

IMPACT REPORT 2023/24





➔ Introduction

“It’s made me think a lot more about my future... and what I really want to do.”

Student

At The Talent Foundry, our mission is simple: to help young people discover their amazing strengths and inspire them to dream big. After 15 years of delivering engaging employability programmes, we know that the key to unlocking social mobility is a shared purpose in partnership.

Social mobility is influenced by a range of factors - like access to quality education, job opportunities, and support networks - which is why we work together with schools, businesses, and local communities to meet local needs.

This year alone, we’ve empowered **64,988 young people** across 32 programmes, in collaboration with 21 businesses and organisations, supporting schools in over 140 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales.

“Students have become more focused on their education and future. A parent gave feedback that he has been delighted in the change in his daughter’s attitude towards school and has seen her transform in confidence and talking more about her future.”

Teacher





This year, **1,813 people volunteered with us**, many of whom said it opened their eyes to the barriers young people face, while also enhancing their own skills and confidence.

“Taking part has helped me develop my own skills, like giving feedback. Plus, I found that what students were learning was really relevant to my line of work.”

Volunteer

“In our recent Ofsted inspection, we highlighted the work we do with The Talent Foundry as a key part of the careers and aspirations opportunities we provide to our students. They were highly complementary about the comprehensive career opportunities we offer, noting that they are ‘second to none’.”

Educator, Forest Oak School (SEND setting)

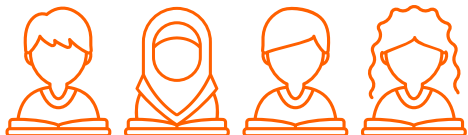
“I’ll go as far as saying if we could offer a Talent Foundry session every week for every single student, we would.”

Educator, Thomas Knyvett College





What we did



64,988

YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED



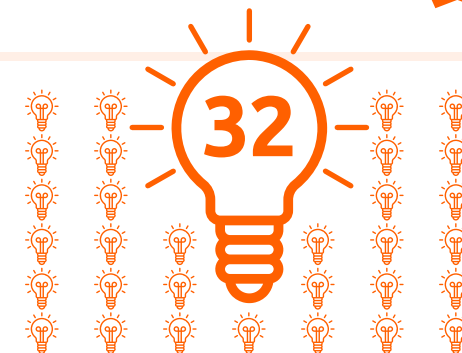
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SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



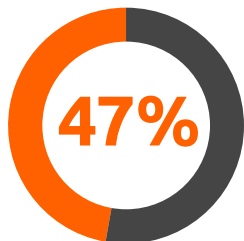
21

INDUSTRY PARTNERS



32

PROGRAMMES



47%

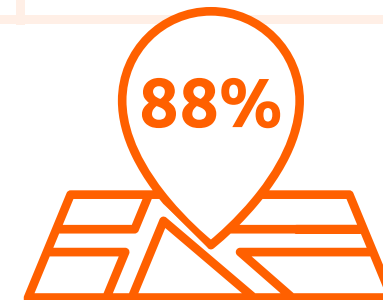


AVERAGE % PUPILS IN RECEIPT OF PUPIL PREMIUM IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS (ENGLAND AVG 28%)



1,813

INDUSTRY VOLUNTEERS



88%

STUDENTS LIVE OUTSIDE LONDON

Top skills students are more confident in:



Teamwork



Aiming High



Creativity



Problem-solving

What young people think

73%

are more aware of how to apply their skills and talents

94%

can see a pathway to an exciting career (intensive connections programmes)

71%

have a better idea of the careers available across industry



→ Our approach



Our vision is to

spark ambition and unlock opportunity so every young person can succeed and thrive as part of a fairer society.

Our mission is to support

- young people from underserved backgrounds to discover their amazing talents, think big about their future and build their skills and confidence to take their next step into higher education or the world of work.
- employers to value young people's talents (not their background) and connect them to exciting career pathways.

Our values are

ambition, inquisitiveness and inclusivity and equity.

Who we work with

We deliver our social mobility mission through activities in schools, universities, corporate partner offices and other locations.

We work with UK schools and colleges that have a higher-than-average number of students eligible for Pupil Premium funding (Pupil Deprivation Grant in Wales and Pupil Equity Fund in Scotland). This also includes Further Education (FE) Colleges where we know a disproportionate number of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) attend. Over 1,900 schools are eligible for our support.



➔ Educator perspective

INSPIRING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS THROUGH CAREER WORKSHOPS

Penny Shakespeare, Forest Oak School, Solihull

As a teacher at a special school where all our children have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), I've been fortunate to work with organisations like The Talent Foundry (TTF) to broaden the horizons of our students. Our school focuses on students with moderate learning difficulties, and over the years, I've observed the subtle but significant impact these career workshops have on their development.

