

Annual Review 2016

ersa
Employment Related
Services Association

Welcome to ERSA

→ The employment support sector doesn't stay still for long and this year has been no exception. We are looking forward to the biggest period of change the sector has seen for years, with the key DWP programmes, Work Choice and Work Programme, due to end in 2017 and the shape of successor provision beginning to emerge.

As such, ERSA has had a hugely busy year. It has been working hard in Westminster, in Scotland and, increasingly, at regional level to support providers and influence commissioners. This year we launched the Greater Manchester Network, which joins the already successful ERSA network, Employment Support Scotland. A London network is to follow shortly, whilst events have taken place in Liverpool, the West Midlands and elsewhere in support of the regional agenda.

ERSA has been growing and evolving to meet the demands of this vibrant and ever-changing sector. Our forums and networks are thriving, proving to be powerhouses in developing policy and championing collaborative action on behalf of the sector and the jobseekers it supports. One great initiative has been the first ever UK-wide Employability Day, which saw around 80 sites open their offices to MPs, employers, council leaders and the media. We can only ever gain by educating our many audiences about the positive work we do and this was a fine example of how the sector can champion its contribution to society.

ERSA has also extended its programme of events to members this year, with more training events and larger scale conferences than ever before. Our annual conference saw around 300 professionals gather to debate issues of importance, whilst our first joint conference with the Institute of Employability Professionals saw packed rooms debate issues on disability and health.

We know change can sometimes be difficult, but it can also offer opportunities. The year ahead is going to be an exciting one, with ERSA committed to doing everything within its power to help the sector in this shifting landscape.



Kirsty McHugh
Chief Executive



Steve Swan
Chair

Influence



ERSA has maintained a high profile position as the sector's representative to media, policymakers and politicians this year.

Public Affairs

- ERSA has met with almost 50 Ministers, Shadow Ministers, MPs, MSPs and peers to discuss employment related issues.
- ERSA held well attended events at the Labour and Conservative Party conferences, plus a private dinner with the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, and other MSPs, in Scotland.
- ERSA submitted ten pieces of evidence to departmental select committees and parliamentary committees and gave oral evidence to the select committee inquiry on contracted employment provision.
- ERSA launched its manifesto in Scotland in advance of the Scottish elections and held an election hustings for candidates.
- ERSA held roundtable events in support of a range of policy areas, including the Carol Black Review, social investment and mental health.

Press work

This year ERSA has had over 40 pieces of direct coverage in publications including The Times, BBC online, The Guardian and The Sun, whilst ERSA's website hosted over 50 blogs from guest speakers. ERSA works with a wide range of journalists and direct with member organisations to support coverage of the sector in local and specialist publications.

Employability Day Campaign

This year saw the inaugural Employability Day take place. This had phenomenal support from the sector, with over 80 centres across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland opening their doors on the day. Providers hosted visits from MPs, held parties for their staff and told their stories online and through news publications.



Whitehall

Influencing the shape of future Westminster commissioning has been a priority this year, with ERSA contributing to a range of expert reference groups and taskforces and working directly with officials on the shape of future employment provision. In addition, ERSA has undertaken specific work with the homelessness sector, social financiers and the charity sector on specific elements of employment support.

It has also focused on other elements of government policy such as offender services, self employment and the new Youth Obligation.

ERSA devolution

As devolution deals are signed with various areas across the UK, ERSA has been working to ensure that those with new powers are supported to develop the best possible services for local jobseekers. ERSA is part of the Scottish Government Advisory Committee on future provision and is working with Greater Manchester's Combined Authority on programme design. Events have also taken place in Liverpool, London and Birmingham on future provision.

Learning



ERSA Employability Awards

ERSA's third annual Employability Awards saw over 250 people come together at the British Library to celebrate the best in class – including the best employers, frontline advisers, specialist organisations and jobseekers themselves. The event was addressed by the Employment Minister and compered by Baroness Stedman-Scott. The awards were covered in a wide range of publications, including The Sun newspaper.

Sector surveys

2015 saw the launch of the first ever State of the Sector survey. This built understanding of the sector's issues and concerns and has helped ERSA in the development of services to support sector capacity. In addition, the HR forum led the fifth annual Salary and Benefits Survey which covered over 12,000 staff.

Institute of Employability Professionals

ERSA continues to work closely with the IEP. The IEP is the membership body for individuals created by the sector, for the sector. This year, the IEP launched its 'Focus on the Frontline' programme and is now embarking on an innovative campaign to deliver high quality content, advice and learning materials to IEP members.

ERSA Forums



ERSA Forums and Networks

ERSA runs a range of free policy and function specific networks. Each forum meets regularly to hear from high quality external speakers, discuss sector issues and pursue joint projects.

Disability and Health Forum

This forum leads on all aspects of disability and health related policy. This year it has been at the forefront of thinking on future government policy. Work over the last year has included feeding into the Carol Black review and developing thinking on how to halve the disability employment gap.

