



Priority Area 2

Employment support for service users, carers and local residents



Key Takeaway

Through integrated employment support and local partnerships we can help ELFT service users stay in, return to or find new job opportunities, training and/or volunteering.

As an employer we can help people access and learn about jobs at the Trust, including through our social value contracts, volunteering, apprenticeships and work experience.



2025 Highlights:

Supporting service users to stay in and find good employment and develop skills:

- 1,018 people with long term mental health conditions accessed Individual Placement Support, supporting 207 (20%) people enter employment. In addition, new staff were recruited this year into specialist employment support roles in Bedfordshire and Luton, Tower Hamlets and Newham.
- 2,790 people accessed employment advice as part of Talking Therapies support in Bedfordshire, Tower Hamlets and Newham. This includes help with returning to and staying in work, interview preparation and negotiating workplace adjustments.
- Two lived experience work placements developed to support the North East London mental health learning disabilities and autism (MHLDA) Provider Collaborative team.



You have made a significant difference on my mental health and the way I view employment now...I took all of your advice on board, and I am continuing to apply it every day. After receiving my [graduation] results, I started putting a lot more effort into job searching and have already applied to a few vacancies

- Bedfordshire Talking Therapies service user

Digital Life Coach Training Programme: Co designed with service users to address digital exclusion and now with 19 trained coaches (17 service users). Feedback from learners include: 50% improved career prospects and demonstrating new skills, 79% seeing improvements in mental health and confidence and 86% feel they can make a positive difference by helping others.



Employment support events: Compass Wellbeing employment support fairs held for ELFT service users in November 2025 and early 2026. The Greenhouse Practice Jobs and Volunteer Fair in May 2025 brought together support organisations, including Hackney Works and the DWP, offering service users a gateway into training, volunteering and employment.

Making Work Work for people with learning disabilities learning space: Co designed with service users to help share and influence practice across ELFT areas. Recommendations from the network will inform actions by the Trust and partners.

Partnership with Redemption Roasters: ELFT charity is funding eight service users from its Forensics service to receive barista training (art of making and serving coffee) to support skills and employment.

First summer work experience week: Held for 21 young people living in our East London boroughs. This doubled the recorded number of placements held over a year and provided a supportive and structured experience, including a careers fair and tips on CV writing.



This placement has not only strengthened my passion for pursuing psychology as a career but has also given me a clearer understanding of the diverse paths within this field

- Work experience student feedback

Apprenticeships: Around 160 in place at the Trust, with 50% recruited from ELFT footprint areas and 30% of recruits under 25 years old.

Volunteer placements: 147 placements over the past year.



As a medical graduate volunteer, it means a lot to be there for patients when they need support most. Even small gestures — a chat, a smile — can make a big difference, and that's really humbling

- Student Volunteer Zelal





Bedfordshire Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) Work and Health Stewardship group:

Shared lived experience to support the development of pathways into employment. This helps employers to be better equipped to welcome people recovering from or with long term health conditions into their workforce.

Ongoing social value impact from our facilities partnership with OCS:

Over £5.7million in impact across Trust service areas in the past year focused on employment and community support.

ELFT as a Marmot Trust

Our strategic objective “Support service users, carers and the communities we serve to develop skills and to access meaningful activity and good quality employment” links to Professor Sir Michael Marmot’s evidence-based recommendation to reduce inequities by “Creating fair employment and good work for all”. Not all population groups have equal access to employment opportunities, with disadvantage seen particularly in people with disabilities and mental ill-health, those with caring responsibilities, lone parents, some ethnic minority groups, older workers and young people.

Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England

Employment support is part of the neighbourhood health model, including expanding provision of Individual Placement Support schemes and employment advice in Talking Therapies. The role of the NHS as an Anchor organisation is encouraged, supporting people from all backgrounds access an NHS career.

The plan encourages co design of digital tools and partnering with libraries and community organisations to support engagement with digital health services.

Why is this important?

Good jobs provide fair pay, safety and opportunities to progress. A good job helps people stay well and recover.

In the UK, 1 in 5 people have a health condition that limits their ability to work (a 25% increase in twenty years). Common mental health problems such as anxiety and/ or depression are twice as high for people unemployed compared to those in work. While 80% of people with a

severe mental illness want to work, only 6-8% do (compared to 75% in the general population). For people with disabilities, the risk of being unemployed is twice as high as people without disabilities.

Actions employers can take to support people return to and stay well in the workplace include mental health support at work, flexible work arrangements, better job security and phased return to work after time off sick.

For younger people access to work experience and employment opportunities is not equal across population groups.

A young person’s socioeconomic background - including the income level of their family, their parents’ educational qualifications, and their family’s wealth – all play a critical role in shaping the options available to them. Students from more disadvantaged backgrounds can be less confident talking about skills and engaging independently with future employers.

Digital skills can be a barrier to employment alongside access to digital devices that support job searches and applications. Digital equity is particularly an issue in mental health care with 35% of service users who access secondary care not daily internet users.



Case Studies

Supporting local businesses with apprenticeship levy transfer

Large employers often have unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds, while smaller businesses struggle to afford training. In 2025, we worked with local Training Hub, Community Matters, to identify GP surgeries needing support. ELFT committed unused levy funds to cover apprenticeship training for health and social care staff, leading to:

- » 18 GP surgeries supported
- » £169,000 levy transferred
- » 21 apprenticeships created.

