

Employability Newsletter

Summer 2020

Welcome to the Thirteen Employability Newsletter

Thirteen's Employability Service continues to support customers throughout the Tees Valley and County Durham. We'd like to share some of the recent successes, developments and achievements of our service with you.

We offer a range of services throughout the Tees Valley to support individuals into employment, education and training

Since our launch in May 2016 we've supported

4,220
customers



From those,
1,316
customers
found employment
or an apprenticeship

and

526
customers
accessed full-time
education or
vocational training.

707
customers
have accessed training
delivered by a tutor
within Thirteen's
Employability team
and gained Level 1 and
2 NOCN accredited
qualifications.

Accreditation success



Thirteen's award-winning employability service has received praise from independent assessors after passing its Matrix Accreditation renewal.

The external independent assessment thoroughly reviewed all elements of the service over three days, citing many areas of its work with customers and partners as exceptional.

Matrix accreditation is the recognised quality mark for the standard of information, advice and guidance delivered by an organisation.

Feedback from the assessment highlighted the quality and variety of support available to customers, effective working with partner agencies and team knowledge and training as key strengths of the employability service.

The team also received praise for successfully adapting to new ways of working during the outbreak of COVID-19, making sure that Thirteen tenants and the wider public across the Tees Valley continue to have access to free employment support at a crucial time.

Susan Borrow, employability support service manager at Thirteen, said: "I'm extremely proud of this achievement and the work that we do every day to support customers with accessing job, education and training opportunities.

"To get positive feedback at any time is fantastic and it means even more at the moment, given that we've had to completely remodel our offer to customers because of the current restrictions.

"The Accreditation renewal is a credit to the whole team and their continued hard work."



Pictured are members of the team collecting a Northern Housing Award in May 2019.

**Please note that all of the photos used in this newsletter were taken prior to the restrictions put in place to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

thirteenplus

Support for living

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Our Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Thirteen's employability service is offering employability and training support to customers remotely.

We're still delivering a number of employability services for our tenants and the wider public. Although we are not able to meet customers in person, we're still offering remote 1-1 support and group training via video and voice calls, emails and texts.

We're working with employers across the area to fill key worker positions in various sectors. Our volunteering service is also looking for areas where we can support customers into external volunteering opportunities, to support local services to the community.

Since the 'lockdown', we've supported customers into work on a daily basis. We're also helping customers to access distance learning opportunities in the comfort of their home to gain accredited qualifications.

Since our service began working remotely on 18 March, we've signed up 433 customers and supported them with employability skills, helping people to access employment and training. During this time, 151 of our customers have been offered employment and 56 have been enrolled into training. We've also supported seven customers into volunteering opportunities.

Our service prides itself on delivering a quality offer to our customers and partners in these difficult times, while keeping everyone safe.

Overleaf are just two of the customers we've supported during this time.

Success for Jamie

Jamie started working with Thirteen's employability service in November 2019.

We supported Jamie with updating his CV, interview techniques and job applications. He expressed an interest in an exclusive recycling operative role and decided to apply through the service.

His CV was submitted to our employer engagement team, which pre-screened Jamie and submitted him for the position.

He had an interview on 27 March and got the job, completing his first shift the following day.

Ryan's quick win

Ryan started working with Thirteen's employability service on 24 March 2020.

He was interested in various roles we had available including a cleaner at James Cook University Hospital.

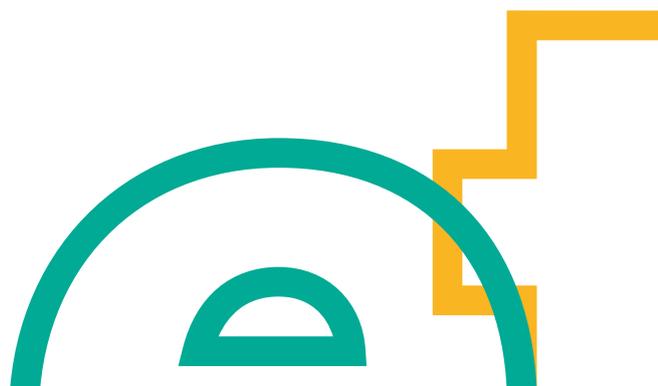
Ryan had never worked before and over the phone, we supported him to create a CV based on other previous experience.

