





# WELCOME

Sheila Clark,  
CEO, Career Connect

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## WELCOME TO OUR IMPACT REPORT FOR 2022/23

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**Career Connect, like the entire charity sector, has faced numerous challenges in the past year as we have navigated our way through uncertain economic times. I am really proud of how we have met these challenges head on and achieved significant success in pursuing our vision of a world where every individual reaches their true potential through education, training, and employment.**

In 2022/23, we implemented our Youth Voice strategy, bringing the experience and perspectives of young people into the heart of what we do. With the appointment of our first Youth Voice Co-ordinator, we are hearing the voices of young people and utilising them to shape and improve our services.

We have also been joined by our first cohort of 12 Youth Ambassadors, who meet monthly to discuss key issues, to help us improve our services and think about how we engage with young people. Over the next year, we will expand participant voice across all of our programmes.

In schools and colleges, we launched an exciting new digital portal called Get Connected. This new App has been developed with feedback from Teachers and young people to make sure it is user friendly. Through our digital innovation programme we were also able to offer virtual careers guidance in schools right across the UK.

Our work in five prisons in Lancashire/Cumbria yielded exceptional results

and we achieved the highest number of people finding work within six weeks of release, nationwide. As vacancies begin to decline from their post-Covid peak, this service will become increasingly vital.

The cost-of-living crisis and impact of Covid has had a lasting impact on young people. Despite a high number of vacancies, many young people remain outside of education, employment, and training. We continued our work in partnership with eight local authorities supporting young people aged 16-24 into employment, education, and training.

Outstanding positive impact included the Connect to Your Future programme. In partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The programme supported 750 of the most vulnerable young people aged 15-19 in their journey towards education, training and employment.

All of these accomplishments – and more, as this report will show - were made possible by the extraordinary efforts of our expert teams.

Together, we have delivered our high-quality professional support services to **82,784** people.

The year ahead will bring its challenges, but the commitment and passion of our people give us a strong foundation to rise to meet them.

I would like to thank all of them for their continued contribution and a huge thank you to all of our Trustees, stakeholders and partners.

# Our vision, mission and values

Career Connect seeks to empower, educate and support individuals, communities and organisations in all aspects of the career journey.

Our services are delivered by professional and experienced teams across the following areas:

- Professional careers guidance and employer encounters in schools.
- Support for young people who are at risk or are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), reaching those who are vulnerable or from under-served groups.
- Careers support and guidance for adults looking for work, including those from minority groups.
- Employment, Education and Training support to offenders and ex-offenders.
- A range of fully accessible, accredited training programmes for careers professionals run face-to-face and digitally.

## Our Vision

A society where every individual realises their full potential.



## Our Mission

To drive social mobility by enabling more people to access and succeed in education, training and employment



## Our Values

**Inclusive:** we believe diversity is a strength and each person should be supported to achieve the best possible outcomes, irrespective of their background.



**Professional:** we are passionate about our work; we are highly skilled and knowledgeable, working with integrity to achieve results.



**Person-centred:** we care about people as individuals, we advise and advocate on their behalf so that they can achieve their goals.



**Impartial:** we work independently as a charity, to broaden horizons and help people to find an opportunity that's right for them.



**Aspirational:** we are committed to raising aspirations and achieving a greater level of social mobility.



# Scope and scale of our work

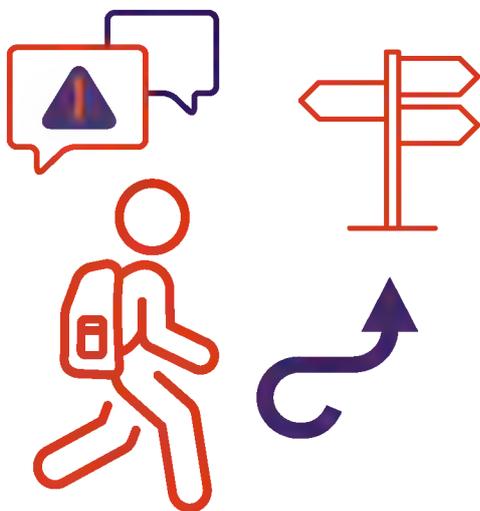
In 2022/23 we have:



Generated an additional **£8.8m** in **social value**



Worked with **6640 adults** through **Achieve**.



Provided careers **education, information, advice** and **guidance** to

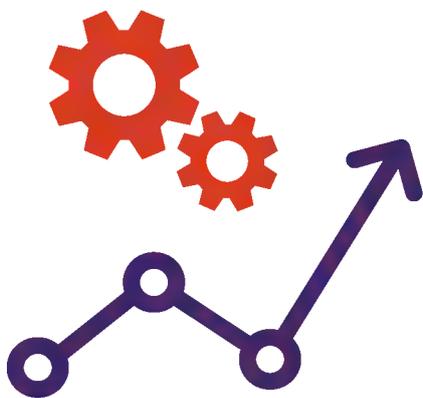
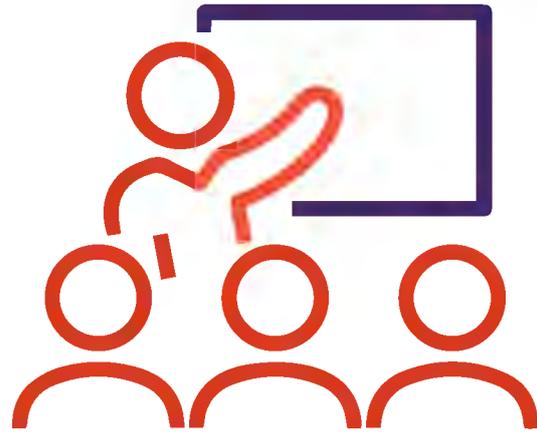
**39,495 young people**

across **184 schools**.

