

# Connect to Work: transforming futures



Connect to Work is a voluntary, government funded supported employment programme designed to help people overcome barriers to work - whether due to disability, a health condition, or complex personal challenges. In London, Ingeus delivers it on behalf of Croydon, Sutton, Kingston and Merton.

On Friday 6th March, South London Partnership formally launched the programme, bringing together participants, businesses and partners to discuss the impact this programme has already started to have in the local community.

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RISE experience gives twin benefits

## Success stories

The programme began taking participants in late December 2025 and has already seen success, both through job starts but also through the personal transformation of participants. Connect to Work has been uniquely structured to give participants the support they need to evolve as they spend time with their Employment Specialist.

Taking into consideration increased confidence, new skills and transferable skills, Connect to Work has seen participants already flourish in this short period of time.

Philip's experience with Connect to Work, supported by his Employment Specialist, has seen him start a new career.

"My experience with Connect to Work has been incredible so far. I started with Mai in December and from the first set of calls I felt we built a good relationship and had a similar mindset. Mai helped me realise that even with my recent cancer diagnosis that she could still help me to find a role. Mai has been so supportive, she has taken the time to find out what my needs are and what I would value in a role. I know that Mai is looking for the right role for me and not just

trying to push me towards something that wouldn't suit me. I feel very lucky to be with Connect to Work and I am beyond grateful for everything Mai has done for me."

## Strengthening local economies

For employers, the durability of Connect to Work, supporting participants both to find work and once they're employed, has enabled them to ensure their staff understand how to work effectively with people that have a disability or health need.

Employers highlighted that they had:

- Access to motivated, diverse, work ready talent.
- Support to create inclusive roles and working environments.
- Advice on workplace adjustments and in-work support for both new and existing staff.

This support has enabled employers to make their workplaces truly representative of the communities that they serve.

## Partnerships that grow communities

The event highlighted the significance of community outreach, something that Ingeus truly understands. With links into health providers, faith groups and other community organisations, Ingeus is building on its strong community networks to support participants long-term.

If you or someone you know would benefit from Connect to Work, you can make a referral and find out more by scanning the QR code below.



# AMIRUN LEARNS NEW LESSONS IN LIFE

**“I’m nearly 60, who’s going to hire me?”**

**Starting her working life later in life was a new and surprising experience for Amirun.**



As her nervousness and fear of the unknown was replaced with a host of work-based qualifications, her attitude changed distinctly. Two part time jobs and a new lease of life later, she’s back to share her story with other Ingeus jobseekers at the Oldham Restart Centre: “I tell them I had few qualifications, no work experience, and no confidence. I’d been a housewife for 40 years but then I wanted to work. I realised I had potential and I never gave up,” says Amirun, mum to five now-adult children. Age 59, her dream came true – twice.

“I could never have stood in front of a room full of people and shared my story before. Now I work in two schools, have my own income and my own car. My confidence has grown, I go out more, have lost weight, and am much happier.”

Amirun admits to being nervous when she joined the Restart Scheme in Greater Manchester for help to find work in the summer of 2025. Her Restart Advisor, Sharon, soon put her at ease. Amirun describes Sharon as ‘warm, supportive and easy to talk to’, encouraging her to attend group sessions to build her confidence, and providing a laptop for Amirun to complete an online health and social care course.

“Once I did the first course, I wasn’t afraid to try more,” adds Amirun, who has a past teaching assistant qualification and went on to complete food hygiene, customer service, literacy and interpreting qualifications in a bid to keep her work options as open as possible.

“I applied for jobs for months with no luck. Sharon just encouraged me to keep

going. I took my new CV into a local school and was offered a trial as a lunch supervisor.”

Amirun’s first job was soon confirmed and added to with a further playground supervisor position at the school across the road.

“I literally walk from one job to the other each day. My hours fit around my home life and with eight grandchildren I’m very used to the noise and fast pace,” laughs Amirun. “With pre-diabetes and high cholesterol it’s been great to get more active and lose some weight. I take better care of myself – my family has even noticed. I have a few years left now before my pension and want to make the most of them. I’m still seeing Sharon – who knows what my next step will be?”

# CRISTIAN'S STRATEGY PAYS OFF

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## Cristian's technical and leadership skills were invaluable when he joined the Ingeus iDigital function in 2021.

