The Opportunity Gap: Young People and Employment in Rutland

citizens advice Rutland

Full Summary Report

October 2026

Contents

Foreword	Page 1
Introduction	Page 2
Rutland in numbers	Page 3
Social mobility by area	Page 6
Types of employment and apprenticeships	Page 8
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	Page 10
Outlook for Young People	Page 13
Recommendations	Page 14
Useful links	Page 16
Acknowledgements	Page 17
References	Page 18

Foreword

Every young person deserves the opportunity to develop their skills, fulfil their potential and access meaningful employment. For many young people in Rutland, this ambition is achievable; however, for others, barriers such as limited transport, restricted access to work experience and a shortage of local employment opportunities can make the transition into work more challenging.

This report brings together national and local evidence to explore the employment landscape for young people aged 16–25 in Rutland. It highlights the strengths of our county, including high educational attainment and strong local SEND services, whilst recognising the challenges presented by our rural geography and the changing labour market.

This report is intended to support discussion between young people, employers, education providers, voluntary organisations and local decision makers. By working together we can create more opportunities, improve access to employment and ensure that all young people, including those with additional needs, have the opportunity to succeed.

We hope the findings and recommendations contained within this report will contribute to positive change and encourage continued collaboration across Rutland.

Clare Bryan

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

The publication of an annual Research and Campaign Report is one of the aims of our service. Through this report, we seek to:

- identify issues affecting local people through research;
- influence policy and practice by presenting evidence to decision makers; and
- support campaigns that lead to meaningful improvements in people's lives.

This report explores employment opportunities for young people in Rutland and considers how local services, employers and partner organisations can better support young people as they move into work.

Although Rutland has many strengths, including high educational attainment and comparatively low levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), significant barriers remain. These include limited transport, a shortage of local employment opportunities, restricted access to work experience and challenges securing entry-level roles. This report examines these issues and identifies opportunities to improve employment outcomes, recognising that positive early employment experiences benefit individuals, employers and the wider community.

Rutland in Numbers

Obtaining recent detailed information on employment for younger people in Rutland is challenging, as data is often collected for a larger geographical area. Where Rutland-specific data are unavailable, this report draws upon the most relevant local and national evidence. Rutland-specific data show that 675 people per 100,000 started an apprenticeship in the 2024/25 academic year, considerably below the England average of 959 per 100,000 people[1]. The rate of apprenticeship achievements in Rutland was also lower than the national average, at 171 per 100,000 in 2022/23 compared with 271 per 100,000 in England.

Rutland had a 2024 population of 41,443 and a median age of 47, higher than the national average of 41[2]. Employment levels remain strong, with an employment rate of 80.3%, exceeding the national average of 74.5%. Median weekly earnings are £750, the equivalent of £39,000 p.a., which is higher than the East Midlands weekly pay of £606[3], suggesting relatively favourable labour market conditions overall.

Amongst younger people in Rutland, educational achievements are good, with 82.8% of people achieving GCSEs in English and Maths (2024/25), compared to the national average of 73.1%[4].

Time to travel to employment is higher in Rutland across all modes of transport recorded by the ONS for 2019 (figure 1). As the transport infrastructure in Rutland has not changed substantially, it is likely this disadvantage in access to work continues to exist and continues to present a significant barrier to accessing employment, particularly for young people without access to a car or other suitable transport.

