ersa AWARDS

25TH NOVEMBER 2025

HEADLINE AWARDS SPONSOR

ELEVATE
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

WELCOME

TO THE ERSA EMPLOYABILITY AWARDS 2025

On behalf of ERSA and our board I welcome you to tonight's ERSA Employability Awards.

This year ERSA received 261 applications, all demonstrating the depth and quality of employment support provision.

To make the final is an achievement and tonight we will celebrate everyone shortlisted.

Thank you to the judges for your time and conscientious commitment, judging is not an easy task.

Congratulations to our winners – be proud and celebrate your achievement.

Thanks to all our awards sponsors, and in particular to our headline sponsor Elevate.

And finally these awards wouldn't be the same without tonight's hosts – Tony Carr, Ian Ross and Henry Rosewall from CHAOS.

Elizabeth Taylor
ERSA Chief Executive

ersa
Employment Related
Services Association

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THANK YOU TO OUR HEADLINE SPONSORS

ELEVATE
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

OUR FINALISTS

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONER

Kindly sponsored by Coyne Recruitment

AMY MCMANUS

Get Set UK –

Amy McManus has been central to the Get Set for Work programme in Essex, supporting employers to create inclusive opportunities for neurodiverse adults aged 18+. Amy provides sustained and tailored guidance to employers, helping them adapt recruitment practices, implement reasonable adjustments, and build confidence in supporting neurodiverse employees.

AKLAK AHMED

Royal Borough of Greenwich – Greenwich Local Labour and Business

As the Construction Coordinator at Greenwich Local and Labour and Business (GLLaB), Aklak Ahmed brokers employment opportunities for residents, develops and maintains relationships with major contractors, and fosters inclusive recruitment. Aklak manages Greenwich Local Labour in Construction (GLLiC) which is now supported by 10 developers and contractors.

ABBY MITCHELL

Forward Trust

Abby Mitchell has built sustainable partnerships with a range of employers and helped to improve employment outcomes for participants, utilising tailored recruitment strategies and an understanding of employer needs. Abby has facilitated over 1,000 candidate submissions to exclusive employer vacancies, resulting in 500+ successful job placements, with 70% sustaining employment.

LEONILA MENCIAS

Ingeus

As New Sales Manager within the Restart Programme in Central and West London, Leonila Mencias has built sustainable partnerships across sectors. Leonila has engaged 223 employers, placing over 670 individuals into employment, and has added 1,286 employer vacancies, supporting the Restart Scheme, Work and Health Programme, Pioneer and JETS.

BEVERLEY COLE

The Growth Company

Beverley Cole's work in Salford has built enduring relationships across sectors and impacted placement and retention rates. Her tailored support includes flexible work trials, bespoke interview days, and pre-employment programmes to ensure inclusive access to employment. In 2025, she brokered 141 vacancies and organised three major recruitment events.

JOANNE STACE

Reed in Partnership

Joanne Stace, Senior Recruitment Manager for Reed in Partnership's Restart Scheme in Cornwall, has worked to bridge the gap between employer needs and participant potential in Cornwall's holiday park sector. She has built partnerships, identified long-term career pathways, and developed tailored recruitment pipelines. Her efforts have supported over 150 participants into employment.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Coyne Recruitment was founded by industry experts, who as former hiring managers with over 45 years of experience working for some of the leading providers in the UK, have an unrivalled passion for the skills & employability sector. This direct industry experience enables us to have a unique perspective on what a quality recruitment service that meets the needs and requirements of providers of all sizes should be like.

We understand the many complexities and opportunities within the Skills and Government contract sectors, allowing us to partner with organisations to offer support and guidance when prospecting and acquiring talent.

For candidates, we support career progression through coaching, consultancy, interview preparation and CV support. We take the time to fully understand their current situation and discuss their career aspirations as well as motivate and progress them through their job search.

We help our clients to save money and time whilst reducing risk. We provide business critical support that removes burden and workload enabling organisations to maximise their opportunity in acquiring the best talent for now and the future.

OUR FINALISTS

EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP

Kindly sponsored by 4front Partners

4front partners
Business Development Training Consultancy

FIFE SPORTS & LEISURE TRUST

Nominated by Fife Gingerbread

Fife Sports & Leisure Trust (FSLT) and Fife Gingerbread worked together to create a targeted employment pathway for lone parents. The partnership began with a Work Inspiration Day and developed into a 26-week traineeship, creating four supported placements who all completed placements and secured job offers or flexible contracts.

SALFORD INTO CARE

Nominated by Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust

Salford into Care, led by Salford City Council's Employment Hub and Northern Care Alliance NHS Trust, provides structured pathways into health and social care for local residents. Through tailored training, guaranteed interviews, placements, and apprenticeships, the programme offers flexible, inclusive support, improving career opportunities while addressing regional workforce needs.

NATIONAL GRID

Nominated by Catch22

National Grid's Pathways to Progress programme supports disadvantaged young people into energy careers, providing events, work experience, career training, and taster sessions. By removing barriers, focusing on skills, and embedding DEI awareness, it fosters a diverse workforce, empowering communities and building talent to help achieve Net Zero by 2050.

