

Engage with... Education Case Studies

Employer
Resource Pack



ENGIE

ENGIE is a leading energy and services company focused on 3 key activities: production and supply of low-carbon energy, services and regeneration. Their purpose is to help businesses and communities move towards becoming zero carbon. They do this by reducing energy consumption, providing greener energy supplies and using innovative technology, data and partnerships. The desire to have a positive impact on people and the planet runs through every aspect of their business.

The company has been working in mainstream and specialist schools for some time and is really engaged on a number of levels. We asked them about their top 3 tips for engagement and here is what Tamara Barker, one of ENGIE's Social Value Officers, suggested:

1

Go into a school with an open mind and be imaginative. Schools and colleges are likely to have some activities you can engage with such as Careers Fairs and interview practice, for example, but are usually open to discuss new ideas. Think about the resources you have – people, facilities, expertise. Following a meeting with a Head Teacher and Deputy in one school, they said they wanted to focus on helping students develop their independent living skills. So we worked with them to develop some resources to be used in class: Caring for cash; Caring for cooking; and Caring for your new home.

2

Make things fun. We offered some visits to construction sites so students could learn about career opportunities there and we called it 'Spy on Sites' We also flipped the standard interview process and did 'hot-seating' where the students interviewed our employees. This really helped them develop self-confidence and was a great first step in terms of interview skills.

3

Involve the students. When we run sessions in schools, we always involve students in the planning and delivery. This can include help with Registration, providing refreshments and distributing hand-outs, for instance. This can then be classed as work experience too.



We find the work we do in schools and colleges a really positive experience.

- Our staff love taking part in sessions and sharing their skills and knowledge, and get a real boost from seeing students react in such a positive way.
- All of our staff are passionate about our business and our mission, and working in an education setting allows us to talk about our business to an audience who are our future customers.
- Staff tell us that they love the challenge of having to change the way they communicate, be inventive and adaptable, and that they learn new skills along the way.

We see this area of work as being a core part of our business and something we are looking to develop more in the future.



John Lewis

The John Lewis Partnership is the UK's largest employee-owned business. It is parent company to two well-known retail brands – John Lewis and Waitrose – which we owned, in Trust, by 80,000 Partners. There are 34 John Lewis shops and 331 Waitrose shops across the UK as well as offices, distribution centres, 3 cookery schools, a heritage centre and a farm!

Here Laurence Sheldon (Team Manager) from John Lewis Leeds, talks about their successful Supported Internship programme.

As a company we run a charitable giving scheme called Community Matters. This makes a range of donations to local charities every 3 months, based on choices made by our customers. We also contribute the 5p from the sale of carrier bags to our Foundation which supports charities throughout the UK and internationally, focusing on education, enterprise and employability. On an individual basis our staff also get involved in a range of fundraising and community activities, often to support local community initiatives.

When we were first approached by Lighthouse, back in 2018, we were a bit hesitant as we had never worked with students with specialist needs before. Where possible we do provide work experience opportunities for local students, as well as offering some formal apprenticeships, but these tended to be for students from mainstream backgrounds.

As soon as we met the staff – and soon after the students – our worries disappeared. The staff were very friendly and knowledgeable and were able to answer all our questions and put our minds at rest. The students were interested, engaged and enthusiastic and soon turned out to be hard workers, too.

First we offered some work experience to students from Lighthouse School and, in 2019, we joined the Supported Internship programme run by Lighthouse Futures Trust. This meant we had 3 interns on site – two in retail and one in The Dock, our warehouse facility. They were supported, on site, by at least one Job Coach employed by the Trust who was on hand to help them learn the different roles, supported by our colleagues in the different departments. We were delighted, when the internship finished, to offer two paid roles – one permanent and one temporary – to two of the interns. The following year we also had 3 interns, one in our 4th floor restaurant and 2 in retail. Unfortunately their internship came to an end because of Covid-19 and we were unable to run a programme last year, again due to the pandemic, but we are offering internships again for the 2021-22 programme.

We really enjoy our partnership with Lighthouse Futures Trust and I would provide this advice to other employers looking to get involved in supporting students with support needs.

