

## **Kelly Spence wins award for widening career options for young people with special needs**



*Kelly Spence, Careers and Employability Lead,  
Outcomes First Group*

Kelly Spence, Careers and Employability Lead, [Outcomes First Group<sup>1</sup>](#), has scooped the Career Lead of the Year Award 2022 from the Career Development Institute (CDI), for her outstanding programme designed to widen career options within a more inclusive workforce for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The CDI awards aim to identify and promote excellence and innovation in approaches to career development for all pre and post-16 students.

‘I am passionate about careers progression and seeing our young people with SEND gain the skills and work experience necessary to equip them for their future lives,’ said Kelly. ‘We developed careers packages for all of Outcomes First Group’s 52 special schools which include core sessions and work experience for our students and staff training. Every school has an appointed careers leader and all the staff completed CDI’s complimentary training, which sits alongside our own training programme. All our schools provide careers development that is appropriate to the individual needs of each of our students.

‘Work experience is vital for raising our student’s aspirations and supporting their smooth transition into the working world. I identified that although there were opportunities in industries such as farming and beauty, there were no available options for exposure to roles within finance and management.

‘To advocate for the needs of our students I approached companies with the idea of co-creating a careers package to accommodate young people with SEND. REED Recruitment were very receptive, they already had a successful mainstream package, however they had not yet created a version for SEND. The resulting SEND package project has been a remarkable success.

‘It is vital to raise awareness within society of the needs of students with SEND and to further enable organisations to be more inclusive and educated about supporting those with additional needs.’

Commenting on the virtual awards ceremony, Kelly said, ‘It was incredible to hear so many stories about the amazing work that is happening within careers. Over the past 12 months, I have seen first-hand the huge impact that good careers advice has on the lives of young people. I was thrilled when my name was called out. I am confident that this is just the beginning of my journey, and I hope to continue to support Outcomes First Group in becoming leaders in careers for young people with SEND.’

1, Outcomes First Group (OFG) is the UK's leading specialist provider of education, therapeutic care and fostering services.

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#### **Outcomes First Group**

[Outcomes First Group \(OFG\)](#) is the UK's leading specialist provider of education, therapeutic care and fostering services. OFG is an organisation that believes in transforming lives for the better, embracing communities and working together to help children, young people and adults dream big and achieve more. The organisation employs more than 5,500 people, and is committed to maintaining and improving its reputation as a ‘great place to work’ by continuing to provide a supportive and inclusive working environment for all.

Within the Outcomes First Group family, there is a whole range of services from schools, residential services and wellbeing hubs through to digital learning and fostering services - all working together to support children, young people and adults, and to create an inclusive world, committed to equality and diversity for all.

Outcomes First Group’s vision is simple yet powerful; to build incredible futures for vulnerable children, young people and adults in the UK by empowering them to be happy and make their way in the world.

The Group’s specialist education, therapeutic care and fostering services are provided by its nationwide teams. These services are delivered under the brands [National Fostering Group](#), the largest independent fostering provider in the UK, [Acorn Education and Care](#), and [Options Autism](#).