



Impact Report

2020-21

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A Thank You from our CEO



Barry Fletcher

Chief Executive Officer

“ We will always believe that our mission is to help everyone to realise their full potential, as that is at the heart of what we do.

When I joined the charity during the first lockdown, I couldn't have guessed what this year would bring. Throughout, we have continued to deliver every service that we would normally offer, albeit adapting to digital ways of working. We have changed some of our services fundamentally after delivering in the same way for almost 20 years, but our team has done an amazing job in doing so.

As for all organisations, the ability to be able to shift to a digital way of working this year has been crucial. This includes not only our delivery but maintaining organisational links. We have introduced Connect My Career, our new digital service offer. We have developed our strategy and a new vision and mission which has been important in order to reinvigorate the direction of the charity.

We have committed and invested more into the journey of evaluating our services, including how we can improve these and better support others.

Ultimately, we want to be able to share, learn and develop to ensure we can evidence our impact. This year we have played an essential part in the wider support for young people through the pandemic. We have also been heavily involved with other organisations to embed policy recommendations to address the youth unemployment crisis and ensure that young people aren't left behind as the evidence may suggest is likely.

In practice we have contributed to this by recruiting young people into our own Kickstart scheme, and it has been great to see this come to fruition. Despite the challenges the pandemic has brought there have been core important elements of our services which haven't changed, such as building a rapport and developing trusting relationships with young people, adults and those involved within probation and prison services.

We have and will always believe that our mission is to help everyone to realise their full potential, as that is at the heart of what we do.

Although we have been able to replicate elements of our services digitally, face to face and personal interaction, especially with those individuals who have greater challenges and barriers to success in life remains important. As an organisation, we have made sure over the last year people were supported despite extenuating circumstances. We will support people to navigate positions that they didn't expect to be in, no matter who they are. I believe that we, as a charity, now have a significant part to play to ensure that recovery from COVID is both successful and crucially, a more inclusive one.

I would also like to say a massive thank you to our dedicated teams who have gone above and beyond this year to support our participants. Their support for young people and adults is never more needed.

A Thank You from our Deputy CEO

“With the commitment of our people, we have risen to the challenge and made it a truly successful year!”

Sheila Clark

Deputy Chief Executive Officer



If you look back over the past year and what was happening in global terms with the Covid-19 pandemic, we, as a whole charity, have made real progress. For us this period also coincided with a change in senior leadership, a new CEO and other senior members of staff who joined during the pandemic. This meant we were adapting, not only to a change in the work we do, driven by the pandemic, but also to a new vision and mission for the future, underpinned by a new growth strategy. With the commitment of our people, we have risen to the challenge and made it a truly successful year!

One of the major challenges we had to overcome during this period, was being able to demonstrate to our commissioners that we could deliver equally well digitally. This was a major transition for a service that has been traditionally predominantly face to face. What I could see, right from the start, and therefore evidence to our commissioners, partners and stakeholders, was the agility of our people to adapt, develop and deliver the best possible service across all areas of our work, with their usual passion

and dedication and I thank each and every one of them for their contribution.

This included our Education and Business team across their work in over 160 schools, our Local Authority teams supporting young people across eight Local Authority areas, our colleagues supporting adults as part of the National Careers Service and those delivering our Achieve North West Connect, New Leaf and HMPPS IAG services within prisons and probation centres. We have definitely seen our teams grow and become more confident in the use of new technology and that is something we will build on moving forwards. Although it has been a challenging time, we will capture the learning that can help us develop the best service we can possibly offer moving forwards.

The need for current, unbiased, high quality and informed careers advice and guidance has never been more important. I know that we can demonstrate the impact we have made as a charity and how important it is, that as a nation, we prioritise giving young people and adults the

confidence and skills to get back into education, work or further training after the effect the crisis has had on people's future ambitions.

We know that young people and adults, particularly the most vulnerable and those who are the furthest from the labour market, can struggle with motivation when they feel like there are no opportunities out there for them. I believe Career Connect can have a real impact in changing lives for the better. I think now more than ever we need to make sure we continue to have good engagement with those we serve and move forward with blended channels of service delivery, to ensure we support as many people in our communities as possible, in new and innovative ways.

Executive Summary



Career Connect are a charity that helps young people and adults to achieve their potential by providing high quality, professional career, employment, and training services.

Our Vision

A society where every individual realises their potential

Our Mission

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

Our vision and mission are supported by our values and how we operate as a charity with each of our services underpinned by these principles in order to achieve the best possible employment, education and training outcomes for individuals and organisation that work with us.

