

Essex Supported Employment Service
ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16



Mission:

To provide products and services that create opportunities for people to progress in work, learning and life.

Realise Futures is more than just a Social Enterprise – it's about people.



At Realise Futures we believe that every individual has the right to earn, learn, enjoy and achieve. Through our services we offer a range of learning, careers advice and practical support to help people gain employment and progress in work, learning and life.

We deliver government funded employment and skills programmes across Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. In Suffolk we also run seven commercially successful Social Businesses that provide employment and training opportunities for adults who are disadvantaged and/or with disabilities.

“WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS, WE LOOK FORWARD TO BUILDING ON THE SUCCESSES OF THIS YEAR, TO FURTHER IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES ACROSS ESSEX”

CONTENTS

Realise Futures Mission	2
Director Statement	3-4
About the Service	5
Our Team	6
People who use the Service	7
The Journey to Work	8-9
Customer Stories	10-13
Employers	14
Job Outcomes	15
Essex County Council	16
Peer Support Networks	17
Future Plans	18

Welcome

Welcome to the Realise Futures Essex Supported Employment Service Annual Report.

This is our opportunity to celebrate what we have all achieved since the service began in May 2015 and most importantly to thank our staff, partners and stakeholders for all their hard work over the last year.

Winning the Essex Supported Employment Service was an important landmark for Realise Futures – it was our first opportunity to work with Essex County Council and to expand our Employment Services into the county.

We were particularly excited to have the opportunity to deliver a supported employment service to people that would be designed around their individual needs and aspirations, regardless of what job they wanted to do, how many hours they wanted to work and what previous experience they had, we would be able to support them.

We were also excited to have the opportunity to design a new service and to put in place things which, based on our previous experience of helping people into work, would be of benefit and value, e.g. our In-work Support Advisors, peer support networks.

We are committed to not only supporting people to get a job, but to have a career – to stay in work and to progress. We encourage people to become part of and more active in their local communities to develop friendships and networks that will support them in their lives.

This report celebrates our key partners – first and foremost the people we support who, by achieving their personal goals of moving into employment, are also breaking down barriers for their peers who follow. We have been part of some truly inspirational success stories, which we can share with you in this report and as we move forwards.

Continued...

“WE HAVE
BEEN PART OF
SOME TRULY
INSPIRATIONAL
SUCCESS STORIES”



“WE KNOW THAT
THE WORK WE ARE
DOING IS MAKING
A DIFFERENCE”

Welcome continued...

We are proud of our new employer relationships in the county and the partnerships we have developed which are all enabling us to open up employment opportunities across the county.

Our team have also worked hard to form excellent working relationships with their colleagues at Essex County Council to launch the service and ensure that people who want to move into work are referred to us.

We know that the work we are doing is making a difference – but there is still a lot more to do. Nationally only 6% of people with a learning disability are in employment.

For many disabled children work is not considered as an option – it is possible and they can aspire to a career when leaving school. We intend to build on pilot projects undertaken with schools such as Lexden Springs, to ensure young people are fully informed of their options and supported to pursue their work goals.

Working with stakeholders, we look forward to building on the successes of this year, to further improve employment outcomes for adults with disabilities across Essex.



Jenny Brick

Deputy Managing Director
(Head of Employment and Enterprise)



174
referrals since
May 2015



490
people supported
across Essex



Monthly
referrals up by
50%

About the Service

The Employment Service supports adults with disabilities across Essex to look for and secure paid work.

We believe that with the right support, anyone who wants to work can work. Realise Futures offer a personalised service that

supports people to learn new skills and find the **right job** for them, delivering a range of employment support activities.

To ensure a successful match, we also provide an 'in-work' service, so that people have the on-going support they need to stay in work and progress in their chosen career.



WHERE WE ARE BASED:

The Supported Employment Service is provided across Essex.

Realise Futures have an office base in Colchester, Chelmsford, Basildon and Harlow.

However, to ensure provision is fully accessible, we take the service to the people we support in their community. Our Advisors meet people at a variety of places, where they feel safe and can get to easily.



