

News from the Jersey Employment Trust

Twenty years of supporting people with a disability into work

By fundraising and relationships manager
Caroline Spencer

IN the Alternative Christmas Message on Channel 4, Strictly Come Dancing winner Chris McCausland called for an end to discrimination against disabled people.

Chris, who is blind, said that disabled people are “often some of the most resilient, creative and determined people you will ever likely meet”.

Using his love for mince pies as a metaphor for equality, the comedian said: “I will never discriminate against any sort of mince pie, all of them are equal to me and will no doubt meet the same undignified end as I try and fit it all in my mouth in one go.”

He called for the UK government to do more to support disabled people into employment. According to the government the disability employment rate in the UK was 53% in the second quarter of 2024,



■ JET chief officer Penny Shurmer: “JET should be at the forefront of your mind when reviewing inclusion policies in relation to disability”

compared to 81.6% for non-disabled people. For over 20 years the Jersey Employment Trust has been supporting Islanders who have a disability or long-term health condition to secure and sustain employment.

● We supported 545 people in 2024, with

263 of those being with our Employment Service and 125 with our Under-25s team.

● 63% of the young people we work with now cite mental health as their primary disability.

● Our employment co-ordinators sourced 140 new jobs last year.

● There were 181 new referrals to the service.

As we embark upon a new year, JET chief officer Penny Shurmer is keen to remind Island employers what the charity is here for.

“JET provides that additional in-work support to both the employer and the employee,” she said. “JET should be at the forefront of your mind when reviewing inclusion policies in relation to disability, and how best to implement reasonable adjustments and offer employment opportunities. We can deliver training where needed. Successes have come in all industries, big and small.”

The recent Third Sector report pointed to the need for more Islanders to donate to charities regularly. “It would be apt to nominate JET for something like payroll giving because by donating some of your own wage packet, you are giving someone else a chance for a work experience or internship,” Mrs Shurmer said.

“I want to express a heartfelt thank you to employers, industry leaders and funders who continue to support what we do. Our wish always is for there to be a more inclusive society. We appreciate and understand the challenges of the employment landscape, but there are many talented and skilled individuals that need a chance. Every individual has a skill just waiting to be unlocked and embraced.”

‘I can’t recommend JET highly enough’

DAVID Harburn feels like he has landed his “gold job”. Having had an internship last year, he was offered a paid role at Family Nursing and Home Care, scanning and archiving medical records.

“It’s a lovely team here,” he said. “I’ve worked in different places but here there is a calming atmosphere. If you haven’t experienced working with people who have a disability, it can be a learning exercise on both sides.

“I like to do the same thing every day. I find change hard. My mental health is a lot better knowing that I’m not going to have anything unexpected thrown at me. I can walk out every day and switch off and that’s a good sign.”

David, who has been working with employment co-ordinator Mel Therin, uses tools called decider skills, which help people recognise thoughts and feelings, allowing them to manage their emotions and mental health.

“If I feel unsure about what I am doing, it’s good to know Mel is there. She will tell me to step back. Before I started here, I was having several issues with anxiety. I was advised to go to therapy but there was a long waiting list. I started talking to Mel and she has helped me more than anything or anyone else. My parents have told me how my whole attitude has changed.

“JET are not there just to get you a job.



■ David with employment co-ordinator Mel Therin

There’s a major support network around it. It’s a toolbox. I can’t recommend them highly enough.

“I would also say to anyone thinking of working with JET, just be honest. Don’t say yes to something you don’t want. But

“It’s not just about the pay, it’s also about keeping active... Being at home is not what I want. You don’t want to live life on income support

do try things even if they’re unpaid. Get there on time, be smart, a reference goes a long way.

“It’s not just about the pay, it’s also about keeping active. It can be a scary place, being out of work. Being at home is not what I want. You don’t want to live life on income support. I look forward to the focus of work.”

Mel added: “I’ve noticed a massive difference in David. He’s taken on board all the tools and techniques of decider skills, and has put the work in. He has an amazing work ethic and wants to do a really good job, and it shows. I’m very proud of him.”

‘JET make a big difference to me’



■ Ewan Le Masurier is popular with customers at Waitrose in Vallée des Vaux

EWAN Le Masurier has been working at Waitrose for nearly five years. Sometimes he doesn’t need support from JET, but he has been working recently with his employment co-ordinator Mel Therin and his manager Benvinda Da Silva as he wanted to increase his work hours.

Mel and Benvinda looked at ways to up-skill him, setting goals and seeking advice, receiving support from various agencies and charities throughout the community. It paid off and Ewan is now working four days a week, from 10am to 2pm.

“Ewan put in a lot of hard work to look at his productivity,” Mel said.

“Although he struggles with reading, he has taken responsibility to get in touch with me and he will email me when necessary.”

What shines through is Ewan’s cheeky

sense of humour. His role now includes helping customers as well as stacking shelves and he is loving the social interaction.

“I enjoy speaking to people and it has improved my confidence,” he said. “JET are very supportive. They help you in the working environment and help with anything else you struggle with. It makes a big difference to me.”

“I enjoy speaking to people and it has improved my confidence

Stepping into 2025...



■ A squirrel spotted outside Acorn

Go nuts for Acorn

A Squirrel Run, in memory of our dear late colleague Dean Lowe and his son Charlie, will be held on Thursday 13 March. Registration is now open. You need to sign up early in order to get your squirrel costume in good time. All the details are on the RaceNation page: <https://tinyurl.com/GoNuts25>.

Passage to Prague

The JET Jaunt will be held again this year, with a different destination. In September 2025, it will take participants from St Malo to Prague. Inspired by the TV programme Race Across the World, the Jaunt sees teams of two race across Europe, completing challenges and ticking off checkpoints along the way. We are now looking for sponsors for the 2025 event. And participants can register their interest by emailing jaunt@jet.co.je.



■ This year’s Jet Jaunt will be going to a different destination – Prague

Run for JET

We have three places in the London Marathon MyWay 2025. Formerly the

Virtual London Marathon, it allows people to take on the 26.2-mile challenge in their local area. It can be done in stages, as fast or slow as you like, so long as it is completed in the 24 hours of marathon day, Sunday 27 April. If you would like a place, and you are happy to raise money for JET, please email caroline.spencer@jet.co.je.

Amazon Wishlist

Santa has delivered! Thank you to everyone who took part in our Advent Calendar, where items from our Amazon Wishlist get ordered and sent to us. There are paint brushes, craft scissors, thread and needles... as well as lots of plain white mugs for us to print and resell. All of them support our crafts and upcycling sessions providing work and training for Islanders who have a disability or long-term health condition.

■ Amazon Wishlist: Pictured are tutors Lynne-Marie Langlois and Terry Langford, and ATD client services manager Fiona Scott

