

Safe Opportunities

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2025

WELCOME TO OUR

TERMLY NEWSLETTER

Season's Greetings!

Helen Pullan – Company Director

As 2025 ends, we are reflecting on a very successful year. Our greatest achievement, as always, lies in the success of our fantastic students: seeing them achieve new qualifications, move into positive destinations, secure paid work and apprenticeships is the ultimate reward!

This newsletter outlines the milestones that bring this year together; from a positive Ofsted monitoring visit, our Chamber of Commerce 'Employer of the Year' award, to the growth of our Macclesfield hub. We also welcomed new schools to our 14-16 programmes and enjoyed continuing to work with existing schools across Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Staffordshire and Warrington.

As we look ahead to 2026, we focus on new opportunities for employer collaboration through our new "Employer and Professionals Advisory Board" and our next "Connections for Growth" network meeting in February 2026. As always, we are keen to involve more employers into our planning and timetabled activities – please get in touch if you can help in any way at all.

Just a reminder that our core team are still available over the holidays so please get in touch with us, even if just for a chat or to find out how we can help. We wish everyone all the best for the holiday season and best wishes for 2026!



In this
newsletter:

Safeguarding for Employers,
Celebration Event, Deputy
Mayor Visit and more!



HOW WE SAFEGUARD OUR EMPLOYERS

At Safe Opportunities, we believe in creating a safe and supportive environment for both employers and students. Here's how we ensure you're always in the loop and fully supported:

Clear Safeguarding Information

All our employers receive a detailed 'Safeguarding Information for Employers' document, packed with all the answers you need about safeguarding and your role. Plus, you'll have direct access to our DSL Team for any advice or concerns.



Health & Safety Risk Assessments

Every work placement is thoroughly risk-assessed, ensuring you have all the essential information about your student to make the experience as smooth and safe as possible.

Ongoing Communication

We keep you connected! You'll get the contact details of your student's coordinator, and they'll regularly check in to share updates, achievements, and address any questions you might have.



TERM ONE OVERVIEW

2025

Term One has been a busy and enriching period, with far more achieved than we can capture here. The key highlights include:

- Employability and Enterprise: Yasmin and Carina supported 2 students on a visit to Betamindes to deliver a postbox they created as part of their programme, showcasing their practical skills and teamwork.
- Futures Fair – 19th November: Students attended the Futures Fair in Congleton, exploring future pathways and speaking with support services. They engaged well and left feeling informed and empowered.
- Personal Development – Rule of Law: A judge visited to speak to students about the Rule of Law, offering valuable insight into the justice system and supporting their understanding of British Values.
- Visit to Cheshire College: Students visited Cheshire College to explore opportunities, facilities, and next steps for their future.

These moments represent just a snapshot of a much wider range of activities this term, highlighting students' growing confidence, independence, and readiness for the future.



Student Success

Paid work at Elior, Macclesfield



We are thrilled with Reggie's success at the Macclesfield-based company Elior. Reggie initially joined Elior on placement earlier this year as part of his Supported Internship and immediately felt welcomed by the team there. His role involves working on the IT help desk and trying to fix IT problems remotely for staff and clients based all over the country. It was lovely to see how Reggie progressed in both skills and confidence. During visits, we saw Reggie interacting with the team and how he had slotted right in. We were able to observe him dealing with customer queries and successfully solving the IT tickets he had been allocated with great competency, accuracy and confidence.

The employer was very clear that they wanted to take Reggie on and did not want to lose him. Thankfully, they pulled out all the stops to make this happen! Reggie began his paid role with Elior at the beginning of November and has just enjoyed celebrating with the team at their Christmas social. Elior has been an absolutely amazing employer from start to finish and Reggie was very well-deserving of this wonderful place to work.

Safe Opportunities wish Reggie all the luck in the world!

EMPLOYER SHOUTOUTS



Caffe AB – Arighi Bianchi

Thank you to Arighi Bianchi for supporting one of our Supported Interns this year. The support from the cafe team has been incredible and our intern is thoroughly enjoying her time there. She is gaining lots of new skills, building her confidence and preparing to move into the world of work.