Managing a large team responsible for supporting the IT functionality of thousands of colleagues predominantly working from home due to the pandemic, he spent 18 months as a Service Delivery Manager, streamlining and standardising the work of his busy team.

When the opportunity arose to progress, Cristian eagerly, but unsuccessfully, applied for a promotion – a setback set to shape both his personal and professional development.

“My skills were seen as too tactical at that point,” explains

Cristian. “I didn't have the strategic overview to steer and manage our future technological direction – a critical role in a large and complex organisation like Ingeus.”

“It was difficult not to get the promotion, but when my manager suggested an apprenticeship, I could see a structured route towards it.”

Cristian embarked on a Level 7 Diploma in Leadership and Strategic Management – the equivalent of a Master's degree. Running for 14 months, the qualification involved online learning, exams and an assessment,

funded by Ingeus and with a day a week released from work for studying.

Applying the same discipline that sees him weight training at 5am each morning and following a strict no-carb diet, Cristian juggled work and a busy family life with his studies. He aced the course, gaining a Distinction.

“I'm so proud that I've done it,” adds Cristian, who is 39 and lives in Worcestershire with his wife, two daughters, and two dogs. “It was tough to juggle at times but from this experience I've gained learning I can apply both to work and wider life.”

Cristian was formally appointed as the Head of Digital Delivery in August 2025 and now formulates Ingeus' delivery capability strategy. He leads a project management team and has established senior forums and a delivery function to plan and fully utilise Ingeus' digital resources.

"The people at Ingeus have definitely shaped my growth and progression," Cristian concludes. "The advice, support and flexibility I've been given has made a massive difference and enabled me to reach a position I wasn't ready for two years ago. The power

of many is strong at Ingeus; like-minded people working together to Enable Better Lives – including mine."

Since speaking with Cristian he has taken another leap in his career to Head of IT Operations for Ingeus UK and Europe! This new opportunity enables Cristian to unite his digital experience, leadership learning and operational focus to drive impactful technology across the UK and Europe.

Cristian adds "This transition marks an important pivot in my career after an incredibly rewarding period as Head of Digital Delivery in 2025.

I'm grateful for the trust the organisation has placed in me, and I'm energised by the journey ahead, one where digital solutions, operational excellence, and human impact come together."



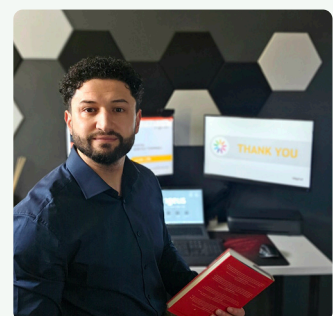
Scan to find out about career opportunities at Ingeus



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**"The advice, support and flexibility I've been given has made a massive difference and enabled me to reach a position I wasn't ready for two years ago."**

Cristian, Ingeus iDigital



# INGEUS TEAMS CELEBRATE TRIPLE AWARD SUCCESS

## Ingeus is celebrating a remarkable hat-trick of achievements.

With three major awards recognising outstanding individual contribution, trauma-responsive practice and innovative rehabilitation work in prisons and communities across the UK.

### **ATR awards win for creating safety and trust**

Ingeus was recognised at the West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience (ATR) Awards 2026, winning the Creating Safety and Trust category for its Youth Arts work. The event, held on 23 March 2026 at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, celebrates teams and individuals who transform systems and services through compassionate, trauma-informed practice.

Ingeus had been shortlisted for:

- Connection and Belonging – Ingeus Academy
- Creating Safety & Trust – Youth Arts (Winner)

The win highlights the organisation's commitment to safe, empowering and person-centred support across West Yorkshire. The Ingeus Academy, delivered by lived experience peer mentors, plays a central role, supporting individuals with wellbeing, dependency and recovery needs, strengthening trust, connection and belonging.

Peer mentors were also instrumental in designing a justice approach that places each young adult's voice at the centre of decisions.



**We are absolutely thrilled to have won this award. It reflects the passion, creativity and care our teams put into ensuring people feel safe, valued and able to grow."**

Katie, Partnership Manager  
for Commissioned Rehabilitative Services

## Butler Trust Commendation

Ingeus Personal Wellbeing Advisor Margaret Slyfield has been honoured with a Butler Trust Commendation, presented by HRH The Princess Royal at a ceremony held at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh. Now in their 41st year, the Butler Trust Awards recognise exceptional individuals working within UK prisons, probation, and youth justice. From more than 400 nominations nationwide, just 10 Awards and 20 Commendations were given in 2026.