Our Team

CUSTOMERS

Graham Woollard
In-Work Support
Advisor
(Colchester)



Susannah Stanford-Eyre
In-Work Support
Advisor
(Chelmsford)



Lee Hamilton
In-Work Support
Advisor
(Basildon)



Hayley Harding
In-Work Support
Advisor
(Harlow)



Daniel Abbott
Employment
Advisor
(Colchester)



Liz Potts
Employment
Advisor
(Chelmsford)



Karen Le Boutillier
Employment
Advisor
(Basildon)



Neil Bowman
Employment
Advisor
(Harlow)



Eleanor McCartney
Employment
Advisor (Basildon/
Chelmsford)



Sam McReynolds
Employment
Coordinator



Melanie Hercus
Contract Manager



Jenny Brick
Deputy Managing
Director



EMPLOYMENT ADVISORS
SUPPORT PEOPLE
TO GET A JOB

IN-WORK ADVISORS
SUPPORT PEOPLE
IN WORK

People who use the Service

Adults with a disability who want to gain paid employment can access the service via a Social Work referral. In the last year a total of 490 people across Essex were supported by the service.

Since May 2015, we have had 174 new referrals to the service and have gone on to provide a service to 153 of these people.

Key to this success **are** 'Essex County Councils Employment Champions'.

Employment Champions are Social Work Team members, who promote the Employment Support Service to staff across the county and support integrated working.

We have been hot desking with Social Work Teams across the county.

As a direct impact of the work we have undertaken to raise the profile of the service with Social Work Teams across the county, monthly referrals have increased by more than **50% since the start of the year.**

REFERRALS BY AREA:

North Essex:	69
Mid-Essex:	49
South Essex:	21
West Essex:	35

490
people supported

Monthly
referrals up by

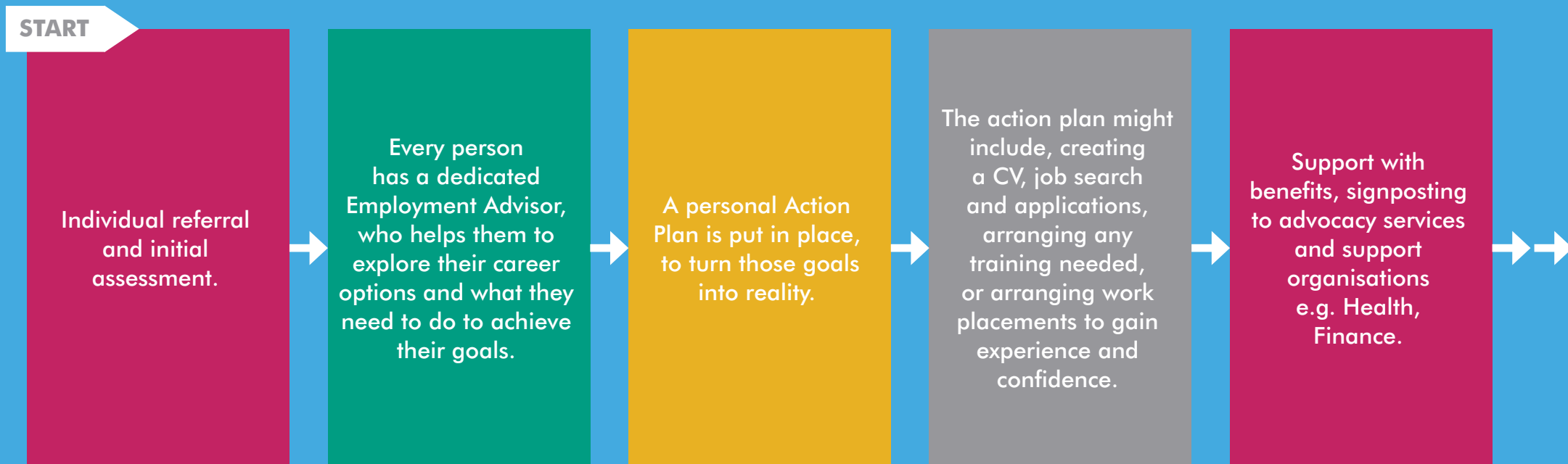
50%



The Journey to Work

We believe that everyone who wants to work can work, but that everyone is an individual and will have a different way of getting there. Each person who we work with therefore, has an individual action plan which is designed just for them, with support from an Employment Advisor.