1

Find a local school, college or supported employment organisation to work with. They are the experts and are able to select candidates who they know will get on in a customer-facing retail environment, like ours.

2

Take time to prepare. Our internships start in September but we start talking to Lighthouse before the summer and agree a plan in terms of recruitment of students and programme start dates.



3

Share information about the roles you have on offer and how you work, as an organisation. Each employer is different and it's important that your partner knows about how you – your values, what you expect from your colleagues (our name for staff) and what is required with each role. Lighthouse Futures Trust do something called Job Carving, where they break each role down into constituent elements so they can see what skills are required. I then go into College and speak to the students, and invite those that are interested back to the shop in Leeds and get them to undertake some practical exercises. This helps us all ensure that the students are the right fit and are likely to gain most from the experience.

4

Bring colleagues on board. The role of the work-based buddy is key to a Supported Internship as this is the person – or team of people – who work alongside the interns on a daily basis. Once we have identified the vacant roles, we get the teams together and talk about the programme. Staff from Lighthouse Futures Trust come down and provide us with some initial training on Disability Awareness and answer any general questions. The teams then get to meet the students on their first visit.

5

Don't be afraid to ask questions. When we started off, we asked lots of questions as we wanted to make sure we were doing things right.

6

Create a real job. Even with work experience we try to ensure that the work the students are doing is meaningful. It's a really important step for them and, for many, it's the first time they have ever been in a workplace so it's really important that they have a positive experience. With the Supported Internships it's even more vital that they are given support to develop the employability and social skills that will enable them to move into paid employment when the internship ends.





Bam Nuttall

BAM Nuttall is part of the Royal BAM Group, one of Europe's largest construction companies, employing 20,000 people globally, with an annual turnover of £7 billion. They use digital engineering and a net zero carbon approach, placing sustainability and great people, at the heart of their organisation. They always look at the long-term consequences of their work by investing in the most sustainable routes for communities, economies and the planet.

Nicola Komzolik-Nawn, regional Skills, Inclusion and Communication Manager, talks about why she sees school engagement as a key part of their business strategy.

- Our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) runs through our whole employee experience at BAM. We promote an inclusive workplace where people can be themselves, and we support initiatives including Disability Confident, WISE (Women in Science and Engineering), Building Equality and 10,000 Black Interns.
- On every project we use our Social Value Strategy to ensure we leave a positive legacy. Engaging and supporting young people is part of this strategy.
- We are involved with multiple projects in Leeds and Yorkshire, employing and engaging with people who live locally is important to us.
- We also engage with local schools and colleges to encourage students to consider a career in the industry and ideally with BAM. It also helps to dispel common myths and misconceptions about construction. For example, assumptions about the 'type' or background of people who are traditionally associated with the industry.
- People are proud to work for an organisation that supports the community, and all staff are given volunteering leave each year. Engaging with schools and the community can improve wellbeing and job satisfaction. It can enhance skills as well, such as confidence and communication.

Staff at Bam Nuttall presenting a cheque to Lighthouse Futures Trust as a result of their Leeds to Liverpool sponsored bike ride.



Some things to think about.

- Talk to the teaching staff about how you can support learning in the school. They are experts in understanding how their students learn, and what areas they might be most interested in. This can then help you decide what kind of approach to take, and ensure all events are accessible.
- Have a diverse team engaging with schools to reflect the social and cultural backgrounds of your workforce.
- Access training where you can. We have benefitted from disability awareness training and workshops focused on autism.
- Make your presentations and discussions relatable. We took part in a Speed Networking event with Lighthouse School students and spoke about the work we were doing in Leeds. We took information with us about local public transport and flood protection projects. The students were engaged as they recognised the areas where we were working and asked very specific questions.
- Take the school calendar into account when planning events and activities, such as the run-up to exams when schools often unavailable.

Our experience of working with students with support needs has been extremely positive, and it is something I would encourage all organisations to do. They are engaged, responsive, enthusiastic and interested.

FUTUREGOALS



In partnership with