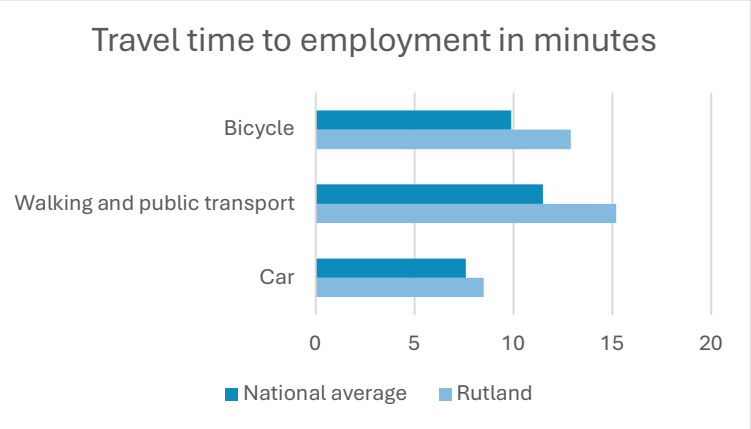


Figure 1[5] - Time travelled to employment in minutes

In a national survey of 11–30 year olds, the Youth Voice Census (YVC) key findings (2025)[6] reported that "Two-thirds (67%) feel supported starting school or college, and most (62%) believe they can access good-quality education locally. Yet careers advice, work experience, volunteering and employer engagement have all declined again this year. Just 26% accessed work experience in the past 12 months, and a third (33%) took part in none of these wider opportunities". At a national level, this survey reveals that jobs remain in the top three concerns for people in this age group, but opportunities for work along-side study is limited, with only 14% of young people having a part-time job[7].

Work experience among young people is highly valued, with 74% saying it helps them understand work, yet 62% of surveyed young people had not had work experience in the last 12 months[8], and this was cited in the YVC as the most common perceived barrier to employment. Employer engagement was also identified as a significant barrier: only 25% of respondents felt that employers were supportive of hiring young people, falling to just 4% among those who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

In spite of this perception and experience, The Social Mobility Commission's (2025) 'Labour market opportunities for young people'[9] report measures Labour market opportunities from 2000 to 2024 and shows that job opportunities for young people in Rutland have improved since 2011, from "lower middling" to "middling" similar to neighbouring areas such as Leicestershire and Peterborough.

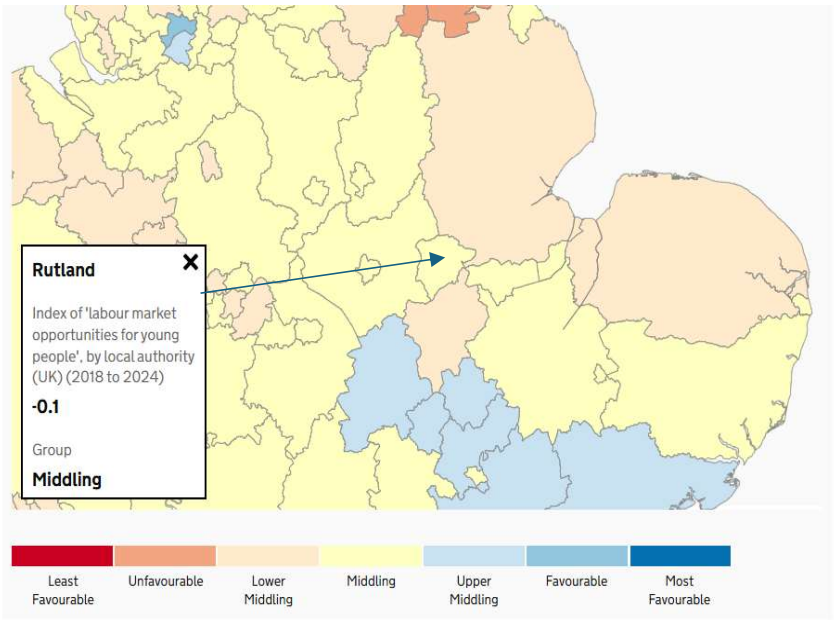


Figure 2: Screen shot of interactive map Index of 'labour market opportunities for young people', by local authority (Uk)

The whole UK map shows a North/South divide, with few favourable areas in the North, exceptions being York, Leeds, Trafford and Salford in England, and Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland. The “Most Favourable” areas being London Boroughs.