It's important to understand that for our students, progress often happens in a slow, incremental way. You won't see an immediate transformation after attending a workshop, but the benefits accumulate over time. TTF's programmes, like Barclays LifeSkills and KPMG WorkReady, **have become essential parts of our curriculum** for Year 10 and Year 11 students.

One of the biggest challenges our students face is the belief that their special needs limit their future opportunities. Many of them start with the mindset of "I can't do that" or "I'll never be able to achieve that."

However, one of the most valuable elements of the Barclays LifeSkills programme is its focus on the various routes a person can take to achieve their goals. It has shown our students that there isn't just one straight path to a career - there are diverse ways to reach the same destination. This concept has been incredibly empowering for them.

As teachers, we benefit from the workshops because they provide a fresh voice that reinforces the messages we constantly try to instil. Sometimes, hearing from an external source makes all the difference.

In our recent Ofsted inspection, we highlighted the work we do with The Talent Foundry as a key part of the careers and aspirations opportunities we provide to our students. They were highly complementary about the comprehensive career opportunities we offer, noting that they are "second to none."

This collaboration has significantly bolstered our careers programme and positively contributed to the feedback we received during the inspection.

I would wholeheartedly recommend The Talent Foundry's programmes to any school looking to inspire and empower their students.

What educators say



agree the quality of the workshop was excellent or good



feel this programme has added value to careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) for young people



agree this has helped them to feel more equipped to connect students to meaningful employer and/or higher education encounters





➔ Volunteer perspective

Shell, Mavas Foods t/a McDonald's Skills for Life Middlesbrough

Taking part has been very inspiring and has made me realise the challenges young people now face. It's amazing to watch the children gain confidence and put themselves out of their comfort zones by speaking to the mentors.

After supporting the programme between January and March 2024, I had the chance to go back to one of the schools to support their Super Networking Day that The Talent Foundry had organised.

As it was the same students it gave me a chance to check in with those I met through the programme. It was amazing to see how much they had grown in confidence.

We get involved in these programmes because employers like us are looking for a range of skills in the next generation. It's important to consider good communication skills, listening skills, and to be confident in what they want, and to know how to get it.

Connecting with volunteers from different industries can show them what's out there and allow them to learn from our career experiences.

What industry volunteers say



agree volunteering was a rewarding experience



agree the skills students developed are relevant to their industry



have increased understanding of the employment barriers faced by young people





Place-based opportunities

The Skills for Life Rochdale programme, funded by M&G plc, has made a meaningful impact on its young participants by helping them reflect more deeply on their futures and providing them with practical skills to navigate the world of work.

We spoke to two participants – **Sarah and Lucy**, six months after its completion, to see that the programme has had a lasting impact on their approach to learning, their outlook, and their confidence.

Sarah shared how the programme broadened her perspective. *“It’s made me think about my future a lot more... It just made me think a lot more in detail of what I want to do,”* she told us.

[Watch our Skills for Life film](#)

Student outcomes



I am thinking more confidently about my future.

The power of volunteers

One of the most influential aspects of the programme for both Sarah and Lucy was the involvement of volunteers from local industries. This was consistent with the results of our post-programme survey, **where 95% of students agreed that working with volunteers and mentors was a real benefit.**

Sarah and Lucy were particularly struck by the personal stories shared by these professionals. *“The volunteers were quite nice to hear from... some of the things they overcame and where they came from...you think you can do anything if they can,”* Sarah said.

Hearing about these success stories, especially from people who had risen from humble beginnings, challenged their assumptions. Lucy reflected, *“If you think of a successful business owner, well, I used to think it means they come from a good background, but it just proved that wrong... I learnt how you could come from the worst beginnings and still make a good life.”*

This relaxed environment made activities like interview preparation more effective. Lucy remarked, *“It makes you think of what you actually want to say and not panic... it was a massive confidence boost,”* while Sarah agreed, *“I think the interview prep is probably one of the biggest helps.”*

Lasting confidence

Both participants emphasised how the programme gave them a greater sense of determination and confidence. *“It’s given me the confidence to be more outgoing... it’s just given me that little extra nudge to do a bit better,”* one of them said.

Across Rochdale and Middlesbrough, teachers have noticed improvements in students’ attendance, behaviour, and attitudes toward learning following the programme.

As one teacher commented, *“This programme has completely raised the aspirations and transformed the outlook of the students involved.”*

Student names have been changed throughout.





Opening Doors to Opportunities with KPMG

Launched in June 2023, ODtO builds on the success of the long-standing WorkReady initiative, taking the partnership to new heights.

ODtO equips students with essential employability skills while giving them an authentic experience of life at KPMG.

