

2024



IEP YEARBOOK

Stories from the Employability Sector

THANK YOU TO OUR STORYTELLERS

- Anita Åkerlind AIEP
- Kat Blacklock MIEP
- Liz Cotterill AIEP
- Matt Crossingham MAIEP
- Heather Ette FIEP
- Claus Forum FIEP
- Sasha Gillian AIEP
- Fatima Al Hajman AIEP
- Annette Jönnervik Holmblad MIEP
- Debbie Holmes MAIEP
- Md. Zahid Hossain AIEP
- Anna Hjelm Jonsson AIEP
- Tracy Jory MIEP
- David Kingsley MAIEP
- Leon Larkings MIEP
- Michelle Little AIEP
- Foyso! Miah AIEP
- Mark Power MAIEP
- Rasmus Rossi FIEP
- Monique Smith FIEP
- Jo Stuart AIEP
- Tina Ward AIEP
- Luke Whinney FIEP
- Emma Williams FIEP
- Michaela Zankl FIEP

WELCOME TO THE IEP YEARBOOK 2024

“ —

Sharing stories of good practice in the employability sector is crucial because it enables us to learn from successful strategies, creating a ripple effect of positive change across the sector and society. By sharing personal and meaningful stories of success, we create a groundswell of best practice, inspiring one another, enhancing outcomes, and ultimately helping more people find and keep work.

Lauren Peacock FIEP
Learning & Development Business Partner
IEP Australia



2024 IN REVIEW

SCOTT PARKIN FIEP IEP GROUP CEO

As Group CEO of the IEP, it is an honour to reflect on another year of growth, achievement, and impact across the employability sector. The past year has seen significant progress, both in the UK and internationally, as we live and breathe our vision to help employability professionals everywhere be the best they can be.

With a new government in place, there has been a renewed focus on employment standards and quality work – principles that align closely with the IEP's core mission. Our learning, career development, and professional networking opportunities have expanded, enabling practitioners to build and enhance the skills and knowledge needed to drive positive change in the lives of the people they support. This year, we have also made a major investment in upgrading our CRM and website, ensuring a more streamlined and accessible experience for our members. These advancements provide a central hub for learning, events, and resources, making it easier than ever for members to engage with everything the IEP has to offer.

We have seen remarkable developments in our global work, with our award-winning Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) being adopted in multiple countries and shaping new standards for service excellence. Collaborations with global partners have helped establish Centres for Excellence, bringing innovative workforce development models to the forefront. Meanwhile, our Fellowship program continues to flourish, fostering a dynamic, global network of leaders who share insights, best practice, and a passion for raising standards in our sector.

This brings us to the heart of this Yearbook – the people who make the employability sector such a rewarding place to work. The IEP Yearbook 2024 captures a range of diverse and inspiring stories from employability professionals, charting their achievements and learning journeys since the IEP's founding in 2012. Each story reflects the passion, dedication, and impact of individuals who are committed to supporting people into meaningful, sustainable employment.

The employability sector is more than a profession – it is a community of people who genuinely care about making a difference. Through these stories, we celebrate the extraordinary contributions of those who work tirelessly to change lives. We are privileged to share their experiences and highlight the incredible impact our sector has, not just on jobseekers, but also on the professionals who dedicate their careers to this vital work.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to championing employability professionals, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to thrive. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this journey – your dedication fuels the IEP's mission and ensures that we continue to shape the future of employability together.

With warm regards,

Scott Parkin FIEP
Group CEO
IEP

YOUR SECTOR, YOUR STORIES



Anita Åkerlind AIEP

Employment Specialist | Iris Hadar

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Ten years ago, I worked as an employment consultant. A colleague and I focused on building relationships with the Public Employment Service and the Social Insurance Agency, as we had secured a contract called the RESA project, which targeted individuals with physical or mental health issues. Each employment consultant worked with six participants. The goal was to find suitable employers who could offer work placements to help participants get closer to the job market. The project showed good results.

What are you doing now?

Today, I work as an employment specialist, coaching individuals in their career transitions.