Hickory's Smokehouse

Thank you to Hickory's Smokehouse for their continued support of our Supported Internship Programme. This is the second year they've partnered with us; currently hosting a student at their Poynton restaurant. The team's dedication and support have been incredible, creating a welcoming environment where our intern has settled in brilliantly. They're continuing to develop in their role, gaining new skills and building confidence every day.



Petal Power

Thank you to Elaine from Petal Power Florists for leading a 'Make Sense of Work' session this year with our students at Springfield School. Nicola; the Student Development Coordinator who attended the session, said: "Elaine led a lovely session, supporting students to explore the different shapes, textures and smells of various flowers. She ended the session by teaching everyone how to make buttonholes for the prom."

Wychwood Park

Many thanks to Tracy and her team at Wychwood Park Hotel, who have been incredibly supportive to our intern and always share feedback promptly. This has enabled us to formulate a comprehensive withdrawal plan to taper job coach support as the intern grows in independence. They have also gone out of their way to provide additional experiences in different settings which has really benefitted our intern by way of increased confidence and skills.



Higher Ground Cafe

Our Supported Intern has made great progress in developing both her practical and interpersonal skills. The staff and job coach are incredibly supportive, taking the time to guide her patiently through each task and offering encouragement that has boosted her confidence. Their welcoming and inclusive approach has made her feel genuinely valued as part of a team, allowing her to take initiative, try new responsibilities, and take pride in her achievements.



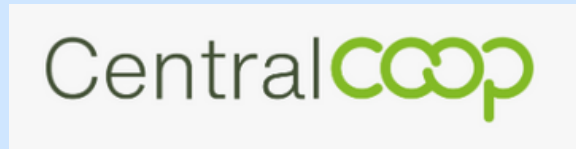
SHACKLEFORD
P I A N O S

Shackleford Pianos

We're so grateful to Shackleford Pianos for their commitment to an ongoing partnership with us over many years. They are currently supporting one of our Step 16 students and one of our Supported Interns; both of whom are absolutely thriving, picking up new skills every week, growing in confidence and have become part of their team. A huge thank you to Aaron for your continued warmth and support; you make such a positive difference to our young people's lives.

Central Coop - Congleton

We're delighted to be working in partnership with Congleton's new Central Co-op store, which opened at the beginning of the year. Our Supported Intern has now been with the team for almost three months. They are doing brilliantly and have become a valued member of the team. A huge thank you to Branch Manager Janine and everyone at Central Co-op for their warm welcome and ongoing support, it's a perfect example of how local employers and our students can grow together. If you're in the Congleton area, please pop in, say hello, and show your support!



AVANTI
WEST COAST



Avanti West Coast

Thank you to Avanti West Coast for their fantastic support of our Supported Internship Programme. They're currently supporting one of our interns at Stockport Station, providing hands-on experience in a range of roles including assisting with train dispatch, customer service, platform announcements, passenger assistance, ticket barriers, and the booking office. The young person is thriving, gaining valuable new skills and building confidence in a real-world railway environment. We truly appreciate this meaningful work experience opportunity.

The Power of Job Coach Support: Helping Our Students Step into Paid Work

At Safe Opportunities, we're proud to champion the life changing impact of Supported Internships for young people with disabilities or health conditions. By pairing hands-on workplace experience with expert guidance from local job coaches, we help interns build skills, confidence, and real career pathways with the ultimate goal of paid employment.

A job coach is more than a trainer – they're a dedicated buddy who walks alongside each young person, offering personalised support every step of the way:

- Discovering strengths – identifying talents and interests to match the right role
- Goal setting & planning – creating clear, achievable steps toward paid work
- On-the-job training – one-to-one coaching to master tasks, routines, and workplace expectations

This tailored approach makes all the difference. Interns don't just attend a placement – they thrive in it.

How does this support a young person?

They gain real job experience, real independence, and real futures, often transitioning from internship to paid employment with the same employer.

How does this support our partner employers?

Offering a placement for a Supported Intern is a fantastic way for businesses to develop new talent and demonstrate their commitment to inclusion. Our model makes the process straightforward and low-risk. Through on-site support from a dedicated job coach, we take much of the day-to-day training and guidance off the employer's hands. This means:

- Your team can focus on their core roles – no need for managers or colleagues to step away from regular duties for extended training periods.
- Productivity stays strong – staff continue delivering as usual while the intern learns and contributes effectively.
- Minimal disruption, maximum reward. Employers get enthusiastic, motivated new team members who bring fresh perspectives and help build a more diverse workforce, all with built-in expert support.

