

## Notes for Entrants 2026

These notes contain important information to help you complete your entry form and best showcase your nomination. It includes an overview of the awards, the criteria used by the judging panel and useful tips to help you prepare your nomination.

We have included the questions on the entry form at the end of this document, so you can see the information you will need to complete your entry.

Please remember:

- All entrants being nominated must be members of the Career Development Institute (including affiliate membership) at the time of entry.
- You can only submit one entry at a time.
- You can enter each category only once for the awards.
- If you wish to submit entries for more than one category, the entries need to be for substantially different activities. If you enter multiple categories for activities the judges consider to be similar, the organisers reserve the right to choose which category it best relates to and only consider the entry for that category.
- We welcome self-nominations for awards to individuals, though these require the support of another person on the entry form.
- The judges will only consider the evidence included on the entry forms when judging entries.
- No correspondence will be entered into concerning judges' decisions, which are final.
- The closing date for entries is **5pm on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2026**.
- The entry form is now online at: <https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/cHj2Vp>

### 1. AIMS

The aims of the UK Career Development Awards are to:

- Recognise the achievements of individuals, teams and organisations which do exceptional work.
- Identify evidence-based best practice and raise its visibility across the profession for others to learn from.
- Provide an opportunity for the profession to celebrate the impact it has on individuals, the economy and society.
- Raise the profile of career development with key stakeholders, the media and the public.

### 2. WHO CAN ENTER?

Any type of CDI member, including student members and affiliate organisations can be nominated or self-nominate for any of the award categories. The entry form asks for the CDI membership

number of the individual or organisation being nominated and **entries that do not state the membership number will be invalid.**

You can find out more about CDI membership here: <https://www.thecdi.net/cdi-membership>

The Rodney Cox Lifetime Achievement Award is not open for entries as it is awarded by the CDI Board. The award of CDI Fellowships is also separate to this entry process.

### **3. AWARD CATEGORIES**

We made substantial changes to the award categories in 2025, to broaden their scope, make them relevant to all areas of the profession and encourage high-quality entries.

#### **Careers programme - education settings**

Recognising outstanding careers programmes in any education setting for clients of any age, such as primary, secondary and special schools, Pupil Referral Units, colleges and sixth-forms, universities and training providers, and may be in the public, private or voluntary sector. The award recognises programmes that achieve an impact for clients in any area of careers education, information, advice and guidance.

#### **Careers programme – non-education settings**

Recognising outstanding careers programmes that are delivered outside formal education settings for clients of any age. Such settings may include employment services, in employers, the voluntary sector or any other client-based career development support in the public, private or voluntary sector. The award recognises programmes that achieve an impact for clients in any area of careers education, information, advice and guidance.

#### **Career development professional working in education settings**

Recognising an individual who has made an outstanding contribution over the past year to clients of any age in an education setting. Such settings may include primary, secondary and special schools, Pupil Referral Units, colleges and sixth-forms, universities and training providers, and may be in the public, private or voluntary sector. The award recognises an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in any form of client-based support.

#### **Career development professional working in non-education settings**

Recognising an individual who has made an outstanding contribution over the past year to clients of any age outside formal education settings. Such settings may include employment services, in employers, the voluntary sector or any other client-based career development support in the public, private or voluntary sector. The award recognises an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in any area form of client-based support.

#### **Careers provider of the year**

Recognising outstanding organisations providing career development services whether for young people or adults. The award recognises the organisation's commitment to professionalism, continuous development of their team, and adherence to the Code of Ethics to offer clients high quality, impartial and expert careers support.

Organisations can be of any size, be in the public (e.g. school, college, university, local authority), private or voluntary sector and need to demonstrate the impact of their approach on their delivery for clients as well as their support for the professionalism of staff.

#### **Innovative product, resource or technology**

Recognising excellent new products, resources and technologies that have had an impact

in the past year – whether in work with clients, supporting practitioners or advancing the profession more generally. The award is for new innovations, rather than existing and ongoing services, and is open to individuals and organisations.

### **Contribution to the development of the profession**

Recognising an individual, team or organisation that has made an outstanding contribution to the profession over the past year, whether through delivery of a careers programme or activity, undertaking a piece of research, delivering outstanding training, professional development or other impactful activity.

## **4. THE JUDGING PROCESS**

All entries for each award category will be sent to a judging panel with the names and organisations of nominees removed to make the process as fair as possible. There is no prior shortlisting process.

