



JOURNEY FIRST

Quarterly Newsletter



Welcome to the Journey First Summer Newsletter

Welcome to the summer edition of the Journey First newsletter. The Journey First project is now well underway and we are hearing so much exciting news from our participants. We hope that this newsletter showcases the exciting road ahead for our participants as well as the hard work of our frontline teams. Read on for more news and information.

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European Union
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Message from the Journey First Programme Management Team

By Phil Macartney, ESF Programme Manager

Funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Journey First programme provides intensive 1-2-1 support for young people and adults across Cheshire and Warrington.

Officially launched in January of this year, the project has dedicated teams in Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington working with participants to build on their skills, identify their interests and explore future paths.

We launched the project in the middle of the pandemic which was a challenge for everyone. But while we continue to work remotely, some of our venues have opened up allowing our participants some face-to-face contact with their support workers.



We have signed up hundreds of participants so far, with the number of referrals growing each week. In this newsletter you will find out more about some of our enthusiastic and hardworking participants.

If you know of anyone who might benefit from the support provided by the Journey First project's dedicated teams, don't hesitate to get in touch. Our details can be found on the last page. Thank you all for your ongoing support.



Partner News

Cheshire East



By Helen Marks, Project Officer

We have been busy in Cheshire East since the spring, establishing connections with different partners including housing providers, charities and social prescribers to ensure that our services are offered to everyone who could benefit. Ensuring a Journey First presence at partner agencies ensures improved outcomes for our participants.

Working in this way can also help to build a more cohesive approach with the participant taking greater ownership and responsibility for addressing needs jointly, and avoiding duplication of provision.

We are now working with over 100 people and our numbers continue to grow. Our team has also grown with new colleagues set to join us soon.

We would also like to take this opportunity to share some good news from our hardworking Journey First participants.

AH: "I was referred to Journey First by my social worker as I was really low in confidence and didn't know what I wanted to do. I am in a wheelchair which has added to my anxiety about looking for work. Journey First has really helped me to improve my confidence and explore what I want to do. So far we have written my CV and I have applied for a number of apprenticeships. It is 100% worthwhile working with Journey First."

JL: "I suffer from a variety of health issues including ADD, ADHD, dyslexia, low confidence and low self-esteem. I also have a child with additional needs. Applying for jobs would make me panic. Since being referred to Journey First, I have developed new coping mechanisms and I have worked on my CV and developed new skills with the support of my Journey First support worker. This has given me the confidence to apply for work as a health care assistant which suits my family life."

Partner News

Cheshire West & Chester Young People's Services



by Ruth Joinson, Senior Practice Lead

Journey First participants are continuing to make progress here at Cheshire West Young People's Services. Our team is working hard to engage with young people aged between 15 and 24 to help them to overcome barriers and prepare them for employment, training or education – with the aim of them gaining a job of their choice.

We currently have 206 young people enrolled on Journey First. 39 have Education, Health and Care Plans and ten of them are Children in Care or Care Leavers. 99 of them are at risk of NEET having just left Year 11 and we are supporting them to find the right employment or training opportunity.

We are also working closely with the Youth Service to offer an activity-based project over the summer holidays to help keep them engaged.

One of our young Journey First participants has already started an apprenticeship. Her YPS worker supported with the application process, helped fund her interview and work clothes and ensured that she had a laptop from the apprenticeship provider.

Another young person has joined a Training Provider and has overcome her fears of speaking on a virtual platform. She is now fully engaged with this type of learning and is attending every day. She hopes this will lead to an apprenticeship.

One of our participants has secured a paid Kickstart placement at Middlewich Marina where he is learning new skills and hoping this leads to an apprenticeship. He was a shy young man who had been NEET for some time, but his confidence is growing and he is enjoying the new challenges of working.

Cheshire West & Chester Adult Services

*by Lisa Breakspear, Journey First
Project Coordinator*

I count my blessings every day; I feel so lucky to be part of a culture that really cares about the people we support, and working with staff that give every ounce of compassion, empathy and time, to ensure we provide a person-centred approach and always put our participants first.

It is approaching nine months since the project started and we have just over 175 adult participants signed up to Journey First, all actively working with an Employment Support Officer (ESO) to reach a goal of education, training, and/or employment. Our ESO's are able to provide intense employment support to breakdown some of the hardest and most complex barriers to employment.

We also offer six months In-Work Support for all participants on Journey First when gaining employment, which helps to prevent fallout from work and acts as a safety net to sustaining employment.

Our ESO's are well equipped with the experience and knowledge to approach local employers. We currently have 30 participants in paid employment, two on work placements, and 11 taking up volunteering opportunities to gain relevant sector experience.