Offender Related Services Forum

The forum, run jointly with the Association of Employment and Learning providers, focuses on offender skills and employment, both inside prisons and through the gate. It seeks to ensure that skills and employment integrate successfully with the current prison reforms and the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda.

Youth Employment Forum

This forum leads ERSA's policy work on a wide range of youth-related issues, including advice and guidance in schools, school to work transitions, pre apprenticeship activity and access to apprenticeship, plus youth employment schemes. This year, the forum has led work on the development of a work experience standard for mandated work placements with Fair Train.

Housing and Employment Forum

The well attended forum, run jointly with the National Housing Federation, looks at issues related to employment, housing and welfare reform. It seeks to bring the sectors closer together on behalf of jobseekers.

Media and Public Affairs Network

This is an action focused network leading the development of the sector's communications and public affairs activity. It provides a point of liaison with government on communication issues and led Employability Day.

HR Forum

The HR Forum has a strongly practical focus, with a variety of working groups and projects that run alongside the main meetings. It leads the annual Salary and Benefits Survey and is developing thinking on employee reward strategies.

Supply Chain Forum

This forum provides a voice for subcontractors of employment services, as well as a space to collectively problem solve and share information. It led the first ever State of the Sector survey in 2015.



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CELEBRATING
10 YEARS

Last year was ERSA's 10 year anniversary. ERSA celebrated a decade of working with the sector to support jobseekers into employment with a reception event in the House of Commons attended by sector representatives, jobseekers, advisors and parliamentarians.

ERSA outside Westminster



Employment Support Scotland

Launched in 2015, Employment Support Scotland brings together a network of 54 organisations to support ERSA's work with the Scottish Government on the future of employability services. Led by co-chairs, Kate Still of Rathbone and Laurie Russell of The Wise Group, the network has met regularly with officials and ministers. Meetings have fed into the formal consultation on the future of employment services and the network held a hustings for candidates for the 2016 elections.

Greater Manchester Network

Meeting regularly in the shadow of Old Trafford, the Greater Manchester network brings together providers and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to plan the design and integration of employability services in the Greater Manchester area. Meetings have received updates on the local Working Well programme, Greater Manchester's mental health strategy and relationships with Jobcentre Plus.

ERSA has also held events with Liverpool City Council, London Councils and in support of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission this year. It has also worked with Northern Ireland's government. Other activity will be launched in 2016/17.

ERSA Services

ERSA offers a wide range of services to its members including:

- Access to member only networking and influencing events on distinct topics and themes.
- Weekly ERSA e-bulletin featuring all the latest sector news.
- A weekly parliamentary monitoring service.
- A free legal helpline staffed by legal sector specialists, Bircham Dyson Bell.
- Price reductions for key products and services, including the entitled to off benefit calculator.
- Access to the ERSA Opportunities Hub and the ability to advertise products and services at reduced rates.
- Reduced fees for ERSA events including the ERSA Annual Conference.
- Each organisation listed on the ERSA website.
- Annual salary survey (including access to the full survey for the previous year).
- Public policy voice and public affairs activity.
- Collaborative projects to help the sector.



ERSA Events

ERSA members have access to wide range of high profile events, in 2015/2016 these included:

- **The ERSA AGM** which in 2016 is featuring Fraser Nelson, Editor of the Spectator and columnist for The Daily Telegraph.
- **The ERSA Awards** addressed by the Minister for Employment and attended by the Shadow Employment Minister.
- **The ERSA Annual Conference**, attended by around 300 people, which heard from a range of high profile speakers, including the Employment Minister, Rt Hon Priti Patel MP.
- **The 'Leading from the Front' specialist conference** on disabilities and health issues, addressed by Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, chair of the Birmingham Mental Health Commission.

ERSA expanded its range of Get to Grips short seminar series this year, with events taking place on topics such as substance misuse and employability, accessing social finance and hidden disabilities and neurodiversity.

ERSA board:
April 2016 – April 2017

Steve Swan (Chair)

Business Director –
Tomorrow's People

Alex Stevenson (Vice Chair)

Chief Operating Officer –
G4S Employment Support Services

Brian Bell

Managing Director, Employability & international –
Working Links

Elizabeth Taylor

Chief Executive –
Bootstrap Enterprises

Helen Cameron

Head of Public Affairs –
The Salvation Army Employment Plus

Iain Salisbury

Chief Operating Officer –
LearnDirect

Liz Armstrong

Director of Health, Wellbeing and Integrated Services
– APM

Rod Jackson

Managing Director –
PeoplePlus

Zoe Eccles

Director of Service Delivery –
Community Links

Barry Fletcher

Chief Operating Officer –
Ingeus

Robert Spread

Programme Director, Employment Services –
MAXIMUS UK

Richard Brooks

Director – Employment Solutions – Royal British Legion
Industries (RBLI)

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ERSA is the representative body for the employment related services sector. It exists to be the voice for the entire sector, improve standards for the benefit of all customers and ensure a fair and effective market for the commissioning and delivery of employment services.