

Inspiring Futures Cheshire East

Insights and Impact Report

Supporting people with disabilities and health conditions into sustainable employment



Foreword



Brian Bell,
Fedcap UK CEO

“I’m proud to share the impact of Inspiring Futures, our supported employment programme delivered on behalf of Cheshire East Council. Over 200 local residents with disabilities or long-term health conditions were supported to pursue their goals, with more than half achieving paid employment or meaningful volunteering, exceeding all programme targets.

From the beginning, our focus was simple: talk to people about their aspirations and how we could help to achieve them. We worked alongside each individual, building on their strengths, skills, and ambitions, and helping to open up opportunities for meaningful and lasting work.

Everyone who wanted to work was supported to do so. No one was turned away. We helped people move into real jobs and meaningful volunteering opportunities, shaped around their choices, their goals, and their aspirations.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment of local employers, who recognised the skills, strengths, and potential people bring - and who understood that making small adjustments isn’t about doing the right thing for others, but about finding the right people for their organisations.

I hope you enjoy reading this report, which shares the insights, outcomes, and journeys people made through Inspiring Futures - and the difference that strength-based, community-rooted support can make.”

“The impact of this programme has been phenomenal not only to the individuals who participated, but to the local voluntary sector and the business community, by highlighting the benefits of employing people with additional needs / disabilities and all of the positives that this can bring. Offering organisations support around reasonable adjustments and wellbeing for employees has enabled barriers to be broken down, and lives to be changed for the better.”

Councillor Jill Rhodes, Chair of Adults & Health Committee, Cheshire East Council



Executive Summary

Fedcap is a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving people's economic mobility – and we passionately believe that good work can be part of a healthy life.

In November 2023, Cheshire East Council engaged Fedcap to provide employment support for people with health conditions and disabilities, and who required reasonable adjustments in the workplace to sustain employment.

Key Insights:

Getting to know people is essential to helping them overcome their specific barriers to employment

Working with local businesses to help them make reasonable adjustments increases opportunities for people with health conditions

Engaging with local communities is essential to successfully reaching target audiences

Volunteering is a crucial step for people on their journey to paid employment

After working with customers to understand their goals and ambitions, our Supported Employment Specialists approached local employers to find job opportunities where reasonable adjustments could be made on a case-by-case basis. Working together, we shaped roles to fit individuals and helped them to stay in employment.

This 'place and train' model of supported employment resulted in over 200 people joining our programme. By March 2025, 120 people had progressed into voluntary and paid employment, providing them with the skills and confidence to succeed in their future careers.



889

Leads generated



211

Programme starts



120

Supported into work



100

Local businesses and charities engaged with



92

days on average into work



32

progressed from voluntary to paid work

Key Insight 1

Getting to know people is essential to helping them overcome their specific barriers to employment

Living with autism left Cecilia struggling to find the role she always wanted. With targeted, consistent support from Fedcap through the Inspiring Futures programme, she was able to secure a job that feels like her perfect fit.

Cecilia dreamed of finding a library assistant role that would accommodate her needs as an autistic individual but had previously been told that achieving this dream would be nearly impossible.



Cecilia explained to her Inspiring Futures employment adviser Helen how her experience with autism and neurodiversity impacted her, both in terms of her search for employment and her daily life. Even attending the office came with its own unique set of challenges.

Through vocational profiling, we worked with Cecilia to explore opportunities that would build on her strengths and reflect her ambitions. Alongside this, Helen helped Cecilia feel comfortable with coming into the Fedcap office on a regular basis. This involved checking in with Cecilia about noise levels, travel and the general office environment.

She not only supported her to prepare for interviews, Helen also accompanied Cecilia to libraries on public transport – training her to travel confidently by herself, which had been a major barrier to her finding work.

Cecilia's hard work paid off, and she secured the role of Library Assistant. Helen travelled with Cecilia on her first day in the new job to ensure that everything ran smoothly for her and to offer support during her induction, allowing her to settle comfortably into the role.