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

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

Aspirational We are committed to raising aspirations and achieving a greater level of social mobility

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

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

Our Key 2020-2021 Successes

- We have worked with 64,716 people across the North West
- This includes 1,468 offenders of whom 12% were supported into employment outcomes
- Delivery across 160 schools (to 27,686 students) across a variety of online and digital adaptations
- Our work with local authorities saw undertake substantial interventions with 26,881 young people
- Our National Careers Service worked with 8,388, 37% of whom moved into an employment or accredited learning option
- We trained 293 staff across a variety of organisations including internal staff, local authorities and schools

Careers Services in Schools

The Gatsby Benchmarks

In 2014, Sir John Holman created the Gatsby Benchmarks based on international research⁰¹ which were launched in the Government's Careers Strategy for England (2017).⁰²

These eight benchmarks were designed to support schools to provide the best possible Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), and give students the opportunity to make informed decisions about their future career pathway.

Improving careers guidance in schools through the achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks has a positive impact on student outcomes (e.g., knowledge, qualifications, engagement in education), attitudes and career aspirations (International Centre for Guidance Studies, 2021).⁰³ In turn, encouraging students career aspirations and supporting them into careers they are passionate about increases the likelihood of positive social, financial and health outcomes in adulthood (Career Development Institute, 2019).⁰⁴



Education and Business at Career Connect

Our Education and Business offer is aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks in order to make it easier for the 160 schools we have worked with this year to achieve these to an excellent standard as evidenced by the team's customer survey maintaining a 100% satisfaction rate.

This includes 120 contracted schools and another 40 through funded projects. We have provided high quality CEIAG that supports student engagement and improves

transitions to appropriate post-16 years Education, Employment and Training (EET) opportunities to 27,686 students in 2020/21. Given the recent global pandemic, now more than ever, it is essential that students are supported to explore their EET options to make confident and informed choices about their future careers. The services we offer are professional, inspiring, and tailored to the individual needs of each school and utilise our three-step model.

1 Partnership to ensure services are personalised to school and student needs by designing and co-producing CEIAG.

2 Understanding the goals, aspirations, and challenges of individual students by breaking down personal and institutional barriers to support career ambitions.

3 Enhancing links to employers who are as passionate about supporting young people as we are to give students the knowledge, they need to succeed in a competitive post-COVID world.

Services Include:

- i. personal guidance and coaching to ensure students maximise their potential,
- ii. continuous personal development for school staff to embed CEIAG into subjects, confidently, and competently,
- iii. deliver the Quality in Careers Standards Award,
- iv. our Get Connected digital offer provides an online platform to enable students of all age groups to explore their careers options as appropriate to their educational stage,
- v. providing up to date labour market information through training and resources to highlight options in an ever changing post-COVID world,

- vi. a student focus on mental toughness and wellbeing to increase coping skills, resilience and confidence in future learning and work options,
- vii. high quality work experience places which raise skills and aspirations,
- viii. careers fairs and events encouraging employee interactions.

COVID-19 whilst posing challenges has also offered Career Connect the chance to adapt to virtual service delivery in order to ensure continued support for students and schools whilst adhering to social distancing and prioritising everyone's safety. For example, between January and March (2021) 16 careers events were delivered online which were attended by 2,307 students, supported by 160 employers leading to 10,391 employer encounters.

We have also delivered the Careers Enterprise Companies (2018)⁰⁵ Personal Guidance 1 and 2 programmes to 3,666 and 350 students respectively to support them to make informed choices about their futures through Professional Advisers. We have also delivered the Careers Enterprise Fund (2018)⁰⁶ virtual wallet areas approach to 2,800 students which included events such as jobs for tomorrow, employability interviews and masterclasses and careers fair events during 2020-2021.



Case Study

CASE STUDY

Game Academy is a web-based programme of careers-related activities aimed to help individuals use the games they love to find work and understand what it means to be employable.

Career Connect and Game Academy have developed a partnership to support computer gamers recognise their skills, aptitudes, and interests, and deliver careers information, advice, and guidance to their users. This has helped young gamers “level up” in life as part of National Careers Week.

The Education and Business team were keen to develop this partnership as it provides an opportunity to interact with Game Academy users via a different digital platform and was not bound by geographical location or physical proximity. A strategy for increasing reach, engagement and impact was developed that included monthly live streams on Twitch (an online platform which allows users and broadcasters to share creative content). This enabled Career Connect to interact with lots of users and respond immediately to any support needs.

Team Manager Chloe Elliott and Careers Adviser Paul Williams volunteered to facilitate the sessions as both had a keen interest in using different types of technology to encourage interaction with those using our services. They have since developed two interactive sessions aimed at computer gamers. The first focused upon the labour market and the skills needed to be employable. The second on CV's, job searches and managing recruitment artificial intelligence (programmes used within hiring processes to quickly screen potential employees).