Provided **careers training** and **CPD** for

**651 people**

across local authorities, schools and professional careers agencies.



Been responsible for tracking and support services for

**35,998 young people**

across local authority NEET contracts, including providing substantive support to **18,934**.

That's a total of

**82,784 people**

benefiting from the professional support services that **Career Connect provides.**



# | Youth Voice



**In 2022/23, we implemented our Youth Voice strategy, bringing the experience and perspectives of young people into the heart of what we do. With the appointment of our first Youth Voice Co-ordinator, we listen to the voices of young people from across the Northwest and use them to shape and improve our services.**

Our Youth Voice Staff Champions actively support young people to have their voices heard, but each employee within our charity has a role to play.

We follow the Lundy Model of Participation. We actively consult with young people, share feedback with Career Connect managers and stakeholders, and gather their responses to the issues raised.

Key to our approach is our Youth Agreement, created in partnership with young people, which outlines what any young person should expect from us when they engage with our service.

## Our Ambassadors

This year we have been joined by our first Youth Ambassadors, 12 young people who are at the heart of our Youth Voice.

Our current cohort of Ambassadors come from a variety of areas across the Northwest including Sefton, Liverpool, Wirral, and Manchester with ages ranging from 16-21. We also have a mixture of diverse backgrounds and experiences, so each Ambassador offers a unique outlook on the situations affecting young people.

The group meets monthly to discuss key issues that young people are facing, discuss things they believe should change, and receive training to develop their skills.

Some areas of change that have been influenced by the Ambassadors include the focus of our research work, branding to reach young people not in education, employment or training and the support we are currently offering to young people.

## What our ambassadors say:



*Young people deserve to be listened to just as much as adults because they will one day become adults and have that responsibility so it would be better to help them embrace that earlier rather than later, so they aren't just lost when that responsibility hits them.*

Jane, 16, Sefton.

*I want to be a Youth Ambassador so young people can have their voices heard and achieve the same things as everyone else regardless of mental health issues and/or disabilities.*

Sophia, 17, Manchester.

*I chose to be a Youth Ambassador so adopted young people can have a voice so older people can understand them.*

Ash, 16, Wirral.



# Impactful careers education for school aged young people



## Careers education, advice, and guidance play a pivotal role in the development and future prospects of school-aged children.

First, by providing comprehensive and tailored careers education, students are exposed to a range of potential career paths, allowing them to make informed decisions about their future.

Research has shown that early exposure to career-related information and experiences positively influences career choices and increases the likelihood of students pursuing higher education or vocational training.

By equipping students with the knowledge and understanding of various career options, they are empowered to make informed decisions about their education and career pathways.

Secondly, guidance and advice offered through careers education programmes ensures that

students receive individualised support, taking into account their interests, abilities, and aspirations. This personalised approach helps students identify and develop their strengths, enabling them to set realistic goals and make informed decisions about their educational choices.

By receiving tailored guidance, students can explore potential career pathways, understand the qualifications and skills required, and make well-informed subject choices, leading to better academic outcomes and increased career prospects.

Career Connect provides tailored Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) services for schools and colleges, helping them to meet each of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks.

These provide the framework for excellence in school-based Careers provision in England. We work with young people in mainstream schools, specialist schools, and alternative provision.

## CASE STUDY

# Personal development aligned with careers: The Henry Box School

The Henry Box School in West Oxfordshire is an 11-18 comprehensive, including a Sixth Form. It is part of the Mill Academy Trust.

**Career Connect adviser Judy provides in-house careers provision three days a week. In line with its aims of raising aspirations and preparing students for life in modern Britain, The Henry Box School places an emphasis on personal development and employer encounters.**

"At The Henry Box School we build careers education into our personal development sessions each week. It's important to us to frame our students' thinking about their futures in this way," says Headteacher Wendy Hemmingsley. "Career Connect took time to get to know us and our context. They understand our vision for a personalised approach to careers.

"Employer engagement is always a challenge for schools. In the current climate, a lot of businesses are not able to take young people for Work Experience. We also have a lot of SMEs locally, who don't have the capacity. However, through Judy's efforts and relationship building, we have managed to send all Year 10s on placement this year.

"Judy has also engaged employers to take part in mock interviews, which our students have benefited from enormously. Judy places a great deal of attention on creating bespoke events for different year groups and key stages.

"Judy works closely with us on site and builds relationships across the school – she is one of the team. Judy is a real asset, and I have seen her develop even further during her time with us

due to the support of her wider Career Connect team.

