



# Impact Report | 2021/22





# WELCOME

Barry Fletcher,  
CEO, Career Connect



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## WELCOME TO OUR IMPACT REPORT FOR 2021/22

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**The last year has been a significant one for the Charity, with the launch of major new programmes and growth in our work across the North West and beyond.**

Over 2021/22 we have slowly emerged from the restrictions caused by the pandemic and our teams have been focused on supporting young people and adults to make progress in their lives.

We have achieved major success in securing funding for large scale programmes that will allow us to grow our impact and support more people to realise their potential. These successes have included the commencement of a large-scale programme in Greater Manchester to support 3000 young people aged between 15-18 who are NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment) or at risk of NEET to transition into new opportunities.

In addition, also in Greater Manchester, we have begun to deliver a long-term programme supporting individuals who are engaged with probation to progress in education and employment. Both programmes have increased the scale of the Charity. In the case of Greater Manchester, working with NEET young people is a key part of our strategy to develop our work in early intervention.

All these achievements have only been possible through

the exceptional efforts of our expert teams, which have grown significantly during the year, despite the recruitment challenges impacting all organisations. In addition to strengthening our teams, we have been delighted to welcome six new Trustees to the Charity including our first two young Trustees, reflecting our commitment to Youth Voice. The involvement of Young People in our work has been further strengthened this year with our first Youth Voice Coordinator and the development of a Youth Ambassadors group, which will launch officially in early 2023.

In 2021/22 we began one of our first major research projects as part of our commitment to becoming an evidence-led organisation that is contributing to the development of new insights and the piloting of innovative approaches. This research project has focused on how better to support young people who are electively home educated (EHE), especially in terms of transition to employment and further/higher education. We will be publishing our initial research findings in 2022/23, which are based on engagement with EHE families and supporting professionals, with a pilot programme commencing this year.

Throughout the report we will be highlighting both the numbers and the stories behind those we support, which I hope will bring our work to life.

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 of or 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, through services in other languages including Arabic.

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 or 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.



**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.





# In 2021/22 we have:

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Worked with  
**3,647 adults**  
through Achieve  
North West

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

**34,576 young people**  
in schools



Supported  
**8,221 adults**  
through the National  
Careers Service (NCS)

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

**365 people**

across organisations including local authorities, schools and internally



**Employed**

**21 young people**

through the Kickstart programme

Worked with

**20,462 young people**

across our local authority NEET contracts in Career Connect areas.



**That's a total  
of 67,292  
people**

We have a particular focus on young people with vulnerabilities. In the areas where we work, 10% of young people who are NEET have special educational needs or a disability (SEND), and 4.5% are care leavers.

# High-quality careers education for a long-term impact



## High-quality Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is vital in helping young people make important decisions about their future.

The Gatsby Benchmarks have been adopted by government as the world-class standard of CEIAG provision in education. The benchmarks are enshrined in statutory guidance and schools are responsible for ensuring their delivery.

Evaluation of school performance against the Gatsby benchmarks has shown that, as CEIAG provision in schools improves, young people are more likely to achieve sustained destinations with benefits for themselves, employers and for society. In the most disadvantaged schools, the benefits of good careers provision are particularly strong (C.Percy & E.Tanner, 2021).

Career Connect provides tailored Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Services for schools and colleges, helping

them to meet each Gatsby Benchmark and evaluate impact. We do this through:

- Careers guidance from qualified Careers Advisers; supporting young people to reach their potential
- Bespoke group work activities to meet the needs of students across all year groups
- Professional development for school staff to embed Careers Education Information and Guidance (CEIAG) into the curriculum
- Licensed awarding body status for the Quality in Careers Standard
- Providing up-to-date labour market information through training and resources to highlight options in an ever-changing post-COVID world
- High quality employer encounters to raise aspiration and awareness of the opportunities and careers pathways available to young people.

<sup>1</sup>Percy, C. & Tanner, E. 2021. *The benefits of Gatsby Benchmark achievement for post-16 destinations*. The Careers & Enterprise Company.



## CASE STUDY

# Stability through change

## The Mosslands School, Wallasey

The Mosslands School in Wallasey has more than 1100 boys aged 11-19, and a mixed Sixth Form. It became the first school in the region to be recognised as a STE@M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) centre of excellence.

**“The purpose of education is more than league tables or Ofsted,” says Headteacher Adrian Whiteley.**

“It is to ensure that our students have the ambition and skills to thrive in a modern world, to build better futures for themselves and for the wider community. This is reflected in our STE@M status and in our approach to careers provision, where we are supported by Career Connect.”

Five years ago, following the closure of a nearby academy, Mosslands gained a sudden influx of pupils from an area of the community that it had not previously served. Throughout this period of change, Career Connect worked closely with the school to design careers provision that meets the needs of all pupils.

Mr Whiteley adds, “Our increased numbers brought with it a range of challenges. More students meant we also had more children from under-served backgrounds, and more students with additional needs or at risk of NEET.

“We want to ensure that everybody receives high quality careers support, and this includes understanding that not one size fits all. Impartiality is really important to us, and this is central to the work of Career Connect.