Once completed, his CV was submitted for the roles and our employer engagement team helped him prepare for an interview.

Ryan was successful and started work at the hospital on 3 April 2020.

Thanks to the employability service, Ryan moved into a job after just ten days of support!

If you have any queries about our current offer or would like to make referrals to the service, please feel free to contact us by emailing employability@thirteengroup.co.uk or calling **01642 947 840**.



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Thirteen's Employment Bootcamp is Packing a Punch Across the Tees Valley!

We are still delivering our NOCN Level 2 Employment Bootcamps across the Tees Valley.

Our 8-day programme will give you the skills and the opportunity to **SHOW OFF, STAND OUT AND SHINE**

**SHOW
OFF**

by learning new skills in customer service, employability and personal development.

**STAND
OUT**

by working with our team to develop a quality CV and build on your interview techniques.

SHINE

in front of employers across the Tees Valley and apply for several positions exclusive to bootcamp customers.

So far, our Employment Bootcamps have been completed by 88 customers. Following course completion, our employer engagement team supports customers into work, apprenticeships and further training opportunities.

One of these customers is Ellie. 17-year-old Ellie attended our bootcamp in Stockton, for support in finding a job. She was struggling to engage with employers because of her age and not having any work experience.

Ellie completed our bootcamp in two parts due to personal circumstances. She had a positive attitude and completed week two of the bootcamp with a new cohort of people and a different tutor. When she completed the training, she met with employer engagement officer Phil, to access exclusive vacancies and for support with application forms and interview skills.

Ellie gained full time paid employment with Sitel and is really enjoying her work. She's living with her mum in Teesside and travelling to work every day in Newcastle close to other members of her family. She is enjoying her employment and the satisfaction of being paid.

Our Employment Bootcamps are virtual at the moment, running every month for customers across all localities. Tutors are delivering the courses online directly to learners, still with support from our employer engagement team on completion.

For more information on upcoming courses or to make a referral please email

employability-admin@thirteengroup.co.uk



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Danny's Steps to Success

Danny is well on the way to a new career in the housing sector thanks to support from Thirteen's employability service.

Danny (pictured above, right) met the team at a careers event and he was interested in a Level 2 apprenticeship.

He was lacking confidence and had no work experience, so our Steps to Success programme was an ideal starting point for him. He was referred to our employability tutor, Leigh (pictured above, left) so that he could join the course.

Danny expressed an interest in a contact centre apprenticeship within Thirteen. Leigh was running apprenticeship awareness sessions at that time which Danny also attended, and as part of this he was supported to complete the application form and with interview skills.

Danny was successful and started his apprenticeship with Thirteen in September 2019.

He said: "I've been here for a few months. Everyone I've met has been very kind and patient with me and the managers are very accommodating as well. I really appreciate the help

and support that I've been given. It certainly helped me get on to the apprenticeship and helped me feel more confident and comfortable in the job."

Leigh said: "It was great to see Danny's confidence increase over the weeks he spent with me in training, awareness and workshop sessions. He was also very supportive of other members of the group, which was lovely to see. His hard work and determination really paid off and I was delighted to see him secure the offer of an apprenticeship role with our contact team."

Leigh continued: "Well done Danny, I hope your determination and drive continues in your role and I wish you every success for your future in Thirteen!"

Thirteen runs Steps to Success courses regularly to help customers improve their confidence, develop their CVs and interview skills and apply for vacancies to help boost their employability.

If you would like more information or would like to make a referral, please email Leigh at

leigh.karakosta@thirteengroup.co.uk

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Volunteering: What's it all About?

Volunteering plays a big part in Thirteen's employability service, as it gives people the chance to gain work experience and develop new skills.

We spoke to Jo Beckwith (pictured above), our new volunteering and peer mentor co-ordinator, about volunteering opportunities at Thirteen and why it's so important.

Why are you so passionate about volunteering?

I've worked with volunteers at Teesside Uni and could see the difference it made, not just for the volunteer themselves but for the service we were offering.

It's the same at Thirteen. Being a volunteer can be a really rewarding experience for someone, and it supports the business too. Great examples are the volunteers that help with activities and acts as befrienders in some of our schemes for young families. That's something we can offer customers because we have those extra pairs of hands to help out and they really have a positive impact on the service.