"We have seen a real benefit in having a careers specialist in school with us, while also knowing that she has the support of a bigger organisation behind her. It's like we have all of the resources of Career Connect in school with us as well. This gives me real confidence in our careers provision and in meeting Gatsby benchmarks.

"A few months into our contract with Career Connect, we had a visit from Ofsted. Even at this early stage in our relationship, the comments from the inspection were incredibly positive. Going forward, we want to build on our already great work with employers at Key Stages three and four.

"The next step is to work with Career Connect to develop our careers education at primary level, as we also have a primary school as part of our Trust. We want to start helping our younger pupils explore the world around them, their skills and passions, and understand how they could use them in the future."

### Ofsted (February 2023):

*"The school's personal development and careers programmes are particularly strong. Pupils are very well prepared for their futures in a changing world. They learn about careers and training possibilities, benefiting from contributions from varied partners and employers."*

# Our **key achievements** over the past 12 months

Over the past year, we expanded our reach to include 184 schools, serving almost 40,000 young people in the Northwest, Midlands, and Oxfordshire regions.

## Work with employers

We engaged with 422 employers to provide activities including work experience, careers fairs, employer sessions, work-related activities, and mock interviews. Wirral Local Authority commissioned us to deliver similar activities for secondary and SEND specialist schools, culminating in a successful Wirral Skills Show that involved 7,085 young people.



## Raising Aspirations

Knowsley Local Authority commissioned us to work with Year 9 students at risk of NEET in nine schools. We delivered a tailored programme comprising both individual and group activities, utilising various resources to ensure meaningful interventions.

In January 2023, we extended our collaboration with Knowsley Local Authority to run a Higher Education (HE) awareness programme for Year 8, 9 and 10 students in secondary schools and Years 5 and 6 in 30 primary schools. The programme aims to raise awareness of HE pathways and help young people understand how to pursue HE in alignment with their long-term career aspirations.

## Digital Innovation



We introduced Get Connected, a new digital careers, education, information, and guidance (CEIAG) tool catering to students from Years 7 to 13. Get Connected allows

students to explore career paths, make vocational decisions, access up-to-date information, and research post-16/18 learning opportunities, apprenticeships, and HE options. It supports students in understanding their options and documenting their learning experiences. Initially offered to the schools we work with, we plan to expand its usage further in the coming year.

## Quality and growing our offer

We initiated our partnership with Macintyre Academies Trust to provide high-quality employer encounters and careers support to young people in three SEND specialist schools in Warwickshire. Throughout 2022/23, we enhanced our visibility among Careers Leaders nationwide and offered free continuing professional development (CPD) sessions focused on meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks and showcasing best practice. These sessions were attended by 206 careers leads.

## Virtual careers guidance

Expanding our services, we offered virtual careers guidance in collaboration with institutions such as London Design and Engineering UTC, the Online School, and Longcroft School and 6th Form College. We provided specialised career support to more than 300 Year 11 and 6th Form pupils who required assistance beyond what the school could access from other providers.

## CASE STUDY

# Personalised and intensive careers support for KS4: The Clifton Centre

The Clifton Centre in Salford is a KS4 Pupil Referral Unit with 70 students. Career Connect has provided careers support at The Clifton Centre since 2013.

In 2021, Clifton was one of 22 Alternative Provision Settings in the UK to receive AP taskforce funding from the government. The taskforce brings agencies together to keep young people engaged with education and careers planning, and away from exposure to serious violence or gang exploitation.

### Jonathan Hill, Assistant Headteacher the Clifton Centre, said:

"Gemma understands our students and the areas from which they come. Careers provision in a PRU looks very different to that in mainstream school. It can be very time intensive and relationship building with students, parents and carers and external partners is vital.

"Without her my job would be much more difficult. Gemma has an in-depth knowledge of provision and how we can meet Gatsby benchmarks.

"Her independence is key in meeting the needs of our students to get the best possible outcomes. She will challenge us to explore new options for students. She knows legislation and stays up to date on the latest qualifications and pathways.

"She helps our students see college as nothing scary. Colleges are now keen to meet with us to make students' transitions easier. This is down to the relationships built by Gemma."

### Matt Wilson, PRU Youth Engagement Officer and AP Specialist Taskforce Project Co-ordinator at the Clifton Centre said:

"We now have a fully enhanced careers programme for our young people. Gemma has taken the opportunity to push for new initiatives. We have employers coming in to do talks, and she has built links for work experience placements. We've had on-site construction and health and beauty visits and college visits, and a careers carousel.

"Gemma ran our first mock interview week, which we'd not done on that scale before. This included in-person and online afternoon interviews to increase access for non-attenders. The feedback from students and employers was great.

"Gemma has attended parent review days and appointments with parents and carers and pushes for these to happen, which has led to an increase in take-up rate.

"Gemma was instrumental in obtaining funding [through Connect To Your Future, delivered by Career Connect] for eight students to access Construction Skills Certification Scheme training. She engaged the young people - and kept them engaged - and worked with the training provider and funding, which is time intensive. Obtaining the CSCS card allowed those students to apply for roles in the construction industry.

"We now have very few students who won't engage at all or who don't have a plan for September."

