



Grace Lown, Social Media Manager Small Business Saturday UK

"Spending the morning in Abbeville's with Luigi, Sean and the rest of the team was hard work - no one told me how much elbow grease you need for making savoury mini muffins! Luckily, Sean was there to step in and show me how it's done, whilst telling me about himself and how First Step Trust has helped him get to where he is today. The professionalism on display in the restaurant is pronounced and they were so patient with a novice chef such as myself. The Trading Places scheme is a genuinely insightful way to see more of the meaningful and impactful work that First Step Trust does - just be prepared to work hard for your lunch" - Grace Lown, Social Media Manager Small Business Saturday UK

Trading Places is a way for us to increase our efforts to create sustainable work and employment opportunities for people unable to manage mainstream opportunities. We have invited senior executives to work alongside our workforce as colleagues so that they go back to their companies excited at the prospect of doing something sustainable. By us getting commercial work it gives us the means to have control over our future without having to depend on funding it also helps us provide employment opportunities and on the job training for people who have been excluded from the mainstream job market due to mental health or other disadvantages.



Steve Nelson Government Relations Director South East London Chamber of Commerce



Salman Ahmed, Client Relations South London Procurement Network

"Myself and Petrona both thoroughly enjoyed our time and it was a pleasure working with the team and hearing their personal stories. FST really does change lives, I could see first-hand how many of the mechanics have developed their skills and built their confidence all whilst getting first class on the job training. I really could not recommend the Trading Place programme enough; all the staff are a pleasure to work with." - Salman Ahmed, Client Relations South London Procurement Network



Stuart Nichols Service Manager Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Commissioning (DAMIC) Royal Borough of Greenwich

"I was impressed and inspired by the dedication and attention to detail of all the workers in the garage. It was an enjoyable afternoon working alongside everyone. Even with my limited practical skills I learnt a lot and everyone was very patient with me. I could see how much people learn from each other and support each other. It's obviously a great place to be and work and learn. I am able to say I changed a tyre (sort of) and I hopefully didn't damage anything!" Stuart Nichols Service Manager Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Commissioning (DAMIC) Royal Borough of Greenwich



Councillor Ed Davie, Chair Lambeth Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

"Spending a day in the First Step Trust's Lambeth garage was incredibly inspiring. Seeing people, who had previously been written-off as unable to work or contribute, learning skills, gaining confidence and helping others shows what a great model they've developed. In the past I myself have struggled with mental health and addiction problems and so I know how important the right kind of support is to making a recovery. Now I am happier and healthier than ever and I can see that First Step Trust is helping others transform their own lives for the better. During my shift I could see what well-supervised, high quality mechanical work was being done in the garage and I urge everybody to use the service for their own vehicle or commercial fleets." - Edward Davie, Chair Lambeth Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Andrew Evers Chief Officer Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Lambeth NHS

"I've had a fabulous day at Abbeville's thanks to the team plus I've learnt how to make really great food! The food going out to delivery looked absolutely wonderful! The people really value working here as it is real work and it was obvious that they get an awful lot out of the work they do at Abbeville's." - Andrew Evers Chief Officer Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Lambeth NHS



Steph Savill Director Foxy Lady Drivers Club

"I am proud to support SMaRT Garages and moved by the inspiring stories from happy individuals whose lives are back on track as a result of First Step Trust giving them a second chance" Steph Savill, Director Foxy Lady Drivers Club



Bill Tidnam Director of Operations, Thames Reach

"I've always found the work of First Step Trust inspiring and I've enjoyed the food produced by Abbeviles both in the restaurant and at events that they have catered for. This morning was a chance to go behind the white door and work with the team in the kitchen. I was really impressed by the easy professionalism of the kitchen team and the way everyone – volunteers and paid staff - works together to produce vast quantities of excellent food on time. I learnt loads about cooking and buying food and I was really grateful to everyone – especially Kevin and Luigi -spending time to make me feel part of the team." Bill Tidnam Director of Operations, Thames Reach



Dr Adrian McLachlan, Chair Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Lambeth NHS

"I would like to thank all the staff at the West Norwood SMaRT Garage for a great afternoon Trading Places. After thorough induction to health and safety in the workplace, I was put to work taking the driveshafts out of Owen, an old rescued Renault van, being restored towards a new commercial life. I already knew the garage provided a good service, having taken my car twice, but to spend time on the inside as a worker rather than outside as a customer was a rewarding experience. I enjoyed getting my hands dirty and to meet the team who are delivering a very good service from a friendly and supportive working environment." Adrian McLachlan, Chair Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Lambeth NHS



Megan Reynolds Commissioning Officer Drugs, Alcohol and Mental Health Integrated Commissioning Royal Borough of Greenwich

"I really enjoyed my afternoon with FST Smart Garage. I learnt new skills such as changing a tyre and replacing a wheel, which will come in useful seeing as I have just passed my driving test! I experienced the valuable work of the service in providing meaningful opportunities for those facing challenges in a supportive yet empowering environment. I also met really inspirational people who are passionate about the service. I was really impressed with the whole organisation and the positive impact it has on peoples' lives." - Megan Reynolds Commissioning Officer Drugs, Alcohol and Mental Health Integrated Commissioning Royal Borough of Greenwich



Petrona Wickham Director South London Procurement Network

"I had a great day working on 'Owen'. I enjoyed learning some new skills. The team was fantastic, some really inspirational people and they were great teachers too! Can't wait to learn how to do brakes and oil change." Petrona Wickham Director South London Procurement Network