

Thriving at Work

Connecting the dots between diversity and inclusion

Better Connect  Programme Impact Report



The cost-of-living crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, and greater demands on local authorities and healthcare providers have exacerbated problems for millions of people in the UK. Add these pressures to economic inequalities and employment changes, and it has never been more important to help people overcome the barriers and challenges they are facing so they can remain in employment, and get the support they need to thrive in their lives and work.

Better Connect are specialists in designing and leading employability programmes that support participants to address these challenges and barriers, and enable participants to move closer to the labour market.

Over the years, it has become very clear to us that once participants move into employment, their barriers and challenges do not just disappear. Often, they are exacerbated or new barriers and challenges for sustaining that employment arise.

As a result, Thriving at Work was designed to support individuals already in employment who are neurodiverse, have a disability or work limiting health condition, or are experiencing mental health challenges, to thrive within the workplace and sustain employment.



Natasha Babar-Evans
CEO of Better Connect

Our Thriving at Work Vision – To create inclusive, accessible and healthy workplaces that increase productivity and create an environment where all employees can thrive.

Our Programme – Thriving at Work was a partnership programme led by Better Connect delivered across York, North Yorkshire and East Riding, supporting individuals to become happier and more fulfilled at work, addressing challenges (both personal and professional) that are preventing engagement and progression in the workplace and supporting individuals to thrive in their lives and work.

Our Model – Designed with the whole person in mind and comprising of 3 main delivery areas;



Workplace Support



Diversity Training



Inclusive Workplaces



“ The very nature of the project celebrates and supports individuals that have a disability or work limiting health condition, are neurodiverse or are experiencing mental health challenges. We believe that creating inclusive, accessible and healthy workplaces increases productivity and creates an environment where all employees can thrive. Our support helps connect the dots between diversity and inclusion.

Emma Lyons, Former TAW Programme Manager

Funders

Thriving at Work was part funded by the European Social Fund with match contributions from North Yorkshire Council Public Health, City of York Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and HEY Smile Foundation

The total investment for Thriving at Work was £1.73M

Better Connect

Experts in programme management at all levels, including financial management, bid development, monitoring and evaluation, performance management, communication, demonstrating impact and building strong partnerships and relationships

Our Partnership

Thriving at Work was delivered via 10 specialist delivery partners; all locally-based across York, North Yorkshire and East Riding who are specialists in mental health, disability and/or neurodiversity

Support

The DWP were the managing authority for this programme, providing support throughout to ensure that the contract is managed effectively

Delivery Partners

TAW's specialist delivery partners were: Autism Plus, North Yorkshire Council Public Health, Craven College, Humankind, York Mind, Futureworks, Community Works, North Yorkshire Sport, Working for Health and St Nicks

Participants

Individuals who have recognised they want to make a change in their lives. They may need support within the workplace or with personal challenges that impact work. They may also want to develop new skills



“ The best partnerships aren't dependent on a mere common goal but a shared path of equality, desire, and no small amount of passion.

*Sarah Maclean
New York Times Best Selling Author*



“ Thriving at Work has assisted me to secure a better job with higher pay and better prospects. I’m very pleased to have made the huge leap of faith after 20 years of being in a job that I didn’t particularly like.

Workplace Support Participant



- 250 participants engaged in 121 Workplace Support
- 576 participants engaged in Diversity Training
- 40 small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged

From January 2021 -June 2023, we supported a total of **801** participants across the Thriving at Work programme

92.4% of participants who received 121 Workplace Support have remained in employment following programme provision

218 participants across the programme have gone on to complete L2, L3 or Basic Skills qualifications - some of whom have gone on to progress to higher paid jobs, and more responsibilities