# Supporting Young People



**At the pivotal age of 16, careers support plays a crucial role in preventing young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Primarily, it provides a vital bridge between education and the world of work. At this stage, many young individuals face the daunting task of making decisions about their future education or career pathways.**

Effective careers support offers guidance, information, and resources to help them navigate this critical transition period. By exploring various options and understanding the skills required in different industries, young people can make informed choices that align with their interests, talents, and aspirations. This guidance ensures that they stay on track,

avoiding the disengagement and uncertainty that can lead to them being NEET.

In 2022/23, our teams worked in partnership with eight local authorities in Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Sefton, St. Helens, Wirral, Halton, and Knowsley, and were the lead organisation for the Connect To Your Future programme, working across ten local authorities within Greater Manchester.

Economic turbulence plus the disruption to education brought about by the Covid pandemic has led to a growth in the numbers of young people requiring support, particularly among those most at risk of becoming NEET. This has posed an additional challenge to our teams over the past year and will continue to do so for the near future.

## Our key achievements

In the last year, we were responsible for 35,998 young people who are either NEET or at risk of NEET, providing tailored support into education, employment, and training. This work was delivered in partnership with eight local authorities and with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) for the Connect to Your Future (CTYF) programme.

## Manchester and Salford

Our Manchester team saw a 10% growth in the number of young people aged 15-24 requiring support, but ended the year as the best performing of the Core Cities group, of which we are a key partner.

In 2022/23, Manchester had the lowest percentage of NEET and Not Known young people within this group, and the lowest percentage in the city of young people whose status was Not Known (1%).

**A number of initiatives have contributed to this success over the past year:**

### Our continued membership of the NEET Prevention Panels for schools across the city.

This is a partnership approach with councils and the Virtual School offering advice to schools on opportunities for at risk of NEET young people.

This includes referrals to opportunities and support with engagement and transition to post-16 opportunities.

### Our participation in Locality Action Days.

We were proud participants in the Wythenshawe Pathways Programme, in partnership with Manchester Council and The Growth Co. This programme supported young people aged 16-18 years who had little previous employment experience or qualifications.

**Creation of a new role in the team** with a link to the Attendance and Exclusions team to support transition to post-16 opportunities.

### Delivery of a second cohort of the Find Your Path programme

sponsored by NatWest Bank, supporting six young people to complete the programme and progress into education, employment, or training.



In Salford, with a growing caseload, we successfully reduced our NEET and not known figures compared with the previous year.

There were a number of new initiatives that contributed to this.

Summer programmes for year 11 leavers and NEET young people across the city, during July and August 2022. These programmes covered construction, bike maintenance, fitness training, and health and beauty courses.



Youth consultation on support for the growing number of young people with mental ill-health, leading to bespoke sessions to re-engage this group of young people through 'softer' engagement, such as nail care and tattoo art.

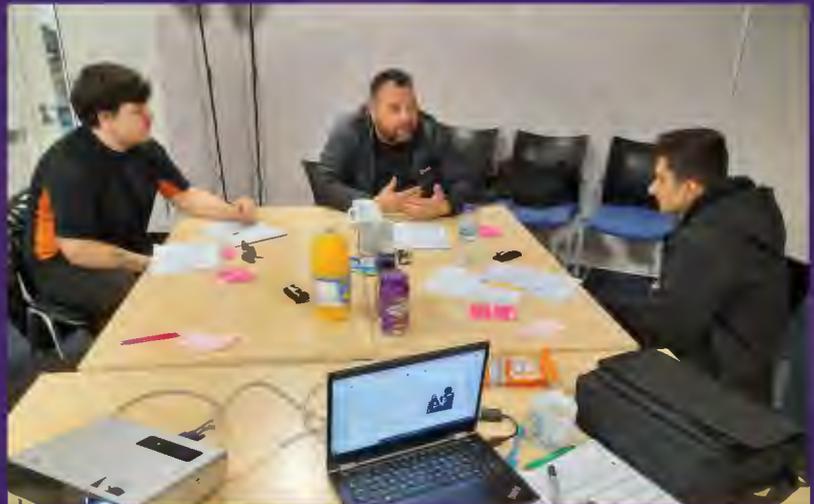


Targeted support through the Community Committees fund to the wards with the highest number of NEET young people. We provided intensive support and a bespoke job search service to connect these young people with employment opportunities of interest to them.



# Connect To Your Future

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority



Connect To Your Future was a youth employment project for young people across Greater Manchester aged 15-19 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or at risk of being NEET. It is targeted at those experiencing the most disadvantage due to the Covid pandemic and not engaged with other mainstream provision.

During 2022/23 the project had enrolled more than 700 young people, receiving bespoke support from a Key Worker, who collaborated with them through the entirety of the programme. The project went the extra mile in providing additional bespoke mentoring support and enrichment activities that is needs-led to that individual young person.

This has been aided by a discretionary fund, which has allowed the programme to fund courses for young people, travel expenses and support with mental health. It also included a range of health and wellbeing sessions delivered for young people, providing support to improve confidence and to manage anxiety.

The programme has made a significant contribution to the Build Salford Programme, and we received positive feedback from the Salford Local Authority who have requested that we continue our support in 2023.