Both live streams had over 50 live participants and 100 additional views after the event. The sessions covered facts and figures, the different types of skills which can be developed using computer games and how this translates into employability.

A key theme which came from the interactive discussion was that gamers wanted to be provided with reassurance that looking for and competing for work is not easy. It was important to recognise that there is rejection in the job search process which can have a negative impact on self-confidence. Therefore, different ways to maintain wellbeing during emotionally challenging periods of life were also discussed.

“ We were thanked by those attending for our support in rebuilding their confidence.

Chloe Elliott

Education and Business – Team Manager



The feedback we had from Game Academy and their users was really positive, we were thanked by those attending for our support in rebuilding their confidence.

It provided us with a brilliant opportunity to test our own delivery methods and skills by using the new technology at our disposal to interact with and help people that we may never have come across before.

Thanks to the success of live streams we are going to continue to work in partnership, this time taking the Game Academy offer into local schools.

Together we have developed a pilot programme aimed at pupils who are disengaged from learning but have a keen interest in computer gaming and the careers this could lead to. Once this work is completed and evaluated, we will be able to disseminate the learning to other schools and colleges. With the hope that this will then mean we will be able to offer an interesting opportunity for young people to think about their career options whilst also addressing skills gaps currently faced by the UK.

CASE STUDY

Anecdotal conversations with our students and research by organisations like the Princes Trust (2020)⁰⁷ have suggested young people report increased feelings of anxiety (43%) and fears for their future employment (49%) since the implementation of national lockdown restrictions.

Having seen articles on the Careers Development Institute website⁰⁸ about the effects of careers guidance on mental health, Steven Leach (one of our Careers Advisers in Warrington) decided it would be interesting to explore if career development interventions positively affect young people's perception of their future employment prospects in his own work.

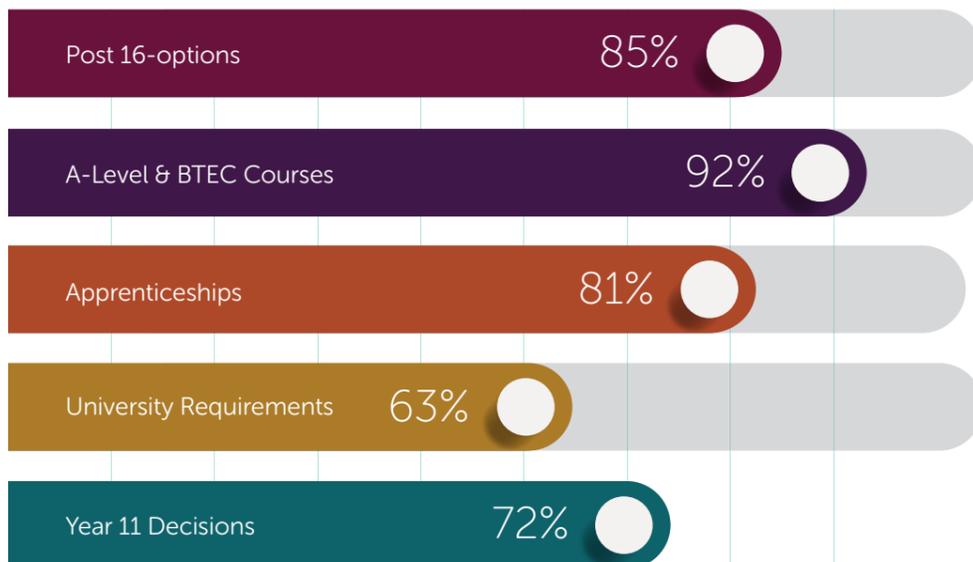
Steven gave a presentation to all students emphasising the importance of careers guidance, followed up with a groupwork activity that looked in more detail at their career aspirations focusing on career & labour market information and decision making. Steven collected feedback from over 125 Year 10 pupils following these careers guidance activities at their school.

The number of students who stated that they were "optimistic" or "very optimistic" about their employment prospects rose significantly after receiving the intervention from 41% to 72% after receiving the careers intervention.

Similarly, the majority of students reported after the intervention they had a better understanding of their options in a number of areas

Graph 1: Presenting the increased understanding our Year 10 students at a school in Warrington following careers guidance at their school

Students reporting increased understanding.



The impact of careers guidance on mental health really crystallised for me recently.

A student said to me that her career aim was to get a "stable job." She told me how apprehensive she felt about her employment prospects. Clearly the disruption caused by the pandemic, missing months of classroom-based learning, the experience of having relatives furloughed or laid off and constant stream of negative headlines had taken its toll.

The results of the student feedback confirmed my long-held belief that career development activities are overwhelmingly positive for young people, not just in economic terms, but also for motivation, mental health, and wellbeing. The conclusion can only be that careers advice can't start soon enough for most young people."

