

MAY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the May Newsletter

As we head into the summer months, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on what's been an energising and inspiring May for all of us at Total Futures.

Earlier this month, we marked Mental Health Awareness Week.

Prioritising wellbeing isn't just a one-week activity – it's something we aim to embed into our everyday culture.

We also celebrated Learning at Work Week, which felt especially fitting given our strong commitment to CPD and continuous growth.

At Total Futures, we believe learning is the key to unlocking not just professional success but also personal fulfilment.

We're constantly striving to create meaningful opportunities for our learners to grow, develop new skills, and achieve their goals. Their journey is at the heart of everything we do, and we remain committed to supporting them every step of the way.

So never mind 'learning at work week' at Total Futures we celebrate 'learning every day week'... every week!

There's a lot to look forward to, and I can't wait to share more in the months ahead.

*From
all at
Total Futures*

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In this newsletter you can expect:

Company Updates

Course Updates

Wider Learner Aspects

Team Highlights

Initiatives and Announcements

Staff Profile Highlights

MEET THE TEAM - MAY HIGHLIGHT

CAROL PEARSON
QUALITYY MANAGER/LEAD IQA



“

Brief Bio-

I joined Total Futures over a year ago now.

Wow and what a busy and amazing time I have had.

I enjoy being busy and being able to juggle lots of things at the same time.

We have an amazing team here at Total Futures who put the learner at the heart of everything that we do.

Fun Fact-

I have had a varied career, from being in the Army to making costumes for a Christmas pantomime.

Fav Quote-

Never give up. You only get one life. Go for it!

Richard E. Grant

COMPANY UPDATE

LONDON

It's been a busy and exciting few weeks at Total Futures, with plenty of activity in and around the capital as we continue to strengthen our connections, support our learners, and champion opportunities across London.

EMPLOYER OPEN DAY – CONNECTING LEARNERS WITH INDUSTRY

We began the month by hosting our Employer Open Day at the Total Futures office. It was a fantastic opportunity for our learners to meet with our employers, ask questions, and receive direct insights into careers, pathways, and expectations.

Sessions included CV tips, interview advice, and sector-specific guidance — all geared towards empowering our learners as they prepare for the world of work.

The energy in the room was inspiring, and we're grateful to the employers who gave their time so generously to support the next generation of talent

If you're an employer and would love to take part in our next open day meeting our eager learners get in touch!!!



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON – BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

We were also delighted to attend a key meeting with the University of East London (UEL). The discussion centred on collaboration, innovation, and the role of education in equipping learners for the evolving job market.

A particular highlight was exploring an exciting upcoming group project that will bring together UEL students and our learners to work on a real-world challenge. This partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to bridging the gap between further education and higher education, and to ensuring our learners benefit from meaningful, future-focused opportunities.



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON – BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Most recently, Total Futures took part in the Jobs and Skills event at City Hall, an important gathering bringing together providers, employers, and local communities to focus on employment and training pathways in London.

Events like this reinforce the value of collective effort in tackling skills gaps and ensuring Londoners of all ages have access to high-quality opportunities.





NORTH EAST

Our **Employability Day** wrapped up Total Futures Ltd's very first **Skills for Business course** under our contract with South Tyneside Works delivered by the amazing Christopher Conifey.

And, what a way to finish!

15 graduates were joined by Andrea Clarke from Enterprise Made Simple Ltd, Ame McQuillan and Will Fairclough from Education Development Trust and Sharon Lynn from TRN Train Ltd - who gave our outgoing students relevant and practical suggestions and advice on what's next for them.

As always, the team at **Action Station South Tyneside** were fantastically supportive of local people, welcoming them into their wonderful space and encouraging them to get involved in their local community.

We have also been incredibly supported by the teams at **Jarrow and South Shields job centres**. They have been crucial to the success of our programmes. Thankyou to the tutors that have supported Elaine at South Shields job centres for Pre-Training Interviews.





WIDER LEARNING ASPECT

Safeguarding May Update: The Silent Struggle

Recognising and Responding to Mental Health Safeguarding Concerns

Following May's **Mental Health Awareness Week** we wanted to raise the importance of mental well-being for everyone, everywhere.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition that mental health is a crucial part of safeguarding — and rightly so. Learners and peers experiencing mental ill-health may be at greater risk of harm, exploitation, or disengagement. That's why it's essential we continue to treat mental health concerns not just as personal or pastoral matters, but as potential safeguarding issues requiring our attention and action.

Why Mental Health Matters in Safeguarding

While most of us experience stress or anxiety at some point, some of us may struggle with more serious mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, or self-harm. These challenges can affect our safety, wellbeing, and ability to thrive in education or the workplace.