### Participant feedback

Here's what some of our young people said about Connect To Your Future:



*"I would not be in college if it were not for [Connect To Your Future's] support helping me to overcome my struggles."*

*"My advisor was very kind and has helped me a lot with my emotional wellbeing and my resilience."*

*"Eleanor has helped me a lot after leaving college due to my anxiety by helping me sign up to a traineeship, improve my CV and finds other jobs. This has really improved my confidence."*

*"I really struggled to understand my passion but Connect To Your Future helped me understand what I liked and didn't like to then find a suitable career."*

*"Before Connect To Your Future, I didn't even know where to start. My key worker has now given me support and a clear path to start my career."*

*"I truly believe the service is amazing."*



# Merseyside

Reporting in October 2022, **Sefton** had the third lowest NEET/Not Known % in England. This is the second year running that Sefton has performed so impressively, and a large part of this success results from close working with Sefton local authority, schools, and other support agencies to ensure that those most at risk of becoming NEET at age 16 are receiving targeted support from Year 9 onwards.

The number of young people at risk of NEET is growing year on year, but targeted early intervention is working to reduce both incidences of NEET and the amount of time spent NEET by young people.

Career Connect has pledged its support for the Sefton Caring Business Charter for Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People.

The Charter aims to improve visibility and access for care experienced young people to employment, training, apprenticeship, work experience and mentoring opportunities. Local businesses and employers have committed to offering these opportunities and support, and to guarantee job interviews where candidates are suitably qualified for a vacancy.

In **St. Helens**, our Careers Adviser work and the partnership developed with Youth Justice Services was highlighted as best practice in the 2022 HMP inspection.

We reduced the number of young people engaged with Youth Justice Services that are NEET down from 50% in October 2019 to 28% in September 2022. We also reduced the average number of days that each young person spent NEET, from 114 days to 95 days.

In **Halton**, Career Connect supports an early intervention scheme delivered for young people in contact with the criminal justice system but who may not be on a court-imposed order. The aim of is to try and tackle issues before they become embedded. It is a multi-agency and collaborative project and can include Youth Justice Services, Housing and Social Care. It is led by the Police with the aim of diversion from criminality. We have established close

working relationships with the attached Police Officer to support young people into education, employment, or training.

In **Liverpool** we operate a community-based delivery model, ensuring our engagement, coaching and professional IAG services are widely accessible to young people.

Overall, the team had more than 23,000 contacts. This includes our contact with young people, parents/carers and external agencies/providers. Partnership working is a key part of our work and through 22/23 we made over 1200 referrals to a wide range of education, employment, training and support service provision on behalf of young people.

Our initiative in **Wirral** to engage young people through regular updates of employment, education, and training opportunities, via social media, managed to engage 1,700 followers. This promoted greater interaction with clients, enabling them to access our services and support to access opportunities. The team also appeared on BBC radio during Careers Week.

As a result of client feedback, highlighting complex barriers being faced by many young people following Covid, we diversified our **Knowsley Inclusion Project** from a group delivery model to an intensive, one-to-one coaching programme focused on re-engaging with unemployed young people aged 16-17. This included developing confidence, self-awareness and raising aspirations, offering employer encounters and supporting positive transitions to employment, education or training.

## Parent feedback



*“My son was at a loss of what he needs and wants to do. Alison took time to understand his situation and what he enjoys etc. She suggested several different options available to him. Alison was very patient and empathic.”*



## CASE STUDY

# Positive pathways in St Helens

Career Connect, St Helens Borough Council, and voluntary sector organisations worked in partnership after identifying a gap in provision

**Funded by the Community Renewal Fund, Pathways to Employment aligned with the aims of the St Helens Borough Strategy, St Helens Economic Recovery Plan and LCR Build Back Better.**

St Helens has high levels of deprivation and has been hit extremely hard by the impact of Covid.

Pathways to Employment sought to bridge the gap for academic age 18-year-olds who were on the cusp of, or were ineligible for, standard provision for 16–17-year-olds, but who were too young or found it difficult to access adult employability services.

A high proportion were classed as 'economically inactive' – among the furthest away from employment, education or training – and faced significant barriers. Home visits from advisers, and a focus on personal choice, were an essential part in removing these barriers and building trust.

### Factors critical to success:

- A proven relationship-based model with a trusted adviser, enhanced for 18-year-olds. A focus on hope for the future and career planning. Active listening, trauma-informed support, help obtaining ID, referrals to mental health support and more.
- A discretionary fund for transport, equipment and clothing – often invisible barriers – and part-time courses which young people would otherwise not have been able to access.

Take up was high and courses included coding, counselling, teaching assistant, beauty and forensics. One participant set up their own dog walking business as a result.

### The outcome:

- 18-year-old NEET figures in St Helens fell to 6.76% from 6.81% in the previous year. With a 16–17-year-old NEET cohort increase from 3.61% to 4.26% in this period, this marked a significant improvement.
- 100 out of a target of 100 participants registered.
- 94 out of a target of 80 improved life skills.
- 87 out of a target of 30 engaged in job search.
- 27 out of a target of 30 moved into employment.
- 26 out of a target of 25 moved into education/training.
- 100% satisfaction score from completed evaluations.
- 93% of young people rated their advisor 10/10 for developing a plan to achieve their goals.