What have you learned along the way?

I've learned to be open and attentive, to listen, and to understand different personalities and skill sets. It's important that every individual I meet feels safe and confident enough to take steps forward. I've always had a strong drive to do my best in every situation for those in need of support. For me, it has been important to create motivation and engagement to help participants develop their job-seeking skills. Through professional experience in various interactions, I've also learned different strategies for different meetings and individuals.



Claus Forum FIEP

CEO | Irisgruppen

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Ten years ago, I served as the CEO of Humana Individ & Familj, where my dedication to human rights, inclusion, and fostering mutual learning had already become deeply rooted in my professional journey. These values have remained at the core of my leadership philosophy, guiding me through every role and responsibility I've undertaken.

What are you doing now?

Today, I am proud to lead as the CEO of Irisgruppen, an organisation encompassing Iris Hadar, Medlearn, and Iriskraft. Our mission is centred around driving meaningful change, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering environments where diversity and inclusion are not just ideals but integral parts of our daily work. Beyond my role at Irisgruppen, I also serve on several boards for organisations that champion critical societal issues, contributing to conversations and initiatives that aim to build a more equitable future.

What have you learned along the way?

Throughout these years, I've gained invaluable lessons in patience and gratitude – learning to recognise and appreciate the passion, resilience, and determination of those around me. Witnessing the commitment of colleagues, friends, and community members as they come together to advocate for progress, development, and inclusion is both powerful and deeply motivating. I firmly believe that real change happens when we collaborate. Together, we can not only adapt to the evolving world but actively shape it. By staying engaged, fostering innovation, and empowering one another, we have the potential to drive sustainable impact and create a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



Kat Blacklock MIEP

Learning and Assessment Consultant | IEP

What were you doing 10 years ago?

10 years ago, I was a Safety, Security, Training and Compliance Manager for a ground handling company at Stansted Airport. My role was to ensure the safety of our check-in staff, baggage handlers, passengers and aircraft, and it was very varied – from designing and delivering training, to risk assessments and audits. It was a great job, and I worked with a fantastic team.

What are you doing now?

Now I have another great job, within another fantastic team, here at the IEP. I am a Learning and Assessment Consultant within the IEP Learning Academy. As a team we deliver our Awards and Qualifications to our learners, develop new material based on their needs, facilitate webinars and masterclasses, host live events – it is just as varied a role, however now I mostly work remote rather than running around an airport.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learnt to be more resilient, and to know that there are always great opportunities out there when you need them, if you keep looking, even if you think at first they are not for you – give them a try. After 16 years with the same company, I was made redundant just before Covid, so I worked at Tesco's through Lockdown, and although I joined up just to have a job at the time, I worked with some lovely people, I enjoyed it, and it helped open up other opportunities that led me to buying our first house, moving across the country, finding the employability sector, and ultimately this great job within the best team. That would not have happened if I had not been made redundant and then worked at Tesco's. Sometimes you should take that step to go into the unknown – even if it's scary, you don't know what is out there that could change your life for the better.



Sasha Gillan AIEP

Progression Manager

Shaw Trust Prospects | National Careers Service

What were you doing 10 years ago?

10 years ago, I had not long finished university and had made the decision I did not want to pursue a career within Law – my chosen degree. I had begun working as a trainee sale negotiator for an estate agency chain. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my career until I was contacted by an agency to discuss a role within recruitment.

What are you doing now?

Fast forward 10 years, I found recruitment was not for me however the skills I learnt allowed me to find the career path I am now on. I have worked across a number of contracts and divisions within welfare to work and employability, with my most recent role working for the National Careers Service as a senior manager. I have completed my qualification in employability and operational management.

What have you learned along the way?

Along my career journey I have found that not all choices may be the right choices, but they will soon direct you towards your goals. Taking side steps within your career will allow for further growth and are not a hindrance towards progression. Sometimes you need to take a step back to analyse your movement forwards. You only know where you are going from where you have already been.



Matt Crossingham MAIEP

Partnership Manager | IEP Australia

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Managing multi contract sites in employment services.

