

E-Bulletin

October 2025 Vol.75

UKSPF EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUES TO EXCEED TARGETS....

HLC accelerates progress on NEET priorities across Hull & East Yorkshire.

HLC has supported young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) since 2011, via community partners across European Social Fund (ESF), Springboard YEI, Talent Match, Traineeships, This-Ability, 16-19 Study Programmes and Exploring Opportunities (UKSPF).

In that time HLC has supported 9,500 young people, making it one of the region's largest NEET providers. Springboard YEI (2016-2023) reached 5,700 participants and was highlighted by the Department for Work and Pensions for statistically significant job outcomes. Today, Exploring Opportunities in Hull is recruiting over 100 participants each month, 40% of whom are NEET—reflecting the national backdrop of rising NEET numbers.

The work aligns with national priorities to reduce youth economic inactivity, improve sustained education and employment destinations, and expand access to high-quality skills routes and apprenticeships. It also maps directly to Hull & East Yorkshire Combined Authority (HEY CA) priorities: tackling inequality, increasing participation in post-16 learning, and creating employer-led pathways into growth sectors with wraparound support.

Crucially, HLC's model is neighbourhood-first: local partners engage young people where

they live, remove practical barriers such as transport, confidence, and mental wellbeing, and connect them quickly to training, work tasters and real jobs. This month's roundup highlights the significance of mental health support and a few of the journeys our partners are enabling—from first steps back into learning to sustained employment with progression.

With demand rising, HLC and partners will keep making the case for community-led NEET programmes and deepening employer links, so more young people across Hull and the East Riding can move forward and thrive.

ADAM MCGOWAN (CHCP) TALKS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR PEOPLE ON UKSPF EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES....



“As a part of World Mental Health Day this year, our Allotment Group members put together a photo for City Health Care Partnership (CHCP) to use to promote positive mental health in the community, which we affectionately named ‘big pumpkin picture’. Having run group interventions for anxiety and depression at our allotment for almost 20 years, I can't help but draw similarities between how we tend to the plot and how we care for ourselves.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO HELP PEOPLE PROGRESS INTO WORK OR FURTHER LEARNING...

Although World Mental Health Day lasts just 24 hours, the truth is that our mental health is impacted moment-by-moment every single day. If we garden one day a year, then the garden isn't going to be a very healthy one. Whereas, if we tend to it and recognise when it is in need of attention, then we can cultivate something that is healthy and brightens the world up.

Through our Allotment Group we aim to bring caring conditions to those who feel low in mood, anxious or isolated. Marcel, our allotment group member, whose idea it was for our 'big pumpkin picture', sums up what the group has brought to his life perfectly," said Adam.

"The allotment itself is a beautiful place and gives participants the opportunity to not only engage with nature and the natural environment but also engage socially with others in the group.

These engagements are encouraged but not enforced, conversations occur naturally and the space encourages this, through simple tasks, sharing snacks and soft drinks and sharing experiences.

The coordination and mentoring is supportive and friendly. As a participant/volunteer the space and the people have offered me a beautiful opportunity to belong to something that nourishes me!" said Marcel, allotment group member.



How is Exploring Opportunities helping?...

Four in every 10 people supported on the Exploring Opportunities programme identify some form of mental health/well-being support need. With more than a third of these participants receiving specialist support services and counselling by CHCP / Adam, underlining the growing prevalence of this important issue.

However, more than 7 in every 10 participants receiving this support alongside employability and personal development training, delivered by our community partners, move into a positive work or training destination. It highlights the need for this vital support and its importance in helping participants along their personal and training journey.



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CATZERO GIVE AILISH THE WINGS TO FLY!....

Ailish (18) joined CatZero after being recruited from the Job Centre. She was unemployed after studying Film and Media at college, she got fantastic grades both at college and school but was really lacking the confidence to make the next step into full-time work.

Before CatZero, Ailish was spending a lot of time at the cinema or with her dog, not necessarily with many other people, so it was quite a change for her to now be spending so much time in a large group with lots of different personalities. This was a difficult transition for Ailish due to her lack of confidence. It was hard for her to integrate with some people so different to herself. She was open about her anxiety and how sometimes she could feel very overwhelmed when with a group performing tasks.

As CatZero worked alongside Ailish, keeping in mind her passion for photography and media, she took on the role of capturing footage for certain activities. During rock climbing, she showed great bravery and resilience scaling the walls herself before putting her skills to use by capturing some amazing footage of other participants, which was then edited into a promotional video. Cultural visits to Normanby Hall and Waters Edge also gave Ailish a chance to showcase her photography skills, bringing her own camera to shoot the activities.



As Ailish's confidence began to grow, she began to show her dry sense of humour, with some cutting (but hilarious) remarks to other participants. She became more involved in the group's activities, taking a leading role in our Café Day, designing the menus, as well as creating an entire ice cream van out of cardboard.

The change in Ailish was most evident at the end-of-programme Celebration Event. When Ailish began with CatZero, she was unable to speak in front of the group and found the idea extremely nerve-wracking. However, fast forward to this last event, Ailish took a huge step forward by standing in front of a room of people and confidently speaking to everyone there about her journey and how she had progressed over the 12 weeks. The speech was so moving that Ailish was invited back to CatZero's recruitment day, where she spoke again about how much she has benefitted from their support. During a 1-2-1 session with CatZero, Ailish realised she had enough UCAS points to apply for university, something she was previously unaware of.