PLACER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMAZON

Amazon's partnership with Placer develops the next generation of talent by providing T Level students, apprentices, and work experience participants with career readiness support. Through CPD-accredited courses, AI interview coaching, and psychometric assessments, students build confidence, professional skills, and self-awareness, preparing them for real-world opportunities in the digital economy.

OCS,

Nominated by Shaw Trust

Facilities management company, OCS Group, run the 'People into Work' recruitment programme, which connects candidates to an OCS hiring manager while offering both wellbeing and employment support. Shaw Trust is now a leading programme contributor, placing 170 candidates into work, with a retention rate of around 80%.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

4front Partners collaborates with employability, skills, and human support providers to deliver better relationships with businesses. Services include employer engagement strategy, training for all operational roles, participant coaching and business development support. We provide expertise, capacity and unique energy to projects, leveraging over twenty years' experience across the UK and globally for our clients' benefit.

OUR FINALISTS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Kindly sponsored by The BUSY Group

BELINA GROW CIC

Belina Grow CIC's Bridge Project supports marginalised mothers in London, moving many into training, employment, and volunteering through direct community outreach and culturally sensitive, partnership-driven programmes, rebuilding confidence and providing sustainable pathways out of isolation and disadvantage.

GOLDSTAR CREATIVE AND INGEUS

Goldstar Creative and Ingeus's partnership empowers young Charedi women in Hackney into sustainable employment through culturally sensitive outreach. Over 120 women enrolled by August 2025, with a 70% progression rate, demonstrating impactful community engagement, tailored support, and significant improvements in confidence and opportunities.

TELFORD COLLEGE

Telford College's Employability Team delivers inclusive, community-based skills and employment programmes across Shropshire and the West Midlands, engaging 800 individuals annually. Through partnerships and tailored initiatives, they achieve high retention, job outcomes, and empower diverse groups—especially women—into sustainable employment, transforming local lives.

RIVERSIDE TRAINING

Riverside Training engages hard-to-reach communities through inclusive outreach and creative programmes, supporting 158 individuals since November 2024. With a 96% engagement rate, they offer trusted, practical support, foster partnerships, and break down barriers to employment, particularly benefiting underrepresented groups and transforming lives locally.

SUCCESSFUL MUMS CAREER ACADEMY

Successful Mums Career Academy hosts grassroots outreach events in varied community venues, empowering marginalised women through welcoming, supportive environments. Over ten years, more than 250 free events have helped thousands gain confidence, skills, and employment, fostering aspiration and community spirit among mothers.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

At The BUSY Group UK, we bring together over 40 years of experience in education, health, and employment to support individuals and strengthen communities. We work across sectors - public, private, and not-for-profit - to deliver holistic, person-centred support that helps people thrive in work, education, and life.

OUR FINALISTS

standguide group

TAILORED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Kindly sponsored by Standguide Group

CIAG DELIVERY TEAM AT HMP THAMESIDE, GET SET UK

The CIAG team at HMP Thameside provides tailored support to prisoners, fostering skills, confidence, and employability. Their personalised interventions, advocacy, and practical guidance enable successful reintegration, reduce reoffending, and have earned praise from both stakeholders and prisoners, exemplifying outstanding tailored employment support.

SCDA EMPLOYABILITY TEAM

SCDA's 14-strong Employability team, with over 70 years' experience, has excelled in delivering employment support since 1997. As top-performing partners for key programmes, their consistent results and successful project delivery stem from a supportive culture focused on providing outstanding service to participants across East Sussex.

ESOL TEAM, AKG

AKG Learning's ESOL Team empowers diverse individuals nationwide through tailored language and employability support, boasting high retention and completion rates. Their innovative, employer-partnered programmes help participants gain confidence, skills, and independence, with significant progression into education, training, or employment, exemplifying transformative community impact.

WORKING CHANCE EMPLOYMENT TEAM

The eight-strong Working Chance Employment Team – many with lived experience – empowers women with convictions to gain sustainable employment through tailored coaching and practical support. In the past year, they assisted 341 women, with high retention rates and a collaborative, purpose-driven approach fostering long-term success.

GET OLDHAM WORKING TEAM, OLDHAM COUNCIL

Get Oldham Working delivers person-centred, inclusive employment support and wellbeing initiatives, transforming lives across Oldham. With robust partnerships, innovative programmes, and externally secured funding, the team has created thousands of opportunities, empowered diverse residents, and achieved remarkable engagement and employment outcomes over 11 years.

AUTISM PLUS SPECIALIST EMPLOYMENT TEAM

Autism Plus Employment Services empowers people with complex barriers to work, providing person-centred support, collaboration, and advocacy. Their neurodivergent-led team delivers tailored coaching, employer engagement, and workplace inclusion across the UK, fostering confidence, skills, and meaningful employment for lasting independence and cultural change.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Established in 1990, Standguide has successfully delivered employment, education, and health-related services in the UK, on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education, NHS, mayoral combined and local authorities. Standguide currently supports over 16,000 people per year to move towards, gain, retain or progress in employment.