*"Feedback from beneficiaries was that it gave young people a sense of hope that they'd lost and presented options they didn't know were available."*

*Delivery partners noted...this project really helped young people navigate adult services in a way they were previously unable to, as they were supported through the process of getting and benefitting from support."*

External evaluation from Metro Dynamics

### Participant feedback



*"It is solely due to the career advice from Kevin that I now know what I would like to do with my life in terms of my education and employment."*



# | Training services



**We continued to deliver high quality, nationally accredited qualifications to improve skills in Careers, Advice & Guidance, Coaching and other professional development programmes.**

We are an assessment centre accredited to deliver courses through four awarding bodies: OCR, City & Guilds, ILM and Open Awards. Our qualifications include Advice and Guidance from level 2 to level 4; Coaching at level 3 and careers related qualifications at levels 4 and 6.

For the fifth year we are also pleased to deliver the level 6 Career Leaders programme for those leading Careers programmes in schools, funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company. About 10% of Career Leaders return to complete the full level 6 careers qualification.

We also offer entry level to level 2 vocational qualifications focussing on the Preparation for Life and Work sector, accredited through Open Awards. These are aimed at supporting individuals with personal development and employability through a range of short courses including Coping With Change, Managing Anger and Preparation for Work.

In 2022/23 we worked with a national provider linked to an international bank, providing quality assurance and certification of their programme to improve employability prospects for the future workforce, especially NEET young people.

We also delivered CPD sessions to local authorities around careers guidance and practice and further sessions around safeguarding. We have also supported two physiotherapists in attaining an Assessor qualification.



As part of internal training, we have engaged external providers to deliver Mental Health First Aid training to all front-line staff, and specialist Mental Health First Aid training to managers. Managers have also undergone Health and Safety training, and two staff are now qualified to deliver Trauma Informed Practice training to staff.

## CASE STUDY

### Building confidence and knowledge to link with employers: Careers Leaders qualification

**Oliver Masters completed the Careers Leader qualification with Career Connect. Oliver is Careers Lead at The Greater Horseshoe school, an independent special school in Devon for ages 8-18. The school was recently graded outstanding by OFSTED.**

"We are fairly new as a school – five years old - and this qualification has put me in a great position to set the course for our whole-school careers provision.

"I've honed my skills and picked up tools and approaches that are helping me to create more impactful experiences for our students. I've worked in careers for a long time, but this is my first careers role in a school.

"For many of our pupils, talking about the future can be scary. It can be more challenging for them to process than it is for someone who is neurotypical. That's why a focus on meaningful encounters with employers and providers is so important.

"I now feel more confident in working with providers and employers to build understanding, and advocate for support for our students as they prepare to move on. I have been able to work with some great employers and providers and articulate the benefits for them and our students.

"As a school we are now committed to arranging a provider visit for our young people at least once every half term. This includes colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers.

"I have also changed the way we run our Aspirations week. Activities used to be subject-based, but we now take a whole-school approach. We regularly build careers themes into assemblies. We update our career boards at each of our three sites and make them an attraction for students. During our summer fair, which celebrates our students' achievements, every department now hosts an activity that has a link to careers.

"Our school was recently graded as outstanding by OFSTED, which is fantastic, and on their visit, the inspectors spent a long time looking at our careers provision.

"I have autism, and my assessor Steve was great in offering flexible assessment options. I completed a number of assignments as recorded discussions because I struggle to process written words and with typing. Through my research for the discussion, it led me to change the way some of our processes work and the way we approach careers advice with our students.

"I had a great relationship with Steve, he always gave me honest and clear opinions on how I was doing, and this helped me identify where my school can improve.

"This course has taught me how to do things differently while meeting our Gatsby benchmarks. It has prompted me to change some of the ways we did things and how we approach careers education with our students. It has shown me that I can do things differently while also satisfying the guidance."

# Achieve: supporting people to gain employment and adapt to life after prison and community orders



Being in employment soon after release from prison or completing community orders, is a critical factor in ensuring that people do not reoffend and that they make a successful reintegration back into communities.

In 2022/23, we provided support to **2424 men and women** through the programme. The focus of the CFO3 is to help the most in-need offenders move towards mainstream provision or employment at the end of their sentence. We do this through addressing multiple barriers to work, and by linking them to wider services that support their individual circumstances and needs.



Career Connect supports ex-offenders through our subsidiary company, Achieve North West Connect (ANWC)\*. In 2022/23 we worked across fourteen prisons in the Northwest, through six national, regional, and institutional contracts.

We have enjoyed considerable success and have brought impactful innovation to new and existing programmes.

## CFO3

The HMPPS Co-Financing Organisation Round 3 (CFO3) contract across fourteen prisons is part of a national programme co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

As part of the programme, in the last year, we developed the Discovery Wing Project at HMP Risley. The 6-month programme focuses on resettlement, teamwork and fostering a sense of community within a prison-based setting.

Participants on the programme include veterans, care leavers and those with limited family ties. The programme model is likely to be an important part of future CFO provision nationally.