Judging panels for each award will be drawn from members of the CDI Board and the Ethics and Professional Standards Committee (EPSC), as well as CDI nations and regional reps, career development experts and award sponsors.

Each judging panel will assess all the entries for the award, using the criteria outlined below and their own knowledge, experience and understanding of the relevant issues. They will choose a shortlist of up to three entries and a winner.

The CDI reserves the right to withhold the award in any given category if the entries do not meet the required standard.

## **5. JUDGING CRITERIA**

**Please read this section carefully and note the general and, where specified, specific criteria for each Award.**

Remember that judging panels will only base their decision on the information contained in your entry form. The form has specific word limits for some sections so it is important that you evidence the criteria below. The emphasis for all entries is to demonstrate:

- **Impact** for the end client – directly or indirectly.
- How the work is applicable to others from across the profession **to learn from**.
- That the entry is supported by **evidence**.

Judging panels will also look at the degree to which each entry demonstrates:

- Excellent and evidenced **professionalism and best practice**.
- Contribution to the **development of the profession** or career development practices.
- Evidence of **inclusive and ethical practice** including challenging stereotypes and being underpinned by the CDI Code of Ethics.
- **Innovation** – the extent to which the work is new.
- **Lasting impact** including evidence of ongoing and longer-term benefits to individuals or organisations.

Additionally, individual awards have an emphasis on specific criteria.

Awards for **programmes**: Judges will be looking for evidence of;

- How the programme has impacted clients;
- How the programme has introduced new or different methods of delivery and reflected and/or enhanced best practice;
- How the programme has been inclusive or increased access for clients and client groups;
- Future development and the lasting impact of the programme.

Awards for **career development professionals**: Judges will be looking for evidence of;

- The positive impact of the entrant on clients;
- Ways in which their contribution is outstanding;
- How the entrant has introduced new or different methods of delivery and reflected and/or enhanced best practice in their interaction with clients;
- The wider contribution they have made to the career development profession;
- How they have identified and invested in their own continuous professional development;
- Future development and lasting impact – how they would build on winning this Award to increase the impact of their work in the future.

Award for **careers providers**: Judges will be looking for evidence of;

- How the organisation's services positively impact clients and client groups;
- How the organisation promotes the professional delivery of its career development services to clients, and where it has been innovative and creative in its support for clients and client groups;
- How the organisation has been innovative and creative in development and professionalism for its staff;
- How the organisation applies the CDI Code of Ethics to ensure informed, impartial and inclusive support for clients, as well as equitable practices for its staff.

Award for **innovative products, resources and technologies**: Judges will be looking for evidence of;

- How the product, resources or technology has made an innovative contribution to the career development profession;
- The positive impact of the product, resources or technology;
- How the product, resources or technology has addressed a problem experienced by clients, career development professionals or careers providers;
- How the product, resources or technology has applied or enhanced best practice;
- The contribution the product, resources or technology has made to moving the profession forward.

Award for **contribution to the development of the profession**: Judges will be looking for evidence of;

- An individual, team or organisation's positive impact on the career development profession over the past 12 months;
- How activities such as research, theory development, influencing policy, enhancing public perception of the profession, impactful training or delivery of career development services have had a significant positive impact;
- Groundbreaking thinking, development or activity that will make a lasting contribution to the profession.

## 6. THE TIMETABLE

<b>1<sup>st</sup> June</b>	Awards nominations open
<b>13<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Entries close at 5pm
<b>4<sup>th</sup> September</b>	Judging panels conclude and shortlisted entries announced shortly after.

**2<sup>nd</sup> December** Winners are announced at the UKCDA award ceremony.

## 7. THE AWARDS CEREMONY

In 2026 the winners will be announced at the UKCDA ceremony to be held in-person on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the evening after the first day of the CDI National Conference, at the Burlington Hotel in Birmingham.

Each shortlisted entry will receive **one free ticket** to attend the awards or send a representative if they are unable to attend. Additional tickets may be purchased.

All winners will receive a certificate and a specially commissioned award, presented by the award sponsor or a member of the CDI Board.

The awards ceremony will also include presentation of the Rodney Cox Lifetime Achievement Award, which is decided and awarded by the CDI Board, and CDI Fellowships which are nominated and awarded under a separate process.

## 8. THE ENTRY FORM

To be nominated, please complete the online entry form before the deadline.