Physically bringing students into KPMG's offices allows them to gain a real sense of what it's like to work at a professional services firm. With fewer workplace opportunities available for students since the pandemic, this initiative is designed to provide meaningful career experiences that many students might otherwise miss.

Whether they're from city schools, rural communities, or coastal locations, students participate in activities designed to build teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills and tackle challenges like those faced by KPMG's clients.

Reframing work experience

Unlike traditional work experience models, ODtO provides a bespoke engagement with smaller groups of students, giving them a diverse and insightful view of what work really looks like. In the in-person workshop, students develop core transferable skills, grow in confidence, and gain valuable insights into technology.

For many students, a visit to a professional workplace like KPMG helps demystify career paths that might otherwise feel out of reach.

As an educator from Edgar Wood Academy noted, *"The experience helps demystify professional workplaces for students, particularly those from families with limited exposure to such environments. Students may view certain careers as 'not for them' simply due to fear of the unknown. The visit to KPMG enabled us to support students in envisioning a future they might not have otherwise considered."*

Positive outcomes

- 74% felt more confident in their problem-solving skills.
- 83% became more aware of how they could apply their skills and talents to achieve their ambitions.

The importance of social mobility

KPMG in the UK Chief Executive, Jon Holt, emphasised the vital role businesses play in addressing the social mobility gap, which has been widening since the pandemic. *"The social mobility gap is widening, and more so than ever, young people are paying the price. Businesses, including our own, need to play an active role to change this. If we want to nurture the talent of tomorrow, we need to open our doors and offer the opportunity to come and see inside our firm to learn what work is like."*





Building confidence for work

Our mission to inspire young people and bridge the gap between education and employment is at the heart of our pre-apprenticeship programme, The Bridge.



First piloted in 2020, this initiative has evolved into an inspiring pathway for students in years 12 and 13 who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Partnering with industry leaders across construction, financial services, and technology, we provide practical workplace experiences and employability skills that build confidence and ignite potential.

Through a powerful mix of in-person mentoring, industry workshops, and online coaching, *The Bridge* offers young people the tools to succeed. Helping them gain the skills and insights they might not otherwise have access to. Over the past two years, we've helped 180 students explore their next steps, with at least eight students proudly securing apprenticeships.

Building confidence through experience

This year's Youth Voice Census highlighted that confidence continues to decline for those in education, with young people feeling less confident about their employability skills.

In 2023, we took the *Bridge to Construction* programme to the next level with a residential experience in collaboration with Mace Group. Recognising that students often lacked real-world opportunities to practice key skills - such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving - we created a space where they could shine.

For our *Bridge to Tech* cohort, we teamed up with UA92 in Manchester and Dell Technologies to offer a life-changing opportunity: the CompTIA IT Fundamentals accreditation. This globally recognised certification, combined with career readiness workshops, provides a critical stepping stone for students interested in technology careers.



"The experience taught me how vital teamwork is and gave me real insight into the many roles people play behind the scenes. I also realised how important self-confidence is in the workplace."

"The coaching sessions made me feel comfortable seeking guidance. I'm more confident now, not just in interviews but in life."

"Travelling with a group, working together, and pushing through challenges really boosted my confidence. It was enriching, and it's helped me communicate better and become more resilient."

The long-term impact of *The Bridge* is already being felt. Tina Reid, a teacher at Greenshaw High School in Sutton, shares how the programme continues to benefit their students:

"Back in 2020, two of our students gained employment at Mediacom thanks to The Talent Foundry. Just last year, they returned to school to help one of our current students complete their work experience there. It's amazing to see this ripple effect of opportunity and success."

Thank you

We couldn't do this without the support of our generous funders: The 29th May 1961 Charity, Garfield Weston Foundation, M&G plc, Mace Group, The Rayne Foundation, and The Swire Charitable Trust.



Empowering Young Talent: The Rise Programme

Launched in December 2021, Rise is a ground-breaking initiative developed by The Talent Foundry and ICAEW in partnership with BDO, EY, Grant Thornton, KPMG, PwC. With a clear vision of equipping some of the UK's most underserved young people with essential life and career skills, Rise is facilitating futures for students aged 14-16 across the UK.



Rise is a powerful collaboration between professional services and accountancy firms. Working together to support young people through workshops to help them understand career pathways, particularly into industries they may not have considered before. The sessions facilitated by The Talent Foundry and supported by volunteers from Rise partner firms, focus on skills-building while tying into the school curriculum, providing students with practical insights they can apply to both classroom learning and the world of work.