Some of the more unfavourable areas include Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and North Lincolnshire, thus an association can be made here between lower work opportunities for young people and rural places, places of tourism that have gig economies and old industrial areas whose economies were linked to trades and industry.

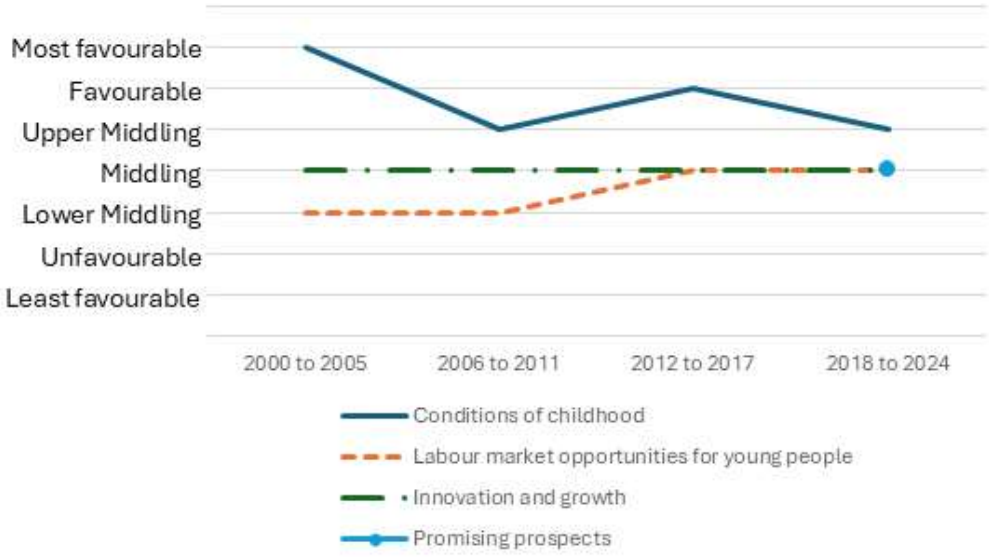
Social Mobility by area

The Social Mobility Commission[10] assesses social mobility by area.

Counties are judged based on four areas that count towards social mobility:

- Promising prospects: Measures how high prospects are for 25- to 44-year-olds via levels of education, earnings and professional work.
- Conditions of childhood: Assesses situations of childhood via earnings, qualifications and occupation of parents, i.e. more money and higher status suggest a better outcome of children
- Labour market opportunities for young people: Labour market opportunities for 16- to 29-year-olds, measured by occupation level and employment rate over time
- Innovation and Growth: Conditions that help an area innovate and grow, measured by productivity level, new economy jobs and economically active residents with postgraduate qualifications

Figure 3 Social mobility in Rutland[11]



The conditions of childhood have varied over time, falling from “most favourable” in 2000, to being reported most recently as “upper middling” in 2018, suggesting that social-economic status of parents in Rutland has decreased and then risen to some extent again. Innovation and growth have remained static at middling and labour market opportunities for young people have improved from lower middling to middling. The data for promising prospects is only available for one data point and has stayed at middling from 2018 to 2024.

There are a number of existing routes through which young people can access careers advice and employment support. All state secondary schools in the area (Catmose College, Casterton College and Uppingham Community College) provide careers advice and support, as individuals must stay in some form of education or training until 18.

Looking specifically at 16 to 17 year olds in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland level, 2.9% are NEETs. However out of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland group, Rutland has the lowest percentage of 0.7%[12].

In terms of social exclusion due to limited transport, across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, approximately 28.4% of residents (211,618 people) live in neighbourhoods identified as being at nationally high risk of transport related social exclusion. In Rutland this is 23.1%, which is roughly 9,474 residents[13]. Better public transport is strongly linked to higher employment rates, as it expands the accessible job pool. This is especially influential for low-income and younger people who may have unsocial shift patterns and inflexible working arrangements. Poorly connected training sites are also barriers to employment linked to transport issues.

