

First Step Trust: an introduction

First Step Trust (FST) was established in 1994 to provide real work experience and employment opportunities for people with mental health problems and other disadvantages. We have work projects based in the community across the UK, as well as projects in medium and high secure settings in the North West, Midlands and Broadmoor Hospital. These are run as social enterprises and offer a wide range of work including garage repairs and end of life vehicle recycling, garden maintenance, facilities maintenance, contract cleaning, painting and decorating, design and print and catering. We also have a restaurant open to the public and our main office in Woolwich provides work and basic training, in office administration and computing skills.

Each project runs as a small business, trading with the local community with a strong emphasis on everyone in the workforce sharing the responsibilities of running the business. People with mental health problems and other disadvantages form the voluntary workforce, staffing and managing both the individual projects and the main office. FST currently has 14 such projects with a total workforce of over 1,000 people. When ready, people are assisted to move onto paid employment elsewhere through a programme of work placements with other employers and support with the job application process.

Vision and values

FST has shown how well this approach works in mental health, learning disabilities and in the area of drug and alcohol misuse. People need a reason to stay off drugs or alcohol, just as people with mental health problems need a reason to stay well. Work provides both the reason and the means. It offers opportunities to learn new skills, occupy the day, meet new friends, regain lost self-respect and develop a future. The FST approach is to challenge people with real responsibility while supporting them with training and firm structures. We are committed to the principle of encouraging and enabling the workforce to achieve success within a framework of core values:

Real work

- Everyone can make a valuable contribution whatever their previous situation/disadvantage.
- People have the right to take part in productive work.
- Work must be used to extend each person's skills and abilities.

Disability/disadvantage does not have to become a bar to work

- People can learn to manage their disability/disadvantage.
- People are responsible for keeping themselves fit for work.

Everyone has the potential to develop

Everyone:

- can change their lives.
- can carry responsibility and be accountable for their actions.
- can meet demands made of them.
- has a life outside of their disability/disadvantage.

Positive attitudes in work

- We treat everyone with respect.
- We support people to develop through learning.
- Projects are organised in the spirit of flexibility, co-operation and partnership.

First Step Trust Projects

All the following projects run as social enterprises trading with the general public and are staffed and managed by a workforce of people with mental health problems, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol recovery problems or other disadvantages.

FST Abbeviles , Clapham, London (Mental health/learning disability)	Restaurant open to the public for lunch, Mon-Fri, and also available for private hire in the evening and weekend on request. Specialises in outside catering both large and small.
FST @ Ardenleigh , Birmingham (Medium secure unit)	Work project set within a medium secure unit for women and adolescents, providing car valeting, finance and administration skills, painting and decorating, gardening, cleaning and shop work.
FST Barnet , London (Mental health)	Provides services in gardening, painting and decorating, removals and office work.
FST Berkshire , Crowthorne, (Broadmoor Hospital)	Work project within the high secure environment, providing contract facilities maintenance, design for print, promotional merchandise and office skills.
FST Bexley , Kent (Mental health and forensic services)	Provides services in painting and decorating, minor building works, gardening and removals.
FST @ Charles House , Salford, Manchester (Medium secure unit)	Provides support for people moving on from the unit into work and educational opportunities in the community, for example, our FST SMaRT project.
FST Enfield , London (Mental health)	Provides garden maintenance, hard landscaping, painting, decorating and small building works, supported by office team developing skills in IT, financial controls and general administration.
FST Haringey , Tottenham, London (Mental health)	Provides services in painting and decorating, removals, garden maintenance, office services.
FST Lambeth , London (Mental health/learning disability)	Provides services in painting and decorating, removals, garden landscaping and maintenance.
FST Main Office , Greenwich, London (Drug and alcohol problems/mental health)	FST administrative centre, servicing the projects, run as a work project, providing work experience and training in IT, administration, finance and office skills. Qualifications available in IT, communications and application of numbers.
FST Merseyside , St Helens (Medium secure unit)	Work project in medium secure setting in St Helens, providing snack bar, car valeting, painting and decorating, gardening and office administration.
FST Salford , Manchester (Medium secure unit)	Work project in medium secure setting in Salford providing print design and desk top publishing, snack bar, contract cleaning, finance and office skills. Also work based training qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene and NVQ business administration.
FST SMaRT , Salford, Manchester (Long-term unemployed, mental health, disabilities, medium secure services)	Work project providing MOT's, garage services and the recycling of end of life vehicles. Also City and Guilds qualifications in automotive skills, pre-employment, health and safety and office administration.
FST Sheffield (Mental health)	Provides services in gardening, painting and decorating, contract cleaning and removals.

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