Steven Leach, Careers Advisor

Support for Young People

 Choosing a career can be a complex task for young adults who may find it difficult to make career decisions due to the perception of uncertainty and concerns that they make a choice which is not right for them (Trevor-Roberts et al., 2019)⁹.

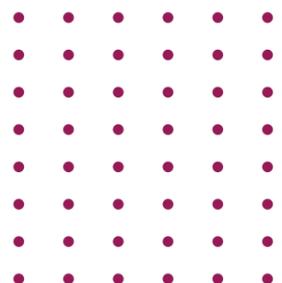
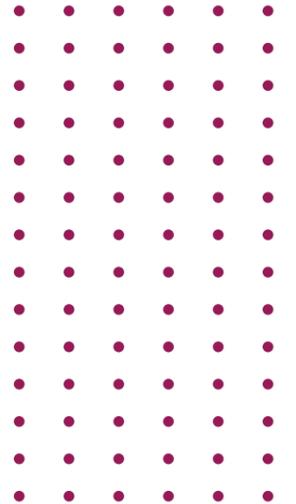
Even before the pandemic there were advances in use of digital technologies (Susskind & Susskind, 2015)¹⁰, shifts in career paths (McElroy & Weng, 2016)¹¹ and a rise in concerns about psychological wellbeing in adolescents and young adults (Gunnell et al., 2018)¹² all contributing to changes in anticipated career paths and trajectories. This highlights the importance of providing careers guidance and support to help them navigate a changing careers landscape, present opportunities and information, and make the best decisions for themselves.

At Career Connect we understand the importance of supporting young people to recognise, access, and engage with the best possible employment and training opportunities for them.

We currently have teams working in partnership with local authorities in Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Sefton, St. Helens, and the Wirral to help young people identify and access appropriate education, employment and training opportunities. This often means providing information on labour market intelligence, supporting the development of practical employability skills such as job searches, CV writing, college and university applications and interview techniques.

However, our work also includes a variety of interventions which focus on psychological and wellbeing outcomes and overcoming personal barriers as some individuals need more encouragement than others. Career Connect aim to increase engagement with learning and work opportunities by improving young people's confidence, optimism, and self-esteem. This is achieved by our trained and qualified Coaches, Careers Advisors, and Engagement Workers through the use of motivational and resilience building techniques, and the development of trusting and understanding relationships.

Throughout, 2020/21 Career Connect provided substantial interventions to over 25,000 young people across our local authority contracts.



The impact of our work can be seen by the excellent feedback we regularly receive from young people and their parents.

“

I could not have applied for university if it wasn't for you.

My application would have most likely been done wrong. Not only did you help me set it up, but you also helped me understand what everything means.

”

...

Young Person,
University applicant

“

Thank you so much for helping me through these tough months.

Part of me wishes I was still looking for a job because you are so kind. You were a real help for the interview, and it looks like your advice worked as I got the job!

Thank you again.

”

...

Young Person,
Struggling to find employment in a labour market affected by COVID

“

I can't begin to tell you the impact our Career Connect Advisor has had on my son, it's phenomenal.

”

...

Parent of Young Person,
With Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Electively Home Educated

“

He's a new child! . .

He's been in touch with [a career's advisor] from Liverpool and he's really looking forward to it. You are wonderful and the first person he's engaged with.

Thank you so very much.

”

...

Parent of Young Person,
Experiencing depression, anxiety, and social isolation

Why Support for NEET Young People is Important to Us

The most recent labour market statistics state that at the end of the 2020/21 financial year there were 728,000 young people classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK (ONS, 2021).¹³

Supporting young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET is important as it is estimated that this costs the government approximately £2.7 billion in benefits each year (EIF, 2016).¹⁴