Types of employment and apprenticeships

Labour market data for August 2025 identified approximately 22,000 vacancies across Leicester and Leicestershire; however, filling these vacancies is insufficient to meet an 80% employment rate target in these areas. The available vacancies do not always align with the career aspirations of young people, and some sectors with high levels of demand are perceived as offering lower pay, less attractive working conditions or limited opportunities for progression. Research from the LLBSP Careers Hub Future Skills Questionnaire in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR)[14] evidences this significant gap between young people's career preferences and the realities of labour market demand.

The LLBSP report[15] also identified a shortage of entry-level roles in many sectors that young people wish to enter. Automation and advances in artificial intelligence may further reduce the availability of some entry-level positions. The creation of entry level roles is vital for increasing youth employment, as these positions provide a gateway to developing skills and knowledge, as well as networking towards future roles.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are highly prized by young people, but completions in Rutland, known as 'achievements', are lower than the rest of the country[16]. Figure 4 demonstrates the number of people who started their apprenticeships in Rutland from 2020/21 to 2025/26 and completed from 2020/21 to 2024/25 (the data for completers for 2025/26 is yet to be submitted). Over this time, a slight drop in the number of people starting is shown, which may illustrate falling opportunities for people in Rutland. The number of completions also varies over time, but as apprenticeship positions can range from 1-5 years, it is less clear how this relates to trends in completions.

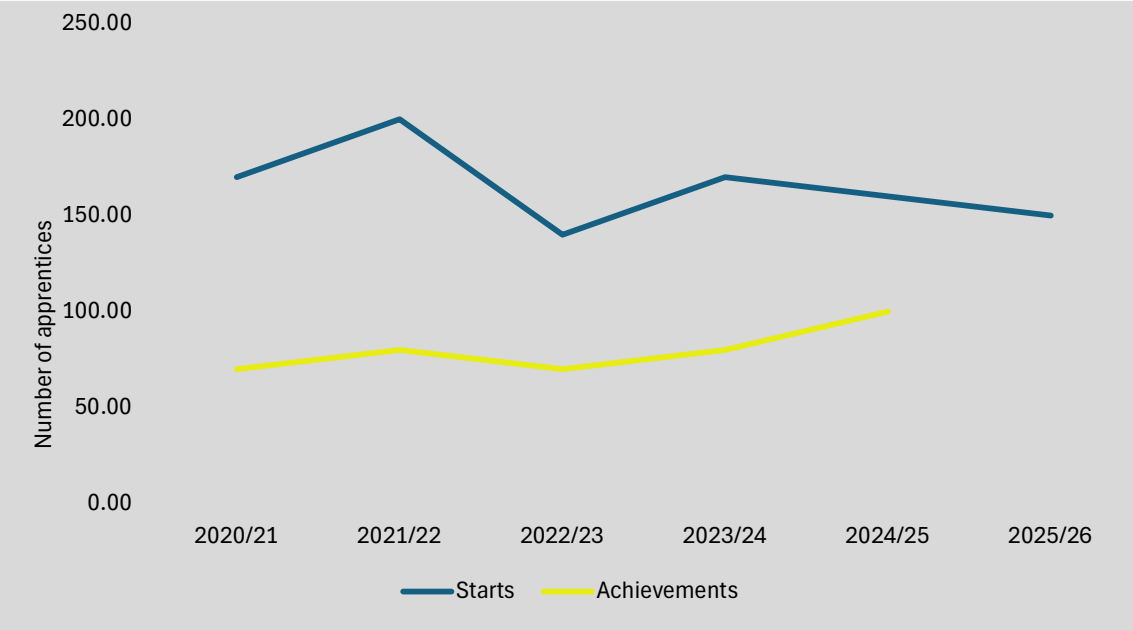


Figure 4: Graph of Apprenticeship starters and completions in Rutland (ONS)

Apprenticeships provide an important route into employment by enabling young people to develop skills and gain workplace experience while earning. They ease the transition from school to work and evidence indicates that completing an apprenticeship can improve subsequent earnings[17]. The issue can be persuading employers to take on apprentices, as they do not complete as much work as a trained worker and require supervision[18].