OUR FINALISTS

HEALTH SOLUTIONS FOR WORK

Kindly sponsored by Populi Solutions

THE MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS (MHM) OXFORD EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

In partnership with Oxfordshire Talking Therapies (OTT)

The Mental Health Matters Oxford Employment Service, in partnership with Oxfordshire Talking Therapies, delivers an integrated model addressing health barriers to employment. Employment Advisors work with clinicians, social prescribers, and community organisations. In 2024/25, the service engaged 1,753 clients: 82 gained employment, 377 retained roles, 194 returned to work.

WORKWELL MANCHESTER

Nominated by The Growth Company

WorkWell MSK Integration Project is a cross-sector initiative connecting patients of Manchester Foundation Trust MSK physiotherapists with tailored employment support. It brings together Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Manchester Foundation Trust, and Manchester City Council. 470 patients signed up in 10 months and 287 completed programmes, with 83% achieving positive outcomes.

AKG HEALTH

AKG Health supports people facing physical, mental, or emotional health challenges to build confidence, resilience and progress towards sustainable employment. AKG Health works with the DWP Restart Scheme, local authorities and delivery partners to delivers interventions combining therapeutic and practical support. In 2025, 3,107 people were supported through 8,446 interventions.

GET OLDHAM WORKING, OLDHAM COMMUNITY LEISURE TEAM AND NORTHERN ROOTS

Get Oldham Working is Oldham Council's flagship employment programme uniting health, wellbeing, and employment support to help residents overcome complex barriers and achieve lasting work. The model combines therapy, fitness, community activity, and employability services. Since 2013, 20,900 residents have been supported, with 16,200 moving into jobs, training, or apprenticeships.

HEALTH COACHING PROGRAMME, MAXIMUS UK

Maximus' Health Coaching Programmes integrates tailored health solutions into larger-scale employability services, supporting people across South and East London improve their wellbeing and move into sustainable work. There have been over 2,300 referrals to date and between 2023 and 2024, nearly half of those completing the programme moved into employment.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Populi Solutions delivers innovative, community-focused mental health programs designed to engage participants, build confidence, and support sustainable Job Outcomes in partnership with employment providers.

Operating across the UK and Australia, we offer engaging, person-centred sessions that combine physical activity and psychological insight, including BoxFit + Mental Health, Yoga + Mental Health, vocational DISC personality profiling, sleep hygiene, and habit-loop support.

Established in Australia in 2019, and the UK in 2024, we're proud to have made a lasting impact in diverse communities through our commitment to high-quality, evidence-based practice.

OUR FINALISTS

SUPPORTING FRONTLINE SERVICES

Kindly sponsored by Arcus Advisory

Arcus Advisory
People. Performance. Progress.

SOPHIE BRAMMER

Compliance Manager, edt

Sophie Brammer, Compliance Manager for Pathways to Progress, has streamlined SPF compliance, producing accessible resources and fostering collaboration. Her innovative leadership and people-focused approach enabled delivery partners' success, embedded learning, and ensured effective, quality-driven support for frontline staff and participants across West Yorkshire.

GOWER COLLEGE SWANSEA

External Funding Team

The External Funding Team at Gower College Swansea excels in innovative, behind-the-scenes support, enabling frontline success through robust systems, bespoke IT solutions, and a flawless compliance record. Their leadership and continual improvement deliver high-quality, client-centred services, measurable efficiencies, and enhanced outcomes for communities and individuals.

THE GROWTH COMPANY

Employment Central Support Functions Team

The GC Employment Central Support Functions Team drives compliance, quality, and performance through collaborative best practice, innovative tools, and CPD training. Their work enables frontline success, evidenced by high job outcomes and sector impact, while fostering safer, more inclusive communities and empowering staff to support participants facing complex challenges.

ALYSSA BALL

Compliance Officer, Standguide

Alyssa Ball, starting out as an apprentice Employment Advisor before becoming Compliance Officer, transformed compliance at Standguide through collaborative practices, live tracking tools, and continuous learning sessions. Her effective onboarding and training of advisors enhanced service quality, prevented compliance breaches, and upheld Standguide's reputation for excellence and adherence to standards.

GET OLDHAM WORKING TEAM

Oldham Council

Get Oldham Working integrates employment, health, and wellbeing support, enabling over 16,200 residents since 2013. Achieving outstanding compliance and exceeding targets, GOW's innovative, multi-contract approach delivers measurable outcomes, robust governance, and life-changing impact, setting a benchmark for local authority-led frontline services.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Arcus Advisory partner with organisations who aim to perform at their best and prepare for the future of our industry. With over four decades of expertise in employability and related sectors, we've worked with scores of providers and have a deep understanding of your world, your challenges and your mission. Along with experience, we bring our passion and a proven record for providing world class services which bring lasting impact to the communities you serve.

OUR FINALISTS

entitledto
independent | accurate | reliable

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Kindly sponsored by entitledto

LIVE WELL KENT AND MEDWAY

Nominated by Shaw Trust

Live Well Kent and Medway is made up of 22 organisations, partly commissioned by the NHS, and delivered by Shaw Trust and Porchlight. It unites work and wellbeing through partnership, addressing deprivation, mental ill health and unemployment. Since 2023, 641 people have had employment support and 88% of participants reported stabilised or improved wellbeing.

ONLY A PAVEMENT AWAY AND INGEUS

Ingeus and Only A Pavement Away formed a strategic partnership to support jobseekers facing homelessness through wraparound employability programmes in Greater Manchester and London. Since March 2024, Only A Pavement Away has supported over 200 employment programme participants with Ingeus, with 40 already securing sustainable employment.