There has been some fantastic work done with participants over the past few months to tackle well-being with a focus on the Five Ways to Well-Being which are: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give. For further information on well-being support check out www.mind.org.uk where you can find details about how to support participants as well as your own well-being.

Cheshire West and Chester offers courses on Pathway to Well-Being and feedback has been very positive. We also have access to a wide range of accredited vocational qualifications, as well as qualifications in IT, English and maths. Over 55 participants have completed at least one accredited qualification including ECDL Level 1 and Level 2, Business Administration, Construction with CSCS card and Forklift Truck Driving.

Autism-friendly work placement removes barriers

by David Hodson-Wright, Head of Marketing & Communications, Liberty Group

Ellesmere Port resident Carl Knox is one step closer to achieving his dream of becoming a plumber thanks to the Journey First project which helped him to prepare for job interviews and secure the hands-on work experience he needed.

Carl, 47, has faced barriers to achieving his career dreams due to his Asperger's, anxiety and caring commitments for his elderly Mum.

But for the past four months, Carl has been thriving and impressing colleagues at property services business Liberty, where he has been getting on-the-job experience with the plumbing team.

Carl, who has been working with Journey First employment support officer Hasan Hijazi, said: "I've always wanted to be a plumber so when I got involved in Journey First I asked if they could arrange some hands-on experience for me.

My worker, Hasan, got me an interview with Liberty and when he told me I got it, I was made up! I didn't think I would. I've got the diploma which proved my technical knowledge, but I needed the on-the-job experience. I'm getting that now through my placement and I'm really enjoying it. I love plumbing because I get to work with my hands and with tools.

Meeting new people and working as part of a team is great. This experience could help me achieve NVQ Level 2 or even 3 which is my goal. My dream would be permanent employment as a plumber and working at Liberty is giving me a real insight into what this would be like."

In addition to supporting Carl to find new opportunities, Hasan helped Carl to prepare for his Liberty interview and address anxiety which had previously impacted his interview experience and confidence.

"I feel very positive about my future. Working at Liberty has given me a great opportunity to develop the skills I need to become a plumber."

When Carl was successful in applying for the placement, Hasan liaised with Liberty to negotiate adjustments to help him thrive in the role.

Carl's colleague at Liberty, Phillip Fawcett, said: "It's been great having Carl on the team. He's so keen to learn and gets stuck into any job. He's asks questions and is getting to grips with as many different scenarios as possible. He'll make a great plumber."

Carl added: "I feel very positive about my future. Working at Liberty has given me a great opportunity to develop the skills I need to become a plumber. Hasan has been great and supported me to fit this around my evening studies (I'm learning maths), build healthier habits and manage my work life balance."







Partner News

Warrington

by Gemma Miller, Job Coach

Warrington's dynamic Journey First team of Job Coaches and Specialist Support Officers help participants to identify their skills and reach their goals, whether that be employment, or accessing appropriate further education or training.

In Warrington, we have been delighted with the progress made by our participants so far, especially due to the positive partnership work with other local services and agencies.

"Journey First adds value to existing services and helps participants to break down barriers and achieve their goals ."

Since joining Journey First I have worked alongside various partners and agencies. Taking the lead from professionals already engaged with our participants leads to more successful outcomes, building trusting relationships and solid foundations.

Amongst others, I have been working closely with Warrington Borough Council's Mental Health Outreach Team (MHOT). This is a quote from one of our Journey First participants, who has been working with both services concurrently:

"I struggled with the educational system when I was younger along with personal issues that had impacts on my mental health and well-being.

I was introduced to Gemma Miller via Sameer Mana who worked for the MHOT and suggested Journey First to help with my lack of employment and education. Gemma has provided a tremendous amount of ongoing support.

Since then I have completed an IT course and developed a clearer understanding of where I want my future to go. Gemma has a high concern for the well-being of others which makes it very easy for me to feel comfortable and trusting in the support offered."

Sameer Mana, Support Worker within the MHOT described the experience from his perspective: "My Interactions with Journey First have been extremely positive. The referral process is so quick and easy and the fact that they have consistently made the effort to put time aside for face-to-face visits with the people they're supporting is of great help.

They are flexible about where they meet with people which holds true to the ideals of 'The Person Centred' approach. It's the little things which make a big difference and the reason why I will continue to refer my clients to Journey First."

If Journey First could support someone you know or work with to improve their employment outcomes, no matter how far they are from the job market, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We accept referrals from all parties and you can contact us for an informal chat. You can get in touch with the Warrington Journey First team by email or phone.

Email:

JourneyFirst@warrington.gov.uk

Tel:

01925 443080

Website:

www.warrington.gov.uk/journey-first





Journey First Events

by Caitlin Otway, ESF Communications Officer



In June we hosted a series of virtual events for Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington attendees. Our teams shared good news and answered questions from over 250 guests. Following the events, referral numbers increased which is so positive.