Apprentice wages can also be a problem as many apprentices are not paid at the living wage. This makes it difficult for the apprentice, as they must often pay for tools and materials out of their own pockets. In 2010, a dedicated apprentice rate was introduced, set significantly lower than the standard rates and beginning at just £2.50 per hour. This has risen to £7.55 in April 2025. These low wages can lead to apprentices taking on other informal work to earn more money to get by.

Employment for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

If, as seen above, suitable employment opportunities are already hard to come by for young people, it is vital to consider those with additional hardships. Favourably, in the most recent Ofsted inspection of local SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services[19], Rutland was one of only four other areas in the country to receive the highest possible outcome for their services (Ofsted, 2023).

The most recent relevant statistics regarding SEND people in Rutland come from a SEND Needs Assessment at Rutland County Council, 2023[20].

- There are 805 SEND students in Rutland schools as of Spring 2023 census (66% male, 34% female, 13.2% of school population)
- England 2022, 4% of pupils in England had an EHCP (Education, health and care plan) in 2022, compared with 2.9% for Rutland Spring 2023 census (reduced from 3.5% in 2015)
- From 2020-2023, the volume of children in Rutland with an EHCP increased by 60%
- In December 2022, 93 Rutland 16-25 year-olds had an EHCP. 91% were in post-16 college/alternative provisions, and the rest were in 'apprenticeships or residential provision'
- In March 2022, 97% of the Rutland year 12/13 cohort were in education or training, compared with 97.6% of Rutland 16-17 year olds with an EHCP[21]

Work Experience

Whilst a lot of the more readily available data pertains to the younger subsect of people with SEND (primary/secondary school), there are a few opportunities available for SEND young people to gain valuable work experience in a supported and tailored environment.

Firstly, there is a Supported Internship available at Stamford College[22] for those aged 16-24 with an EHCP. Students work with advisors to create a plan surrounding their desired qualification outcomes of the course and then take part in a weekly mixture of 1/2 college days, where they learn interview techniques, workplace etiquette and other important employment skills, and 2/3 days of unpaid placement with a local employer, determined through their interests, skills and goals. Though dependent on the capacities of the employer, there is also potential for paid positions to be available at the end of the internship. Supported internships provide an important route into employment by combining workplace experience with tailored educational and pastoral support. They are particularly valuable for young people with SEND, including neurodivergent young people, who may face additional barriers to accessing meaningful work experience and transitioning into employment.

Also available in Rutland is the Lodge Trust, which provides work experience in areas including gardening, café hospitality and woodworking. The organisation also provides residential accommodation for SEND adults, supporting a balance of independence and care. As a Christian organisation, its ethos may not be suitable for everyone. In addition, the work experience opportunities are unpaid, which may present a barrier for young people who require an income while gaining workplace experience.

Rutland Disabled Youth Forum (RDYF)

It is important to recognise, for young people with SEND, including neurodivergent young people, that opportunities for purposeful activity are not limited to the traditional work experience routes. The Rutland Disabled Youth Forum (RDYF) is a group set up in 2015 who meet on the first Wednesday of every month to discuss services and accessibility in Rutland and provide feedback to the relevant organisations in order to make amendments where necessary[23]. Evaluations of the forum indicate that members feel their views are listened to and have influenced local decision-making (2023[24]). For example, RDYF advocated for, and achieved, tactile paving outside the hospital and amendments to the disabled spaces in the McDonalds[25]. They also have had opportunities to go to London and weigh in on conferences concerning national policy, in addition to simply providing a social opportunity and sense of community with other local disabled young people.