“We have seen, for example, a pupil who came to us after being excluded, and at strong risk of NEET,

now studying science at a top university. Another, who seemed destined for the traditional university route, opted instead for a higher-level degree apprenticeship, and is now working for a major consulting company.

“Our Career Connect adviser Kerry has her eye on trends and changes in the world of work, helping us to be responsive and shaping our activity. Mock interviews and industry insights are also invaluable.

“As well as providing guidance for students, Kerry supports our Careers Lead and our wider school CEIAG strategy, organising events, trips and activities, so she is well known around school.

“From experience, I have found that most boys respond better to someone that they know well, so having someone like Kerry, who understands their needs and takes an interest makes a massive difference.

“Despite the challenges we have faced as a school, our NEET figure has remained well below local and regional averages. Our progression figures into higher and further education and into successful employment are among the highest in the North West.

“As a Headteacher, I have a lot of things to think about – but having Career Connect as a partner means I don’t have to worry about our Careers provision.”

# Our Achievements

In 2021/22, the Education and Business team **supported 34,576 young people**, through contracted services to 150 schools, a **25% increase** from 120 schools in 2020/21. .

Although Covid restrictions were still in place at the start of 2021/22, the Education and Business Team maintained contract delivery throughout. They ensured that young people in schools and colleges still had access to face-to-face or virtual careers guidance and support, which is vital in career planning and the transition to their next learning opportunity.

## Digital Careers Guidance

As our Education and Business offer continues to grow, we have been delighted to trial new ways of delivering CEIAG across the UK. We have worked with the London Design and Engineering UTC to offer virtual careers guidance sessions for their year 11 cohort of 100 pupils. This gave each of them the opportunity to meet with a qualified adviser to ensure that they had impartial advice for this transition point in their education. This service proved successful with their quest for zero NEETs to be met..

## Our work with employers

Despite two national lockdowns we have continued to work to bring employers and schools together. In 2021/22 we delivered a range of employer-led activities including work experience, careers fairs, meet the employer sessions and mock interviews.

We provided employer engagement opportunities to 1014 young people, with 102 employers.

## Digital innovation

We have continued to work in partnership with The Game Academy, providing content and

careers advisers who led sessions via Twitch. The sessions covered job search, CVs and improving confidence. During the live streams each session had more than 40 attendees and a further 100 views after the sessions.

## Raising aspirations

We were commissioned by Shaping Futures, under the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) to deliver a programme to inspire and support target ward learners (years 9 – 13), in their priority schools across the Liverpool City Region (LCR), to make informed decisions and navigate the Higher Education landscape.

The *Launch* programme included activities to develop young people's knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding; in preparation for making successful choices and to help manage transition into further learning. Despite restrictions due to the pandemic, these sessions were interactive and took place both online and in schools. Between April and July 2021, our team engaged with 1186 young people across nine schools.

## Promoting quality and growing our offer

We offered a range of free CPD sessions to 135 Careers Leads in schools. These sessions focused on 'what good looks like' in careers provision and meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks. We worked with 17 schools undertaking the Quality in Careers Standard. The Quality in Careers Standard is the national quality award for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning.



## CASE STUDY

### Widening horizons St Cuthbert's School, St Helens

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School is an oversubscribed, voluntary-aided, 11-16 mixed school in St Helens. It has more than 900 students on roll.



**St Cuthbert's places a strong focus on raising aspirations, with careers activities taking place from Year 7 onwards.**

Cath Twist (left), Headteacher of St Cuthbert's, says: "Fostering aspirations and an understanding of career options is extremely important in our context. We want to open our children's minds from day one. Our Career Connect Schools Lead, Alison, is like one of our own staff. She knows our children and is relentless in ensuring they can access everything that they are entitled to in careers provision.

"Alison works with vulnerable students who may find it hard to access post-16 education and arranges transition visits for those not quite ready to move straight on to college or employment. She picks up students who don't attend and engages them in conversations about careers. She ensures nobody is left behind. During the Covid-19 pandemic Alison did everything she could to continue provision.

"It is the attention to detail that stands out – taking every opportunity to spark those conversations and open our young people's eyes to their options. The children, and their parents, also really value the one-to-one careers interviews and her attendance at parents' evenings."

Nikki Ward (right), Careers Lead for St. Cuthbert's adds: "If we are taking children off curriculum to attend an event, it has to be worthwhile, and with Career Connect that has always been the case. Alison organised a very high-quality Jobs for Tomorrow event for Year 7s and Year 9s, and Employer Marketplace events.

"I've undertaken Careers Leader training, offered by Career Connect, which has really helped equip me for my role and allowed me to network with other Careers Leaders. We have also worked with Career Connect on our second Quality and Careers Standard accreditation, which we have in place for the next three years. Having a whole range of services to choose from, from a provider you trust, makes it so much easier.

"Alison is truly embedded into our team. As educators, we all do our best to build careers conversations into lessons, or when we speak to students around school, but Alison brings that all together."

Mrs Twist adds: "Alison - and Career Connect - provide invaluable support, not just for our students as they navigate their futures, but for us as educators as we strive to widen horizons for our young people."