BETTER CONNECT

Better Connect delivers partnership-led employment initiatives across York and North Yorkshire, working with over 200 organisations including VCSE groups, local authorities, and public sector bodies. Flagship programmes Rise2Thrive and Trailblazer have engaged nearly 1,700 individuals across 18 months and eight regions, providing wrap-around-support including employability-coaching, wellbeing interventions, and financial guidance.

ACTION TOGETHER

Nominated by Get Oldham Working

Action Together have co-designed a person-centred service with Get Oldham Working (GOW), combining wellbeing and employment support for working residents with health conditions. Their collaboration offers holistic services, from counselling to job skills and community engagement. Action Together's contribution has helped GOW to support 221 residents into work.

SALFORD EMPLOYMENT HUB

Nominated by The Growth Company

Commissioned by Salford City Council and delivered by the Growth Company, Salford Employment Hub provides inclusive, person-centred employment support through a "no wrong door" approach. The Hub works with a range of partners to deliver meaningful outcomes and social value, receiving 3,500 referrals and recording 514 job starts since launching.

ACORN TRAINING AND RIFT

The partnership between Acorn Training and RIFT Social Enterprise supports people facing employment barriers to move into sustainable self-employment. Combining Acorn's Restart Scheme with RIFT's business expertise, it offers up to 12 months of tailored guidance. So far, 124 participants have benefited, with 38% launching businesses and gaining confidence and independence.

SEFTON CAREER CONNECT

Sefton@Work and the Caring Business Charter

Career Connect and Sefton@Work play a leading careers support role in The Sefton Caring Business Charter, a multi-agency partnership also including Merseycare NHS Foundation Trust, The King's Trust, and local employers. It helps care experienced young people into education, employment, or training through tailored guidance, employability programmes, and financial support.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Good jobs offer income, social connection, and fulfilment, but many people need support to get into work and progress. Navigating benefits when moving into employment or considering a new role can be complex, especially for those with health issues or caring responsibilities. At entitledto, we recognise how important it is for employability providers to deliver personalised support that helps each participant move toward employment or progression

OUR FINALISTS

ADDING SOCIAL VALUE

Kindly sponsored by Genius Within

WORKING WELL: ROOTS TO DENTAL

Nominated by Ingeus

Roots to Dental, a partnership in Greater Manchester, provides free dental care to disadvantaged jobseekers, improving health and employment outcomes. Delivered by dental students, it builds confidence, uses existing resources efficiently, and supports social responsibility, significantly reducing barriers to NHS dentistry and driving lasting social change.

REED IN PARTNERSHIP

Reed in Partnership delivers additional social value through local engagement, partnerships, and measurable impact, including health events, disability workshops, volunteering, free masterclasses, and internal ambassadors—empowering communities, supporting employability, and driving positive, sustainable change across its national programmes.

AKG SOCIAL VALUE IN ACTION

AKG embeds social, environmental and economic value in all operations, supporting over 20,000 people annually. Initiatives include digital inclusion, community investment, training and health interventions, generating significant measurable social value and empowering disadvantaged groups, with a strong focus on sustainable, inclusive impact across communities.

WORKING CHANCE

Working Chance supports women with criminal convictions into employment, achieving a zero reoffending rate among clients in four years. With a small team, they generate over £5m in social value annually, foster employer inclusivity, and secure long-term job placements, significantly benefiting individuals and communities.

MAXIMUS AND SMART WORKS

Maximus and Smart Works partner to support women into employment via coaching and styling. Over three years, 370 women benefited, with expanded services in Bradford and Leeds. Collaboration, investment, and community research drive sustainable, locally tailored employment support across regions.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Genius Within empowers neurodivergent thinkers to thrive. Through coaching, assessments and consultancy, we help individuals build confidence and employment success while supporting organisations to create neuroinclusive cultures. Led by a majority-neurodivergent team, we deliver impactful, evidence-driven solutions that unlock talent and drive meaningful change.

OUR FINALISTS

SKILLS FOR WORK

Kindly sponsored by Serco

CLARION HOUSING GROUP

Clarion Housing Group's Apprenticeship Programme builds opportunity, confidence, and careers through over 2,000 apprenticeships since 2011. With 226 current apprentices, it promotes inclusion and tackles sector skills gaps. Offering mentoring, coaching, and tailored support, it achieves a 97% completion rate and 93% progression into permanent roles, transforming lives and communities.

MORE THAN A JOB PROGRAMME, SANDWELL AND WEST BIRMINGHAM NHS TRUST

The #MoreThanAJob Programme, led by Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, provides health-focused employability support for people facing barriers to work. Through apprenticeships, internships, and targeted schemes, it has supported over 1,000 individuals and helped 250 into employment, combining job readiness with physical and mental wellbeing support.

ENERGISE, CATCH22

Energise empowers NEET individuals to build confidence, skills, and careers in the energy transition sector through coaching and flexible training. It takes a participant-led approach, focusing on breaking down barriers. Over two years, it has supported 2,700 people, with 778 moving into work, education, or training and 69.6% sustaining employment.