What are you doing now?

Seeking new connections and partnerships on behalf of the IEP in Australia.

What have you learned along the way?

I have completed my Employability Essentials (EE), which is fantastic. Since starting with the IEP I have learned that the Fellowship is a powerful tool for collaboration and positive change in our sector.



Liz Cotterill AIEP

Work and Skills Officer | Local Authority

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Community and People Team at Asda.

What are you doing now?

Work and Skills Officer, Local Authority.

What have you learned along the way?

In my role as an Employment Advisor at Warrington Disability Partnership, I gained extensive experience working with individuals facing complex health needs and disabilities, as well as non-UK nationals. I learned the importance of tailored support when helping people navigate employment barriers. This required a deep understanding of individual needs, including accessibility considerations and the impact of health conditions on employment. The key takeaway was the significance of patience, empathy, and persistence in helping clients achieve their employment goals, even when faced with significant obstacles.

As an Inclusion Coordinator at Rochdale AFC Community Trust, I developed my leadership and organisational skills, particularly when establishing Hope Football, a team for refugees and people seeking sanctuary. In addition to qualifying as an FA Coach, I learned how sport can be a powerful tool for social inclusion and community building. Creating an environment where individuals feel accepted and valued, regardless of background, underscored the importance of inclusive practices and the positive impact sports can have on mental health and integration.

In my role as an Asylum and Refugee Support Officer for Work, Health and Skills, I further honed my ability to support marginalised communities, providing advice and guidance to individuals navigating complex immigration and employment systems. This position emphasised the need for a compassionate and thorough approach to case management, as well as the importance of collaborating with other agencies to provide comprehensive support. Tip for future professionals: Always approach your work with empathy and a solution-focused mindset. Understand the unique challenges each individual faces and tailor your support accordingly. Collaboration, persistence, and respect for diversity are key to making a meaningful impact in roles that involve working with vulnerable populations.



Heather Ette FIEP

Head of Marketing, Communications and Brand | IEP

What were you doing 10 years ago?

A decade ago, I was introduced to Declan Swan, then Director of the IEP, and Janette Faherty OBE FIEP by my longtime friend and mentor, Paul Wolstencroft MIEP. Paul had played a pivotal role in my career from the very beginning, giving me my first marketing job at Enfield Council in 1989. I have much to thank him for — not just for believing in me or teaching me the craft of marketing, but for always keeping me in mind whenever he saw an opportunity where my skills could make a difference. One of those opportunities led me to the IEP, where I worked with Paul on the original CRM — a system we finally replaced earlier this year with a new, more advanced platform. Sadly, Paul passed away in 2023, but I am grateful that we remained friends for 35 years. His mentorship and friendship reinforced something I deeply value about work — the relationships we build along the way and the importance of mentoring. The connections we make in our careers are not just professional; they shape us, inspire us, and, in some cases, last a lifetime. Before I met Paul, I had no idea that marketing would become my lifelong career. Over the years, I've had the privilege of working in local government, housing associations, leisure and gaming, events management, IT, and even with police forces and security organisations. My work has taken me across different sectors and even internationally, but the common thread has always been about communication, connection, and impact.

What are you doing now?

Today, I am proud to be the Head of Marketing for the IEP and a Fellow of the Institute. This marks my tenth year working with this incredible organisation, which is dedicated to supporting employability professionals to be the best they can be. Over the past decade, I have watched the IEP evolve into a remarkable global force, delivering learning and professional development opportunities to sector specialists worldwide. I feel privileged to be part of such an inspiring team and a sector that works tirelessly to help others improve their lives through sustainable employment. What we do is about more than just jobs — it's about changing futures, building confidence, and creating security for individuals and families.

What have you learned along the way?

If there's one lesson that has resonated with me throughout my career, it's that employability is at the heart of everything. So much of my working life has been spent working with organisations that focus on holistic, people-centred support — and this is ultimately linked to employability. Helping people become employable, secure good jobs, and achieve financial stability isn't just an economic necessity; it's a fundamental part of building thriving communities. The work we do in this sector has a profound ripple effect, and I am proud to contribute to an organisation that plays such a vital role in making that happen. Reflecting on the past ten years, I can see how everything I've done has led me here — and I wouldn't change a thing.