# Supporting Young People

## Supporting transitions from school to further education, training and employment

**Decisions that young people take straight after the end of compulsory schooling have major implications for their future careers and life outcomes.**

It is crucial for young people to continue to develop their skills through work, education or training (Social Mobility Commission, 2022). We know that a young person being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) can have long-term negative effects.

Individuals who spend time NEET are more likely to be unemployed, receive lower wages, have a criminal record, report lower levels of life satisfaction and job satisfaction and suffer from health problems such as depression (T. Richmond & E. Regan, 2022).

In March 2021, there were more than 700,000 16-to-24-year-olds classified as NEET in England. A growing proportion of young people are NEET but not seeking work because of health reasons, particularly mental health. These young people have become harder to reach and support into education, employment or training. (L. Murphy, 2022).

We worked in partnership with local authorities in Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Sefton, St. Helens, and Wirral to help young people identify and access appropriate education, employment and training opportunities. Five of these are among the top 20 areas of high deprivation in England.

In the areas where we work, approximately 50,000 young people turned school age 16 in 2021 and

were making decisions about their next steps in life.

Career Connect engaged with more than 20,000 young people, supporting them with pathways to training, education and employment.

On average, across the Local Authorities where we provide services, we supported 9.5% of NEET young people into employment, education or training, each month.

We continue to innovate in the services we deliver to support young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.

### % of young people supported into employment, education or training:



8.2%

England average



8.7%

North West average

**9.5% within local authorities supported by Career Connect**

<sup>2</sup>Social Mobility Commission 2022, *State of the Nation 2022: A fresh approach to social mobility*

<sup>3</sup>Tom Richmond, Eleanor Regan, 2022, *Finding a NEET Solution: How to prevent young people from falling out of our education system*. EDSK.

<sup>4</sup>Louise Murphy, 2022, *Not working. Exploring changing trends in youth worklessness in the UK, from the 1990s to the Covid-19 pandemic*. Resolution Foundation

## Connecting with employers

### Find your Path

Our Salford Connexions team delivered the innovative Find your Path Programme sponsored by Natwest Bank. Targeting NEET young people in Manchester and Salford, it provided a unique insight into the culture and expectations of the corporate world, aiming to impact positively upon young people's aspirations and levels of motivation. A second cohort to be delivered in Manchester has now been commissioned.



### Build Salford

Career Connect played a key role in the Build Salford Programme, a partnership between Salford Local Authority, Salford City College, key employers

in the construction industry and our charity. The programme received significant recognition for its ability to develop a strong partnership, and the design of a delivery model that resonated strongly with both Salford NEET young people and local and national employers.



### Partnerships promoting equality of opportunity

We continually strive to develop and promote equality of opportunity for young people, and this year we have supported a range of initiatives across Liverpool including:

BAME race equality hub – we attended a number of focus groups and gave advice and feedback on a range of issues that affect young people

Jacobs Engineering – we worked in partnership with the Race Equality Manager at Jacobs and

organisations such as the LCR apprenticeship Hub. We attended a working group and contributed to the development of a BAME apprenticeship framework, aimed at recruiting more BAME candidates into Jacobs vacancies. We promoted this directly to NEET young people and across our community links.

Liverpool John Moores apprenticeship BAME vacancies – we worked in partnership with the BAME manager at LJMU to promote their apprenticeships, setting up an information and support session at Crawford House and promoting the vacancies to BAME young people we work with and within the local community.

# Supporting Young People

## Reducing NEET and Not Known

**Our Career Connect Manchester team had major success in reducing the number of young people whose destinations are 'Not Known', a critical foundation in the provision of effective support to young people.**

The 'Not Known' destination was reduced from 18.4% in October 2021, to 3% in January, and to 1.2% in March 2022. This compares with 3.7% recorded in March 2021.

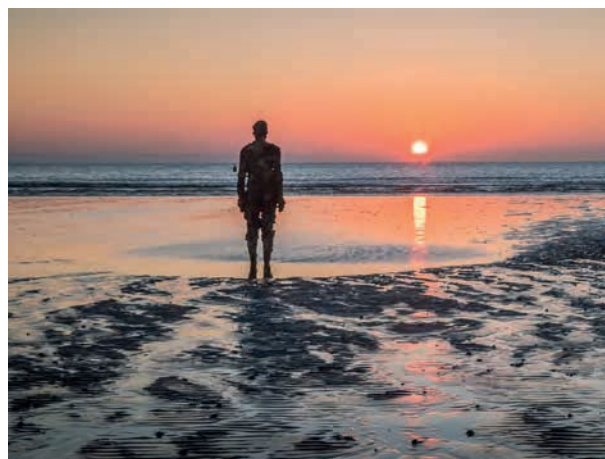
This achievement led to a combined NEET and Not Known figure for March 2022 of 4.6%, compared to 7.6% submitted in March 2021.

Manchester moved up the ranks both in relation to statistical neighbours and geographical neighbours within Greater Manchester. It progressed from a ranking of 24 for National NEET/Not Known in March 2021, to 57 in March 2022 (of 151 Local Authorities where 1 is lowest ranked).