THE DIGITAL COLLEGE,

Nominated by G4S

G4S Employment Support Services and The Digital College partnership delivers accessible, accredited online vocational training, upskilling Restart participants for sustainable careers. Inclusive, flexible, and sector-responsive, the collaboration empowers learners, bridges skill gaps, and meets local employer needs. Since January 2025, 440 participants completed 765 courses, with 111 moving into work.

TELFORD COLLEGE

The Into Employment Programmes across the West Midlands and Shropshire equip unemployed or low-income individuals with skills, confidence, and career opportunities. Offering HGV/PCV training, women-only initiatives, and wrap-around support, the programmes achieve 100% completion and 96% retention, helping learners into sustainable employment while addressing local skills gaps and promoting inclusion.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

With over 20 years' experience in delivering employment support and skills development contracts, we support citizens into employment and develop the workforce of tomorrow. We are proud to have delivered the DWP Restart Scheme contract in Wales and West Central England since 2021, supporting over 26,000 individuals into sustainable employment.

OUR FINALISTS

FRONTLINE ADVISOR

Kindly sponsored by AKG

ASHLEY NEEROHOO

Maximus

Described by colleagues at Maximus as a `dedicated, compassionate Frontline Advisor who goes above and beyond to support participants and his team', Ashley is nominated for fostering a positive environment and consistently delivering exceptional results through empathy, innovation, and a strong commitment to helping individuals achieve meaningful employment.

DERWIN MACHADO

Twin

Derwin Machado is recognised by his colleagues at Twin for his unwavering dedication, compassion, and professionalism, helping individuals rebuild their lives through personalised employability support. Emphasising `resilience and empathy, restoring confidence and dignity to participants', are just some of the reasons for his nomination by colleagues.

FRANCES TAYLOR

Sheffield City Council/Opportunity Sheffield

Fran Taylor, a Progression Mentor at Sheffield City Council, is nominated by colleagues at Opportunity Sheffield for delivering `exceptional employability support to local young people, achieving outstanding outcomes despite challenging circumstances.' Her `personal, empathetic and determined approach' is recognised by colleagues for continued results in the sector.

JADE WHEELER

Get Set UK

Jade Wheeler, Senior Employment Advisor at Get Set UK, has achieved outstanding job placements, built strong employer partnerships, and inspired participants with her innovative, compassionate support. Jade shares innovative approaches with colleagues, and has developed strong employer partnerships, ensuring participants not only enter work but thrive in supportive workplaces.

ANGELA SHEA

Positive Steps

Angela Shea, a Youth Engagement Worker on the UKSPF project, is nominated for empowering 15–19 year-olds facing significant barriers. She achieves `outstanding outcomes', progressing participants into education, employment, or training, with sustained results. Angela is also recognised for her outstanding staff mentoring and for exemplifying best practice.

SAV WILLIAMS

Serco

Sav Williams, a Job Coach at Serco Restart Scheme, is celebrated for her innovative use of technology, empathy, mentorship, and record job outcomes. Nominated by colleagues for her leadership and support, inspiring both participants and colleagues, Sav is recognised by colleagues for positive attitude, dedication, and performance under pressure.

DARREN OWENS,

Catch 22

Darren Owens, Catch22 Digital Skills Academy advisor, supports neurodiverse youth into employment, apprenticeships, and training. Nominated for his `compassion and expertise', he advocates for workplace inclusion, mentors staff, and drives best practice, making positive impacts for participants. His work is recognised for exemplifying `the highest standards of frontline advisory practice.'

LESLEY MCNOCHER

Papworth Trust

Lesley McNocher, Support Manager at Papworth Trust, has enabled numerous people to secure employment through empathetic, persistent support. Lesley's proactive, flexible, and deeply supportive approach, combined with her tailored guidance for neurodiverse jobseekers, `exemplifies her transformative, proactive approach, empowering clients to overcome barriers and believe in themselves.'

HELEN ELLIOT

Mental Health Matters

Helen Elliot, of Mental Health Matters, has supported over 200 people through Talking Therapies, empowering many into employment or training. Renowned for empathy and tailored support, her practical, person-centred approach is nominated for transforming lives and exemplifying the values celebrated by the ERSA Advisor of the Year award.

VICKIE HAYWARD

Hunt, Acorn Training

Vickie Hayward-Hunt progressed from apprentice to top Employment Coach at Acorn Training, empowering long-term unemployed with tailored support. Her expertise in compliance, leadership, and best practice sharing distinguishes her with colleagues. Her nomination notes her embodiment of Acorn's values and her transformation of lives, earning admiration from colleagues and participants.

JADE MOULTON

Get Oldham Working

Jade Moulton of Get Oldham Working is recognised for her dedication, innovative programmes, and empathetic support, empowering residents towards employment and personal growth. Her adaptable, customer-focused approach transforms lives, fosters inclusion, and upholds the organisation's commitment to putting residents first and delivering impactful frontline services.

SIMONE TOT

Enable Works

Simone Tot, Employment Coordinator at Enable Works, supports disabled clients in rural Lochaber, overcoming barriers with creative solutions. Achieving high job outcome and sustainment rates, Simone's 'approachable and knowledgeable' character is praised for her compassion, innovation, and transformative impact on individuals and the community.