Cecilia is thrilled with her new role and is now largely unfazed by travel days, independently travelling to work and handling different crowds within the library. She even delivers group sessions for new students during their induction period.

Key Insight 2

Helping local businesses make reasonable adjustments significantly increases opportunities for people with health conditions



Having previously identified a gap in the delivery design of supported employment programmes, Fedcap created a new role to act as a bridge between participants and employers.

Our Occupational Inclusion Specialists work with people to understand what their goals and ambitions are and match them with employers who have live vacancies.

If there are any barriers or challenges into work, it's the job of our Occupational Inclusion Specialists to 'carve' that role so it fits the individual immediately and supports them to sustain employment.

This successful partnership working had led to organisations taking the next step in becoming fully inclusive employers.

Fedcap has been a Level 3 Disability Confident Leader since 2020 helping employers adapt their organisational thinking and culture to make them be more inclusive in their practices.

We've extended this offer to organisations in Cheshire East to help increase the number of people with complex needs and disabilities into the workplace.

"Fedcap's matching process is fantastic. Employment rates in the UK struggle and if we can all work together and get somebody back into employment, that social value back into the community is just incredible. We're so proud to be part of that."

Alsager Community Support

Key Insight 3

Engaging with local communities is essential to successfully reaching target audiences

Building on our existing footprint and local networks, we prioritised community engagement with a wide range of local stakeholders, organisations, charities and employers.

To reach our target customer audience, it was essential to have an integrated approach with a very targeted, local social media campaign - driving people to engagement events with stakeholder groups in accessible locations within Cheshire East.



Job and Apprenticeship Fairs



Medical centres and GP practices



Community Hubs



Facebook Groups



Libraries and Leisure centres



As well as prioritising stakeholder and community engagement, including through having “boots on the ground” at local events, we created brand awareness and “leads” through an extensive local digital marketing test-and-learn approach.

This targeted key audiences, such as neurodiverse individuals, over 50s and those with health conditions.

Our fully integrated marketing and communications strategy also saw us generate media coverage across the county, and we appeared on Cheshire’s Silk Radio as its designated “Charity of the Week”.

The Macclesfield-based radio station’s news feature and podcast were good opportunities to share information about the programme and reflect on the amazing progress our customers had made.

Key Insight 4

Volunteering is a crucial step for people on their journey to paid employment

Alexis joined the Inspiring Futures programme after being out of work for five years due to challenges with her mental health. Her journey hasn't been easy, but with determination and the right support, Alexis is now more confident than ever.



Recognising that Alexis would benefit from specialist support with her mental health we made a referral to NHS Talking Therapies, while continuing to work with her towards her goal of finding meaningful work or volunteering.

Alongside supporting Alexis with her mental health needs, we worked together to explore volunteering opportunities that matched her skills and interests. To help her feel confident for interviews and placements, Fedcap provided funding for smart clothes. Together, we secured a volunteering placement at Everybody Leisure in Crewe, where she now volunteers as a receptionist.

A key part of Alexis's success has been the support she's received, not only from the team at Everybody Leisure but also from her emotional support dog, Finley. Recognising the importance of Finley as a reasonable adjustment in the workplace, Everybody Leisure has embraced both Alexis and Finley with open arms.

Alexis said: "Volunteering has given me focus and a good routine. I have developed lots of skills and have been a lot more confident since I have been here.

"Laura has met with my manager to help them with my wellness action plan to make sure I continue to be happy and safe at work. I'm excited to keep growing here!"

Contact Fedcap



We're specialists in:

- supported employment – an independently-validated IPS (Individual Placement Support) provider, we help people manage their disability and health conditions to allow them to find and remain in work
- building relationships with local employers – helping them see how making reasonable adjustments to job roles helps attract the right talent to grow their business
- maximising the amount we give back to society - delivering 37% Social Value Return on Investment into communities in Cheshire East
- connecting individuals to employers, community organisations and local charities where they can take their first steps to employment



Come and talk to us about helping connect your residents to work to benefit your local area