CTYF is an engagement and mentoring programme for 15-19-year-olds in Greater Manchester who have been negatively affected by Covid-19. Many may feel disengaged from mainstream education and support services. Greater Manchester Combined Authority awarded Career Connect £5 million from the European Social Fund to deliver this strand of its NEET and Youth Employment Programme.

The programme provides tailored mentoring and wellbeing support to help young people achieve positive career outcomes. Our Key Workers work with local partners to support young people at key transition points in their career journey, including leaving school or starting college, training or employment.

## Sefton above national and North West average



Career Connect delivers the Sefton NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service, which is funded by Sefton Local Authority, and supports young people who are At Risk of NEET find their way into education, employment or training.

Sefton Local Authority consistently performs higher than the North West and England average for combined 16 and 17 year olds NEET and Not Known.

In October 2021, Sefton was the third-highest ranking for performance in England out of 151 LA's

## Connect to Your Future

A promotional graphic for 'Connect To Your Future'. It features a young woman with curly hair smiling. The text includes: 'Left school? Not sure what your options are?' with a globe icon, 'Connect To Your Future', 'Develop new skills', 'Find the right course for you', 'FREE 1-2-1 mentoring', and 'Improve your confidence'. At the bottom, it says 'Contact us for free support!', '0161 232 7863', 'CTYF@careerconnect.org.uk', and a QR code.

Covid-19 has impacted young people significantly, including missed education, social isolation and anxiety.

In January 2022, we began delivery of the Connect To Your Future programme (CTYF).

at 3.4%. This is a result of Sefton's extremely robust tracking process and enables early identification of young people's destinations and NEET young people.

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## Knowsley Intervention Project

In June 2021 we launched the Knowsley Intervention Project - a new engagement and employability pilot project commissioned by Knowsley MBC to tackle longstanding high levels of NEET in the borough. We completed an initial 6-month pilot, with the project then being extended for a further 18 months.

The project provides an intensive one-to-one, face-to-face service. Young people have included those who are long term NEET, those presenting with complex needs and young people classed as vulnerable. Career Connect also works closely with the Knowsley Looked After Children team to ensure support is integrated.

The project places an emphasis on digital development and the use of technology, introducing young people to the concept of virtual working and interviews. It also helps the young person to develop a deeper understanding of the world of work through employer engagement. Continuous feedback from young people on the programme has helped us shape what we offer.

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## Halton – Working in partnership to support young people at risk of NEET

Our Careers Advisers support the delivery of the Year 11 Vulnerable Case Conference. This is Halton Borough Council's process for identifying and supporting year 11s who are at risk of NEET. We received 54 referrals this year, with many of the young people having low or no attendance at school at the point of referral.

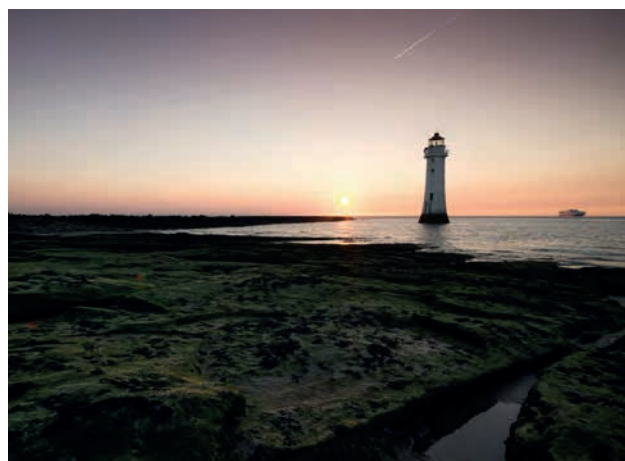
We delivered co-ordinated and intensive support to young people from Easter through to September. This involved gathering background information, multiple visits to the young people's homes (including at evenings and weekends), accompanying young people to visit training providers and colleges, advocating on behalf of young people, and providing practical support such as transportation.



Of the 54 young people referred, 47 made a direct progression to EET with a further two young people since joining EET. Four young people continue to be supported through the partnership. Co-ordinated delivery with partner agencies and engagement with parents and carers is key to our success.

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## Wirral – Developing social media to engage with young people and parents



Following the launch of the Wirral Facebook page in 2020, we have continued to use the platform to help raise awareness of our services, encourage participation from young people and support career choices.

During the last twelve months we've used social media to engage with young people and make referrals for Information, Advice and Guidance. We have continued to develop our posts to promote a wide range of opportunities and support available and have reached in excess of 1000 followers.

## CASE STUDY

# Changing direction

Kyle, 20, is working as a Support Worker for Community Integrated Care after accessing support from our team in St Helens.

**"I was doing a construction course, where I achieved a Level 1 in Health and Safety/ Construction Skills. I was waiting to be contacted about my CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card test after the delays with Covid but didn't hear anything for a while and I wasn't really enjoying it."**

Through annual tracking, Career Connect found that Kyle had become unemployed and wasn't claiming any benefits. They gave him a call to offer help exploring his options.