KASEY LEE

Career Connect

Kasey Lee, Support Worker at Career Connect, delivers tailored, employment-focused support, empowering participants to overcome barriers and reduce reoffending. Renowned for creativity and dedication, she leads by example, develops impactful programmes, supports colleagues, and is lauded by stakeholders and participants for her exceptional commitment and professionalism.

RHYS BARKER

Seetec

Rhys Barker of Seetec's Health and Wellbeing Team empowers young people to overcome barriers and stigma, joining up health and employment. His creative, compassionate approach delivers exceptional engagement, satisfaction and measurable improvement, transforming lives and embodying Seetec's vision for healthier, more hopeful futures.

TAMSIN JONES

PeoplePlus

Tamsin Jones, Frontline Advisor at PeoplePlus, excels in delivering empathetic, person-centred employment support on the Restart Scheme, consistently exceeding targets. She fosters confidence and independence in participants, collaborates closely with colleagues, and embodies professionalism and best practice, earning praise for her positive impact and supportive approach.

CAMERON SMITH

Seetec

Cameron Smith has overcome his own life challenges to now excel as Seetec's top adviser in Plymouth. Drawing on personal experience, he empathetically supports clients to rebuild confidence and hope, transforming lives, earning praise for his compassion, persistence and inspiring journey from adversity to purpose.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

AKG supports people across the UK into employment, education and improved wellbeing, working in partnership with the communities we serve. Through services such as the DWP Restart Scheme, NHS IPS services, substance recovery and learning programmes, we enable people to build skills, improve health, and achieve real, lasting progress in their lives.

OUR FINALISTS

Reed in Partnership

FRONTLINE MANAGER

Kindly sponsored by Reed in Partnership

MARYAM BELLO-TUKUR
Imperial Health Charity

Maryam Bello-Tukur leads Imperial Health Charity's Volunteer Employability Programme, supporting over 140 people into NHS roles. She designs, manages, and delivers initiatives, refines outcomes, and shares best practice through sector events and publications, contributing to sector-wide learning and quality improvement, demonstrating significant impact in employability and inclusion.

MUSHARAF MALIK
Get Set UK

Musharaf Malik is recognised as an outstanding front-line manager at Get Set UK, noted for his hands-on leadership, collaborative approach, and exceptional results supporting refugees and jobseekers, consistently inspiring his team to achieve ambitious targets and delivering life-changing services through dedication and empowerment.

PETER SLACK
Sheffield City Council / Opportunity Sheffield

Peter Slack, described by colleagues as 'a vital manager' at Opportunity Sheffield, leads multiple teams to outstanding results. Renowned for his empathetic, inclusive leadership, he offers exceptional pastoral support and builds strong partnerships, ensuring project success and staff wellbeing across employment initiatives, even amidst complex challenges.

RACHEL GRAY
Middlesbrough College Group

Rachel Gray's transformative leadership expanded Middlesbrough College's Adult & Community Learning department, achieving "Outstanding" Ofsted status. Her commitment to innovation, staff development, and community engagement has been identified by colleagues as improving lives across Tees Valley, earning widespread recognition for fostering inclusion, well-being, and impactful partnerships.

LEWIS MECHAN
Ingeus

Since May 2023, Lewis Mechan has been recognised by colleagues as leading a revolutionised Restart Scheme with innovative leadership, pioneering pilots, and customer-first culture, achieving top customer service rankings, exceptional engagement and conversion rates, and fostering staff development, earning widespread respect as an inspiring and impactful frontline manager.

JENNIFER ATKINSON
Bolton City Council

Jen Atkinson, a former JETS participant, now leads her team with innovative, collaborative management, improving productivity and staff progression. Her colleagues recognise her process enhancements and mentoring as fostering a positive, high-performing culture. Currently pursuing a Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, Jen exemplifies resilience and continuous professional growth.

KATE LIDDLE
The Growth Company

Kate Liddle's innovative, people-focused leadership at The Growth Company has driven employment success for refugees, improved integration, and empowered her team. Through tailored support, strategic partnerships, and compassion, she has achieved outstanding results, transformed lives, and is recognised for her dedication and vision in frontline management.

DEBRA KURMIS
Maximus UK

Since 2021, Debra Kurmis has transformed Maximus Keighley into the region's top performer, exceeding DWP targets through empathetic leadership, inclusive support, and strong community partnerships – collaborating with local charities and delivery partners – proving that even the smallest branch can achieve outstanding results and become a vital community hub.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Reed in Partnership is a trusted provider of public services.

We work with governments and local authorities to provide solutions to some of the most important challenges our society faces. Our partnerships enable millions of people to access services that transform their lives and their communities. We are a family-owned British company that is purpose-driven and values-led, with social value and philanthropy at our core.

OUR FINALISTS

OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANT

Kindly sponsored by Seetec

AHMAD PEYRAVIESLAM

Nominated by Maximus UK

Ahmad Peyravieslam, a Kurdish refugee, arrived in Cheshire in 2021 after fleeing Iran. Learning that his Master's degree would need validating, he joined the Refugee Employability Programme (REP), delivered by Maximus. After attending wellbeing sessions, employability training, and English lessons, he launched a successful kitchen and takeaway employing other refugees.

