

Goodlives is a community-focused project located on Westlakes, accessible to anyone interested, whether they're learners, local residents, or employees at the nearby Science Park who want to enjoy the outdoors. Established as part of Home to Work's mission, Goodlives serves as an initiative to support community members in gaining practical skills and training to re-engage economically. Home to Work was created to empower our local area, fostering economic growth by helping those not currently in the workforce take steps toward active participation. Skills 4 You, the project that runs Goodlives, specifically addresses rising unemployment in Copeland by offering practical work experiences and skill development to help people overcome barriers to employment.

Skills 4 You (S4Y) has a strong history of assisting people to reintegrate into working life through meaningful training in realistic work environments. S4Y supports long-term unemployed individuals and those facing multiple barriers, helping them build essential skills, confidence, and a strong work ethic. By focusing on "hard-to-reach" groups, including people dealing with mental health issues, substance dependencies, social isolation, and other challenges, S4Y provides an open-door policy for adults struggling to enter the workforce. With the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is expected to be a surge in mental health cases, making services like S4Y even more essential.

The Goodlives project offers fresh produce growing activities where learners can volunteer solo or with others, depending on their comfort level. This flexibility allows them to gain experience at their own pace while benefiting from the outdoor setting, exercise, and the chance to be part of a community project. Growing produce from seed not only enhances their health but also instills confidence and creates pathways to further education or employment opportunities. For many, outdoor work is less intimidating than indoor environments, making Goodlives a uniquely accessible option.

The site is open from 9 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday, with learners attending from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day. During this time visitors to the site would have access to all the wonderful things Goodlives has to offer. The yurt, provided by Natural England, serves as a therapeutic space for 8–10 learners at a time, supporting relaxation and mental well-being. For employees at the Science Park, we have been asked to extend the hours on request for special sessions like yoga or meditation, these have been proven to be very popular. They would also have access to the polytunnels for sessions ran, for example Morgan Sindall recently ran sessions in collaboration with local Primary Schools – Montreal and St Patricks. They came and were educated on the life cycles of plants with hands on experience and items to take away to further their education. We also have collaborated with Schools such as Mayfield and local community groups – The Autism Academy, Lowther Housing Association and The Foyer.

Goodlives has built strong partnerships with local businesses, with several companies encouraging employee volunteer days on-site, including Kaefer, Balfour Beatty, Severfield, and Westinghouse, who have provided electricity. We've received contributions from Kaefer for water, BAF for excavation, Balfour Beatty and Severfield for polytunnels, GAP for sanitation, DSD for a courtyard, and William King Builders, Thomas Graham, and Orano for a polytunnel. Our site is fully equipped with weekly-serviced sanitation, electricity, and water.