Career changes



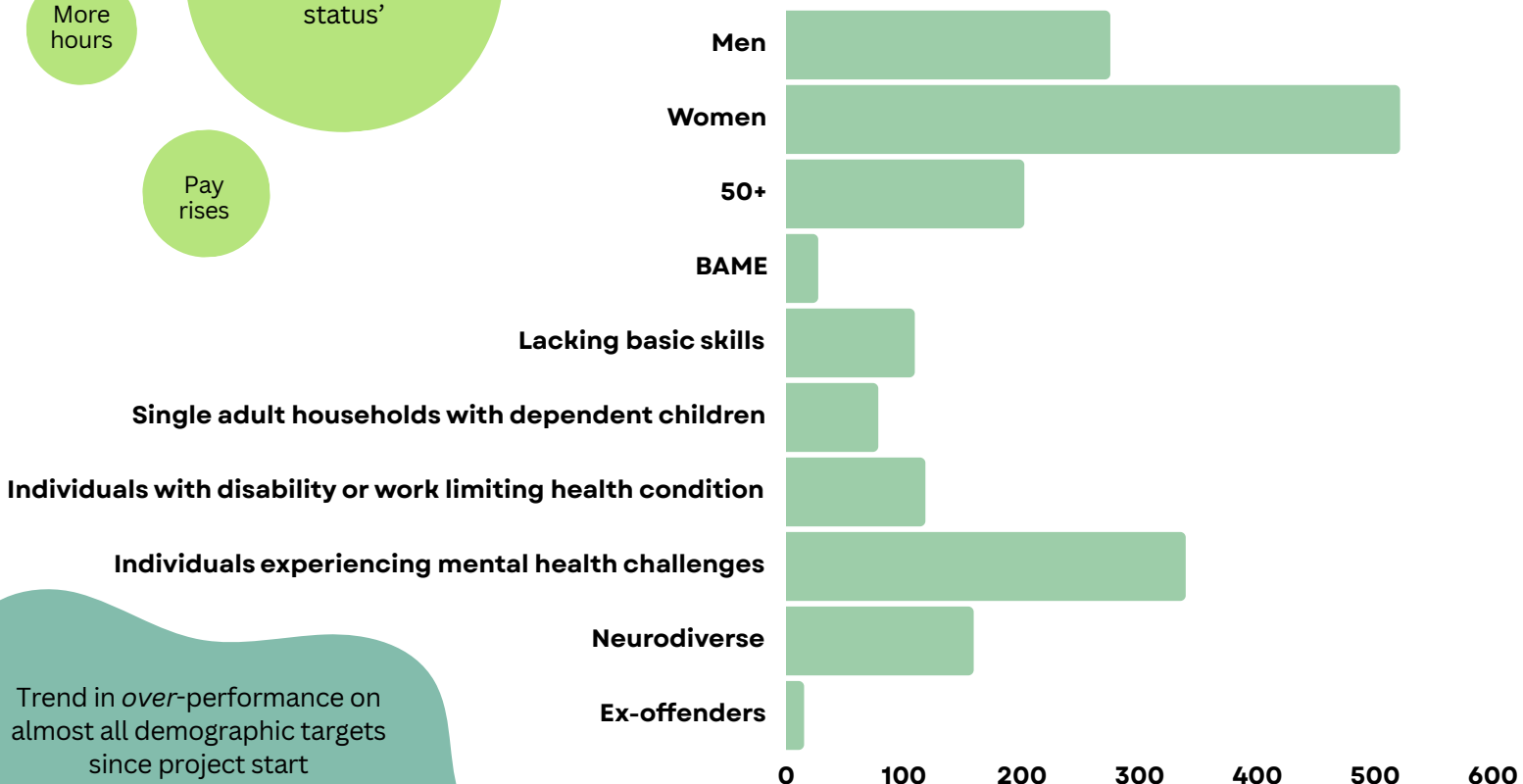
Contract changes

58 women to date saw 'improved labour market status'

More hours

Pay rises

TAW Demographic Numbers



Trend in over-performance on almost all demographic targets since project start

Workplace support

121 specialist support for individuals who are neurodiverse, have a disability or work limiting health condition, or are experiencing mental challenges. Designed to support these individuals to make positive changes to improve their working lives. In many cases, the support received was designed to address personal challenges that were negatively impacting the participants experiences at work. Where appropriate, participants were also supported to engage with the Government's Access to Work Scheme.

The **Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)** is a measure of mental wellbeing focusing on the positive aspects of mental health. It contains 14 short, positively worded statements which are used for assessing an individual's mental wellbeing.

The scale supports positively focused interventions and was used by the Thriving at Work programme to measure changes in mental wellbeing, collected at entry and exit from the programme.



Upon entry, 94 participants scored lower than 41 (across WEMWBS), indicating signs of clinical depression. Upon exit from the programme, this number was reduced to 16 scoring lower than 41, with 50% of these participant still showing significant improvements in their wellbeing scores.

35 participants scored between 41 and 44 on entry, indicating signs of mild depression, and upon exit, this number had reduced to 13 with 70% still showing significant improvements in their wellbeing scores.

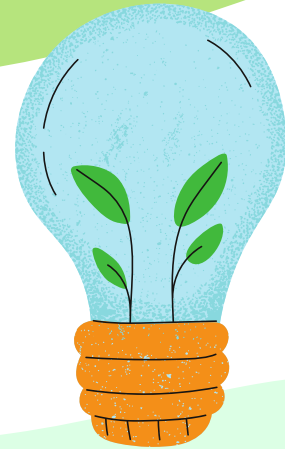
81% of participants exited the programme with positive wellbeing scores.