Many of our partner employers tell us that the job coach's involvement makes hosting a Supported Intern one of the easiest and most rewarding ways to give back to the community while gaining loyal, capable employees for the future.

We're proud to work with local employers who share our vision of inclusive opportunities, and together we're creating pathways that benefit everyone involved.



Our Partners

We're proud to partner with two outstanding local job coach providers who share our commitment to inclusion and excellence, **Grow & Achieve Together** and **The Rossendale Trust**.

By combining workplace experience with expert, local job coaching, we're not just preparing students for work, we're helping them secure it. And that's the kind of impact we're proud to shout about.



STAFF FOCUS - *KATHRYN HARRISON*

Careers & Employability Coordinator

Hello, I am Kathryn, and I am the Careers & Employability Coordinator at Safe Opportunities. I have been working here for almost four years, supporting young people to develop the skills, confidence, and aspirations they need for their future.

I work closely with the management team, teachers, and coordinators to ensure students receive the right support in relation to careers education and next steps. This collaborative approach helps us deliver a consistent, personalised careers offer for every student.

I work alongside the management team to develop and deliver our careers programme in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, a nationally recognised framework for high-quality careers education, information, advice, and guidance.

The programme is designed to raise aspirations, empower students, and equip them with essential employability skills. Through meaningful employer encounters and real-world experiences, students gain a clear understanding of local and national labour markets, supporting confident progression into further education, employment, or other pathways. All students have access to impartial careers advice, and careers education is embedded within the curriculum.

This year, I developed an online careers and employability resource, bringing together careers information, employability support, and next steps guidance in one accessible place via a simple link. I have also introduced a personalised Careers Action Plan, enabling students to take greater ownership of their career journey. This plan acts as a personalised roadmap to success, focusing on individual goals and the practical steps students can take right now to move closer to them.

Alongside my role, I am currently completing a Level 6 Careers Professional Development Apprenticeship to become a qualified careers guidance practitioner. I am halfway through the programme and find it extremely valuable in strengthening my practice. While I am studying, students continue to receive impartial careers guidance through our partnership with an independent careers adviser, who visits us regularly throughout the year.

Employer engagement is a key focus of my role. I work closely with our Employer Engagement Team to build strong relationships and source new opportunities, in particular for our Supported Internship students. I continue to build that relationship, working with employers to support young people's transition into paid employment. I organise and support a range of employer-led activities, including Careers Live Days, mock interviews, employer visits, and workplace encounters. These experiences are invaluable in helping students build confidence, understand workplace expectations, and raise aspirations. Strong partnership working is essential, and the support of employers and professionals plays a vital role in creating positive outcomes for our students.

If you are able to support our work in any way, whether through work placements, employer talks, workplace visits, or mock interviews, please do get in touch.

Your involvement helps create meaningful opportunities and positive futures for the young people we support.



SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARDS

We are proud to have won the employer of The Year award at the annual South Cheshire Chamber Business awards this year. This award recognises us as a business that demonstrates a commitment to the support and development of our workforce. Along with prioritising development and wellbeing of our employees, proving a great place to work and thrive. We are also proud to be recognised and highly commended for our contribution to the community for business.

Thank you to everyone that supports us here at Safe Opportunities; we couldn't do it without you.



CREWE MAYOR VISIT SALLY GRAHAM



A huge thank you to Crewe Mayor Sally Graham for taking the time to visit us over the summer. During her visit, we had a really valuable chat about the different ways we can work together to support our community. Sally shared lots of helpful insights and information about local charities and community groups, many of which could provide fantastic support for our students.

We're especially excited about building links with their new befriending service, which we think will make a real difference. Thank you again, Sally, we're looking forward to continuing this connection and working closely with you in the future.

Are you an employer who can help?

Send us a message to discuss further:



Safe Opportunities



@safeopps



@safeopps

“Supporting a secure future through tailored Student Work Placement Programmes”

How Our Students Enrich and Elevate Your Workplace:

A fresh perspective
Creativity
A boost to staff morale
Impactful experience

Innovation
Enthusiasm
An extra pair of hands
No incurred cost