EMMA

Nominated by Enable Work

After nine years out of the workforce as a lone parent and carer managing a long-term health condition, Emma joined the Progress for Parents programme. Supported by Enable Works, she secured a traineeship and now works three days a week supporting adult learners and shares her journey to inspire others.

JAMIE WALKER

Nominated by Shaw Trust

At 50-years-old, Jamie was diagnosed with psychosis and experienced other challenges leading to drug and alcohol dependence. After a journey of recovery, he joined the Shaw Trust Kent and Medway IPS and pursued his dream of acting. He now shares his story to help others, including in an advert by CALM.

JULIAN WARD (JULES)

Nominated by Waythrough

After 30 years of addiction and 19 months of prison, Jules was placed in accommodation. He was introduced to Pathways to Progress, where he was supported to enrol on a Level 3 Counselling course and rebuilt his confidence. He is now a successful peer mentor, guiding others through recovery.

NATHAN MCKEITH-SCOWCROFT

Nominated by Positive Steps

When Nathan joined Positive Steps, he dreamed of working in construction but was NEET with no qualifications or experience. He actively participated in employability activities, completed a course and secured a placement. His hard work led to a full-time contract as a labourer, and he became a mentor for new apprentices.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Seetec is one of the UK's largest employee-owned public service providers, supporting people into sustainable work, education and training. With personalised support and many colleagues with lived experience, we help people rebuild their lives and reach their full potential.

We work with community partners and employers to champion inclusive recruitment and create thriving, resilient local places.

seetec.co.uk #PeopleEmployersPlaces

OUR FINALISTS

INTRODUCING AI

Kindly sponsored by Twin

SERCO

Serco's use of storm® AI in the Restart Scheme reduces admin, enhances personalised support, and improves outcomes. By empowering Job Coaches and adapting to various provisions, it drives efficiency, inclusivity, and sustainable employment, showcasing Serco's dedication to innovation and participant-centred care.

BODY SWAPS AND INGEUS

Ingeus uses Bodyswaps' AI-driven virtual reality platform to improve jobseekers' interview skills, providing personalised feedback and boosting confidence. The tool reduces adviser admin, enhances tailored support, and has helped thousands secure employment, reflecting a commitment to inclusive, responsible AI-driven coaching.

REED IN PARTNERSHIP

Reed in Partnership piloted Beam's Magic Notes AI tool to streamline meeting documentation, achieving reduced admin and stronger participant connections. With full adoption and positive feedback, the initiative exemplifies their values-led, collaborative approach to AI, enhancing frontline support and expanding across programmes in 2025.

BEAM

Beam's Magic Notes is an AI-driven tool enabling frontline staff to quickly transcribe and summarise casework, reducing admin by up to 60%. Widely adopted by over 100 authorities and major partners, it enhances person-centred support and drives sector-wide efficiency in employability and welfare services.

SEETEC AND EARLYBIRD

Seetec's partnership with Earlybird AI boosted adviser productivity, saving time and enhancing support for diverse participants. The pilot led to improved job outcomes, national rankings, and expanded AI adoption, demonstrating responsible, inclusive digital transformation focused on empowering advisers and transforming lives.

BELINA GROW CIC AND AKG UK

Grow Digital Leicester, led by Belina Grow CIC, empowers economically inactive women with digital employability skills via accessible training and AI tools. Supported by AKG, it partners with local groups, develops volunteer ambassadors, and embeds AI support, promoting inclusion, confidence, and sustainable community impact.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Twin Group is a global leader in education and employability services delivering apprenticeships, ESOL, language training, skills bootcamps, neurodiversity coaching, adult learning, internships, higher education pathways plus much more. We've got over 30 years in helping individuals gain confidence, skills, and careers while supporting partners with innovative solutions to grow opportunity worldwide.

OUR FINALISTS

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Kindly sponsored by Broadfield

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY NEET PROGRAMME

The Greater Manchester NEET Programme, funded by UKSPF, supports disengaged and at-risk youth through personalised mentoring, tailored local projects, and youth-led design. Over 3,800 young people have engaged, with 445 sustaining employment. Flexible, innovative interventions ensure 58% achieve positive outcomes, transforming lives and pathways into education, training, and work.

AUTISM PLUS SEND YOUTH HUB

The Autism Plus SEND Youth Hub in Sheffield supports 18–24-year-olds with SEND, providing personalised guidance, workshops, and employer connections. Its holistic approach removes barriers and stands as a pioneering model of inclusive employment support. In three years, 200+ participants have benefited, with 89 progressing into education, training, or work.

FORGING FUTURES PROJECT

Nominated by the Cumbria Youth Alliance

Forging Futures supports marginalised young people in Cumbria at risk of long-term NEET through personalised, person-centred programmes. The programme delivers individualised support, help to overcome barriers, vocational training, work experience, and employer encounters, as well as working to build confidence and independence. Forging Futures 1 achieved 106 job starts.

TRAINING GROUND

Nominated by EFL in the Community

Training Ground, delivered by EFL in the Community with 11 London football charities, supports NEET 16–24-year-old through mentoring, life skills, wellbeing sessions, and work placements. Over 12 months, 884 young people engaged, 33% progressed into education, employment, or training, and participants gained confidence, practical skills, and improved life satisfaction.