"I'm really glad they reached out to me first, because I was really happy for the help. We had a phone call and spoke about things that I enjoyed and programmes or training that I was interested in. I could have easily stayed on the route of construction to get some money, but I wanted to build a career and I was also looking to get a security SIA (Security Industry Authority) licence.

"My adviser helped me by sourcing different training courses that I could go on. They also made me think about alternative jobs that I could do if security or construction didn't work out. This advice actually led me to the job I am doing now.

"I had to wait for a few of the programmes I wanted to go on. In the meantime, MMA was always something I was interested in, so I decided to try it out to see if I wanted a career in it. I was offered training, but I decided I wanted to be self-taught and went on to complete five matches which were all paid.

"In January 2022, I started my new job as a Support Worker for Community Integrated Care in St Helens, and I'm still working there now. I help people of different ages and with a variety of needs in supported living.

"I feel really positive about my future, and appreciate that Career Connect continued to keep in touch with me to give me support and offer alternative plans for my career. The staff just being there at the other end of the phone made me feel reassured, and it really helped to keep me motivated to find a job. It also made me feel less isolated because I knew someone was there to support me reach my goals and aspiration."



## CASE STUDY

# Building confidence

India, 16, is studying Childcare at Hugh Baird College in Bootle after accessing support from our Sefton Career Connect team.

**“My first contact with Career Connect was in school, when my teacher asked who was struggling to get into college, and she connected me with Steve.**

“He came and spoke to me in school and asked what courses I wanted to do. I was a bit scared at first, because I hated school so much. I used to go in crying a lot because I didn’t want to go in. I was scared that college was going to be the same. I was thinking that I’ll have no mates at college, I’ll get lost, I won’t know what bus to get.

“At first, I didn’t really believe in myself, and I didn’t think I could do anything, but Steve just told me to make sure that I studied hard because he knew I could, and he knew that I would do well. In the end, I actually did get good grades that I’m proud of.

“Steve is a nice person and if you need him, he is always there to talk. When I went into school on results day, me and my mum were saying, ‘we need Steve right now!’ and he just appeared from nowhere! He gave me the extra push I needed to get into college.

“It was very enjoyable working with Career Connect. It helped me to see what my future was, put me on the right path, gave me confidence and it helped with stress. Steve told me, ‘It’s ok, you’ll be fine,’ - and he was right the whole time.

“If I could offer some advice to someone else like me, I would say don’t be scared. It’s all going to be ok. Go to college. Don’t be worried. Everyone is nervous the first day and once that first day is over, you’ll be fine.

“If a teacher asks you do you want to work with Career Connect, do it, because it does help. It helps with confidence, it helps you get into college and to find out which course would suit you, so I’d say just do it.”

# Pathways to employment for those leaving prison

Employment is a key factor in preventing re-offending and helping those leaving prison, and those serving community orders, reintegrate back into their communities.



The recent Prisons Strategy White Paper (Ministry of Justice, 2021<sup>5</sup>) sets out the aspiration that most people leaving prison will be in employment within six weeks of release. It announced continued support for people leaving prison with a range of needs, with employment being a key pillar.

Career Connect supports ex-offenders through our subsidiary company, Achieve North West Connect (ANWC).

Despite the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 that restricted activity with prisons and probation throughout the year, ANWC continued to deliver programmes in innovative ways. In 2021/22 we delivered impactful programmes across 12 prisons in the North-West.

In 2021/22, we provided services to

**3,647 adults**

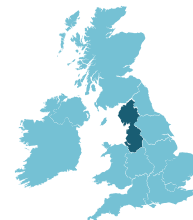
in custody, leaving custody and serving community orders.



Working with

**12 prisons**

and numerous probation offices and approved premises in the North West



<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice, 2021 Prisons Strategy White Paper





We continued to deliver the HMPPS Co-Financing Organisation Round 3 (CFO3) contract across eight prisons in the North-West, as part of a national programme co-funded by the ESF. In 2021/22, we provided support to 1431 men and women through the programme.

The focus of CFO3 is to help offenders move towards mainstream provision or into employment. We do this through addressing their barriers to work through facilitative access to comprehensive support mechanisms appropriate to their individual circumstances and needs.

Offenders are supported through the prison gate into the community, providing continuity on their journey to gaining new skills and employment. We work with the hardest-to-help offenders, ensuring that those who are not currently able to access mainstream provision can be supported to enter employment.

Within the programme, we have run four projects with specific groups facing particular barriers to accessing employment:

- Women with significant drug and alcohol misuse issues
- Men and women with significant mental health needs
- Older offenders, including those reintegrating after longer prison sentences
- Vulnerable women, including those at risk of self-harm/suicide or suffering domestic abuse.

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

In October 2021, ANWC began a new programme in partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester Probation Service. The Greater Manchester Employment Training and Education programme has Key Workers in all probation offices across the 10 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 2022, the programme had moved 32 participants into work, and 73 into training provision. We aim to pilot an innovative approach to through the gate delivery over the course of the next year.

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## Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG): Lancashire, Cumbria and HMP Manchester HMP Manchester IAG

We delivered an innovative employment hub initiative as part of our programme of work with five prisons across Lancashire and Cumbria, in partnership with the New Futures Network. The aim of the programme is to provide employment immediately on release from custody. The delivery model has proven to be very successful and is now being rolled out across the prison estate nationally.

