

Sodexo and The Aurora Group Celebrate Decade of Supporting SEND Students into Hospitality Careers

6 months ago



[Sodexo UK & Ireland](#) and The Aurora Group, one of the UK's leading independent providers of education, care and support services for children and young people with additional needs, are celebrating ten years of collaboration focused on empowering young people to create meaningful opportunities that go far beyond the classroom - opening doors, building confidence, and helping students discover their potential in the hospitality industry.

The partnership was founded by Mike Taylor, Learning & Development Manager for Sodexo's Government business when he met an Aurora Foxes Academy student on placement at a military site where Sodexo provided food and FM services.

Mike introduced The Aurora Group to hospitality charity, Springboard, resulting in ongoing tailored training and work experience opportunities for Aurora students from predominantly its Foxes Academy in Somerset.

As a Springboard Ambassador, Mike connected Aurora and Springboard and together worked to adapt the annual Springboard FutureChef competition specifically for Aurora students which was launched in 2022. Twenty schools from The Aurora Group and other schools in the Oxfordshire area have already expressed interest in their students competing in the 2026 FutureChef competition.

Sodexo-led initiatives have included a two-day 'takeover' of the Foxes Academy in 2022 where 12 Sodexo employees including chefs and subject matter experts from its Government business helped deliver a

programme of 30 one-hour interactive and practical learning experiences. In 2025, a similar one-day event was held. Both initiatives provided valuable student-led food service experiences.

Mark Costello, Principal, Aurora Foxes said: “Our partnership with Sodexo continues to go from strength to strength. Having industry specialists attend our training hotel for takeover days and other events, give our students, and staff, brilliant insights into the hospitality industry and inspiration for them to compete in the Aurora/Springboard FutureChef competition where they can showcase their abilities to the industry.”

Sodexo volunteers continue to support Aurora Foxes students with mock interviews twice a year, career talks, CV sessions writing and interview preparation as well as Q&A sessions on Sodexo and the opportunities it can offer.

Paul Anstey, CEO Government and Energy & Resources said: “We are proud of our work with The Aurora Group over the last ten years which has been driven by Mike. By working together we have helped former Foxes Academy students find employment within the hospitality industry some of which have found positions within Sodexo teams at a number of our client sites.

“At Sodexo we are focused on creating workplaces where everyone can belong, thrive and progress. Our [Social Impact Pledge 2030](#), includes a dedicated ‘People’ pathway focused on commitments to help drive social mobility in communities across the country with colleagues like Mike we are helping create meaningful opportunities for a wide range of groups. We look forward to continuing to work with *The Aurora Group for many more years.*”

Mike Taylor has twice received the title of Ambassador of the Year at the annual Springboard Awards for Excellence for his work with The Aurora Group, and other organisations, to raise awareness of the career opportunities within the hospitality industry for individuals from other groups such the over 50s, those with disabilities and the long-term unemployed.

Mike adds: “When I started out as an ambassador for Springboard I wanted to understand what I could do to attract more young people to this fantastic industry. I love getting out and about, visiting schools, colleges, job centres and careers fairs to talk about all the opportunities the sector has to offer. The role is so rewarding, the Aurora FutureChef competition does not disappoint each year and developing partnerships with the likes of Aurora Foxes is opening up some amazing opportunities for people to really build a career in hospitality.”