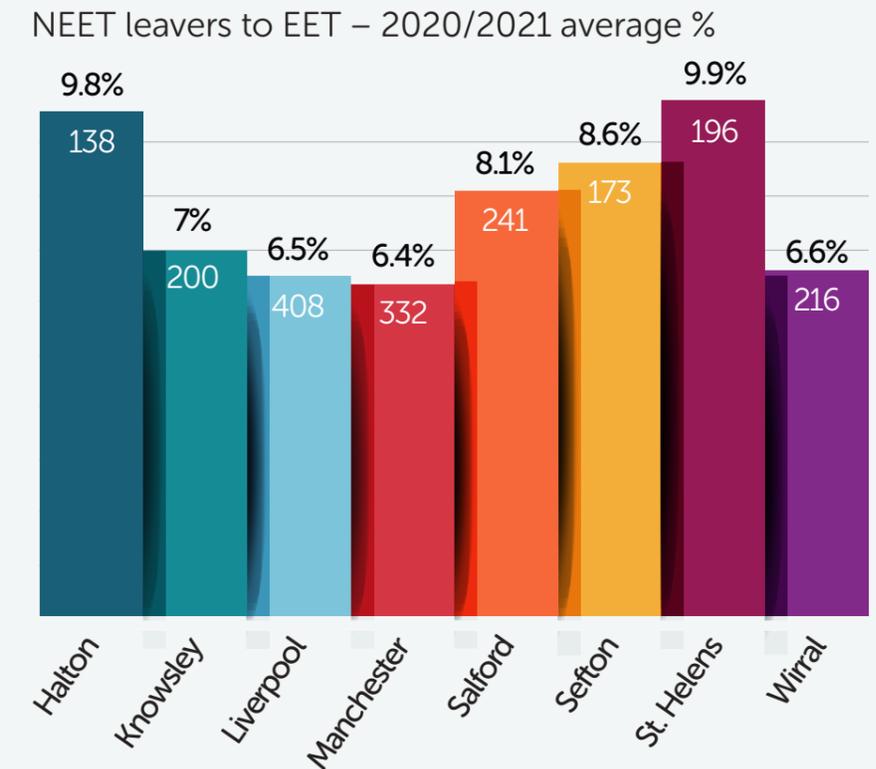
Similarly, NEET young people also experience poorer social, physical and mental health, and financial outcomes than those who are engaged in education, employment or training (PHE, 2014).¹⁵ This is particularly important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are twice as likely as those from areas of higher socioeconomic status to become NEET, and more likely to remain there reducing the likelihood of positive future outcomes (Impetus, 2019).¹⁶

Despite face to face delivery being limited there is evidence to suggest that using careers websites through online information, advice, guidance and counselling, and delivery in a virtual world still leads to positive career outcomes such as decidedness and self-knowledge (The Careers Enterprise Company, 2017).¹⁷

In 2020-21 Career Connect supported 4,211 young people in to Education, Employment or Training opportunities

The impact that Career Connect have had can also be evidenced through exploring the 16-17 year old not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) leavers data.

Graph 2: Presenting NEET to EET progression of young people across the areas we work



Graph 3: Presenting the NEET to EET leavers in comparison to both North West and National averages in 2020-2021



CASE STUDY

In Sefton, Career Connect have continued to adapt engagement strategies and delivery of services to meet the needs of young people throughout COVID alongside Sefton council.

The Sefton NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service commissioned by Sefton LA, has a strong focus upon young people in vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children (LAC), with Education Health Care (EHC) plans, young carers, teenage mothers, and young people involved with Early Help services, including Electively Home Educated or those involved in the Youth Justice system. Many of these young people are the most vulnerable young people in our society, often with complex lives, many living unstructured and isolated lives outside mainstream society and beyond the reach of education, employment, and training. Subsequently increasing their risk of being or becoming NEET.

Sefton's flexible, accessible, and inclusive careers information, advice, guidance, and coaching supports young people at critical transition points to decide their futures. A client centred approach frequently challenging stereotypes on what they can achieve and raising aspiration to overcome barriers to improve outcomes, developing employability skills for priority groups at risk of NEET.

Our Service Manager Sarah Vaughan who leads the Sefton NEET reduction and Early Intervention Service recently won the Career Development Institutes Career Services Manager of the year (2021) award. In just three years, Sarah and her team have reduced the total cohort of young people not in education, employment or training in Sefton by 35%. Out of 151 Local Authorities in England, Sefton in October 2020 ranked fourth for its performance in NEET and Not Known. This result is particularly impressive because nearly 20% of all the young people supported by Sarah and her team are identified as being vulnerable and need more intensive and specialist support. Sarah has delivered an exemplar of best practice that supports Career Connects social mobility mission by designing and delivering services for young people in Years 9, 10 and 11 working with those most at risk of becoming disengaged as early as possible. Sarah and her team also work intensively with those young people in Year 11 as they reach a key transition point in their education, employment and training options where there are long-term implications for the future careers.



“ The Sefton team have shown perseverance, delivering excellent careers information, advice and guidance to make a sustainable difference.

Sarah Vaughan

Service Manager for Sefton



In Sefton we are passionate about supporting young people. Staff have developed excellent partnerships to ensure our work is co-ordinated and informed.

This means that young people and families do not have to continually repeat their story of the barriers they are facing. Sefton staff build trusting relationships with young people and their families, by delivering high quality careers information, advice and guidance and always fulfilling the actions agreed.

The team has a flexible and responsive approach, which meets the varied needs of the young people and families we support, achieving excellent outcomes.

Throughout the pandemic, the Sefton team have looked for new ways to work with young people and, when possible, has continued to home visit those most vulnerable young people for whom a virtual service was not enough.

