

# **ADVERTORIAL: ‘Integral’ skills programme back to bolster North East employability**

An award-winning employability programme has made its return to schools after a 20-month hiatus due to the pandemic.

For National Careers Week 2022, a group of North East businesses have re-introduced Building My Skills (BMS), an initiative that was founded more than 10 years ago by Esh Construction, Ryder and Arup to showcase a variety of sectors, raise aspirations and boost employability skills.

The careers guidance programme has been re-launched with the support of OneVoice – a regional collaboration which seeks to drive positive change in the construction industry.

The ever-changing career landscape brings with it the need for a fresh perspective.

The programme sees long-serving business partners return and an influx of new businesses come together to deliver quality careers and employability information to over 1,900 students from 12 NELEP schools in Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and Sunderland.

Year 10, 11 and Sixth Form students will receive three timetabled workshops, where speakers will offer insights into the sector, their own career pathways and employability skills they value.

An interview and opportunities day will round off the programme in June.

Darush Dodds, corporate affairs director at Esh Construction,

said: “Since its conception, BMS has provided over 2,000 free, high-quality workshops to over 50,000 students.

“The combination of the pandemic subsiding, revived interest from long-standing business partners, and the chance to partner with OneVoice provided the perfect opportunity to relaunch our new model ahead of a full roll-out from September.

“Programmes which bring together business and education are integral in helping students make informed decisions about their future and develop employability skills that all employers value.”



The programme is delivered collaboratively by business partners across the North East

Nik Turner, executive director at Believe Housing and chair of OneVoice People Group, said: “The OneVoice construction strategy aims to provide an inclusive culture within the North East construction sector with the themes of climate, people and value underpinning our aims.

“We believe it is important that we continue to retain, reward, and celebrate our existing people, however, it is essential that we also attract new people into the sector.

“Our sector is exciting, innovative, and ever-evolving; we hope to utilise BMS as the conduit between industry and students, to showcase the varied roles we offer and to become the sector of choice for young people taking the first steps on their career paths.”

Returning business partners include Accenture, North Wealth Management, North East Times, Mediaworks, Lloyds Bank and Turner & Townsend, in addition to new partners such as Northumbrian Water Group, Bowmer & Kirkland, Gleeds and Believe Housing.

To bolster the programme, a digital platform has been developed to enhance the student experience and engage a much larger digital cohort.

Planning is now underway to expand into Tees Valley and enrol more schools for the next academic year.

**To find out more and get involved, visit [buildingmyskills.education](http://buildingmyskills.education).**