This year has been a demanding one for ERSA, but we believe our work has never been more vital. ERSA members are increasingly navigating a complex funding and commissioning environment, growing their services into an ever wider definition of employment support. ERSA’s focus has developed apace. We now cover issues related to employability in schools and school to work transitions, have specialisms in youth employment, offender related services, housing and homelessness, welfare reform and health and disability, alongside a growing focus on helping people escape insecure low paid employment in pursuit of careers. Regionally, we continue to strengthen. This year, we have cemented operations in London, Scotland and Greater Manchester, with the West Midlands and Wales within our sights.

We are also now a far more front footed campaigning organisation than ever before. Securing an appropriate successor to the European Social Fund is not just essential to our sector but to the whole of civil society. As such, ERSA has led a high profile and inclusive cross sectoral campaign to engage with our political decision makers on this vital issue. Work this year has also focused on hidden young people, those not engaged or counted by the system, black and minority ethnic employment, people, those not engaged or counted by the system, black and minority ethnic employment related issues.

Finally, we’ve continue to extend our programme of events this year, with more training events and larger scale conferences than ever before. Our conferences on housing and disability attracted lively engaged audiences, whilst our annual conference continues as a highlight of the sector calendar.

So, in summary, a year of change, but also a year of opportunity. We very much look forward to working with you all going forward.

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

ERSA’s public affairs
• Post General Election, ERSA briefed all MPs on the employment support sector, held introductory meetings with key Ministers and met over 40 Shadow Ministers, MPs, MSPs, Metro Mayors and council leaders to discuss employment related issues.
• ERSA met with both the new Secretary of State and Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work within weeks of them taking up post.
• In Scotland, ERSA held a well attended roundtable with the Minister for Employability and Training.
• ERSA’s party conference events on English devolution were attended by over 20 councillors and regional leaders, plus MPs and thinktanks.
• ERSA made over 15 submissions to parliamentary committees and gave oral evidence to three select committee inquiries as well as All Party Parliamentary Groups and backbench committees.
• ERSA held roundtable events on a range of policy initiatives, including in-work progression, the London Skills Strategy, specialist support for policy such as Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathways, also focused on other elements of government policy such as Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathways, self-employment, older people and employment and the Race Disparity Audit.

ERSA campaigns
ERSA has led a cross-sector working group with the NCVO on the replacement of European Social Fund, jointly led a pre General Election campaign, a letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 100 organisations, cross-departmental discussions with officials, the publication of a report and secured a Work and Pensions Committee inquiry.

Supporting the market
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 employment provision. In addition, ERSA has undertaken specific work with the ESFA on older people accessing apprenticeships, the Prison Learning Alliance on guidelines for prison governors and the charity sector on data. It has also focused on other elements of government policy such as Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathways, self-employment, older people and employment and the Race Disparity Audit.

ERSA has run market engagement events for a range of commissioners this year, including the Ministry of Justice, Government Equalities Office, London Councils and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

ERSA in the regions
ERSA’s regional networks are going from strength to strength. ERSA has continued to work jointly with the Scottish Government through its Employment Support Scotland Network, with the Greater Manchester (GM) Combined Authority through its dedicated GM Network, and with London Councils and the Greater London Authority through the London Network. ERSA is now in conversation with the West Midlands Combined Authority and in Wales about future networks.
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 policy in relation to disability and health employment services. It has been at the forefront of thinking on future government and local authority policy, with a major focus on how to halve the disability employment gap.

Offender Related Services Forum
The forum focuses on offender skills and employment, both inside prisons and through the gate. This year the forum has led work on Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathways, Transforming Rehabilitation and youth justice and featured speakers including the chair of the Justice Select Committee.

Youth Employment Forum
This forum leads ERSA’s policy work on a wide range of youth-related issues, including careers inside and outside schools, education to employment transitions, pre-apprenticeship activity and access to apprenticeships, plus youth employment schemes. This year, the forum has led work on the Youth Obligation, the Careers Strategy and access to apprenticeships.

Housing and Homelessness Forum
The well attended forum, run jointly with the Give us a Chance consortium, looks at issues related to employment, housing, homelessness and welfare reform. This year, the forum has focused on issues including the apprenticeship levy, Work and Health Programme and Universal Credit rollout.

Communications and Political Insights 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 leads the annual 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 Employability Day.

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. This year sessions have focused on social finance, the Merlin Standard and the procurement and delivery of the Work and Health Programme.
ERSA outside Westminster

**Employment Support Scotland (ESS)**
The Employment Support Scotland Network brings together over 50 organisations to support ERSA's work with the Scottish Government on the future of employability services.

Led by Kate Still of Rathbone and Laurie Russell of Wise Group, the network has met regularly with officials and ministers, including holding both a one-to-one meeting and a roundtable with the Minister for Employability and Training.

The ESS chairs and ERSA's Chief Executive also this year sat on the Scottish Government Advisory Committee on Employment Programmes.

**Employment Support Greater Manchester**
The Greater Manchester Network brings together providers and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) 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 worked with the Combined Authority to deliver networking events and market engagement as part of the Working Well ‘Early Help’ procurement.

**Employment Support London**
The Employment Support London network regularly attracts audiences of over 100 attendees.

Recent meetings have focused on youth, the Work and Health Programme in London and housing. ERSA has also held a consultation event with the Greater London Authority on the draft Skills for Londoners Strategy, the feedback from which was fed back for consideration on the final strategy.

ERSA Events

ERSA members have access to a wide range of high-profile events. In 2017/2018 these included:

- The ERSA Awards, attended by Penny Mordaunt MP, then Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work.
- The ERSA Annual Conference, attended by around 300 people, which heard from a range of high-profile speakers, including Sarah Newton MP, Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Ashwin Kumar, Chief Economist of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Michael Jacobs, Director of IPPR Commission on Economic Justice.
- A dedicated housing conference, run jointly with the Give us a Chance Consortium.
- A packed mental health conference, run jointly with the IEP.
- The ERSA AGM, which in 2018 featured Nick Timmins, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Government and the King’s Fund, and former Public Policy Editor of the Financial Times.

ERSA Services

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

- The Contract and Funding Alert, a weekly service highlighting opportunities across a range of sectors.
- The ERSA Evidence Hub, a database of over 400 pieces of research covering areas including devolution, service design, welfare and conditionality, employer engagement and more.
- Access to member only networking and influencing events on distinct topics and themes.
- A weekly ERSA e-bulletin featuring all the latest sector news.
- A weekly parliamentary monitoring service.
- Access to the ERSA Opportunities Hub and the ability to advertise products and services at reduced rates.
- A free legal helpline staffed by legal sector specialists, Bircham Dyson Bell.
- Price reductions for key products and services, including the entitledto better off benefit calculator.
- Reduced fees for ERSA events including the ERSA Annual Conference.
- Your organisation listed on the ERSA website.
- Public policy voice and public affairs activity and collaborative projects to help the sector.
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.