

Compass offers opportunities with DFN Project SEARCH

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[Compass Group UK & Ireland](#), the UK's largest food and services company, is expanding its partnership with DFN Project SEARCH to provide one-year transition to work programmes for young adults with a learning disability or autism spectrum conditions, or both. The collaboration aims to offer valuable work experience and learning opportunities within the industry.

The partnership is building on an existing relationship, which has seen students taking part in client led DFN Project SEARCH programmes - completing Compass placements as part of their courses. The latest cohort started late last year, with the organisation supporting almost 35 students across seven client contracts within industries including defence, healthcare and education in its ESS, Medirest and Chartwells sectors.

DFN Project SEARCH brings together host businesses, local authorities, education partners and supported employment providers, creating the infrastructure, guidance, consultancy and training needed to run a successful supported internship. It aims to help 14,000 young people, aged 18-24 from across the UK, into paid employment by 2030.

The students who have joined Compass are completing three placements throughout the year, in departments such as catering, retail and cleaning. They are fully embedded within their respective teams, given comprehensive training and empowered to develop their skills and confidence. The placements give a broad range of work experiences, supporting each participant to identify their strengths, interests and potential future career paths.

The interns also complete classroom-based activities, including CV writing and interview techniques.

Aidan Knights joined Bradford Royal Infirmary's internship seven years ago and gained work experience in retail. He subsequently secured a permanent role with Compass and continues to be a highly valued member of the team there.

Kirsty Matthews, CEO of DFN Project SEARCH said: "We are delighted to strengthen our partnership with Compass Group UK & Ireland, a company demonstrating real leadership in fostering an inclusive workplace. Transformational change only happens when businesses take proactive steps, and Compass is setting a powerful example of how organisations can do that. We're looking forward to working together further to create meaningful employment opportunities for the young adults we support."

Jess Payne, Director of Social Value – Compass One commented: "The hospitality industry offers fantastic opportunities for candidates from diverse backgrounds. As well as giving young people experiencing barriers to employment valuable opportunities to transition into work, our partnership with DFN Project SEARCH is establishing a route into our business for a new talent pool of capable, committed employees. I'm incredibly excited about what the future holds and looking forward to maximising the positive impact we can deliver together."

Nichola McAvoy, Social Value Manager at Chartwells added: "Our industry has lots to offer and it's a great place to get practical work experience and build up knowledge and confidence. There are so many opportunities within a business like ours and our teams will support the individuals taking part in these internships to help them learn and grow, setting them up for the future."

This supports Compass Group UK & Ireland's Our Social Promise, which includes 'Mission to a Million' a commitment to positively impact one million lives by 2030.