



Press Release – for immediate release

More young people with special educational needs in East Midlands will be supported into work thanks to Derbyshire Freemasons

Friday 19 June 2026

60 young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) region will have the opportunity to prepare for an internship or employment pathway, thanks to a significant grant awarded to Direct Education Business Partnership (DEBP) CIO by Derbyshire Freemasons.

The £60,000 grant will enable DEBP to expand its Supported Insight Scheme (SIS)[®] and deliver four programmes each year for the next three years. The scheme is designed to strengthen progression routes and improve employment outcomes for young people with SEND. Each programme includes a six-week placement (one day per week) with a host employer, alongside four weeks of wrap-a-round delivery to prepare students pre-placement and consolidate learning afterwards.

Across the East Midlands region, only 2.7 per cent of working-age population with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum conditions are in paid employment, despite 97 per cent expressing an aspiration to work (Youth Futures Foundation Connected Futures Programme). This funding will help DEBP reach more young people, offering practical experiences of work, whilst building confidence, self-esteem, resilience and essential life and employability skills.

The expansion of the scheme will not only benefit participating students but will also provide positive role models for their peers, showcasing different pathways available and demonstrating what can be achieved with the right support. It will also encourage employers to adopt more inclusive practices and create more accessible pathways.

The grant from Derbyshire Freemasons comes through the Masonic Charitable Foundation, which is funded by Freemasons, their families and friends, from across England and Wales.

Sarah Cutler, DEBP Inclusion Programme Manager, said:

“We’re absolutely delighted to receive this grant from Derbyshire Freemasons. This funding allows us to grow the Supported Insight Scheme® and provide more young people with SEND access to meaningful, inclusive experiences that raise aspirations and support successful transitions into employment.”

A representative from Derbyshire Freemasons said:

“I’m really pleased we’ve been able to help DEBP with their hugely important programme for young people with special educational needs. Getting into regular employment is absolutely essential for their self-confidence and independence and can transform their lives in a wholly positive way.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Photo: Chris Taylor, Provincial Grand Charity Steward, Provincial Grand Lodge of Derbyshire Freemasons, visited the Supported Insight Scheme at AtkinsRéalis with students from Westbury Academy.

About the Supported Insight Scheme®

The scheme enables young people, aged 16+ with SEND, to undertake immersive experiences within employment sectors; providing wraparound careers support to enhance and embed skills and enable participants to have an insight into the world of work, including Supported Internships, opening up a pathway towards employment.

About Direct Education Business Partnership (DEBP):

DEBP champions the potential of every young person by offering specialist guidance, inclusive support and opportunities to shape a future based on their abilities, not their circumstances. We work with primary, secondary, mainstream, specialist schools, and support centres, and in the community, supporting learners up to age 19, or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. We also work with vulnerable young adults up to age 30 to advance their employability skills. For more information about DEBP visit www.debp.org. Charitable Incorporated Organisation registration number: 1193708

For further information about DEBP, please contact Rebecca Kuchta, Communications Coordinator (rebecca.kuchta@debp.org |01246 212535)

About the Masonic Charitable Foundation

The Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) is one of the largest grant-making charities in the country. Funded entirely through the generosity of Freemasons and their families, the MCF awards millions of pounds each year to charities that help vulnerable people, advance medical research and provide opportunities for young people. As well as providing grants to charities, the MCF supports Freemasons and their families with financial, health or family needs. Visit www.mcf.org.uk

For further information about the Masonic Charitable Foundation, please contact Guy Roberts, Press Officer (groberts@mcf.org.uk |0203 146 3311)