The Sefton team have shown perseverance, delivering excellent careers information, advice and guidance to make a sustainable difference; supporting young people to progress and remain in education, employment or training creating real change.

CASE STUDY

A digital divide has existed for some time and Career Connect is acutely aware of its impact on young people. The divide has become particularly stark over the past 12 months of the pandemic.

Many young people have found that their only route to socialising, learning and job seeking is through technology and as such, those without access to the hardware and connectivity required, soon find themselves isolated with barriers to even the most basic tasks.

The BBC's Make a Difference: Give a Laptop campaign inspired our Careers Advisers located in various community locations across the Wirral to focus on the accessibility of digital technology and ensure that our young people have access to all possible education, employment and training opportunities.

Zen Tec Network Solutions asked businesses and individuals to donate any used or unwanted desktops, monitors, laptops and tablets which were still in working order to be refurbished and given to North West families with children and young people who could not afford computers to help with their studies, applications for further education, and employment options.



One of our Careers Advisers, Andy Cannell played a significant role in the collection and distribution of such technology, making it possible for the young people he has worked with to achieve the best possible outcomes, despite significant adversity due to socio-economic disadvantage and the impact of COVID.

He is an excellent example of the passion and commitment of Career Connect staff to improving outcomes for young people above and beyond their employment.

In addition, Career Connect has committed to donating any laptop or computer we are replacing in the Charity to Zen Tec so they can be refurbished and given out to Young People across the areas we deliver our services.

“The amazement when you say, “No you don’t have to give it back”, it’s clear no one has given them something like this before, it’s more than a laptop it’s a chance to change.

Andy Cannell

Careers Advisor



For the last few years, we have morphed into a new technological age. Access to the internet through up to date devices enables the young people we work with to keep in touch with society, explore their own personal needs and interests as well as accessing EET opportunities.

When I first heard about the opportunity through Zen Tec I knew it was a great venture and something that could really support people we work with day to day. So many families have access to a device, but these might be shared between three children trying to do homework, look at social media and college opportunities depending on their age.

Laptops provide young people with a whole new empire. But Zen Tec didn't have a donation or drop off point in the North West as we were all on

lockdown so I volunteered my own address, socially distanced of course.

The people donating them range from retired people who have upgraded laptops to ex-university students who now get them through their jobs and want to help other people achieve their potential. It just shows an unbelievable community spirit and getting to see both sides from those who donated and then those receiving them makes all the extra bits we do as a team on top of our regular jobs worthwhile. In total we have given out around 40 devices.

The faces on the parents makes you want to cry. The amazement when you say, “no you don’t have to give it back,” it’s clear no one has given them something like this before, it’s more than a laptop it’s a chance to change.

One of the ones which I think I will always remember is a young lad who wouldn't engage. He came in with his hood up but we managed to get him talking about music. He said he wasn't good with words but the music he produced was almost poetic. His face lit up when he talked about what he was passionate about even if the lyrics were reflective upon his involvement in gangs and mental health issues. He used one of the laptops to apply for jobs but also further his own interest in music through different types of software.

His mum got in touch with me and said, “he’s a new person.” It seems amazing how much good progress we can make in terms of education, employment and training opportunities with a simple fix like a laptop which literally transforms an individual and contributes to a spiral of positivity.

CASE STUDY

Co-location of Careers Services in Manchester

Over the last three years Career Connect has been working with Manchester City Council to provide a NEET support and prevention service. Career Connect and Manchester City Council co-designed a new service delivery model which included the co-location of staff members into teams which support young people who are NEET or most at risk of becoming NEET (e.g., those engaged with Pupil Referral Units, The Endeavour Federation of Social and Emotional Mental Health schools, Youth Justice Teams and Care Leavers Services).

This aimed to reduce barriers to a variety of supportive services, help young people secure appropriate post-16 destinations, and shape the provision of services through closer partnership working. Ultimately, by services supporting each other and providing young people with a combined approach they receive a clearer and simpler service.

Researchers from the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) at the University of Derby were commissioned to provide an independent qualitative evaluation of the model and its implementation in Manchester in order to inform future practice. This evaluation has now been published and is available here (<https://careerconnect.org.uk/research/manchester-co-location-evaluation>)



If we think about the impact of CEIAG on students then we cannot possibly ignore what has happened over that past year and how important planning for the future has become. Supporting people to make successful transitions has always been important, but now in an ever-changing environment it has become more important than ever. Having people co-located has made data sharing easier, they are all now part of the same team, being embedded in organisations means we are not only seen as integral but we can also help to upskill our partners so they can embed careers advice within their own work."