Of the 244 participants that have received 121 Workplace support, **156** completed the exit paperwork and completed the exit (WEMWBS).

124 of these have shown a meaningful positive change in score (anything greater than +2). Improvement in score ranged from 2 to 35, with the average meaningful positive change being **+11**.

“ It exceeded my expectations and it saved my life. And it saved my family's life as well. It's not just the person who suffers with mental health that is affected, it's everybody around them, whether that be personal or professional. It's a ripple effect.”

Workplace Support Participant



On average, the number of participants exhibiting symptoms of **clinical depression decreased** significantly following 121 Workplace Support

“Quite a few of the participants have had a lot of mental health support before ... but those challenges don't go away for them. So it's how to navigate the office environment, how to navigate social isolation when you're home working, things like that. How to navigate your anxiety, your depression or even people who are neurodivergent, how that translates to the office for them and their colleagues and their access to work passports.”

Thriving at Work Keyworker

“ I knew nothing really about neurodiversity and this course has improved my understanding greatly ... This training should be mandatory in the workplace, to enable employers to gain a better understanding of possible barriers and assist on how to overcome them.

Diversity Training Participant

Diversity Training

Specialist training and awareness raising to enable individuals to better support peers, colleagues and team members who may be experiencing barriers and challenges that have an impact on their work. Training included neurodiversity awareness, mental health awareness and disability awareness courses.



Of 371 participants who received Diversity Training and completed exit questionnaires, 370 would recommend the training received to others

“The training was very informative and valuable. This training should be mandatory in the workplace, to enable employers get a better understanding of possible barriers and assist on how to overcome them”

Diversity Training Participant



Inclusive Workplaces

Tailored support for SME's to help embed good working practices into the foundations of their organisations. Happy and healthy workplaces are more productive and more innovative. On completion of our Thriving at Work diagnostic, organisation centred action plans were created to support organisations with:

- Policies and Governance
- Recruitment and Induction
- Culture and Values
- Staff Skills and Training
- Reasonable Adjustments and Support
- Quality Standards and Pledges

“We had a really positive experience engaging with Thriving at Work. It has allowed us to access vital training for our management team as well as get much needed support with our policies and processes. It was easy to engage with the programme and they went above and beyond to support us, even presenting at our Christmas gathering to talk about what support was available.”

Thriving at Work SME

80% of the organisations who completed the diagnostic at entry and exit, were all working towards, or had signed up to quality standards and pledges to improve workplace wellbeing by the end of provision



Thriving at Work engaged a total of 40 SMEs. Support received will in turn, benefit 587 employees in addition to those that have engaged directly with the programme



Thriving at Work Case Studies



Click the large pictures below to watch the videos

LUKE'S STORY WITH WORKING FOR HEALTH

Luke's journey with TAW began after years of struggling with his mental health. After finding help through his community mental health team, Luke was then pointed in the direction of Working for Health and the Thriving at Work programme. From there, Luke began engaging with 121 support and went on to change his career completely, giving back and founding his own charity, We Go Again.



COMMUNITY FURNITURE STORE'S STORY WITH ST NICKS

The Community Furniture Store's experience with TAW began with St Nicks- the 'green heart' of York. Through the programme, St Nicks offered SME mentoring, supporting CFS to embed more inclusive and robust policies and processes for employee wellbeing. Employees Jude and Tyler, also received 121 workplace support on the programme.



ASHLEY'S STORY WITH HUMANKIND

Ashley's journey with Humankind began when he was referred to TAW Keyworker, Leanne Arnell. Grappling with a tumultuous relationship, poor mental health, and his desire to be a present father, Ashley was struggling both professionally and personally, but once he began receiving 121 support, things started to change for the better. Following the programme, Ashley is doing brilliantly; he has a renewed sense of confidence, is in a happier relationship, and has found more suitable, sustainable employment.



This project has helped my confidence grow in so many ways. I can approach my manager with any issues, problems or just for a chat. I am more confident to work alongside other people, both staff and residents.

Workplace Support Participant

Can you help us accelerate our impact?



Invest in us so we can continue to lead more transformational partnerships and transform more lives across Yorkshire

Join us and our board to have a say in what we do and how we do it or become part of our passionate staff team

Partner with us to widen your impact, gain access to broader funding opportunities and become part of a supportive network of dedicated delivery organisations

Connect with us on social media to see the social and economic impact our programmes are making, find out about opportunities, and learn more about what we do

Connect with us



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**Click the picture to
read our TAW
evaluation on 121
Workplace Support
led by Annie & Jane**



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