Ailish is now thriving! In October alone she has had a job interview, attended two university open days, to study Media and Communication, and has been offered a work-trial. She has finally found her voice and confidence, and is now well on her way to succeeding in life. Being witness to this transformation has been an absolute pleasure for CatZero.



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TAILORED SUPPORT HELPS REECE CHANGE DIRECTION TO ACCESS WORK TO SUIT HIS NEEDS...

Reece (18) originally signed up to Exploring Opportunities at Probe in November 2024. He had achieved excellent GCSE results and recently completed a Level 2 qualification in Motor Vehicle Maintenance. He had started the Level 3 course but this had not worked out as, due to a diagnosed muscle deficiency, he struggled physically with the job when he went on a work placement.

Reece was lacking in confidence and anxious about new places and meeting new people. He was unsure of where to go next in his career, but he knew he wanted a change of direction. From the start, despite his low confidence, he was keen to learn and progress.

A comprehensive IAG session helped Reece to identify that he would like an office-based job, ideally working with numbers. He decided he would like to secure an apprenticeship. Reece's advisor reviewed and updated his CV, helped him to register with an apprenticeship provider, and together they searched for opportunities.

Throughout the next few months Reece attended in-house workshops, which helped him become more comfortable in group settings, as well as increasing his knowledge and understanding. From the first few weeks when Reece was very quiet (keeping his hood up even when inside),



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he eventually started to contribute and join in. Eventually the hood came down, and we met the real Reece!

During this time Reece continued to be proactive with his job search. He applied for all the suitable apprenticeships that came up, and secured three interviews. Although he got excellent feedback, he still wasn't successful. Reece started to feel demotivated and isolated, his advisor continued to keep in touch and sent him details of possible opportunities.

In May 2025, Reece asked to re-register with Exploring Opportunities. His time without full advisor support had resulted in low mood and a loss of confidence. He was still looking for work but getting demoralised by repeated rejections. His advisor arranged for him to get some support for his anxiety through CHCP.

Within a short space of time, Reece was offered another interview. This time as an Invoice Administrator with Crossroad (Volvo) Truck and Bus. He was delighted to hear that he'd been successful and was offered the job!

(Reece's story continued..)



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PROBE: REECE'S JOURNEY INTO WORK CONTINUED...

Despite several setbacks and rejections over a number of months, and a dip in his confidence, Reece demonstrated real resilience and motivation. He accepted support that was offered and took every opportunity to attend learning opportunities. At the end of June he started his full-time position. A few weeks later he contacted Probe to let them know he was doing so well that he had been given new responsibilities earlier than planned, 'I've got the hang of everything super quick... enjoying it a lot!' and was loving his new job.

PROBE'S PAID WORK SCHEME HELPS ALICE ACCESS EMPLOYMENT POST UNIVERSITY...

This is a success story that demonstrates the power of effective networking and individuals 'joining the dots', as well as recognising the determination and commitment of a young person overcoming challenges to secure a great employment opportunity.

Information about Probe's Exploring Employment ILM project was shared with the Employment Hub, the city council's Invest Hull Team, and subsequently with local businesses.

This resulted in the happy coincidence of a local employer, ELB Metalworks, contacting Probe about an administrative vacancy, at the same time that Alice, a young

unemployed graduate, was referred to them by the Employment Hub for a potential work trial.

Alice (23) had been unemployed for a year since graduating with a degree in Animal Science, and was struggling to find a job.

Following an in-depth IAG, the first step was to update Alice's CV to highlight her skills and strengths. She was also referred to CHCP for some 1-2-1 support to overcome her anxiety.

ELB Metalworks is a growing company and they were looking for someone to take on their day-to-day office work, to release their existing administrator to do more development work. They needed an organised person with good IT skills. Probe felt that Alice met the criteria, and forwarded her updated CV. She was then invited for an interview at ELB.

In the early days of the work trial, there were a couple of things which Alice found difficult due to her anxiety. She really struggled with making phone calls, and was extremely shy with some of her senior colleagues, which prevented her developing good working relationships. The employer contacted Probe about this as they wanted to help Alice overcome these problems, as they were more than impressed by her abilities and efficiency at carrying out other tasks.

To Alice's credit, she was open to accepting any help that Probe could give her. After some 1-2-1 coaching on telephone techniques and confidence building and additional on-going support from CHCP,

(Alice's story continued...)



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ALICE'S STORY CONTINUED....

Alice began to put what she had learned into practice.

Her supervisor praised her progress, and her willingness to take on board the advice she'd received. Alice was now using the phone competently, and had started to initiate conversation with senior colleagues. She also had the confidence to point out when she spotted any potential errors or discrepancies in paperwork. Along with her excellent organisational skills and enthusiasm for any task given to her, ELB decided to offer Alice a permanent post.

Although Alice had great skills and massive potential, ELB would probably not have considered employing her without the safety net of the work trial and the additional support provided through the project.

Through the initial networking and subsequent engagement with the Exploring Employment project, Probe were able to help a growing SME find an excellent employee, and help Alice take her first step into a job with great opportunities for the future.

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