Fatima Al Hajman AIEP

Employment Coach | Iris Hadar

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Ten years ago, I worked in healthcare as an assistant nurse.



What are you doing now?

Today, I work at Iris Hadar, where I match participants with jobs or education. I truly enjoy what I do – helping participants and supporting them. Seeing them grow and succeed in life brings me so much joy. Every day at work feels fulfilling, thanks to the wonderful things I hear from the participants. My job is beyond words – it is exactly what I have always wanted to do, and I love it.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned so much and grown as a person. I have learned not to take anything for granted and to be grateful for both the big and small things in life. I have also realised that, as coaches, we have a tremendous responsibility: we have the participants' trust, and we must do our best to help them succeed.



Annette Jönnervik Holmblad MIEP

Partnership Manager | IEP Sweden

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Working as a job coach (Supported Employment/IPS).

What are you doing now?

Partnership Manager for IEP Sweden, Board Member of The Swedish Association for Supported Employment and Vice President for Association for Supported Employment Europe.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned that the labour market is not static; everything changes around us very quickly and we constantly have to adapt. What never changes, however, is people's need for good relationships, a need to strengthen their empowerment and to be coached further by another human to reach beyond today's borders.

Debbie Holmes MAIEP

Employment Specialist | RCS Wales



What were you doing 10 years ago?

Working for a Welsh Government project which was the beginning of my journey into employability. I managed a jobs club which worked in partnership with the local job centre. At the same time, I also managed online training for clients to upskill/be work ready with accredited qualifications. I've since worked for a former MP as a constituency support officer which gave me a great understanding of how politics affects working and non-working individuals and families. I also learnt what was important to local people and businesses during this time.

What are you doing now?

I now work with individuals who have mental health needs and want to get into work. I've been doing this for 5 years almost and I absolutely love the role!

What have you learned along the way?

I think the biggest thing I have learnt is that being in work impacts a person not just financially but also their wellbeing and self-esteem.

Md. Zahid Hossain AIEP

Author



What were you doing 10 years ago?

I successfully completed my four-year B.A. Honors degree in English Literature. Subsequently, I received a scholarship from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) – Bangladesh Infrastructure and Social Economic Welfare (BISEW) to pursue a graduate degree in Software Engineering.

What are you doing now?

Now I am an author published on Amazon Author Central, with several books on Information Technology and Sciences. I specialise in translating complex concepts into accessible insights. I am also a reviewer at the International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science. I serve as an active ambassador for several international organisations, including the Young Energy Professionals Forum (Energy UK), the International School of Leadership and Diplomacy (USA), the Center for Teacher Accreditation (India), and Mindset Mastery 360 (USA). I am a Fellow (community member) of the Digital Euro Association (DEA), an esteemed organisation focused on digital money technologies such as stablecoins and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). I am also a Fellow of the European Carbon Offset Tokenization Association. As an ECOTA Fellow, I am part of a dynamic and rapidly expanding community of experts in the field of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) and carbon markets. Furthermore, I am a Global Outreach Contributing Member of the American Society for Microbiology.

What have you learned along the way?

Throughout this experience, I've honed a diverse skillset. I've also developed a strong work ethic, a keen ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and a deep appreciation for the importance of lifelong learning. This journey has not only equipped me with valuable knowledge and skills but has also fostered personal growth and a greater sense of confidence in my abilities.

Anna Hjelm Jonsson AIEP

Regional Coordinator for Individual
Educational Support in Studies | Iris Hadar

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Ten years ago, I worked as a store manager in a women's clothing boutique. In that role, I was responsible for overseeing daily operations, managing staff, and ensuring excellent customer service. It was a dynamic position that required strong leadership, organisational skills, and the ability to motivate my team.

What are you doing now?