RDYF demonstrates how meaningful participation can enable young people with disabilities to influence local services while developing confidence, communication and leadership skills. It also provides opportunities outside of the other traditional customer service work experience available at the College or Lodge Trust. Interestingly, one of the items of interest in the RDYF's priorities for 2023/24[26] was indeed to advocate for more paid work opportunities, so while the forum itself is not a paid position, it may be useful for creating change to allow SEND young people to be paid their worth for the work they do.

The outlook for young people

Employment outlook for young people without SEND

The evidence presented in this report suggests that young people in Rutland have a strong educational foundation and generally favourable employment conditions. However, these strengths do not necessarily translate into easy access to employment for all young people. Rurality, transport limitations, availability of local opportunities and access to meaningful work experience can all affect the transition from education into employment.

Young people may therefore need to look beyond Rutland for suitable employment, particularly where they are seeking specific occupations or opportunities for progression. Access to affordable and reliable transport is consequently a crucial factor in widening the range of employment opportunities available to them.

There are also opportunities for employers to play a greater role in supporting young people into work. Apprenticeships, entry-level positions and meaningful work experience can provide valuable routes into employment while helping employers develop their future workforce.

Employment outlook for young people with SEND

Rutland has a solid foundation of support for young people with SEND, including highly rated local SEND services, supported internship opportunities and the Rutland Disabled Youth Forum. These provide valuable opportunities for young people to develop skills, gain experience and participate in their communities.

However, access to paid employment remains an important challenge. Funding limitations, the availability of suitable placements and barriers within traditional recruitment and employment practices can restrict opportunities for some young people with SEND.

The RDYF also demonstrates that contribution should not be measured solely through traditional employment. Volunteering, advocacy and participation can provide valuable opportunities to develop skills, build confidence and influence the communities in which young people live. At the same time, where young people are undertaking productive work, there should be clear routes towards appropriate paid employment wherever possible.

Recommendations

1. Increase access to quality work experience

Schools, colleges, employers and local partners should work together to expand meaningful work experience opportunities for young people, particularly before they leave compulsory education. Placements should reflect a wide range of industries and include opportunities for those who are at risk of becoming NEET.

2. Expand apprenticeship opportunities in Rutland

Local employers should be encouraged and supported to create more apprenticeship opportunities. This could include promoting available government incentives, simplifying recruitment processes and recognising the long-term benefits of investing in local young people.

3. Improve transport to employment and training

Transport remains one of the most significant barriers to employment in rural Rutland. Local partners should continue to explore affordable transport solutions, improved public transport links and travel support for apprentices, trainees and young employees.

4. Create more entry-level employment opportunities

Employers should consider increasing the number of entry-level roles that require limited previous experience. These opportunities provide an essential first step into employment and help young people develop transferable skills and confidence.

5. Strengthen careers education and employer engagement

Schools, colleges and employers should increase opportunities for careers advice, workplace visits, employer talks and mentoring so that young people have a realistic understanding of local labour market opportunities.

6. Improve employment opportunities for young people with SEND

Building on Rutland's strong SEND provision, partners should increase supported internships, supported employment pathways and paid work opportunities for young people with SEND, including neurodivergent young people. Employers should be encouraged to adopt inclusive recruitment practices and make reasonable adjustments to ensure inclusive workplaces.

7. Continue listening to young people's voices

Young people should be involved in shaping local employment initiatives through groups such as the Rutland Disabled Youth Forum and other youth participation activities. Their lived experience should continue to inform local policy and service development as well as employment and training opportunities.

8. Develop a Rutland Youth Employment Partnership

Rutland County Council, schools, colleges, Jobcentre Plus, employers, voluntary organisations and training providers should work collaboratively to monitor local employment trends, identify emerging skills needs and coordinate support for young people entering work.

