

# Specialist Employment Team Newsletter

## Volume 5, January 2025



Welcome to the latest edition of the Specialist Employment Team's Newsletter.

The team supports Sandwell residents with a health condition or disability to find or sustain paid employment, and we provide a no cost service to employers.

Whether you are a job seeker, a referral organisation or an employer, we hope you will find our Newsletter interesting and inspiring.

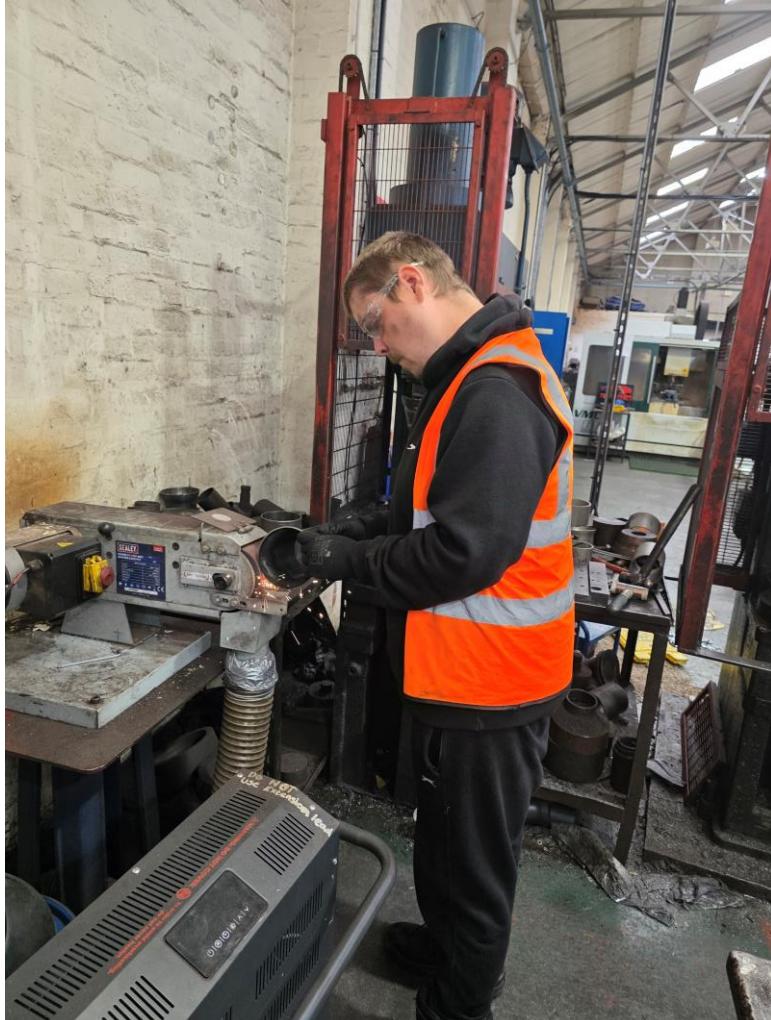
**Contact us:**

 0121 569 5563

 Email [SET\\_enquiries@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:SET_enquiries@sandwell.gov.uk)

[www.sandwell.gov.uk/SETTeam](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/SETTeam)

