our aim is to have supported 14,000 young people into full-time paid jobs and operate in c500 sites, with over 70% of our graduates transitioning into full-time work.



06 Person Specification

We are looking for a colleague who is:

- **Committed** to DFN Project SEARCH's vision, mission, values and ambition and living the brand.
- A **strategic thinker** with a track record of delivering growth.
- A **commercially astute** operator who understands the most effective ways to set up and deliver sustainable programmes
- An **excellent communicator** with strong negotiation, and advocacy skills and the ability to represent DFN Project Search across the breadth of our stakeholders.
- A **collaborative leader** with the ability to inspire and forge meaningful partnerships and drive high performance.
- **Knowledgeable** about supported employment and Access to Work programmes including funding arrangements in education, local authorities and the DWP in relation to transition work.
- A **team player with a sense of fun.**



07 Terms of Appointment

We are a flexible and virtual organisation with staff across the UK who are all home-based. Staff members travel to meetings and sites depending on the needs of their role, including to an office we have in Victoria, London. All staff come together in person three times per year, including for our annual conference. There are also quarterly meetings for each team within the organisation

Salary: Competitive

Benefits:

- 25 days holiday (plus bank holidays and your birthday)
- company laptop and phone,
- Employment wellbeing support for you and your family
- Employer pension contributions at 6%, opportunity to join NHS top up scheme

Process:

Interviews will take place on **Wednesday 19 March** in person at x+why Fivefields (8, 10 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W).

Due diligence :

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



08 How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is partnering with DFN Project Search on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **RBPSB**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Monday 3 February 2025**

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive

Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