This led to:

- » Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) accessing training opportunities
- » Strengthening local healthcare supply chains and employment prospects for local residents.

We will continue working with Community Matters to transfer additional levy funds to SMEs and plan to replicate this approach across Luton and Bedfordshire.



Levy transfers make it possible for GP practices and voluntary sector organisations to grow their own workforce and support staff... As well as upskilling the existing workforce, apprenticeships also help us engage local residents and help them gain meaningful employment

- Community Matters



Lived experience story of Luton and Bedfordshire Individual Placement Support



I was able to, from very onset of starting the service, build a wonderful rapport with my Employment Specialist. Initially, I was in a very distressed state trying to find employment in the fields I had, in what I believe, experience in...Sadly, this was not the case as the positions I was applying for were highly sought after. It was during this tumultuous period, Employment Specialist was most supportive. He did in no way push for me to get just any other form of employment but respected my wishes for trying to find employment in the fields I had chosen.

During this period he offered invaluable support, such as reading through applications and my resumes. Meeting with him in a public setting also helped bolster my confidence...Throughout the tenure of employment support, Employment Specialist has helped me gain a more broad outlook in what types of employment I could undertake, fields in which I never would have considered and take into consideration of my personal circumstances. Now, with Employment Specialist's support, I have taken another trajectory by way of employment; in a field I initially would not have considered, and in which I find rewarding

Find out more about Luton and Beds Individual Placement Employment support [here](#).

Working together to help residents into employment, Newham

Newham has the highest unemployment rate of any London borough at 7.9%.

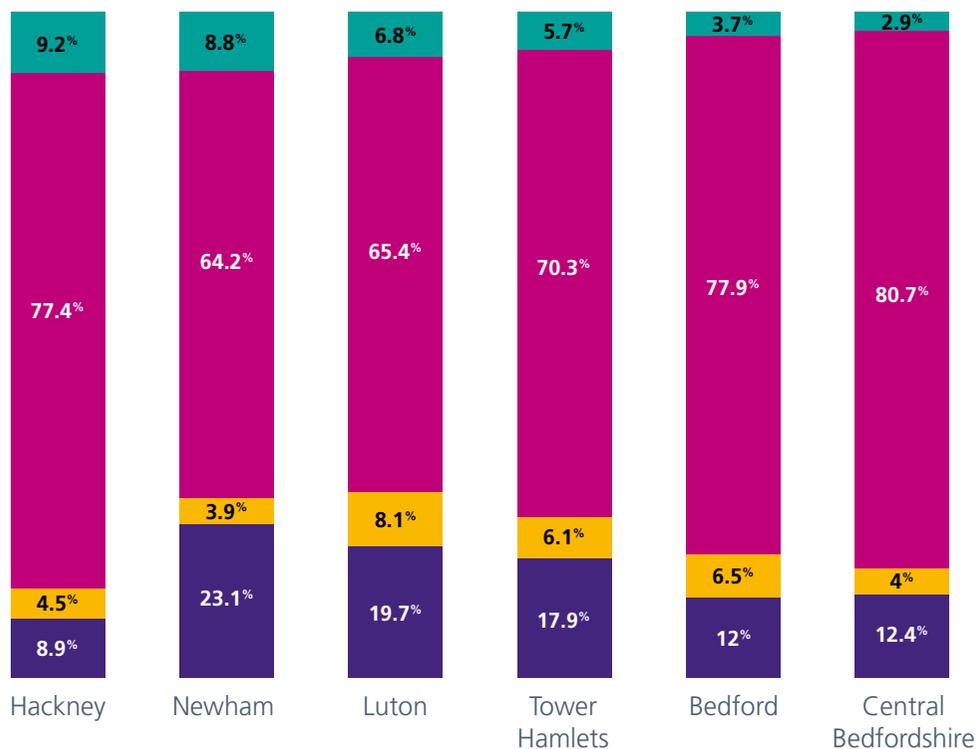
Through a joint employment forum, six Newham employment support services are working together on strategic challenges such as outreach, integration of services, referral redirection, educating employers and sharing knowledge and resources. A [new website](#) was co-produced with residents which outlines the employment services available and answers the most frequently asked questions. Additionally, a poster campaign is being developed with stories from Newham residents who gained employment.

This year **Community Health Services (CHS) Newham** started a programme of staff education sessions to assist patients and carers with social and financial issues. These were led by the London Borough of Newham and Department of Work and Pensions covering Disability Support (access to work, health adjustments passport, fit notes), Universal Credit Benefit Awareness Session (Personal Independence Payment application) and Private Sector Housing Standards. In addition, a new Carer Lead is in place, working with the Newham Carers Community (NCC). This includes training to help identify and support informal carers, understand Carers Assessments and access local support.





Economic Activity Status



- Key**
- Economically inactive: Other
 - Economically inactive: Sickness & Disability
 - Economically active: In Employment
 - Economically active: Unemployed

Figure 8: Differences in economic activity across our ELFT service areas



Next steps include

Continuing to maximise the employment support available to service users, including through clinical and service user awareness and supporting local partnerships.

Strengthening ways people can learn about and access jobs at the Trust.

Glossary

Digital Equity: This refers to when every person and community has the necessary information technology resources to participate in activities that affect their lives. The term includes not only access to devices and the Internet, but also the ability to use and benefit from them effectively.