How does it benefit the volunteer?

It's a massively rewarding experience, whether it's because you make new friends, update skills, build up experience or confidence, or simply to gain some routine and structure in your life.

It's also really good to support someone's mental health and wellbeing, doing something positive that helps them and also helps others.

What's available at Thirteen?

We offer a variety of volunteering roles at Thirteen. Most of these are within our support services but we've recently expanded into other areas of the business such as Tenancy Support and Syrian Resettlement services, so there's a lot of choice for anyone interested. I'm working with other teams to potentially open up roles in other areas as well.

How do we support volunteers?

Volunteers are given a lot of support and we want them to really feel valued, so that they stay with us. They go through a rigorous application, induction and training programme so that we know they are committed and so that they really get to grips with the business and learn how volunteering with us could help them develop and grow.

We also work very closely with our employability team to support volunteers into work and training.

Who can become a volunteer?

I think anyone can become a volunteer, even if they only have a little bit of free time. Everyone has something to offer through direct skills or just from their own life experiences that could be of help to someone else.

We don't just work with existing Thirteen customers – we welcome applications from anyone. It may be someone looking for a career change that just want to 'test out' an area of our work, someone who wants a bit more experience in the sector or someone that wants to boost their confidence or skills, the list of possible volunteer candidates is endless really!

How can you find out more?

If you're in contact with anyone that you think would benefit from volunteering with us, email volunteering@thirteengroup.co.uk to find out what opportunities will be available when we return to more normal working arrangements.

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Durham Routeways Delivery

Thirteen's employability service delivered its final routeways in partnership with DurhamWorks in March 2020.

We've thoroughly enjoyed being a sub-contractor on the DurhamWorks project, providing a high quality service to customers and businesses across County Durham.



Since the start of our Routeways in February 2019 we've supported over 160 customers with a customer service or food hygiene qualification.

Our employer engagement team have linked with numerous employers across County Durham and have moved 40 customers into employment opportunities.



Below are the stories of just two of the customers we've supported through our routeways.

Josh's story

Josh completed our customer service routeway in January 2020. He was struggling to find work due to a lack of confidence and understanding of the jobs market.

Tutor Chris supported Josh during his course in Durham City and he gained a level 2 customer service qualification on completion.

Josh met with employability caseworker, Gill, for 1-1 support in his job search as well as interview techniques and confidence building.

He'd been unemployed since leaving college two years ago and this was his first try at getting a job.

Gill supported him to write good quality applications and worked on interview technique and selling his skills to an employer.

Josh became confident enough to visit his local Tesco Extra and ask if there were any positions available.

He was offered an interview and successfully secured a job with Tesco.

Kate's story

Kate attended our hospitality routeway in February 2020, looking for support to find work.

With support from tutor Chris, she gained a level 2 hospitality qualification as well as a food hygiene certificate.

When she completed the routeway, Kate met with employability caseworker Gill for 1-1 support in her job search.

Kate's career goal was to become a nurse. After chatting with Gill, they identified that this would be a long-term goal and paid work in the care sector would be a great first step to develop her skills.

On her first appointment, Gill supported Kate to apply for five different jobs and she got two interviews. Within five days of completing the routeway, she was offered a position by Perfect Care Ltd in Durham City.

Kate needed a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check to start in this role and was supported by Thirteen and DurhamWorks to fund it, to make sure she could start working as soon as possible.

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Feedback from our customers

The opinions and feedback from our customers constantly help to shape service delivery and provide high quality support for all who access the employability service.

We'd like to share some of the amazing comments that we've received over the last 12 months.

“At 42 years old I have never had job interviews, filled out applications and have been employed since leaving school. Tracy guided me through the whole process with a successful outcome.”

“Dave not only helped me find work, but he gave me confidence as I had been unemployed for a long time.”

“Heather put a lot of her own time and effort into helping me improve my CV to apply for some positions that were live at the time. I have gained knowledge and skills through this that will last me a lifetime. I was offered a position with Grosvenor Casino about a month after signing up to the services of Thirteen.”

“The advisor made me feel comfortable due to her excellent customer service skills and signposted me into full time employment.”

“I was supported every step of the way and wasn't made to feel alone. My CV is exceptional, and I have since gained employment down to the hard work of Nathan and Heather. I am so grateful I had the chance to join Thirteen and would recommend that anyone struggling to find a job, or even just needing a bit more support, to join.”