A safeguarding issue arises when mental health:

- Places a learner at risk of harm (e.g. suicidal ideation or self-harm),
- Prevents them from accessing education safely or effectively,
- Leads to neglect of basic needs,
- Leaves them vulnerable to exploitation or abuse.

Spotting the Signs

Whilst our staff are not expected to be mental health experts or make diagnoses, we all have a role to play in noticing when something isn't right. Possible signs that a learner or peer may be struggling include:

- Sudden withdrawal or isolation
- Noticeable changes in appearance or hygiene
- Frequent or unexplained absences
- Expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness, or extreme stress
- Physical signs such as self-inflicted injuries or constant tiredness
- A drop in performance or engagement

These signs on their own may not always indicate a safeguarding issue — but they do warrant a conversation.



What to Do if You're Concerned

As an employer, line manager, mentor, or fellow learner and peer we all play a vital role in safeguarding.

If you have concerns about someone's mental health, it's important to act sensitively but promptly.

Here's what to do:

Notice and Document

Pay attention to changes in behaviour, mood, attendance or performance. You might notice:

- Increased absences or lateness
- Signs of anxiety, low mood, or distress
- Disengagement or lack of motivation
- Difficulties concentrating or making decisions
- Keep a record of what you've observed — factually and without speculation.

Create a Safe Space for Conversation

If appropriate, check in with the individual in a private, supportive way. You could say: "I've noticed you don't seem yourself lately — is everything okay?"

You don't need to have all the answers. Just listening non-judgementally can make a huge difference.

Know Your Boundaries

It's not your responsibility to diagnose or counsel — and it's okay not to have all the solutions. Your role is to:

- Show care and concern
- Avoid making assumptions
- Share your concerns through the correct channels

Refer or Report to the Training Provider

If you are working with a training provider or apprenticeship organisation, inform their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) about your concerns. They are trained to assess and respond appropriately, and can help access professional support if needed.

Maintain Confidentiality — But Don't Keep Secrets

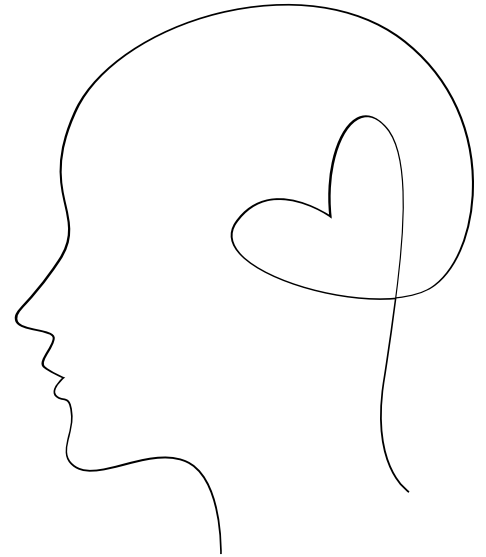
Confidentiality is important, but safeguarding always comes first. If someone is at risk of harm, you must report it — even if they ask you not to.



Creating a Supportive Environment

Our culture plays a big part in how safe people feel to speak up. You can help by:

- Encouraging open conversations around mental health
- Normalising checking in with learners regularly
- Signposting learners to trusted resources and support services



Real-World Classroom Example

One of our learners, aged 17, began missing sessions and seemed increasingly disengaged. A tutor noticed the change and raised a concern with the Safeguarding Team. It emerged the learner was experiencing overwhelming anxiety and struggling to cope. With support, they were referred to a mental health service, adjustments were made to their learning schedule, and they were assigned a pastoral mentor. The learner is now re-engaged and progressing well.

This case is a reminder that early action — simply noticing and sharing a concern — can have a life-changing impact.

If any of our learners or employers have questions or concerns regarding any of the above, please speak with our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Carol Pearson.

Helplines and Support:

If you're struggling or just need someone to talk to, there are people ready to listen – day or night. Here are a few places you can turn to for free, confidential support:

- Samaritans – 116 123 (24/7) - Whatever you're going through, they're there to listen.
- Shout – Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 (24/7) - A text service for anyone in crisis.
- Mind – 0300 123 3393 or text 86463 - For info and support around mental health.
- NHS Mental Health Helpline – Call 111, option 2 (24/7) For urgent help.

WIDER LEARNING ASPECT

May SEND Topic: Understanding Pathological Demand Avoidance

What is Pathological Demand Avoidance?

This month, we're focusing on Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) – a profile on the autism spectrum that is characterised by an intense avoidance of everyday demands, often due to high levels of anxiety.