With HMP Manchester, as well as delivering a traditional information, advice and guidance service to men in prison, we also trained prisoner IAG mentors, to level 3 or 4, to deliver IAG to others serving prison sentences.

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## New Leaf

We are one of several partners involved in the New Leaf project, led by Torus Foundation, supporting offenders from across Warrington and Cheshire who want to move away from offending by supporting them into work and training opportunities.

Funded through ESF and the Community Lottery Fund, New Leaf brings together partners from across Warrington and Cheshire to create opportunities and make a positive contribution to local communities and the regional economy.

## CASE STUDY

# Understanding neurodiversity and the transition to employment

Stephen's\* Achieve CFO3 Case Manager and Offender Manager worked together to support him in communicating his additional needs to his training provider.

**Lisa Duckworth, Case Manager from Achieve, says: "Stephen has ADHD and is autistic, and had difficulties in engaging with support. He was referred to me by his Offender Manager.**

"When I met Stephen for the first time, he was very anxious. However, I have experience and knowledge of ADHD, and I was able to help him feel calm and comfortable in planning to move forward. This positive rapport led Stephen to discuss his goals, which included completing a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) course, and creating an updated CV.

"Stephen struggled with his behaviour in certain situations. Due to his own feelings relating to his offence, he also needed coping mechanisms to stop his negative thoughts, and guidance on how to be around new people. We completed some work together to address this and work around boundaries and how his behaviour could be interpreted by others. Stephen responded well.

"I supported Stephen with motivation and in building his employability skills. I also liaised closely with his Offender Manager to check his suitability for a CSCS course and spoke to the provider to explain Stephen's additional needs and behaviour traits. In the lead up to the course, Stephen attended weekly sessions on boundaries and dealing with new people.

"On the day of his enrolment for the CSCS, Stephen struggled when asked questions, as he had not taken his medication. As the CSCS provider was already aware of Stephen's additional needs, they were understanding of the situation. I was able to help Stephen reflect, and Stephen spoke to the provider and explained the situation.

"Stephen was able to attend the course and he was encouraged to take his medication to help him focus. I spoke to him daily during the course, and Stephen achieved his CSCS qualification.

"Stephen continues to work with myself and is now even more focused on gaining employment in the construction industry.

"Due to the clear communication between myself, the CSCS provider and Stephen, he was able to pursue his goal, and be open and honest about his additional needs. This was vital in helping Stephen put in place strategies on which he could build for the future."

*\* Stephen is not the participant's real name and has been changed to protect his identity.*

*CFO3 is part-funded by the European Social Fund.*

## CASE STUDY

### Support right up to interview stage

Michael\* was on probation when he attended the Greater Manchester Education Training Employment (GM ETE) Job Club in Salford. He was able to access invaluable preparation the day before an interview.

**Tracy Briggs, GM ETE Team Leader, says:**  
**"Michael had served a sentence of four years and wanted to return to a role in customer service, an area in which he had worked prior to serving his most recent custodial sentence.**

"He had done some preparation for exploring the world of work post-release, but at the Job Club, which he attended regularly, he was able to consolidate what he had learned, build new employability skills and apply them to his job search.

"He was on probation when he found a job vacancy as trade counter assistant, for which he had an interview. He was delighted, but also very nervous, as he hadn't attended a job interview since 2017.

"However, he was able to attend the Job Club the day before his interview, where I helped advise him on the best way to prepare. Michael was able to spend the day researching the company, looking for examples of the company's work that he could discuss, and I also helped him work on his interview technique. We discussed possible questions and Michael practised his answers.

"We also went over how he would disclose his conviction with the employer, should he be

asked to disclose any unspent convictions.

"Michael said he felt much more confident, and ready for his interview. I was delighted when he called me to say that the employer had offered him the job straight away.

"This was a great opportunity to work with a person on probation right up to the point of interview.

"The focus was on helping Michael focus on his strengths and gain a deep understanding of the role and the company, to ensure there were no surprises at interview. This preparation helped him build confidence and he said it kept him calm on the day.

"He is now fully settled into his new role, and enjoying it, as he continues to plan his future. The employer was so impressed with him that they rang the recruitment agency asking for "more Michaels."

*\*Michael is not his real name and has been changed to protect his identity.*

# Careers Services for Adults



## National Careers Service

As the largest provider of the National Careers Service in the Liverpool City Region, Lancashire, Cheshire and Warrington, we worked with unemployed and employed adults providing high quality careers advice and support.

We worked with more than 8221 individuals, with 49% of those we worked with having moved into a sustainable job or accredited learning outcome.

Towards the end of 2021/22, our teams supporting adults received the following feedback in a large-scale survey:

- 96% of respondents were extremely, very or fairly satisfied (yearly average)
- 98% would recommend the service to others (yearly average)
- 97% had an excellent or good first impression of the service
- 93% of respondents felt a lot or a little 'empowered to take the next steps independently as a result of the session' (yearly average)

“

Just wanna say a huge THANK YOU!!! Your work definitely pays off. I was feeling so low in myself these last few weeks and genuinely thought it was the end for me... by your simple phone call and little catch up, you've given me such hope and positive energy! Your work is truly amazing and I hope other young people like myself feel the exact same when they speak to you! You're an absolute star & you should be ever so proud of yourself! Thank you dearly! I'll be sure to keep you updated.