*\*From June 2023, Achieve North West Connect is known as Achieve.*

# CASE STUDY

## Bespoke careers support for veterans and others: Discovery Wing Project



**The CFO Discovery Wing Project is delivered by Achieve in partnership with staff at HMP Risley and is part funded by the European Social Fund. The bespoke programme is designed to help armed services veterans and other hard-to-reach prisoners access support both in custody and in the community, as they prepare for release.**

The 27-week wrap-around programme combines self-development activities, practical support, and access to networks upon release, to help prevent re-offending.

Participants have been linked up with post-release support from charities such as Veterans HQ and Care After Combat and been referred to self-employment advisers. They also meet regularly with their Community Case Workers before release to build a rapport, helping to keep the participant engaged with support once they leave custody.

The programme has three phases:

### Phase 1:

- Motivation and goal setting
- Individual and group sessions
- Disclosure advice
- Stress management
- Mindfulness and coping strategies
- Benefit advice and housing support
- Job searching techniques and interview preparation
- College/university applications
- Volunteering opportunities
- Managing the outside world

### Phase 2:

- Learning new skills through working in the Bike Workshop.

### Phase 3:

- Engaging in community activities for the benefit of the prison estate.

Each week participants undertake meaningful activities on a Friday. This has included creating displays for the wing, and painting and building furniture which has been used throughout the prison. Activities such as quizzes and a 5K run have received excellent participant feedback.

So far, 135 people have participated in the project, with 69 of those released from prison. Out of that 69, 23 have secured employment. Seven participants have moved into an Open Prison due to their progress on the project.

A new cohort is now underway, with 20 new participants.

## Participant feedback

..... “ “ .....

*“...the course is brilliant and helps a lot for lads who need help on release. The staff on this course are great teachers and do the job, which is challenging most of the time, but they handle the lads great. The CFO Discovery Wing is good and the staff are fair and will go out their way to help. I think my life has taken a positive turn because of the staff. Thank you.”*

*“Adam, Hannah and Katie have been very helpful in giving me ideas for when I get released as I was wanting to do the course last year but I didn't have long left, but as I was recalled I applied to come straight on the course to help me more for when [I am] released.”*

*“I found the course very helpful, with up-to-date info. It helped me [think about] work on release, construction, HGV, jobs I thought I couldn't have got. Disclosure and CV helped.”*

*“The staff have always been real. Treated me as a person. Honestly, this team works. Thank you.”*

..... ” ” .....

# Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for five prisons in Lancashire and Cumbria, and HMP Manchester

Since 2019, the Achieve team has been delivering IAG services to those at the end of their sentence in five prisons in the Lancashire and Cumbria region, and to HMP Manchester.

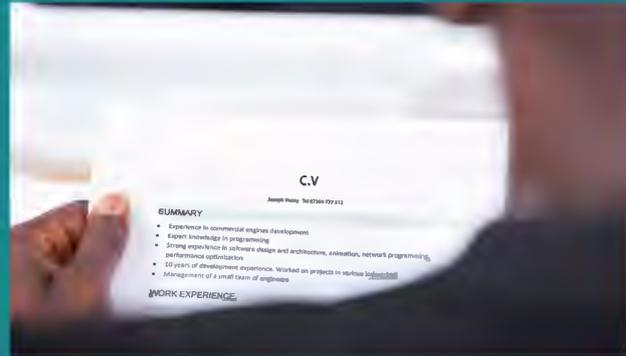
In the last year, our teams of advisers have been a key partner in the development of employment hubs across the prison estate, as part of a national effort to increase the number of people finding employment at the end of their sentence.

Key to our approach is an understanding of the local labour market, provision of practical, employment-focused support to people approaching the end of their sentence and building strong relationships with employers.



Our teams play a critical role in sourcing vacancies and brokering relationships between employers and clients. Our teams work in close coordination with the other prison Employment Hub agencies, to ensure that opportunities for employment are maximised.

In 2022/23, the five prisons we work with in **Lancashire and Cumbria had the highest proportion nationally of men moving into employment within six weeks of the end of their sentence** and has seen numbers grow year-on-year since 2019.



In HMP Manchester, despite the continued challenges of Covid in the first half of the year, we were able to commence delivery of an IAG qualification to a group of prisoner mentors, meaning they can support other prisoners with Careers Information, Advice and Guidance.

## Participant feedback

*'What I really appreciated is that Achieve gave me hope but not false promises. If they told me, they would do something then they would do it. They were very honest about my options but also very positive....always looking forward to what I could do, and how to improve my chances.'*

Achieve client, 2023.

*'Achieve ensure that we get good people and the candidates that they send us are often a better fit for our vacancies than those we get from elsewhere. All have done well here, and most are still with us.'*

Employer, working with Achieve since 2020.

*'It is really good that Achieve keep in touch and are asking about vacancies that we need to fill and putting forward good people for them. You never get the sense that they have just sent us somebody for the sake of it, or to tick a box.'*

Employer, working with Achieve since 2022.