We also recently launched a Journey First forum for frontline staff. This monthly forum gives colleagues the chance to meet with teams from other partner authorities to share best practise and ideas and raise any questions. The first forum was hosted by Warrington Journey First colleagues and we were introduced to the Warrington core team, meeting job coaches as well as those in specialist roles.

The team showcased the impact made so far by Carolyn Wishart, who works as a Benefits Advisor within the Warrington team. Carolyn aspires to carry out an initial assessment with every participant to offer a tailored support package. She begins with an income maximisation exercise to ensure participants aren't missing out on any benefits which they are entitled to.

Carolyn has helped participants to claim Universal Credit and has submitted successful applications for Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance, PIP payments, Employment Support Allowance and Council Tax reduction.

Carolyn's work is invaluable as it means that participants aren't waiting long for specialist help. The role also allows Carolyn to break down barriers and misconceptions that participants face which can stop them from moving from benefits into employment.

Carolyn also works with participants to strengthen their financial stability, build family budgets, and save money in the most beneficial way, as well as supporting participants to access social care and emotional support.

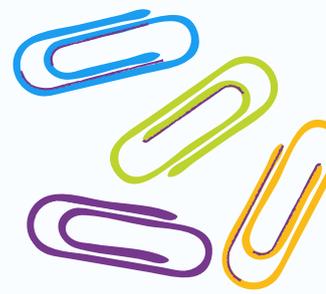
Our second staff forum, hosted by the Cheshire West and Chester team included participant videos showcasing success and good news, and we heard from a number of Chester West and Chester's employment support officers who work across different services.

Mark Gillooley, Employment Support Officer, gave a presentation on the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT).

We also heard how the team is working closely with foodbanks and supporting Risk of NEET young people by offering inhouse appointments in schools to sign up new participants and do PAT assessments. If you would like to be invited to the next staff forum, please email Caitlin on:

caitlin.otway@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

Journey First Supports Mum and Son to Realise Their Potential



by Sarah, Journey First participant

My name is Sarah and I'm 47. Since childhood I have wanted to work with children and to be a mum. Initially I hoped to teach but after sitting maths GCSE six times I only ever achieved a grade D.

After having my son, I started an evening course studying for a childcare BTEC. However the ten-year abusive relationship I had been in came to an end, resulting in me having to leave the course due to childcare issues. Later my son was diagnosed with autism.

Time passed and I met the man who would become my husband – Kev. But in 2009 Kev became ill and in 2012, the day after our fifth wedding anniversary, he died in St Rocco's hospice; he was 48.

Recently we were introduced to Journey First through Speak Up Warrington to help my son to further develop his skills and enable him to live independently.

While discussing my son with his job coach, Karen, I mentioned that I'd love to get back into work. After my husband's death I was unable to return to work and was a full time Mum and carer.

As much as I love this role, I felt like I'd lost my identity and was merely here to look after the children. My own aspirations no longer seemed important.

Karen phoned one afternoon but she wanted to speak about me. She asked if I'd ever considered a job as a classroom assistant.

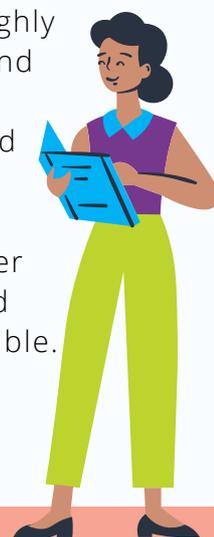
"It felt like someone was taking my hand and helping me to finally realise my dream."

It was what I'd wanted my entire life, to work with children! To be honest I thought it was too late for me to ever imagine this could be possible! I stood in my kitchen with my jaw on the floor, could this really be happening? Was this lady providing me with the opportunity to finally realise my dream? In a word, Yes.

When Karen asked if I would be interested in signing up to Journey First, I didn't hesitate, it felt like someone was taking my hand and helping me to finally realise my dream.

Karen helped me through the necessary forms and I am now studying to be a classroom assistant and thoroughly enjoying it. I've met new people and I've realised that I am capable of achieving the career I have wanted for so long.

Without Journey First I would never have signed up for the course and would never have thought it possible.



Sarah is currently undertaking a Classroom Assistant Award L1 & L2. To convert the award to a certificate, Sarah will complete a school placement which begins in September.

Congratulations Sarah!



Points of Contact

Thank you for reading our summer newsletter. If you would like to get in touch with the Programme Management Team or the Journey First frontline teams for information or advice about making referrals, please see the inbox details below.

Cheshire East:

JourneyFirst@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Cheshire West and Chester:

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