Useful Links

For Job seekers:

Employment support from Rutland Council

- Rutland County Council - Employment Support - Joy

Rutland Disabled Youth Forum (RDYF)

- rutlanddyf@hotmail.com

For Employers:

- Build Your Future Workforce
- Employing an apprentice: Overview - GOV.UK

Local employers will often go through a local college offering apprenticeships such as

- Employers - Stamford College
- Employer Apprenticeship Portal - Grantham College

Acknowledgements

This report was written by:

Nicola Bateman (Trustee Citizens Advice)

Lucy Young (Citizens Advice Volunteer) - Now studying a Master's degree

Emily Hutton (Citizens Advice Volunteer) - Now in full-time employment

References

[1] Office of National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/ last accessed 1.5.26
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid
[6] Youth employment UK (2025) Youth Voice Census 2025 Report https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-voice-census/results/ last accessed 17.5.26

[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid
[9] The Social Mobility Commission (2025) Labour market opportunities for young people. https://social-mobility.data.gov.uk/drivers_of_social_mobility/composite_indices/labour_market_opportunities_for_young_people/latest (Accessed 15.7.26)

[10] Social Mobility Commission https://social-mobility.data.gov.uk/social_mobility_by_area/205_regions/rutland (Accessed 25.7.26)

[11] Ibid
[12] leicester.gov.uk https://www.leicester.gov.uk/about-council/get-leicester-leicestershire-and-rutland-working-plan-2025-2035 (accessed 21st August 2026)

[13] East Midlands Chamber https://www.emc-dnl.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/LSIP-2026.pdf (accessed 24.8.26)
[14] Release home - Further education outcomes - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (accessed 21.8.26)
[15] Ibid
[16] Office of National Statistics https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/ last accessed 1.5.26
[17] Release home - Further education outcomes - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (accessed 21.8.26)
[18] https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/employer-guides (accessed 21.8.26)
[19] Ofsted (2023) *Area SEND inspection of Rutland Local Area Partnership*. Available at: https://rutlandcounty.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s27531/Report%20151-2023%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Rutland%20Local%20Area%20Partnership%20-%20Area%20SEND%20Final%20Report-113003.pdf (Accessed: 10 April 2026).

[20] Rutland County Council (2023) *Needs Assessment: Rutland Children with Special Needs and Disabilities.* Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/Rutland%20SEND%20Needs%20Assessment%202023.docx (Accessed: 10 April 2026).
[21] Rutland County Council (2022) Inclusive Rutland: Rutland's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2017 (Refreshed 2022). Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/rutland-information-service/send-local-offer/rutlands-send-inclusion-strategy (Accessed: 10 April 2026).
[22] Stamford College (no date) . Available at: https://www.stamford.ac.uk/courses/supported-internship-stamford-3/ (Accessed: 10 April 2026).
[23] RDYF (2023) *Rutland Disabled Youth Forum priorities for 2023 24.* Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/Rutland%20disabled%20youth%20Forum%20priorities%20for%202023%2024.docx (Accessed: 10 April 2026).
[24] Rutland County Council (2022) Inclusive Rutland: Rutland's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2017 (Refreshed 2022). Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/rutland-information-service/send-local-offer/rutlands-send-inclusion-strategy (Accessed: 10 April 2026).

[25] Rutland County Council Spotlight on SEND Summer 2025. Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/spotlight_on_send_summer_2025.pdf (Accessed 11 April 2026).
[26] RDYF (2023) *Rutland Disabled Youth Forum priorities for 2023 24.* Available at: https://www.rutland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/Rutland%20disabled%20youth%20Forum%20priorities%20for%202023%2024.docx

Free, confidential advice.
Whoever you are.

Citizens Advice Rutland is a local charity which provides free advice to meet the needs of our community. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

Your donation can help us continue our work and make a real difference to the people we help. Scan the QR code to donate and support the work we do.

Published by Citizens Advice Rutland in October 2026.

Citizens Advice Rutland is an operating name of Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd. Registered in England. Reg. No. 05287678. A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity 1107907. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. FRN: 617720

citizens advice Rutland