The win marks a career pinnacle for Margaret, who said:



**“It was an absolute honour to meet HRH The Princess Royal and to receive a Commendation on behalf of all those gentlemen who have turned their lives around. It’s the pinnacle of my career.”**

Margaret, Ingeus Personal Wellbeing Advisor

## Phoenix Wing wins team of the year at North East Prison Group Awards

Rounding off an exceptional series of achievements, the CFO Evolution team on the Phoenix Wing at HMP Holme House has been named Team of the Year at the North East Prison Group Awards, held on 26 March 2026.

The award recognises a team who have redefined rehabilitation, transforming the wing into a structured, supportive and hopeful environment for young men and veterans. Originally developed on the former Endurance Wing, the programme successfully transitioned into the new Phoenix Wing as Holme House evolved into a local prison.

The team embraced new expectations from day one, adapting for a more transient population and redesigning delivery to remain flexible, person-centred and solution-focused.

Their achievements include:

- A fully functional wing kitchen supporting independence and life skills
- A dedicated gym space to enhance wellbeing and routine

- New furniture and calming, participant-designed wall decals
- A transformed, engaging training room
- A thriving gardens project producing vegetables for the wing, trading post and local events
- Strong links with national and local charities
- Production of woodwork items

These initiatives have created a calmer, safer and more positive environment, reducing conflict, adjudications and drug-related issues.

Together, these three award wins highlight the passion, innovation and humanity of our amazing teams – congratulations everyone!



**“We are incredibly proud of the team at HMP Holme House. Their enthusiasm, creativity & dedication has transformed the Phoenix Wing and made a real difference to the lives of the men on the programme.”**

Chris, Regional Head of Delivery

# CONNECT TO WORK

## Connecting work, health and skills support for all in North Yorkshire

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**Following on from the successful launch of Connect to Work in South London and Lancashire, Ingeus is excited to now be launching the programme in North Yorkshire having been awarded the contract by the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.**

North Yorkshire has a considerable employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people and Connect to Work will be working with local people and businesses to significantly reduce that gap.

Specifically designed to help people overcome the

challenges that can come with health conditions, disabilities or complex barriers, Connect to Work will be supporting 1500 people in North Yorkshire into sustainable employment over the next five years.

The initiative provides voluntary, personalised, and

flexible support, including one-to-one coaching and job matching with a range of local employers. Giving people meaningful support to access the local job market. For those considering a different route into work, specialist self employment guidance is also available.

Alongside tailored support for those out of work, Connect to Work also offers assistance to people at risk of losing their roles due to health conditions or other needs, providing early intervention to help them remain in work.

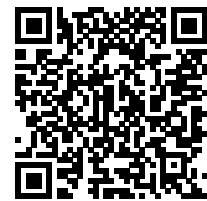
David Skaith, Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, said:

“There are rising numbers of people out of work in our region, but many of those want to change their lives, get a job and provide for their families.”

“That’s why I am incredibly proud to officially launch our Connect to Work programme.

From today, we’re working with expert partners to provide an extra helping hand to those who need it.”

“It will mean that people with disabilities, long-term health conditions and other complex needs will get a route into work, and we’ll be here to help them.”



Scan to find out more information about Connect to Work in North Yorkshire



**“Our team’s empathy and understanding about the impact that health conditions and disabilities can have on day-to-day life for people, combined with our relationships with local employers, means Connect to Work will provide opportunities and employment for local residents.”**

Julie, Employment CEO Ingeus



# CELEBRATING EID AL-FITR

## In celebration of the end of Ramadan, colleagues across Ingeus were celebrating Eid al-Fitr.

In Bury and Bolton, our teams marked the day with cultural celebrations, offering colleagues the opportunity to learn more about Eid traditions, showcasing homemade dishes, clothing and even a trivia quiz.

Loraine Campbell, Local Integration Lead at Bolton and Bury said: "From the moment lunch began, the room filled with laughter, conversation and the unmistakable sense of togetherness that Eid brings. Our amazing team shared homemade dishes, favourite recipes, and stories that offered a window into different cultural backgrounds."