(NCS Participant: 18–24-year-old job seeker)

“

I owe my new career change to Michael, he was so focused on meeting my needs I've actually met them all.

(NCS Participant: at a career crossroads)

“

I have been successful in gaining a new position, in fact, since the training session I attended with Michelle I was offered three positions so had a choice! Thank you for the support I received.

(NCS Participant: interview advice and support)



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 been working with adults and young people across Cheshire East to support them into employment, with 75 adults enrolled in the programme by March 2022.

# 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 level 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 in a wide range of short courses including Coping With Change, Managing Anger and Preparation for Work.

We offer flexible, comprehensive training, delivered to suit the needs of individual learners. Between them, the select team has more than 100 years' experience of delivering training and qualifications. They come from a range of operational backgrounds serving both young people and adults. Our professional and experienced trainers and assessors work with candidates across sectors including local authorities, schools, colleges, housing associations and universities.

We have made our courses more accessible by offering face-to-face or distance learning via digital platforms. In 2021/22 we have expanded our customer base so we can include candidates from Carlisle to Cornwall amongst our caseload. During 2021/22 our training team delivered a total of 341 qualifications, from prisons, universities, schools, housing associations and local authorities, and will surpass that number in 2022/23.



## CASE STUDY

# Tailor-made learning for practitioners

**Shaping Futures delivers targeted outreach to young people in school years 10 to 13, offering impartial information, advice and support on all matters relating to Higher Education.**

The Shaping Futures team has been undertaking CPD with Career Connect since 2018, helping to equip them for delivery to young people. So far, 18 team members have undertaken 23 qualifications across levels 3-6.

Shannen Dabson (back row, second from left), Outreach Manager at Shaping Futures said: "Our delivery staff were recruited over a period of time from various backgrounds and with diverse skill sets. We wanted to give them the opportunity to undertake CPD that leads to a recognised and relevant qualification.

"The feedback from our team has been positive, with many citing how they feel more confident as practitioners as a result.

"Our team have found the training sessions informative, providing insights into complex concepts, such as career theories, in a relatable way.

"An unexpected benefit has been strengthening our relationships with school and college career practitioners who are also taking the qualification. The practical nature of these qualifications allows learning to be applied to practice instantaneously. Career Connect's Training Co-ordinators have shown a real understanding of the work we do and

our objectives, guiding us through the qualification, and helping us select modules which will be the best fit for us as a team and as individuals. We really valued the group work module. Most of the sessions we deliver in schools are in group settings, so this is particularly applicable to our job role. The module gave the team knowledge of learning theories, group dynamics and meeting the needs of different learners.

"It was also a useful module for thinking about developing new group work sessions – from planning to resource and evaluation. Using what we'd learnt through the qualification and subsequent group work we were able to develop a suite of resources which were pitched at the right level, interactive and adaptable to differing needs within a classroom.

"We now have resources which receive consistently positive feedback, from learners who are engaging with the session as well as those delivering the sessions. This module helped our team to feel more confident in delivering group work and in the process of reflection and evaluation, ensuring our resources are as impactful as possible.

"We have been consistently impressed with the quality of the qualification and the outputs in terms of our team's confidence and ability in delivering CIAG as they progress through the course, supported by the Career Connect team. Career Connect provides a high quality and supportive learning environment which enables our team to develop their skills as practitioners."

# Our People and Workplace

Career Connect aims to be an inclusive place to work, reflecting the diversity of the people that we serve. We look to provide young people with opportunities for meaningful and rewarding work, and we work towards reducing our impact on the environment.

## Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to continually strengthening our approach to diversity and inclusion.

In 2021/22 we achieved the Investors in Diversity Award. We were also nominated for the National Centres for Diversity Small/Medium Size Organisation of the Year and included in their Top 50 most inclusive workplaces.



We continue to be a Disability Confident Leader, the highest level awarded by DWP, which reflects an organisation's approach to employing disabled people.



An area for improvement is increasing the ethnic diversity of our teams, including in senior positions. We have seen an increase over the last year with the proportion of staff with an ethnic minority background increasing from 6% to 9%, targeting further increases between now and 2025.

## Kickstart programme

As part of the UK Government's response to Covid, the Kickstart Scheme provided funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on

Universal Credit. When Kickstart launched, we committed to recruit a significant number of young people, paying them the Real Living Wage, giving them a structured role, and delivering additional training and support to remain with the Charity or on to a new opportunity.

We were delighted to welcome 21 young people over the 12-month period. All recruits have either remained in employment with the Charity in permanent roles or moved into a positive destination. In addition, we delivered careers and employability support to young people undertaking the Kickstart scheme through VOLA Merseyside, supporting 72 young people.