## Kristian's Story



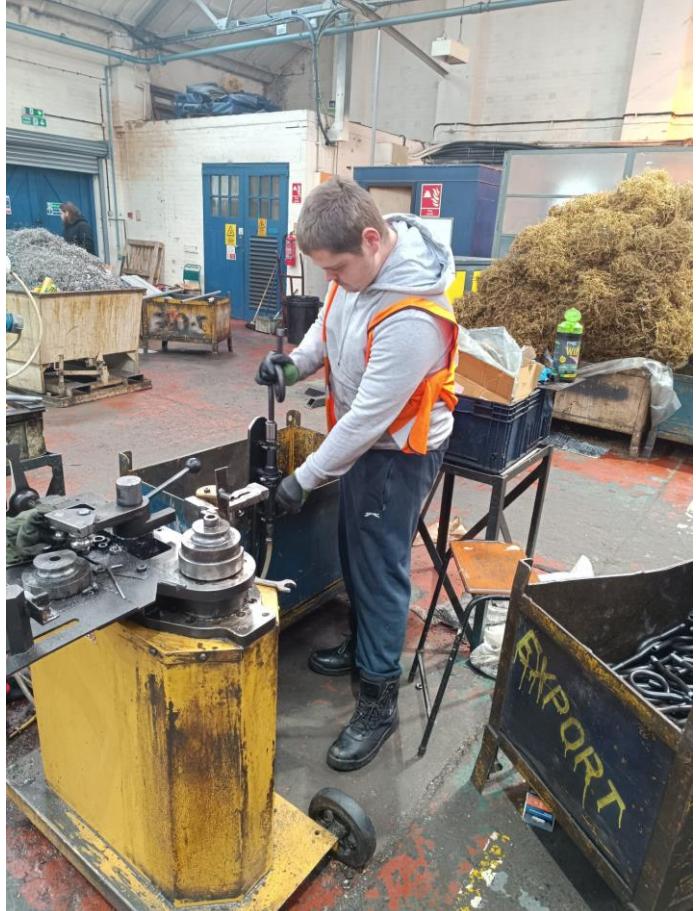
Kristian hadn't been in paid employment previously and had limited exposure to the workplace. His main passion and hobbies are heritage vehicles, and he is a volunteer at Chase Water Light Railway.

To broaden his aspirations, we arranged for Kristian to attend a work placement with **CMT Engineering** where he was quick to learn correct use of machinery and his friendly nature meant he got on well with the staff. Not only was he 100% reliable he also chose to get in to work for 6am, further demonstrating his commitment and motivation.

When the requirement came to take on additional staff on a temp basis, Jon (CMT Operations Manager) contacted Kristian, who was over the moon, and employed him via Best Connection.

Jon and the staff at CMT have been very supportive, making an adjustment to the hours of work for Kristian so he can manage his health.

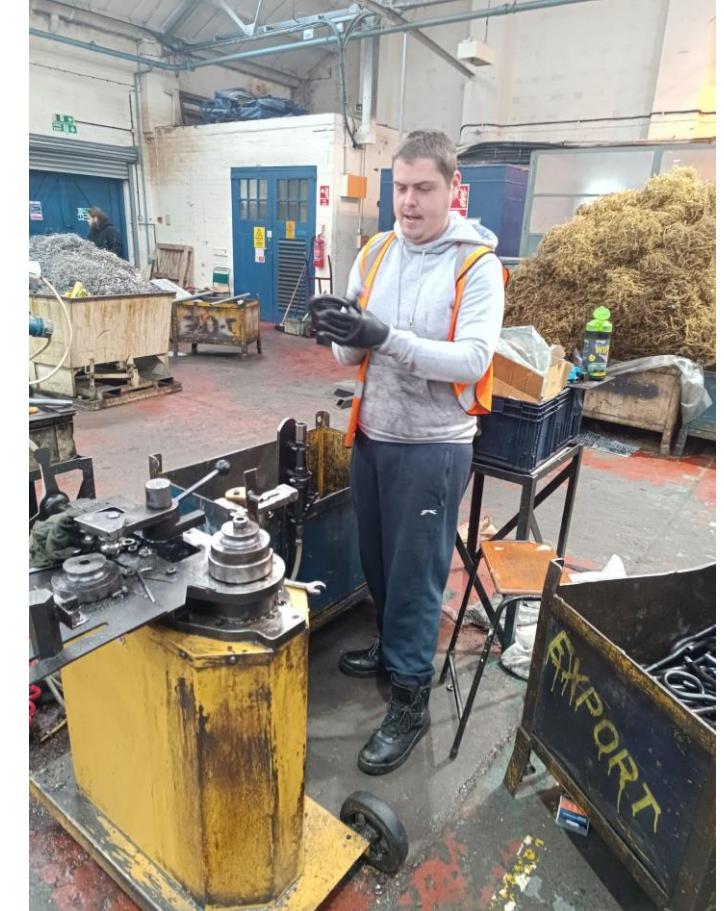
## Kristian's Story continued...