SEFTON CAREER CONNECT TEAM, SEFTON@WORK AND THE CARING BUSINESS CHARTER

Career Connect and Sefton@Work play a leading careers support role in The Sefton Caring Business Charter which takes a holistic, practical approach to supporting care experienced young people. Through mentoring, training, paid placements, and financial aid, 188 young people (73% of eligible) have progressed into education, employment, or training.

HIYED CIC

Hiyed CIC's Youth Employment programme supports 18–24-year-olds facing barriers to work through one-to-one coaching, tailored 8-week work placements and in-work support. The work placements provide vocational training, practical skills, sector-specific experience, and career pathways. The programme has a 65% employment success rate, helping young people to secure permanent employment.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

Broadfield Law UK LLP is a law firm serving mid-market clients, offering expertise across multiple practice areas and a strong commitment to client service. With offices in London, Cambridge, Reading, and Southampton, Broadfield's team of over 400 trusted advisors navigates the complexities of law, providing tailored legal strategies and solutions to meet each client's unique needs.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Kindly sponsored by ICONI

This award recognises an exceptional individual who has dedicated a significant part of their career to the employment-related services sector and has made a notable impact on the wider sector.

The award is presented to an individual who has:
Shown unwavering dedication to the employment-related services sector over a significant period.
Provided exceptional leadership, guiding teams and colleagues to success and inspiring others in the sector.
A proven track record of success and recognition within the sector, evidenced by awards, honours, or widespread acclaim.

The winner will be an individual who exemplifies a lifetime of dedication, innovation, and leadership in the employment-related services sector, leaving a lasting legacy of positive change and improvement.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR

ICONI are the creators of Enspirio, a secure, scalable platform for managing support programmes. Enspirio streamlines workflows, automates reporting, and enhances participant outcomes - supporting local authorities, providers, and supply chains across the UK with fast deployment and long-term flexibility.

ersa
Employment Related Services Association

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SECTOR

The ERSA Outstanding Contribution to the Employment Support Sector Award recognises an individual that has made significant contributions to the employability sector. A true sector leader.

This award is given to those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, commitment, innovative approaches, and dedicated expertise in supporting the sector to deliver to disadvantaged people in finding and maintaining work.

The award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of those who often work behind the scenes, at a local and national level, to create transformative opportunities for jobseekers and learners.

This award is presented to a sector leader that works beyond the bounds of their organisation representing the sector, influencing change, and ensuring the sustainability of employment support delivered at a national and local level.

This year's award will be presented at the end of the ceremony.

THANK YOU TO
THIS YEAR'S JUDGES

TRACY FISHWICK OBE

Managing Director of Transform Lives Company

Tracy founded Transform Lives Company (TLC) in 2013 to give people the 'tender, loving care' they need to find sustainable employment. She is founder and non-executive Director of People's Powerhouse CIC and Chair of the Groundwork Trust (Cheshire, Lancs and Merseyside). In 2020, Tracy was awarded an OBE for her services to unemployed people in the North West.

KATY JONES

Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Katy Jones is a Reader in Employment and Head of the Decent Work and Productivity Research Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research focuses on support for people to move into and progress in work, mainly in relation to active labour market policy and vocational education, and with a particular focus on those most disadvantaged in the labour market.

JANE MANSOUR

Department for Work and Pensions

Jane Mansour is working in the Department for Work and Pensions as an expert adviser on localism. She is on a year's sabbatical from the Institute for Employment Studies (IEP) where she was Programme Director for the ReAct Partnership. She has more than 20 years' experience in employment and skills, working in research, policy, and operational capacities in the UK, US and Australia.

TONY HYLAND MBE

National Partner and Stakeholder Relationship Manager, DWP

Tony Hyland is part of the Strategic Relationship Team at DWP, working at a senior level across Government departments. He leads on a range of covenants including the Care Leavers Covenant, Employer Domestic Abuse Covenant, Autism, and Homelessness Covenants. He believes in supporting young people to enjoy meaningful and sustainable careers.

ELIZABETH GERARD

Deputy Director, Learning and Work Institute

Elizabeth joined L&W in July 2024 as Deputy Director. She works to influence policy and practice, with a particular focus on issues relating to employment. Elizabeth has more than 12 years' experience in employment policy and thought leadership, having held senior positions in the New Zealand civil service.

NAOMI CLAYTON

Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Employment Studies

Naomi brings more than 20 years of experience in policy and research with focus on employment, skills, and addressing labour market disadvantage. Before joining IES, Naomi was Director of Policy and Research at Learning and Work Institute, where she held overall responsibility for research, policy and development.

THANK YOU

TO OUR 2025 SPONSORS

REACT RESEARCH ACTION IMPROVEMENT

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G4S An Allied Universal Company

Reed in Partnership

ingeus

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FEDCAP inspiring confidence inspiring people

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ELEVATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

serco NETWORKING LOUNGE

ICONI SOFTWARE

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PeoplePlus

Broadfield

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Arcus Advisory People. Performance. Progress.

Get Oldham Working

standguide group

Geographic Solutions

Twin

Genius WITHIN

The BUSY Group where opportunities begin

populi solutions

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