

ADEPT President's Awards 2023

Entry form

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Award category	Shaping Places for People
Project Title	The Reintegration to Employment Programme: A collaboration between Leeds City Council Highways, Colas and local third sector partners
Local authority entrant	Leeds City Council
Partner/s if applicable	Colas Ltd (Leeds Business Unit), St George's Crypt

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

The Reintegration to Employment Programme: A collaboration between Leeds City Council Highways, Colas and local third sector partners.

Shaping places for people: How was this project an innovative response to a significant concern? (150 words max.)

The Reintegration to Employment (RtE) programme exemplifies not just the highways services which are provided to our communities by Leeds City Council, but also how we deliver them and value they add.

RtE is a highly-empathetic 4-stage programme targeting priority groups and communities who face barriers to employment, and require additional support to gain and remain in work. This project specifically supports those rehabilitating from substance dependency and/or or in temporary accommodation.

Working with Colas, specialist local third sector providers and other services, including the Leeds Leaving Care Team (LLCT), RtE is therefore a procurement innovation, in terms of how we can leverage collaboration and care to address the challenge of an inclusive and stable local workforce within Highways.

Together, we have demonstrated how a shared vision can tackle the wider determinants of health by breaking down employment barriers to provide fair and equal opportunities to the most vulnerable.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

Two individuals from 'Growing Rooms', an established innovative addiction recovery programme in Leeds supporting the street homeless to return into the community, have completed the programme so far. Both are now valued permanent employees of Colas.

Our first candidate from Growing Rooms was Will, who was nervous of leaving his paid placement at

the charity, but leaves a positive testimonial of his experience of RtE (see Supporting Information section).

In partnership with the LLCT, we have also progressed two placements for care experienced young people (one is now a full time Colas apprentice), and for a long-term unemployed veteran who lost confidence and needed to change careers following a lower-leg amputation. Accordingly, our LLCT colleagues have cited our programme to be “the ideal trauma-led approach”.

Positive feedback from a survey conducted with Colas’ Leeds team also showed increased staff engagement in social value, improved soft skills of staff and retention.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

A Social Value Steering Group embedded in our Minor Works Framework, made up of local third-sector providers, colleges, Council services and the supply chain. Collaboration broadened our reach to include further specialists to develop the programme.

We aimed to establish a programme that was person-centred, accounting for the complex backgrounds and specific barriers that vulnerable people face when trying to secure and sustain employment. We knew we needed experience, understanding, training, and support from specialists to achieve this vision.

The RtE programme grew from our long-standing relationship with Colas’ Leeds Contracting Division, who engaged St George’s Crypt, a Leeds-based charity providing care for the street homeless community. They already deliver the Growing Rooms programme, which provides temporary accommodation and therapeutic recovery for homeless candidates with substance dependency issues, and supports the LLCT. Therapists from Growing Rooms and LLCT Social Workers therefore collaborate closely to develop and trial the RtE programme.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care and external organisations. (150 words max.)

The strength of collaboration and ongoing delivery of the RtE programme demonstrates clear buy-in. Despite challenges, the core objectives have never been diluted, and we have always managed to collaboratively find a solution in the best interests of the RtE candidates.

Whole team buy-in is evidenced by the number of staff empowered to lead their own initiatives, leveraging collaborations formed and strengthened through RtE.

We also support Colas’ endeavours to promote this model of best practice to support other contractors in the city and roll out RtE to other Local Authorities. They are already replicating the approach in Liverpool and have workshops scheduled with Bristol and Swindon Councils to showcase the programme.

Lastly, we have received overwhelmingly positive testimonials across a range of stakeholders, including Growing Rooms and the Leaving Care Team, regarding the transformative outcomes related to this aspect of how we meet the wider needs of our communities.

Shaping places for people: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The scalability of this programme lies in the very low direct investment requirements on us as a Council department.

In particular, the opportunity to leverage the Social Value ambitions of our contractors and their supply chain through formal frameworks has been key to delivering RtE. A prime example is the paid work placements within Colas and corresponding SVSG activities, which were baked into our contracts with them. This is a direct illustration of where procurement innovation can help us transform how we

deliver place services within Leeds Highways.

Within the Council there has been an investment of time, offset against funds re-directed from previous, less joined-up business-as-usual activities supporting these objectives.

We could therefore deliver this first implementation of RtE without any new sources of investment, and have proved the model for how Leeds City Council and other local authorities can introduce these programmes through an innovative approach to procurement.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

Please consider these testimonials as further evidence of the success of the programme that we have pioneered in Leeds.

“My job at Colas has given me responsibility and the ability to stand on my own two feet, I’m independent for the first time in my life. I enjoy the work and the relationship I have with colleagues, I’m so glad I got this opportunity.”

Will, the first candidate from Growing Rooms who went through the programme.

“Thank you to all at Colas for giving one of our clients at Growing Rooms substance mis-use recovery programme a chance at employment and a better life. It takes vision & foresight to see the humanness in people that are often forgotten about by society. Many thanks from all at St. Georges Crypt for your support and continued partnership working”.

John Davis, Therapist and Growing Rooms Manager.

“We first started working with Colas following an introduction from another part of Leeds Council, as Colas had developed an RTE programme that had proven successful with homeless people recovering from addiction, and they wanted to tailor it for care-experienced young people. I felt it was a really good way to engage our young people, all of whom have experienced trauma. This manifests itself in many ways, but the majority have issues with mental health and self-esteem, as well as educational disadvantages caused by frequent school moves. Whilst they are very skilled and capable, they don’t always have the qualifications needed to make it through the first sift in job applications, or the resilience to keep on trying. A number of consultation sessions took place between Colas’ Head of Social Value Rachael Atkin and I, to discuss the support needs that care-leavers typically have, which Rachael took back to the team. What came back was amazing, and as we engaged with the Colas Leeds team we started to understand how much they were willing to adapt to the needs of our young people, and how much they care about doing what’s right for them.

What has developed over time is, in my view the perfect-trauma led approach to recruiting care experienced young people. When the first work experience placement broke down, Colas weren’t deterred by this. Together we reviewed policies and procedures introducing measures to improve wrap-around, young person-centred support mechanisms. This led to the second candidate, Josh, flourishing during his work placement and progressing into an apprenticeship, giving him exactly what every care-experienced person needs to prevent them falling into traps that can affect them lifelong – a high-quality, socially-mobile opportunity.

Rebecca Faraday, Social Worker, Leeds Leaving Care Team.

Lastly, according to a recent survey conducted with the Colas Leeds business unit, the programme has increased staff engagement in social value, improved soft skills of staff and improved retention. This demonstrates that including social value in the procurement activities of Leeds CC improves the practices of Leeds based businesses which impacts on their staff (Leeds residents) and local communities positively.