"It was a reminder that while we may come from a variety of places, our values, family, kindness, gratitude, are aligned."

"One of the highlights of the afternoon was the chance to explore the beauty of traditional clothing. A special thank you to Nafeesa in the team, who generously shared her stunning abayas, giving everyone the opportunity to appreciate the artistry, symbolism and elegance behind the garments."

The celebration offered a wonderful moment for colleagues to pause, connect and appreciate the rich diversity within the team. Events like this not only deepen cultural



understanding but also strengthen the bonds that make our centres such supportive and welcoming places to work.

# MATTHEW AIMS BEYOND BARRIERS AT RISE

**When Matthew tried archery for the first time at the RISE residential experience as part of the Restart Scheme in Manchester, an important realisation struck him.**



**Neurodiversity  
Celebration  
Week**  
March 16 - 20, 2026

The dyspraxia that had seen him dread his school sports lessons needn't define his employment options. After a week of outdoor activities and practical employability sessions, he returned with new hope, and a new job, in his sights.

"I'd never considered warehousing roles before but after gaining confidence in my hand-eye coordination with archery and feeling a moment of pure triumph mastering the rock climbing, I realised that, for me, my dyspraxia was more of a mental barrier than a physical one," says Matthew. "I applied for a Christmas vacancy in the stock room of a busy clothes retailer and was offered a permanent role from it."

Matthew, from Wythenshawe, had previously been unemployed for 18 months after completing his

university degree. Despite having past part-time retail experience, he describes his increasingly frustrating job search as a 'nightmare' before he joined the Restart Scheme in 2025. Given help with his CV, cover letter and job search, Matthew was also offered a place on a pilot residential scheme: RISE (Ready, Inspired, Skilled & Employed).

Matthew joined almost 50 other young Restart Scheme participants taking part in team building activities and skills workshops at Laches Wood Outdoor Education Centre.

"When I attended RISE I needed a break from my every day," adds Matthew, "it felt like I was pushing a boulder up hill. I needed something new to focus on, something different."

"My big take away was confidence in my physical abilities; I realised my dyspraxia shouldn't limit me. The employability sessions were very helpful too. Despite receiving payslips before, I'd never understood how taxes work until the finance session."

Matthew now works processing deliveries and ensuring the warehouse is well organised for his high-street employer. He enjoys processing the paperwork and hopes his next step will be into an administration position.

"Ingeus and the RISE residential especially have been an incredible help to me."

# RISE EXPERIENCE GIVES TWIN BENEFITS

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**Shannon spends lots of time with her twin sister, relying on her to ease the anxiety she's acquired from living in foster care from an early age.**

Yet when Shannon joined the Restart Scheme in Manchester for help to find work she independently signed up for a new, week-long residential experience: RISE (Ready, Inspired, Skilled & Employed). Not only has it seen the shy 21-year old go on to qualify and start a career as a teaching assistant, but her twin is also now following in her footsteps,

hoping the Restart Scheme can repeat her sister's success.

After studying for a childcare qualification at college, Shannon struggled to find work, frustrated at the experience required for jobs she was interested in. Attending Ingeus – taking the bus journey with her sister – she gained an updated CV

and employability advice but lacked the confidence and self-belief to take the next step. A chance to attend RISE, she says, “made me realise that if I can do this, then I can get out there to do jobs.”

Ingeus delivers the Restart Scheme in Greater Manchester and piloted the RISE scheme in late 2025, taking 50 young participants,

between 18-24 years-old, to Laches Wood Outdoor Education Centre. Combining fun challenges and thought-provoking employability sessions, Shannon knew it could be the boost she needed: "It sounded fun and I thought it could help me, but I was very anxious about going on my own," says Shannon, who lives in Ashton. "I'm so glad I pushed myself to do it. The rock climbing was awesome, and the budgeting session was really helpful. The whole week gave me confidence to go further. I feel like I'm handling my anxiety much better and immediately came home and

recommended Ingeus to my twin sister."

Shannon also seized the opportunity to train for a Level 2 Teaching Assistant course, funded and arranged by Ingeus on her return. With the Restart Scheme also making sure her security checks were in place, they recommended her to a partner employer – a local teaching agency. Shannon started work as a teaching assistant in February 2025 and hopes to now gain her Level 3 Early Years qualification to become a qualified nanny.

"Maybe my twin will follow in my footsteps again, with the Restart Scheme's help."