*Kristian said "The staff have been really good and helpful getting me my job at CMT with help from Sam, Kiran and Jon."*

*Jon from CMT said "He really is not the same lad - so much more confident. He reflects on how work makes him feel and I'm glad he has this ability. In turn CMT really listen and I find this to be so good. Kris loves working for CMT."*

*I am incredibly proud of my son and thankful for CMT and Sandwell Employment Services for giving Kristian this opportunity.*  
Tina, Kristian's mum



## Gemma's Story

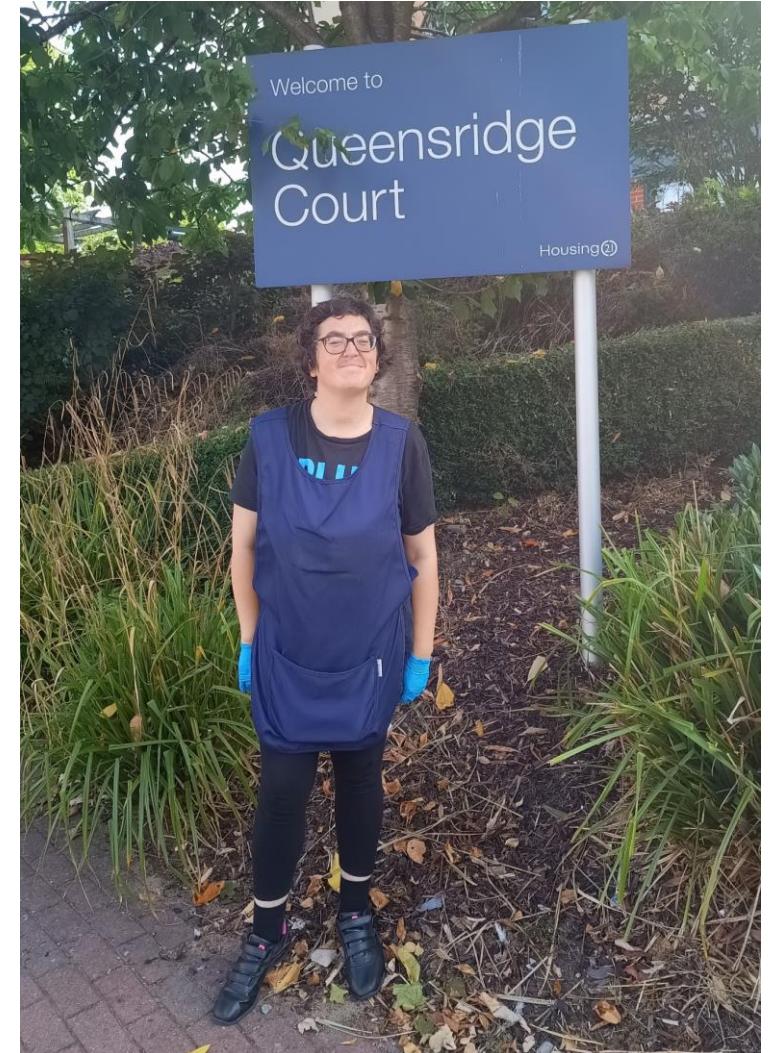
Since being referred to the Specialist Employment Team, Gemma has attended site visits and work tasters to increase her knowledge of different job roles and learn more about cleaning.

Following on from the work tasters, we arranged cleaning work experience opportunities for Gemma with **Dimensions** and **Queensridge Court** (Housing 21).

Having excelled in both placements, we were delighted when Gemma successfully applied for a paid cleaning role with Dimensions. She really deserves this opportunity and it's great that all her hard work has paid off.

