

DFN Project SEARCH and Compass support job seekers via 'Reverse Jobs Fair'

June 14, 2024



DFN Project SEARCH and **Compass Group UK & Ireland** hosted a 'Reverse Jobs Fair' at Compass' regional community skills and learning centre, Xcelerate with Edgbaston.

The fair brought together young people with a learning disability and/or autism spectrum condition and recruiters from the local area to get to know each other and discuss job opportunities. For the fair, each supported intern designed a display board with images and information about their placements. Interns used these boards as a starting point for talking to employers about their skills, experience and career goals.

The event is part of a partnership between DFN Project SEARCH, Compass Group UK & Ireland, Heart of Birmingham Vocational College, Mencap and Birmingham City Council, aiming to help young people gain the skills they need to transition to work and gain their independence.

DFN Project SEARCH is a national charity changing the lives of young people with a learning disability and/or autism spectrum condition by supporting them into full-time employment.

Together with a community of partners, DFN Project SEARCH delivers Supported Internships – transition-to-work programmes – for young people in their final year of school or college, helping them make the positive transition to adulthood. The charity works in over 120 sites around the UK and is working to support 10,000 young people by 2030.

Xcelerate with Edgbaston is the first of Compass' regional community skills and learning hubs for training and excellence. Designed to help with training, development and employment opportunities, this event perfectly demonstrates the value the hub brings to the local community.

This is a crucial part of Compass' Mission to A Million commitment, which supports 'Our Social Promise' and pledges to positively impact one million lives by 2030.

Ibrahim, who attended the fair, said:

"I found the reverse fair experience very interesting, as it was something I had never done before. It initially seemed overwhelming, but actually speaking with lots of employers to showcase my skills felt very good, as by then I had come out of my shell and was comfortable talking to new people. It really helped me understand what potential employers were offering and what qualities they were looking for."

Molly Williams-Leer, Programme Specialist at DFN Project SEARCH helped organise the fair and spoke about her impression of the day:

"We love reverse job fairs because they allow interns to showcase their skills to hiring managers in a way that works for them. I was blown away by the enthusiasm of the employers who embraced this new format with open arms, spending lots of time speaking to each intern and even inviting some of them to apply for open positions. You could see the immediate impact this had on our interns, who became more confident with each employer they spoke to."

Jonathan Foot, Head of Apprenticeships and Early Careers, Compass Group UK & Ireland, said:

"This event really brings to life what Xcelerate is all about – supporting the local community and hospitality industry with our state-of-the-art facility. It was a great event and the feedback has been fantastic. It was another step forward in our ongoing partnership with DFN Project SEARCH, which is changing people's lives."

Claire Cookson, Chief Executive of DFN Project SEARCH, said:

"We are so proud to be working with Compass and all our Birmingham partners to help more young people with a learning disability into meaningful employment. The Reverse Job Fair is a brilliant opportunity for young people and their families from the Edgbaston area to find out more about local job opportunities and start planning out their future careers."