Diane Sproson

Director of Operations for Salford and Manchester

CASE STUDY

Becoming a Kickstart Employee at Career Connect



Despite the challenges of COVID, it has also offered organisations funding opportunities for young people.

An example of which is the Kickstart scheme. This is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) scheme which provides funding to employers to create new job placements for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

Placements take place 25 hours a week over six months and aim to provide young people with the essential skills and workplace experience to lead to sustainable employment.

Kickstart has been created as part of the government's HM Treasury "Plan for Jobs" (2020) initiative to boost job creation in

the UK and support the countries recovery from the coronavirus outbreak.

Career Connect has recruited an initial cohort of ten young people in February (2021). The goal is to recruit up to sixty young people in total, dependent on the duration of the scheme.

Positions will be available in a range of roles, covering community-based delivery (e.g., caseworkers) as well as different corporate services (e.g., training, HR, finance) accounting for business priorities and client preferences.

Our Kickstart employee Olivia Murphy has spoken to us about the impact that this had had on her future career ambitions and employment prospects.



After graduating in the middle of the pandemic, the job market from my perspective seemed very limited. I had a work coach, with lots of my university friends doing this as well to try expand their options. My coach told me about the Kickstart scheme and explained to me what it was and stuff. She looked for opportunities within the North West which is how I found my placement at Career Connect.

I felt it was for right for me at this time because it seemed really well rounded and being six months long, gave me the opportunity to gain work experience until the pandemic was over and the job market got back to something that looked more normal. I was really lucky in that I got to be able to split my time within the research and monitoring information teams. This has given me a broader set of skills to take into future opportunities. I felt thoroughly supported throughout and feel so much more optimistic about my future career."

Olivia Murphy Business Executive for the Research, Monitoring, & Information Team

Careers Support for Adults

As well as working in schools and with young people in local authorities, Career Connect offers a range of careers support for adults and young people through the delivery of the National Careers Service (NCS).

NCS is a service which supports those living or working in England to provide free impartial information, advice, and guidance to help them make decisions about careers.

Often career and skills action plans are developed with the goal of achieving positive job or learning outcomes through face to face, telephone or web-based contact. This may include CV writing, searching and applying for jobs, courses, training schemes and volunteering opportunities and understanding the current labour market depending on individual levels of need.¹⁸

During 2020/21 our NCS team delivered substantial careers, information, advice, and guidance sessions and interventions to **8,388** adults. Of these individuals **1,614** moved into sustainable employment following an intervention within four weeks (**19.2%**) and a further **1,490** in to accredited learning options (**17.8%**). Our team is dedicated to ensuring impact for our customers and completed **5,638** phone calls to monitor and progress individuals further.



people received substantial careers, information, advice, and guidance sessions and interventions

1,614

moved into sustainable employment.

1,490

moved into accredited learning options.

Our team completed 5,638 monitoring and progression calls



The impact of our work can be seen by the excellent feedback we regularly receive from the adults we support.

“

I just wanted to tell you I received the full funding we applied for and it will be a huge benefit for me to regain employment to continue my flying career.

The time you spent with me gave me hope and reassurance. I can't thank you enough.

”

...

NCS participant,
Support for completing applications

“

Those links were really helpful. I've interviewed people myself but it's scary how much information you forget, especially when you are on the other side of the desk. Really can't tell you how much you've helped me. The service you provide is invaluable.

”

...

NCS participant,
Prior professional looking for employment

“

My confidence was rock bottom, just talking to you made me feel like I could have another go – even at my age!

To know you would be there if I hadn't been successful this time round was a huge relief.

”

...

NCS participant,
New career path

“

I honestly can't thank you enough for your help in writing my CV. I'm so happy with my job and your support was a huge part of actually getting it.

”

...

NCS participant,
Practical CV writing support

CASE STUDY

Ellie-May Rawlinson, 18 years old



I first spoke to (a Careers Advisor) from a referral from Jobcentre Plus for a CV and some advice.

I've never had any experience before either paid or unpaid. I had been in foster care for several years before returning to the family home when my baby brother was born prematurely, and my mother was extremely poorly and needed my help. When he was one and she was feeling better I was asked to leave and went to live with my nan, where I have been ever since.

I am not a very confident person and had lost faith in my abilities and it has been difficult to trust people due to my circumstances. I turned 18 during 2020 and needed help in creating a CV and some advice as to what I could do. Although I had not been in employment, I had been a carer for my little brother and we used this on the CV to show that I had been proactive, not doing nothing. She told me about apprenticeships where I can get paid and have a qualification and supported my CV with a careers action plan.

I feel so much more confident and valued. She's even remained in touch with me to make sure I am okay. She emailed me straight back and told me how proud she was of me and that really meant a lot to me.