*"I enjoyed doing work experience, meeting new people and learning about cleaning. I've also gained confidence. I'm happy now I have been offered a job"*

Gemma.



## Bailey's Story

**We are so pleased for LSE job seeker Bailey Harker, who moved into employment with UK Access Solutions.**

This is a well-earned culmination of Bailey's efforts since being on LSE. He has taken part in two work placements, two site visits, a Reverse Jobs Fair and gained his CSCS Card.

We'd also like to thank Ashley at UK Access for being such a positive ambassador for Inclusive Recruitment. By reframing the interview into a site visit and chat, followed by a work trial, he took the pressure out of the process and enabled Bailey to demonstrate his work ethic and practical capabilities.

*"Bailey's doing a great job here at UK Access Solutions and we're pleased to count him as a valued member of our team - well done Bailey!"* Ashley Rookes, Managing Director, UK access solutions

*"I like everything about my job. I felt proud of myself when I was offered the job. Sam and Seema were excellent at helping me with my CV and looking for a job. They boosted my confidence"* Bailey Harker, LSE Participant



The Specialist Employment Team are loving our partnership with Housing 21 who have offered fantastic site visits and invaluable work placement opportunities to our Specialist Employment Team participants.



Thank you to Nithan, Jenny and the team at Head Office who hosted an informative site visit as a precursor to a work placement opportunity with the ICT Tech department due to start in January 2026. It was a great experience for our participants, meeting at West Bromwich Bus Station and catching the number 80 bus to Tricorn House in the City Centre.



Queensridge Court, one of Housing 21's ExtraCare facilities, have been amazing and kindly hosted four fantastic work placements throughout 2025.

Our participants Shernade, Rachael and Martine seen in the photo with Jessica, Lorraine and Jackie from Queensridge, thoroughly enjoyed their placements, learning new skills and gaining valuable experience.



Mitchell was referred to our service on leaving Nova Training, looking for his next step after having completed his education journey.

Having achieved a BTEC Level 3 in Health and Social care we felt a work experience placement with Housing 21 Deighton Court would be a good fit.

Initially the placement involved completing admin and reception duties, however Mitchell also got involved with assisting the Activities Co-Ordinator and really liked this aspect of the placement.

*“I have really enjoyed assisting in activities and have loved every second of playing games such as Bingo and have received really nice compliments from the residents who have enjoyed my company”.*  
Mitchell Smith, Connect to Work participant

The next step for Mitchell is paid employment.

## **CONNECT TO WORK Supported Employment Programme**

Connect to Work is a voluntary employment programme that uses supported employment techniques to help Sandwell residents with a disability, health condition or people with more complex barriers to finding paid employment.

You can access Connect to Work for help finding a job if you're unemployed, or for support if you're currently employed but at risk of losing your job.

Contact us for more information about Connect to Work.

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## **CONNECT TO WORK**

Funded by **UK Government**



**West Midlands**  
Combined Authority

## Supported Internship Programmes

This academic year **23** young Sandwell people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are participating in supported internship programmes with employers across the Black Country.

Supported Internship programmes are structured, work-based study programmes facilitated by the support of an expert job coach and are for young people aged 16-24 with an Education Health and Care Plan.

In September, two new DFN Project sites opened at Asda Oldbury and Great Bridge stores. These opportunities complement existing supported internship programmes available with employers including Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and Sandwell Council.

Contact us for more information about supported internship programmes.

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Sandwell and West  
Birmingham Hospitals  
NHS Trust



# Meet the team....

**Specialist Employment Advisers:**

Sam Crabtree  
Zed Khatoon  
Seema Mair  
Mandy Morrison  
Kiran Rajania  
Darmesh Valambhia

**Team Manager:**

Kate Loftus

**Project Search Employment Coach:**

Charlotte Hackett

**Job Retention Officer:**

Gwen Thompson

**Data Management Officer:**

Stacey Griffiths