Today, I work as a regional coordinator for Individual Educational Support in Studies. In this role, I coordinate and oversee the service and its results. I collaborate with educators, students, and support staff to create personalised strategies that address each individual's unique needs and challenges. My work focuses on fostering an environment where students can thrive both academically and personally.

What have you learned along the way?

Over the years, I have learned that I thrive in roles where I can help others grow and reach their full potential. Whether it's guiding someone in their professional development or supporting them on a personal level, seeing individuals achieve their goals brings me immense satisfaction. I am deeply motivated by witnessing tangible results in people's lives, and this passion for making a positive impact continues to drive me in everything I do.





Tracy Jory MIEP

Learning & Assessment Consultant | IEP Learning Academy

What were you doing 10 years ago?

My role was Office Manager at my local Adult Education Centre, where I enrolled learners onto a range of courses, from essential qualifications to creative crafts like art and jewellery making. My days were a whirlwind of activity, ensuring the Centre ran effectively and efficiently on a day to day basis. I made sure tutors had everything they needed to deliver top-notch education, while also keeping a keen eye on health and safety and conducting thorough risk assessments. On top of that, I managed the important task of completing tutor payroll with precision and punctuality. Leading a small team of 2 administrative assistants, I ensured we met every deadline and exceeded expectations.

What are you doing now?

After dedicating the best part of my career to adult education, I realised I needed a change. I didn't feel challenged in my job role any more and I wasn't getting any younger, and I knew if I didn't make that change, I never would. So, I took a leap of faith and applied for a part-time admin role with the IEP Learning Academy. I'm delighted to say I was successful and have never looked back! I quickly transitioned to the role of Employability Assessor, and now, as I approach my 3-year anniversary with the IEP, I've been promoted to Learning and Assessment Consultant. I'm currently working towards the Level 5 Associate Diploma in Organisational Learning and Development and am proud to be an Associate Member of the CIPD. I'm constantly pushed out of my comfort zone, which, while challenging, helps me learn, grow, and develop, both personally and professionally. Moving into employability, especially with the IEP, has been incredibly rewarding. It might sound cheesy, but I absolutely love what I do and strive to be the best I can be!

What have you learned along the way?

Apart from diving into a completely new sector, I've gained invaluable insights and skills. I've learned to adapt quickly to new environments and embrace change with confidence. This rewarding journey has taught me the importance of continuous learning and professional development. I've discovered the joy, although sometimes challenging, of stepping out of my comfort zone and the immense satisfaction that comes from personal and professional growth. My journey has been a testament to the power of taking risks and the rewards that come with it!

David Kingsley MAIEP

Deputy House Manager | Ronald McDonald
House Charities UK

What were you doing 10 years ago?

I was working at HSBC, building a strong foundation in the banking industry. During that time, I gained valuable experience in customer service, financial products, and relationship management, which not only deepened my understanding of the sector but also shaped my professional approach. The insights and skills I developed during that period continue to influence my work ethic and contribute to my success today.



What are you doing now?

I currently work in the voluntary sector, specialising in service delivery and operations management with a focus on effective programme oversight. In my role at a charity based on a hospital site, I support families with sick children by coordinating services, managing operations, and fostering a compassionate, supportive environment. Beyond my primary responsibilities, I am deeply committed to civic engagement, actively contributing through board memberships, housing policy development, patient and public involvement in healthcare, and freelance facilitation with young people – all aimed at driving meaningful, community-focused change.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned the importance of empathy, collaboration, and adaptability in driving impactful change across diverse sectors. My journey has shown me the value of coproduction, where including lived experiences creates meaningful solutions, particularly in mental health, homelessness, and youth services. By navigating roles in finance, healthcare, and the voluntary sector, I've honed my ability to engage stakeholders, manage operations, and deliver results that align with both community needs and organisational goals.



Leon Larkings MIEP

Employment Advisor | Fedcap

What were you doing 10 years ago?
Travel agent.

What are you doing now?
Employment Advisor.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned to make the most of training and upskilling opportunities offered. This mindset is why I've been able to change role and go to internal recruitment, then pivot and use those skills in my current role. Even within my current role I've taken every training opportunity possible and was even a finalist for an IEP Learning Award and got to attend the IEP Basecamp 2024.