Unlike more widely recognised autism profiles, individuals with PDA may appear confident, sociable, and articulate, but can become overwhelmed when they feel pressured or out of control. This may result in avoidance behaviours, shutdowns, or expressions of distress. These responses are often misunderstood as defiance or lack of motivation, when they are, in fact, rooted in anxiety and self-protection.

Pros of Understanding PDA

Supporting someone with PDA in the workplace can come with challenges if their needs aren't well understood. These may include:

- Avoidance of tasks or deadlines that feel too pressured or directive
- Fluctuating engagement, depending on how in control and supported the person feels
- Difficulty with authority or rigid systems, which can increase anxiety
- Misinterpretation of behaviours as resistance or non-cooperation

Recognising these patterns is the first step toward building a more inclusive and psychologically safe work culture.



Challenges and Considerations

Supporting someone with PDA in the workplace can come with challenges if their needs aren't well understood.

These may include:

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- Fluctuating engagement, depending on how in control and supported the person feels
- Difficulty with authority or rigid systems, which can increase anxiety
- Misinterpretation of behaviours as resistance or non-cooperation
- Recognising these patterns is the first step toward building a more inclusive and psychologically safe work culture.

Strategies that Support Success

At Total Futures, we advocate for compassionate and flexible approaches that empower all employees, including those with PDA.

Effective strategies can include:

- Reducing direct demands – Offer choices or frame tasks collaboratively (“Would you be comfortable starting with...” instead of “You need to...”).
- Maintaining open and respectful communication – Build trust by listening without judgement.
- Allowing autonomy – Where possible, give individuals control over how they complete tasks.
- Creating low-pressure environments – Avoid last-minute changes or high-pressure expectations where possible.
- Supporting individuals with PDA is not about lowering standards—it's about adapting how we reach them. These approaches often benefit entire teams by promoting empathy, reducing stress, and encouraging more flexible and inclusive ways of working.
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MAY WELLBEING TIPS

Spring Clean Your Mental Health: Simple Habits for a Healthier Mind

As we move through May and into the heart of spring, it's a great time to take a step back and check in with ourselves. The longer days and lighter evenings offer a natural reminder to refresh not just our surroundings, but also our routines and mindsets.

Working in education and training—especially in a fast-paced environment like Total Futures—means we're often focused on others. But looking after ourselves is just as important. A little mental "spring cleaning" can go a long way in helping us stay calm, motivated, and well. Here are a few small but powerful habits that can support your mental health this season:

Make the most of natural light

Even 10 minutes outside in the morning or at lunchtime can boost your mood and energy levels. Try taking a short walk, having your coffee outside, or simply stepping away from your screen.

Reclaim small pockets of calm

You don't need a full hour for self-care. Even brief moments—deep breathing between meetings, a quiet cuppa, or five minutes of stretching—can help reset your mind and reduce stress.

Declutter your digital space

A tidy inbox, fewer notifications, or even a break from social media can clear mental clutter and help you feel more in control.

Reflect and reset

Ask yourself: What's been helping me feel balanced lately? What's been draining me? A quick weekly check-in with yourself can highlight small changes that make a big difference.

Connect with your team

Sometimes, a quick chat with a colleague can lift your spirits more than you expect. You're not alone—and chances are, someone else is feeling the same.

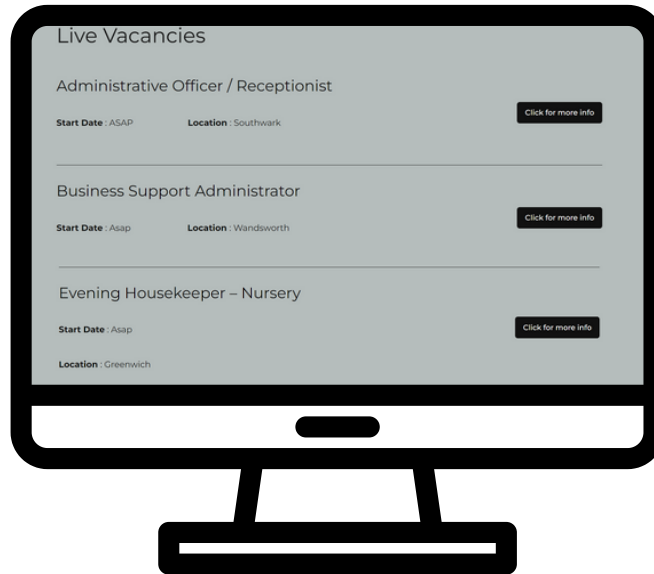
This month, give yourself permission to pause, recharge, and take small steps that support your wellbeing. You're doing important work—and you deserve to feel well while doing it.

**ANY QUESTIONS OR TOPICS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE MENTIONED IN
NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER PLEASE EMAIL:
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