A TYPICAL JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT WITH REALISE FUTURES MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS:





Customer Stories

BETHANY'S STORY

When Bethany first came to Realise Futures she was very shy and reserved. She had been knocked back badly before and was even told during a recent interview (unbelievably) that she did not have the necessary skills to work.

Well hasn't she proved them wrong! Bethany has now secured a Sunday job at the Premier Inn in Rayleigh assisting in the Food and Beverage department; during the week she is doing a work placement at the Holiday Inn in Southend where she is learning all the ins and outs of the hotel business.

Bethany is hoping that through this placement she will be able to decide where her passion is, although it's already looking like this will be in reception, as she is fantastic with the customers.

With the unending support of her mum and the determination to succeed, Bethany is a shining example of why Supported Employment is so important to the lives of those with barriers to employment.

BETHANY IS A SHINING
EXAMPLE OF WHY SUPPORTED
EMPLOYMENT IS SO IMPORTANT
TO THE LIVES OF THOSE WITH
BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

IN-WORK SUPPORT FEEDBACK...

Dear Sam

I wanted to provide feedback on the positive support Realise Futures are providing our son.

You and your team's support has been excellent in terms of supporting him in the work environment over the past 18 months including;

- Helping with day to day issues,
- Coping with challenging situations caused by his disability,
- Providing one to one support when necessary – reacting immediately to any difficulties that arise,
- Helping with his confidence and self-esteem.

Without this beneficial support from Realise Futures he would not be able to maintain a job that he enjoys and allows him to actively participate in a normal working environment.

Best regards
A & D



Customer Stories

DAVID'S STORY

David had not worked since leaving education. He had been studying at university but had to leave before he finished his qualification and he had lost his confidence.

We identified a training course that matched his work aspirations, run by the Princes Trust, which he attended, gaining a qualification which really boosted his moral.

After this we started to support him with regular job searching, but he never actually applied for any vacancies. This again was down to confidence. Together we decided to directly approach some companies that might offer part-time work with an immediate start to get some experience on his CV and make him feel that he had more to offer an employer.

We supported David to attend a couple of interviews and his confidence started to increase. One day he came in to tell me that he had been to an interview on his own and had been offered a job.

There was a point where he decided not to take the job in case it brought back bad memories.

We talked through the pros and cons and he decided to take the job.

He is currently doing supported permitted work and we are still meeting regularly to look for a job that will use his skills from University and the Princes Trust.

"THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP,
IT WAS A LONG JOURNEY BUT WE
GOT THERE. I GOT MY DREAM JOB.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT"



Customer Stories

AARON'S STORY

Aaron Graham joined our programme on the 16th February 2016. He is a very anxious but friendly person once he gets to know you. He has never worked before but was keen to get into employment if he found the right support to do so. He attended his first meeting with his father.

I discovered at this meeting that Aaron has a real interest in animals but especially reptiles, as he has one at his home. So we had a look through what employment opportunities there may be in the Colchester area, working with reptiles.

We approached Swallow Aquatics in Colchester. I explained the support that we provide as an organisation in supporting adults with disabilities to find employment. They gave Aaron a 6-week work trial, attending every Thursday for 4 hours.

We regularly went along to see Aaron at Swallow Aquatics to see how he was getting on.

Aaron would complete tasks such as cleaning out the animal cages and making the shop floor presentable. Aaron really enjoyed the work.

After his first 6 weeks I rang their HR department and asked how Aaron was getting on and if there may be a possibility of Aaron getting a job.