Michelle Little AIEP

Community Employment
Mentor | Conwy County
Borough Council

What were you doing 10 years ago?
Working for the Welsh Ambulance Service as a 999-emergency call taker.

What are you doing now?
Community Employment Mentor, supporting individuals overcome barriers that are stopping them getting to where they want to be.

What have you learned along the way?
That each case is an individual and personal journey that they need to take at their own pace whilst in control of decisions that affect them and their future.

Foyso! Miah AIEP

ESOL Lead and Employability Trainer | Serco



What were you doing 10 years ago?

Working in the education sector – higher education.

What are you doing now?

Working in Welfare to Work, I have the privilege of supporting individuals in developing the skills, confidence, and resilience they need to secure sustainable employment.

What have you learned along the way?

The more support given in terms of training and development, the greater the transformation in their journey to success is. My journey with the Institute of Professional Employment (IEP) has been both rewarding and insightful. Sharing experiences with fellow professionals within the industry has not only been incredibly valuable but also truly inspirational. Engaging in meaningful discussions and exchanging best practices has enabled us to navigate challenging situations more effectively, leading to improved outcomes. This collaboration has played a crucial role in supporting individuals to build the confidence, skills, and self-esteem needed to succeed in the world of work and to maintain sustained employment. The IEP's commitment to fostering professional growth and learning has been instrumental in my own development, and I look forward to continuing this journey of mutual support and progress.



Mark Power MAIEP

Employment Advisor | Palladium

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Senior Retail Manager.

What are you doing now?

Employment Advisor Restart.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned about people, the unseen and seen struggles that they go through every day.



Rasmus Rossi FIEP

Senior Advisor | Arenakoncernen

What were you doing 10 years ago?

I was the CEO of Work for you.

What are you doing now?

Senior Advisor to the largest provider in Scandinavia.

What have you learned along the way?

I learned the importance of successfully motivating employees who help people get closer to the job market. That as the leader you must communicate a clear purpose and vision. Foster a culture where their contributions are valued and make a real impact. Empower them with autonomy while providing support and resources. Encourage collaboration, learning, and innovation to boost engagement. Celebrate successes, both big and small, and show appreciation regularly. Lead by example and demonstrate genuine commitment to both employees' and participants' development.



Jo Stuart AIEP

Project Development Officer |
CCBC

What were you doing 10 years ago?

I was Head of Languages, in school specialising in supporting students with ASD, ADHD, and Dyslexia.

What are you doing now?

Now I work with 16- to 19-year-olds, supporting them in getting work-ready.

What have you learned along the way?

Everyone has something valuable to offer – a gift, a skill, a quality, that is just waiting to be shared with the world!

Monique Smith FIEP

Operations Manager | Standguide



What were you doing 10 years ago?

I was working as a Deputy Manager – Employment and Skills for the Gloucestershire LEP, managing various contracts including the National Careers Service, Work Programme and others. I really enjoyed this role as it was very busy and varied. I developed a strong team, and we supported thousands of people who wanted to progress in their careers. It was a challenging role as all of my contracts were payment based on results, and with that comes a lot of pressure. However, we were very successful.

What are you doing now?

Operations Manager for Standguide.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned that I am very resilient and no matter what challenges I have faced I have been able to overcome them. I also really thrive in seeing people progress in their careers whether that is a customer, colleague or a member of the team I am managing. Seeing their growth also inspires me to push myself to try new things and develop my skills. I also like to encourage people to reach their full potential and achieve what they did not think was possible. I recently became a mentor for the CDI, and I found it really rewarding using my skills and knowledge to support someone new in the sector. This year I am focused on trying to be in the moment and to really enjoy what I have achieved so far as sometimes I don't reflect enough. The year ahead will bring its challenges but I am feeling quite positive.

Tina Ward AIEP

IPS Employment Specialist | Blackpool Council



What were you doing 10 years ago?