If I'd not been referred to the service, I honestly don't know what I would have done with my future. I feel I can start my life in the direction I want to go in. I would tell anyone to definitely contact you. I have the belief to move forward. Don't be nervous."



If I'd not been referred to the service, I honestly don't know what I would have done with my future..



Support for Offenders & Ex-Offenders

Why Supporting those in Prisons and Probationary Services is Important to Us

Education, Training and Employment (ETE) opportunities are recognised as a key factor in offender rehabilitation and reducing the likelihood of re-offending.

Meta-analysis have found education in prison settings has a positive impact of recidivism and employment outcomes upon leaving such settings (Ellison et al. 2017).

However, those leaving prison and probationary services can also have additional challenges which require support such as drug misuse (10.5%) and finding stable accommodation (82.7%) in order for them to engage fully in ETE opportunities (HMPPS, 2020).

With national data showing that **only 4%** of prisons have achieved their employment at six weeks post release target, it is important to provide individuals with a variety of vocational training in prison as they are more likely to secure employment shortly after release, an opinion which has been verified by Ofsted (2014).



Career Connects Support for Offenders and Ex-Offenders

Career Connect have multiple programmes which focus upon progressing offenders and ex-offenders closer to the labour market.

We deliver these services through our subsidiary company, **Achieve North West Connect (ANWC)**. We currently deliver the HMPSS Co-Financing Organisation Round 3 (CFO3) contract across the North West which receives funding from the European Social Fund.

One of the core objectives of CFO3 is to improve the ability and opportunity for individuals to take part in society.

The programme focuses on individuals with multiple barriers to employment, such as drug and alcohol misuse, debts, homelessness, amongst a variety of other issues. It focuses on not labelling people as being an unemployed ex-offender rather overcoming specific challenges and issues which may prevent participants engaging with ETE opportunities.

ANWC work with a range of individuals to improve their confidence, increase their motivation and offer long-term employability skills in order to reduce possible re-offending. This ranges from work readiness training such as basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills, CV writing and interview preparation through to soft skills such as team working, communication skills and stress management techniques.



In total ANWC enrolled 1,468 individuals onto the CFO3 programme with 175 people moving into ETE outcomes.

For our New Leaf programme, ANWC also focus on those individuals with multiple barriers to employment. This programme brings together partners across Warrington and Cheshire to change lives, create opportunities and support individuals to make a positive contribution to their community and the local economy through investing in projects which support skills development, employment and social inclusion.

In total, 52 individuals were enrolled on to the programme with 13 achieving positive ETE outcomes upon exit in 2020/21.

Although this is lower than the number of individuals reached (106) and supported to achieve ETE outcomes (52) in 2019/20 it is due to not being able to conduct face to face work in the majority of venues we work in for a large proportion of the year.

As well as the New Leaf and CFO3 programme ANWC also support HMP Manchester, training prisoners to be able to deliver the IAG (Information, Advice & Guidance) service themselves. The Lancashire and Cumbria IAG contract is focused upon those individuals coming to the end of their sentence to ensure they can access employment upon release.

A significant number of prisons access education opportunities and workshops which are more vocational in nature. As we work across a number of contracts we have the ability to cross-refer. For individuals this means they have an extra layer of service and we really can improve outcomes as a charitable organisation.



Training

In addition to our delivery services we also have an experienced training team who deliver high quality qualifications to Career Connect staff and wider organisations.

This year we have supported Housing Associations, Universities, and Local Authorities with their training needs, especially CEIAG training.

We are also a major provider of Careers Leaders training for the Careers and Enterprise Company, supporting teachers to become accredited Careers Leaders in the North West and beyond.

There are four main awarding bodies which Career Connect deliver.

City & Guilds

Level 3 & 4, Advice & Guidance

Institute in Leadership & Management

Level 3, Effective Coaching

Open Awards

Entry Level to Level 2

OCR

Level 4, Careers Information & Advice and Level 6 Careers Guidance & Development



Summary

This report has highlighted the crucial work of the Charity over a very challenging year. We have looked to highlight the stories of our staff, beneficiaries and partners and the impact we have achieved across the areas we work.

Delivering all of our services during the middle of the pandemic has been a massive challenge. However, the passion, creativity, and overall drive of each of our staff has been inspirational. We have still managed to deliver what we know works for people to support them with their education, training, and employment goals.

Changing to a virtual offer has shown us we can adapt, learn and be able to support people in different ways digitally, through our education and business team offering online sessions and training being delivered virtually, to the dissemination of laptops to enable online applications for jobs, education opportunities. We will be incorporating this learning and a new blended approach into our day-to-day delivery models.

We hope this report has shown the incredible work of our dedicated staff over the last year and we look forward to supporting even more young people and adults in the future.



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Impact Report

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