“My compliment is about a gentleman, Nathan, on the employment support team. He helped me so much with my application for mobile cleaner at Stockton Riverside College. He was so friendly and easy to communicate with and very professional. I do believe his help really gave me an advantage and I got the job. I have since bumped into Nathan and had a chat and again he was just lovely and friendly.”

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Contracts: Thirteen's Employability Service Offer

We hold a number of contracts across the area and would like to share some more information on our full employability offer.

Employability service for Thirteen tenants

The service delivers an employability offer for Thirteen tenants, allowing anyone living in a Thirteen home of working age to access high quality support, advice and guidance to support them into work, education or training. We also support anyone already working if they're looking for alternative employment or want to learn new skills.

If you're interested in engaging with the service or would like more information, please email

employability@thirteengroup.co.uk

New Directions (YEI)

Our employability service is delivering the YEI programme until 2021 in Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. The programme supports people aged 15 to 29 who are currently out of work, education and training and are living in the Tees Valley area.

If you're interested in engaging with the service or would like more information, please email

newdirections@thirteengroup.co.uk or
phone **01642 947 840**.

Employability support for Accent and Clarion Housing tenants

Thirteen is working in partnership with Accent and Clarion housing to provide employability support to their tenants. Through our continued delivery of job clubs and one-to-one appointments remotely, we're supporting their tenants and the wider community with employability advice and guidance. The support offers a raft of benefits including e-learning opportunities, exclusive vacancies, IT facilities and access to a range of grants to support customers into work.

If you'd like more information on the support available to Accent and Clarion customers, please email

tracy.simmons@thirteengroup.co.uk

Volunteer and peer mentor service

Thirteen continues to offer its volunteer and peer mentor service across the Tees Valley, County Durham and Tyneside. People can access volunteering opportunities either within Thirteen or externally, to boost their experience as a volunteer and their employability skills. We support volunteers throughout their structured placements to make sure they have a rewarding experience that's right for them.

Volunteering at Thirteen is open to everyone. If you're interested, please email

volunteering@thirteengroup.co.uk

Routes to work

Thirteen is working in partnership to deliver Routes to Work across Stockton. The contract offers 1-1 support to anyone who is 30 and over, living in Stockton and falls within one of these categories:

- Long term (2 years or more) unemployed / inactive benefits
- Claim to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) rejected
- In the ESA support group (health/disability)
- Have been out of work for at least 13 weeks and is unlikely to find work in the next 12 months, due to having significant or multiple barriers to work

If you're interested in engaging with the service or would like more information, please email Tracy Simmons on

tracy.simmons@thirteengroup.co.uk

Employment Bootcamps

Thirteen is excited to be delivering employment bootcamps in partnership with Learning Curve, as part of their ESF funded NEETs Programme.

As part of this, we deliver monthly 'employment bootcamps' in venues across the Tees Valley. The courses have exclusive job vacancies attached and further support for customers to support them into jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships and education opportunities.

The bootcamps are available to 15 to 24-year olds living in the Tees Valley who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

If you're interested in attending the bootcamp or would like more information, please email **employability-admin@thirteengroup.co.uk**

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UKRI Youth Panel

Thirteen is working with Teesside University on a project to encourage people aged 16 to 24 to research a range of issues in the areas they live. The project is focusing on the Hemlington, Grove Hill and Gresham areas of Middlesbrough and is funded through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which works in partnership with organisations to create the best possible environment for research and innovation.

This initiative is part of a number of UKRI projects, aiming to generate new ideas and help develop services that people need to make the area a better place to live.

The project has now been reshaped due to COVID-19 and will be held remotely. Customers will receive packs to scrapbook their experiences during this time and how it has been in their areas.

If you are interested in the Youth Panel, please email Ann Davison on ann.davison@thirteengroup.co.uk



Some of our contracts are funded by external agencies including:



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills



To discuss partnership working opportunities with Thirteen's employability service, please contact Susan Borrow, employability support services manager by calling

07816 070 370 or emailing susan.borrow@thirteengroup.co.uk

Alternatively, visit:

www.thirteengroup.co.uk/page/employment-support

<https://www.facebook.com/Newdirectionsteesvalley/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ThirteenGroup/>