Ten years ago, I was working as a Development Officer in a small charity that supported older people, where I managed the fee-based services (cleaning, shopping, foot care and day centres). I managed a team of 20 paid staff and 10 volunteers and had approximately 500 clients that accessed our services on a regular basis. It was a very busy role, which I enjoyed, and I was able to develop my leadership skills; it was also high-pressured with a very busy workload. I worked with some lovely people, and we all did our utmost to ensure that people accessing the services received the best service we could provide. At that time, my children were 10 and 8 years old, so I was also very busy being a Mum.

What are you doing now?

I am now working as a Senior IPS Employment Specialist, working within local government to support people with severe mental illness back into employment or to retain employment. I manage a team of 9 Employment Specialists, who are all fantastic and I feel very lucky to work with lovely people who are all very different but come together to achieve fantastic outcomes. My children are now 20 and 18, still living at home, so still being a very busy Mum as well.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learnt how important it is to work with your team, find out what they are good at and keep communications going both ways. I also know the importance of taking regular breaks away from work, so as not to burn yourself out, recognising that within yourself and looking after your own wellbeing. I have also built my understanding of mental health, recognising that this can impact anyone at any time and how important it is to break down stigmas and feel comfortable talking about this.

Emma Williams FIEP

Learning and Development Manager | IEP



What were you doing 10 years ago?

Working in Penzance, Cornwall in a small office of 6 staff at a Welfare to Work programme, supporting a caseload of around 130 participants.

What are you doing now?

Leading the IEP Learning Academy in its UK operations to design and deliver crucial and relevant learning qualifications to frontline professionals across the sector.

What have you learned along the way?

I've learnt that the fundamentals of employability delivery don't change, the challenges that face both practitioners and participants remain the same, and it's rarely about processes or procedures; it's nearly always about human interaction. How to feel equipped to help those that need it the most, how to have difficult conversations and feel the ability to develop trust in a professional relationship. More and more I'm seeing the impact of the breaking of the psychological contract, the ways that unspoken expectations people have for one another fall short and this affects not just the professional relationship, but the retention of good people, and how we can work on this as a way to protect the wellbeing of our teams and our participants by being open and honest.

Employability in my view has always been a vocation; it has appealed to those that simply want to help others to achieve their potential. To see that profession become recognised, to see a pathway of qualifications cemented as an ideal both inside and outside the sector as a mark of excellence, and evidence of someone professional practice has been a joy to see. I look forward to continuing this journey within both the IEP and the sector at large. We know that change happens often, our horizons shift and our input changes, but the core values remain the same: to ensure professional practitioners everywhere can be the best that they can be.



Luke Whinney FIEP

Senior Manager Employment Services – Victoria | AMES Australia

What were you doing 10 years ago?

Winding up my time spending 2 years out of the employment industry, to plan for a return. That return was soon to be AMES!

What are you doing now?

Still leading a team in Victoria that passionately assist refugees and migrants daily on their settlement journeys.

What have you learned along the way?

Refugees and migrants have so much to offer Australia and the country is only richer socially, emotionally, and economically for it!



Michaela Zankl FIEP

Regional Manager and National Coordinator | Folkuniversitetet & Chair | IEP Sweden

What were you doing 10 years ago?

I changed jobs and moved to Stockholm. I temporarily left the non-profit sector, but now I am back. I worked with the delivery and procurement of municipal adult education.

What are you doing now?

I work as a Regional Manager with responsibility for labour market services, municipal adult education, and corporate training. I am also coordinating, among other things, procurement and quality work nationally. I was recently elected Chair of IEP Sweden and serve on the board of an organisation for municipal adult education.

What have you learned along the way?

I have learned to concretise many of my thoughts on initiatives that support people in learning and development, especially in relation to public organisations' problem analyses and contracts. I have made it a point to know who works with us and what their skills are to continue my own learning.

THE IEP WISHES YOU AN INCREDIBLE 2025

A massive thank you to all who submitted their inspiring stories from across the sector and globe.

We are excited for what 2025 holds and look forward to working with you throughout the year.



Institute of
Employability
Professionals