## Our commitment to the environment

Career Connect is committed to playing its part in addressing the climate emergency and we continue to focus on decreasing our environmental impact. We made the decision in 2020/21 to remove all fossil fuel companies from our investment portfolio. This was completed as planned by the end of 2021/22. The pandemic had a massive influence on our environmental impact in 2020/21, with the majority of our services moving from face-to-face to virtual. As a result, we saw a major reduction in our environmental footprint.

As we began to return to face-to-face services as lockdowns eased, we have seen an increase in our environmental impact compared to the low levels in 2021/22.

However, we have not seen a return to pre-pandemic levels, as initiatives such as increasing virtual meetings has had a positive impact. In 2021/22, we undertook a major transformation of our IT infrastructure, which has led to a decrease of over 30% in our IT systems' energy usage. This is due to the re-location of our data centre and consolidation of servers.

Finally, we partnered with Positive Planet to develop a Carbon Footprint Measurement and Net Zero plan. This will support us to reduce our carbon footprint further over the next three years.





## CASE STUDY

# A new opportunity

Zaihera, 23, has been working with Career Connect as an Engagement Worker and Coach in Salford after originally joining the charity through the Kickstart Scheme.

**“I graduated in 2021 after studying Politics and I was supporting my grandma full time as a carer. I was struggling to get into employment especially after Covid-19. I ended up going to the Job Centre for support, and I was told about Kickstart.**”

“I applied for the programme at Career Connect and got a position as a Case Worker for six months in Salford. I was given so many opportunities on this programme, and staff were constantly asking me what I wanted to do to cater to my needs and gain experience. I also learned new skills from my fellow Kickstart staff. I really liked that Career Connect took an active role, looked after us, and were really excited to have us join the charity.

“After my six months had finished, I secured a full-time position as an Engagement Worker and I just kept developing my skills and experience.

“I have had lots of different tasks, such as helping with the annual tracking exercise, managing a small caseload of young people who were not ready for work or employment and working on our social media.

“Following this, my team were hiring for an Engagement Coach. My manager approached me and asked me if I had thought about applying for the role. It really took me off guard as I didn’t feel qualified enough, but both managers said they thought I’d be really good for the position. I was incredibly surprised when I was told I aced the interview and ended up getting the job.”

Zaihera has since won the Rising Star award at the Career Connect staff awards for the positive impact she has made.

“I feel well supported in this role. I really enjoy it and I really like that I get to make a difference and see first-hand the impact I’m making, because I do a lot more community work.

“I knew I was interested in working in the education field and making a difference, but I wasn’t sure how to do this, so I’m glad I got the chance to do it with Career Connect.”

# Looking forward

Sheila Clark, Deputy CEO and incoming Career Connect CEO



**This year we completed the groundwork for several exciting and innovative new services that will come to fruition in 2022/23.**

We want to create and deliver services that have the maximum positive impact on the people we serve.

## User Voice

Engaging the people we serve in every aspect of our work remains a priority.

Young people had significant involvement in developing our new ESF programme in Greater Manchester, from deciding on the name of the service (Connect To Your Future), to designing the logo and supporting recruitment.

We have adopted the Lundy model of youth participation to support and measure our approach to Youth Voice. This helps us align our participation work closely with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our Youth Voice Co-ordinator is tasked with the recruitment and development of our first ever Youth Ambassadors. This team of 13 young people will play a major role in how we shape our engagement, participation work and communications with young people. They are there to challenge us and bring their insights and ideas. I have already met some of them and know already that they will be assets to our charity.

## Support to those in prison and on probation

We are committed to improving the lives of the most vulnerable in society. We look forward to building on the early success of the Greater Manchester Entry to Employment Programme, in partnership with Greater Manchester Combined

Authority and the Greater Manchester Probation Service. The programme is bringing much needed employment support to those on probation across all 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester.

We will continue to seek new opportunities to grow our support to those in prison and on probation, helping them into employment, training, and productive lives.

## Research and piloting of services for young people electively home educated

By bridging the gap between research and delivery, we can become an even stronger voice for the people we serve.

Towards the end of 2021/22, we began a project to research, develop, and pilot services for families and young people that are educated at home.

A growing number of families are withdrawing their children from school, increasing from an estimated 37,500 young people in 2016, to 115,542 young people during the 2020/21 academic year (ADSC, 2021).

Many of these families have made this decision with little support or guidance, and struggle to support their children's education after the decision has been made.

Over the next year, we will continue this work, further building and evaluating services for these families and young people, evaluating results and sharing our learning more widely to support the development of impactful services at scale.

## Get Connected

We continue to focus on innovation, with significant investment in developing a new digital application which builds on our Get Connected portal, which is already in use in schools.

The new Get Connected app has been developed with teachers and young people, ensuring they can benefit from exceptional quality digital guidance alongside our face-to-face support. We look forward to launching the Get Connected App in 2022 to current and new schools.

As this report shows, we move into 2022/23 in a very strong position in terms of our impact, and we have much to look forward to.

Our vision remains the same: a society where every individual realises their full potential. That remains our critical purpose.

We have a truly committed workforce, and I am thankful every day for their passion, hard work and unwavering dedication to making a difference for each and every one of the people we serve.