# Greater Manchester Integrated Rehabilitative Services in **Education, Training and Employment.**



**This was our first full year of delivery of the programme in partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester Probation Service.**

The programme has Key Workers in all probation offices across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. Working closely with probation staff, the project aims to support people on probation into employment or training. By the end of March 2023, the programme had **enrolled 2115 participants** and had **moved 495 of these into employment or training provision.**

Over the past year, we have developed closer links with the Probation Wellbeing Hubs, integrating our job clubs into this wider provision. Working in partnership in this way means that people on probation can access additional support as well as the learning and work opportunities that we offer.

During this year, we were able to offer an additional service, supporting prisoners from HMPs Styal, Forest Bank and Hindley to access our service at an earlier point in their sentence and for them to have Education, Training or Employment (ETE) already planned for their release subject to their licence with Greater Manchester Probation Service.

## CASE STUDY

# The right tools to move on



### Achieve GM ETE Key Worker Richard explains how he supported Kevin, who was on probation, to move into a role in the construction industry.

Richard said:

"Kevin was recently released from custody when I began working with him in probation. He was eager to progress and get into work in the construction industry, so I began by providing some industry advice, and explaining how a CSCS card (Construction Skills Certification Card) could help equip him in his job search.

"I referred him to a three-week CSCS course, delivered with one of our partners. This included CSCS training, and supporting elements such as employability and money advice. I was also able to help him access funding for the CSCS practice app, so that he could revise for the test.

"During the final days of the course, Kevin was supported to create a new CV and he used this to apply for a job as a labourer. He was successful with his application and began a two-week volunteer role with another of our community partners.

"I stayed in regular communication with Kevin during the course, and also organised food bags, a ruck sack and a sleeping bag when he had need of these.

"Through the GM ETE beneficiary fund, we were able to provide Kevin with PPE equipment for the construction industry, including boots, hard hat, and hi-vis clothing. Without this, he wouldn't have been able to take on the volunteer role.

"Kevin successfully completed the volunteering period and as a result was offered full-time employment.

"The combination of guidance and practical support helped keep Kevin engaged and motivated to move forward."

# new leaf

a torus foundation service

**We were one of several partners working with the Torus Foundation, supporting offenders from across Warrington and Cheshire who want to move away from offending through supporting them into work and training.**

The programme was funded through the ESF and the Community Lottery Fund, and over the last year made a positive contribution to 131 people, ensuring that they are contributing to local communities and the regional economy.

This year, we were able to add a 'through the gate' component to the service, creating immediate links with those who are very recently released from prison.



## springboard

**Springboard is an employment and skills programme to support people living in the Cheshire and Warrington area, led by the Torus Foundation.**

We began working in partnership with Torus and other providers in October 2021. Through Springboard, we have worked with adults and young people across Cheshire East to support them into employment, with 378 adults enrolled in the programme by March 2023.

This contract increased its client base significantly this year. One of our advisors has developed significant expertise in working with the Afghan and Ukrainian communities in East Cheshire, working with individuals to help them secure employment.

## Participant feedback

**“**You helped me set up my CV and gain the confidence to apply for the job. It's been years since I've had a job because I was procrastinating and after a while I didn't have the confidence...you didn't put too much pressure on me but the right amount to help me get my thoughts together to gain the confidence to move forward.”

Springboard participant

**His self-esteem, self-belief, and independence has improved under your guidance and understanding. D's communication skills have developed under your coaching, and he has successfully completed and passed his CSCS. This has increased his self-worth, his confidence and has further increased his employment opportunities.”**

On behalf of a New Leaf participant

# Social Value: bringing positive change through how we do our work

For the first time, Career Connect has calculated the social value that it generates, in addition to the impact that we have through our contracted services.



In the **fiscal year 2022/23** we generated an **additional £8.8m** in **social value**

Social value encompasses the broader positive impact organisations create in the communities in which they operate. It considers social, economic, and environmental outcomes and quantifies the benefits organisations bring to society as a whole. Crucially, it captures the value organisations generate beyond what they are paid to deliver.

For third sector organisations like Career Connect, where social value is integral to the services provided to schools, local authorities, and prisons, measuring and demonstrating this value presents a unique challenge.

In the United Kingdom, social value has become a crucial consideration for those bidding for government-funded contracts, especially in the public sector.

To estimate Career Connect's social value in monetary terms, we utilized the TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, and Measures) calculator, a standardised tool developed by Social Enterprise UK and the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO).

The TOMs framework allows for the consistent measurement and reporting of social value outcomes. By identifying relevant themes, outcomes, and measures specific to various sectors and areas of our work, the calculator provides a methodology for quantifying the monetary value of social value outcomes.

Using the TOMs calculator, we can see that the social value that we produce has come through:

- Promoting local skills and employment through the creation of apprenticeships, training opportunities and providing a Real Living Wage to our staff
- Supporting responsible regional business growth through our support for mental health and wellbeing initiatives, equality and diversity, both for Career Connect and our local supply chains
- Cultivating healthier, safer, and more resilient communities; and through our Beneficiary Fund
- Decarbonising and safeguarding our environment through a range of initiatives to reduce our environmental impact.

Additionally, our collaboration with Positive Planet involves establishing a baseline and action plan for assessing our environmental impact and a measurable carbon reduction plan, to help us reach net zero by 2035. We will be tracking and reporting on progress against this baseline.







**Find out more:**

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