Scan to learn more about the Restart Scheme



**"I'm very close to two of my sisters and enjoy playing with my six nieces and nephews so would love a job as a nanny,"**

**"I'm so happy to have had help from the Restart Scheme and enjoyed everything about attending RISE."**

Shannon, Restart Scheme Participant



# LEARNERS MAKE A PLAY FOR GAMING CAREERS

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**Ingeus is levelling up opportunities for computer gamers to turn their passions into professions by teaming up with specialist skills provider, Game Academy.**



Working together for the first time with a group of unemployed participants on the Restart Scheme in London is ensuring that valuable gaming skills like creativity, strategic thinking and problem solving are put to good use in tech industry roles.

The six week Play Games, Build Careers experience ran at the end of 2025. Delivered online with input from almost 20 games industry speakers and employers, the course gave insights into a wealth of in-demand skills and career

options, including self-employment. Transferable skills were developed and strengthened with employability advice, while projects gave participants a taste of real-life cyber collaborations, wrapping up with a career progression event in collaboration with games, marketing and cyber security employers.

Not merely a side quest for hobbyists, the initiative supported learners, aged from 19 to 61, intent on developing careers in digital industries. All 27 participants

who completed the course gained a Level 2 IT User Skills qualification, with 80% stating they felt more confident about getting a job.

Founded by gamers, for gamers, Game Academy is a social impact venture that offers personal development and employment support to gamers. Founder and CEO, David Barrie says: "Budget from the Performance Fund gave Ingeus an opportunity to offer this new and innovative programme. Game Academy provided materials designed to appeal to gamers while

Ingeus vetted and inputted to the course content, strengthening links with recruiting employers. Once described to Ingeus' Restart Scheme advisors, it quickly prompted applicants from across Central and West London."

David adds: "The knowledge the Restart Advisors had of their participants was exceptional. They were excited for the chance to offer this and the quality of the people referred reflected that. We were able to step up a level in terms of the types of jobs and employers we were highlighting."

"From the very start, Ingeus had the confidence and imagination to truly partner with us to get this right."

Tarik from Hackney was impressed with the practical knowledge he gained from the course. He's struggled to break into the industry he loves and hopes to find a full-time role as a narrative designer or set up as an independent games designer.

He said: "The Game Academy course gave me real industry knowledge. We worked on a live group project and had great guest speakers – all completely different and with varied roles. I learnt

a lot about networking and developing my online presence too, which is already paying off."

With all participants stating that the programme had developed their skills and confidence, we can't wait to see where in the digital world it takes them.



Scan to find out more about Game Academy



**"People acquire all sorts of skills from playing computer games and what games they play influences what skills they develop. Gaming can be frowned upon in many households, seen as a waste of time, but these learnt abilities – like logic, leadership, spatial reasoning and data management – are very valuable and transferable skills."**

David, Game Academy Founder and CEO



# Getting to know you...



**This month we stopped to take a minute to find out more about Sue Bowden and her role at Ingeus.**



## Sue Bowden

Health Assessment  
Advisory Service  
Coordination Manager

“I have a fantastic job at Ingeus. I am the Contract Coordination Manager for the Health Assessment Advisory Service (HAAS). My role involves administering the progress of Change Requests through the impact assessment stages, managing the formal communication between Ingeus and our commissioner and ensuring we are meeting all our contract obligations.”

“No two days in this role are ever the same, and that is exactly what I love about it. I am constantly learning

and developing new skills, and I work within a team of incredibly knowledgeable and hard-working colleagues who are all determined to do their best.”

“This contract supports some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and knowing I am contributing to that is a really rewarding feeling. It’s an important contract with high stakes but everyone is focussed on achieving the right outcome for each person and ensuring we are enabling better lives.”

### Coffee or tea?

Tea – but I’m not a huge ‘hot drinks’ person, more of a Pepsi Max fan

### Early bird or night owl?

Permanently exhausted pigeon!

### Book or movie?

Book

### Pizza or pasta?

Pasta

### Sunrise or sunset?

Sunset

### Comedy or drama?

Comedy

### Singing or dancing?

Singing

### Cats or dogs?

Cats (although I love all animals)

### Summer holiday or winter holiday?

Winter holiday – I am a Christmas super fan!

### Chocolate or vanilla?

Vanilla