### Section 1 – Awards and personal details:

- Please select the category you wish to enter. A separate entry form should be completed for each entry and you can enter only once for a category for each year.
- If you wish to enter more than one category, it must be for substantially different work. Where entries in multiple categories are considered similar, the organisers reserve the right to choose which category it best relates to and only consider the entry for that category.
- Please provide the details of the person completing the nomination and the person, team or organisation being nominated.
- The questions to be completed will be different for each award type so please follow the instructions on the application form.
- All individuals and organisations being nominated must be CDI members and entries will be invalid if they do not contain their correct membership number.
- Self-nomination for individual awards must include a statement of up to 300 words from another person supporting the entry, where prompted.
- If you are nominating someone else for the award, you must have informed them of your intention to nominate them, have their agreement and be able to provide their details.

### Section 2 – Description of the entry

Please provide a summary of the nomination of up to 100 words, and a description of the individual, work or organisation being nominated. Your description can be up to 500 words and should be a summary of their approach, activities and outcomes bearing in mind the judging criteria stated in this document.

### Section 3 – Evidence in support of your application

Entries need to demonstrate how the entry meets the general and specific judging criteria.

- It should include evidence from clients, colleagues, partners and stakeholders as relevant.
- It should be written in the light of the judging criteria listed in this document.

- Please do not embed weblinks in the first section - weblinks can be added to the later question to evidence the impact of the entry. work/activity and say why this has been significant/influential.
- This section is limited to a maximum 500 words so please focus on the key evidence to support your entry.
- In the second question in this section, you may provide no more than **five** weblinks to give additional evidence to support the entry. This may be to web pages, documents or other materials supporting the entry.
- Weblinks must point to a publicly available site. Judges will not access links that are not open access or require registration.

#### **Section 4 – Future developments and lasting impact**

Explain what future developments you anticipate in respect of the work covered by the entry.

- Any lasting impacts of the work for clients, yourself, organisations or the profession.
- How the work may develop in the future.
- How winning an award could help increase or extend the impact of the work.
- Please consider the judging criteria outlined in this document when completing this section.
- This section is limited to 250 words.

#### **Section 5 – confirmation statement**

Please select that you accept the confirmation statement that;

- The information you are submitting is accurate.
- You understand that the judging panel’s decision is final.
- You consent to the information contained in the entry being used by the CDI in relation to the judging, management and promotion of the UK Career Development Awards.

## **9. JUDGES TIPS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS**

We want to encourage as many members as possible to take part in the UKCDA and help us to showcase the excellent work done by individuals, teams and organisations across the career development profession.

To help you complete the application form, we asked judges from previous years to offer some tips which we hope you will find useful. These can be summarised as:

### **1. Get the balance right**

Look carefully at these guidance notes and judging criteria. Then think how to best describe your activity/project/work in relation to these criteria. How is what you do different from others in the field? The entry form has word limits to encourage a focus on quality of narrative rather than volume.

### **2. Impact, impact, impact!**

The most impressive applications are those that show impact in the widest sense throughout. Consider the scope and scale of impact. Who has benefited from the work and in what way? What are the longer-term legacies? Be selective in your evidence and you may want to include both qualitative and quantitative examples of impact.

### **3. Plan carefully**

Give yourself plenty of time to complete the entry form so you can stand out. Consider the distinctiveness of each section and then present your information innovatively and without repetition. Answer the question accurately, be evaluative and succinct in what you say and make full use of the word limits given. Finally, we will only judge what you have written – do not assume any prior knowledge.

We have included the information required on the entry form at the end of this document, so you can see what you need to complete your entry.

If you require any further information regarding the awards, please contact David Morgan: [david.morgan@thecdi.net](mailto:david.morgan@thecdi.net).

## 10. ENTRY FORM - INFORMATION REQUIRED

It is recommended to gather all the information required for the entry ahead of completing the entry form. The list of information required is below to assist with this planning;

- Which category the entry is for.
- Your details as nominator (name, job title, organisation, email address, phone number, postal address).
- Name to be added to the award should you win.
- Membership number of the person or organisation being nominated.
- If you are nominating another person or organisation;
  - Their contact details (contact name, job title, organisation, email address, phone number, postal address)
  - Confirm that they are aware and agree to you making this entry for them.
- If you are self-nominating;
  - Contact details of the person supporting your entry (name, job title, organisation, email address, phone number)
  - Their statement of support (up to 300 words)
- A 100-word summary of your entry to be used to promote the entry if shortlisted.
- A 500-word description of the entry including the approach taken, the activities and outcomes from them.
- A 500-word statement covering the evidence supporting the entry which may include no more than 5 links to on-line material.
- A 250-word statement outlining future plans or benefits of the work related to the entry.