They informed me that they were just talking about this and had also spoken with Aaron and his father about this possibility.

They have now offered Aaron 16 hours per week, on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 4 hours per day. Aaron is extremely happy about this and started on the 4th July 2016.

AARON AND HIS FATHER HAVE THANKED
REALISE FUTURES SO MUCH FOR HELPING HIM
TO FIND THE RIGHT POSITION FOR HIM IN
THE JOB THAT HE WANTS TO DO.

THEY WILL SOON BE JOINING
OUR STEERING GROUP.



Going the extra mile for our customers – PIP Appeal

VICTORIA'S STORY

Victoria works at Ursuline Sisters Convent. She had been in receipt of DLA for 13 years and had been given advice by Citizens Advice to switch over to PIP.

Victoria, who has a learning disability receives support from Social Workers and hospital treatment for a variety of medical conditions. Despite this Victoria was turned down for PIP.

We contacted her work placement in Brentwood (a convent) for more information, her employers had also been amazed at the assessment result, and subsequently helped enormously in collating information. We arranged a visit in February to meet Victoria; spending time to gain her confidence and get to know her. We liaised with Victoria's family, spoke to her Social Worker and attended a doctor's appointment with her in Brentwood to collect additional information to support the appeal.

We maintained regular contact with the employer to support them to understand the PIP appeal process. The support process spanned a 3 month period whilst collating evidence for the appeal and filling out appropriate documentation.

The Court hearing was set and we supported Victoria throughout the process, meeting with her 2 days prior to the hearing to explain what would happen and go over

the types of questions she may be asked enabling her to prepare a response.

We attended the hearing which gave Victoria the confidence to see it through.

We later heard that Victoria was successful in her appeal for PIP having both her care and mobility elements reinstated. It has been confirmed that her PIP will be ongoing for the next 10 years.

Feedback from Victoria's employer was very positive...

"Thank you for the help we have received from Realise Futures for one of our employees, Victoria.

Victoria had her disability allowance stopped following an assessment. Knowing Victoria, we felt that this decision was not at all fair and that she should appeal.

I'm pleased to say that with the professional help provided by Realise Futures, an appeal was submitted and the hearing yesterday was successful – Victoria has her allowance back and backdated.

Realise Futures managed to gain Victoria's trust in a short space of time and your expertise in this kind of matter obviously affected the outcome. Victoria is of course delighted."

PAULINE TOWNSEND – BURSAR – URSULINE SISTERS, BRENTWOOD



Employers



The success of the service depends on us working with and developing excellent relationships with employers. We are currently working with more than 250 employers across the county and across a wide range of national and local businesses from a variety of sectors.

A PERSONAL APPROACH:

We want people to find the right job match for them.

We approach employers, based on the individual goals of people accessing the service, so that they have the best possible chance of staying in work and progressing in their chosen career.

We also work with partners on bigger Employer initiatives.

JOBCENTRE PLUS (DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS) – SUPER SEEDS:

Jobcentre Plus are running an initiative to encourage large employers coming to the area to ring fence a number of jobs for people with barriers to employment.

In March 2016, John Lewis provided 100 assessment slots for their new store in Chelmsford.

As part of the process, candidates completed 67 hours of pre-employability training; this meant that even if someone was not offered a job, they still gained valuable retail experience and an accredited qualification.

People accessing local Employment Support Services were invited to apply for the assessment slots. Ten people from the Realise Futures Service passed their initial assessments and successfully gained a place on the Chelmsford College training course.

Four people from our service successfully passed the interview assessment, one job offer received and three are on the waiting list for a suitable job match.

More Super Seed opportunities are on the horizon and we look forward to working with Jobcentre Plus and partners to open up job opportunities and meet local employer needs.

4

people offered a job with John Lewis

Job Outcomes

We are aiming for 420 adults with disabilities in Essex to be in paid employment by May 2018.

In the last year, we found 72 new jobs for people across Essex. These can be split by hours as follows:

WORKING HOURS	NUMBER OF JOB OUTCOMES
0-4 hours	20
5-10 hours	15
11-16 hours	24
17-22 hours	1
23-28 hours	2
29-34 hours	2
Over 35 hours	8
TOTAL	72

72

JOB OUTCOMES



Essex County Council



As well as being our funders, we are working on some exciting new initiatives with the Local Authority that support and enhance the service.

DISABILITY CONFIDENT ROADSHOW:

Our Employment Team have been travelling around Essex in a roadshow bus, as part of an initiative by Essex County Council called Be Disability Confident.

THE PROJECT AIMS TO ENCOURAGE

63,000 **EMPLOYERS**

ACROSS ESSEX TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WORKING AGE ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES IN TO EMPLOYMENT.

Essex County Council, in Partnership with Realise Futures, North Essex University Partnership Foundation Trust (NEPT), Jobcentre Plus and Ixion, are running the roadshow in support of the Department for Work and Pensions national Disability Confident campaign.

Our staff joined the roadshow bus visiting a variety of locations, including industrial estates, shopping centres, retails parks and the head offices of a variety of firms.

CAPITA RECRUITMENT

Realise Futures have been working with Capita Recruitment to open up employment opportunities within Essex County Council for people accessing the Service. We are part of their Socially Responsible Supply Chain Strategy; we receive recruitment alerts and suitable candidates are guaranteed an interview.

Working together we can increase the number of disabled people that the Local Authority employs.

CAPITA | [Specialist recruitment](#)

WORK PLACEMENTS

We are working with Essex County Council to pro-actively generate work placement opportunities within the Local Authority, for people using the Service.



Peer Support Networks

One of the biggest issues facing people who use our service is social isolation and the lack of opportunities to meet new people. We wanted to address this.



Peer support meetings take place across the county, at least once a month. These meetings provide an open forum to discuss issues, concerns and solutions, in work and life.

Meetings are led by people who use the service; together the groups decide what the agenda will be.

This means every meeting is different, reflecting the needs of the group.

The aim is for these groups to become self-sustaining and increase in number.

These are some of the discussions and activities that have been happening in peer support sessions across the county:

- **Shaping Support Networks** – how does the group want the sessions to work and what topics are of interest?
- **Ice breakers** – from a quiz on famous people who have disabilities, to 'About Me' – favourite movies and music.
- **Sharing hopes and dreams** for the future.

- **What do you need** to have in place to achieve those aspirations (including skills)?
- **Thinking outside the box** to get your dream job.
- **Using the Internet** to explore vacancies and share knowledge of different sites.
- **Team building** activities.

- **Supporting each other** to investigate how to use Google Maps to check if jobs of interest are on public transport or walking routes.
- **How to reflect achievements** in an application form and interview.
- **Self-esteem**, confidence and building on strengths.
- **Preparing** for interviews.

Future Plans

TO SECURE ADDITIONAL FUNDING THAT ENHANCES PROVISION

Big Lottery is matching ESF Funds to invest in local projects that tackle the root causes of poverty, promoting social inclusion and driving local jobs and growth. We are working on Stage 2 Plans with three Lead Providers in Essex; this includes the strand for 'Employment Support for People with Disabilities and Long Term Health Issues'.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

We are keen to explore social enterprise plans that will provide employment and training opportunities for people accessing the Service, replicating our successful social business model.

EMPLOYER INITIATIVES

To continue to work with JCP and partners on 'Super Seeds', an NHS recruitment project is due to start soon.

PREPARING FOR ADULthood (TRANSITIONS)

To review and build on work undertaken with Lexden Springs School to raise aspirations among young adults. The project enabled a group of year 14 students to access our service, promoting paid employment as an alternative to (or in combination with) further education; we want to expand on this.

We will also continue to work alongside Essex County Council NEET teams, to support young people with disabilities to explore their employment options.

STEERING GROUP

To establish a group that represents all stakeholders and meets four times a year.

Contact Us

Colchester

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Essex,
CO4 9HB.

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