Since its launch, Rise has gained recognition for its collaborative approach to social mobility. Over 30 firms representing the heart of the professional services industry, have in the past year collectively contributed 1,727 volunteer hours, directly impacting over 17,500 young people. To date, since the programme began, over 26,000 young people have benefitted from a Rise workshop.

Bridging the gap for rural and coastal communities

One of the unique strengths of Rise is its focus on reaching students in rural or coastal areas that often lack the resources and industry connections available in urban settings. Not only does the programme help students gain critical skills, but it also strengthens their local communities by helping businesses tap into a more diverse and representative talent pool.



For many students, Rise has been a life-changing experience. The programme helps young people see their own potential and realise that they have the skills and capabilities to succeed in professional careers, regardless of their background.

At the same time, volunteers from partner firms have expressed how participating has given them a new perspective on the barriers facing young people trying to enter the workforce.

A collaborative future

As Rise continues to grow, we are committed to expanding its reach and deepening its impact. Thanks to the dedication of our partners and the enthusiasm of the volunteers, Rise is building a brighter, more inclusive future for both young people and the businesses they will one day lead.

Thank you to the partner firms:

AAB (Anderson, Anderson and Brown) | Albert Goodman | Aventus Partner Limited | BDO | BPP | Centralis Group | Crowe | Curo | Deloitte | Dixon Wilson | Dodd&Co | Duncan & Toplis | EY | First Intuition | Grant Thornton | Harris & Co Chartered Accountants | Haysmacintyre | Hollis & Co | Horiba | ICAS - The Professional Body of CAs | Kaplan | KPMG | Larking Gowen | Lubbock Fine | Mazars | Menzies LLP | Mercia Group | MHA | Moore Kingston Smith | UK National Audit Office | Price Bailey | PwC | RSM UK | Saffery Champness | Shorts Chartered Accountant | Somar and Co | UKSE | Wheelhouse Advisors



Track to the Future

Building Skills and Career Insights with Network Rail and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB).

Student outcomes

100%

think more confidently about my future.

“I learned how to work in a group environment and how project management works. This is a great and diverse industry to work in and it gave me a great insight on how people work together.”

We have worked with the rail industry for four years. Together, our shared purpose is to build the skills and confidence of the next generation of rail professionals.

Our Track to the Future programmes, developed and delivered in partnership with Network Rail and RSSB highlights the need for growing and empowering the future workforce, and helping young people find new opportunities.

Last year, together we supported 182 students across England, Scotland and Wales to explore exciting career paths within the rail industry. Students gained vital workplace skills and a clearer vision for their futures. They learned through hands-on work and face-to-face engagement with industry pros.

A further 1,795 young people had their first introduction to railway careers through the Network Rail Lightbulb Moments programme.

Developing the right skills

One element of the programme challenges students to develop innovative approaches to train station design that engages their local community, celebrates inclusivity and promotes sustainability. Through these activities, they improve their teamwork, leadership and creativity skills.

Teachers praise the programme for developing their students' confidence and presentation skills – especially amongst students less likely to speak-up in class. One teacher commented that *“I was astounded and very proud of the ideas our students came up with... some of our most quiet and introverted students really delivered.”*

Students also visit local rail offices, either with Network Rail or through one of RSSB's local members– including East Midlands Railway, Govia Thameslink and Northern. Here, they meet professionals working in engineering, project management, operations and more, to understand how a safe, reliable and efficient railway is managed.

Learning from industry experts

A highlight of the programme is the involvement of current rail employees. They volunteer their time to mentor students and these professionals share their varied career paths. They include apprenticeships, degrees, and even late-career switches. Their stories show that there is no single way into the rail industry.

As one student put it: *“Railways are more than just drivers, there are many careers involved.”*





Get involved

Help spark ambition and unlock opportunity.

The pandemic widened the disadvantage gap, with young people feeling less confident about their employability skills.

To improve social mobility we work with a wide range of partners and industries to connect young people to relatable role models and exciting career pathways.

Become a corporate partner

Our strongest partnerships are built on a shared purpose. We collaborate with organisations to create bespoke and transformational programmes that develop young peoples' skills and confidence for the long term.

Fundraise for us

Organise a challenge or event to help us raise much-needed funds to keep delivering lightbulb moments across the UK. You can join #TeamTTF by [taking part in one of our running or cycling events](#), or be supported by our team to take on a personal challenge.

Volunteer your time or expertise

Pro bono support is essential for our work. Across our intensive connections programmes 95% of students agreed that working with volunteers and mentors was a real benefit. Whether it's volunteering at a workshop, hosting an event or supporting the development of our IT, data and marketing, meaningful engagement with the world of work transforms young lives.

Give the gift of opportunity

You can spark ambition by donating to The Talent Foundry by visiting our [JustGiving](#) page.

Last year we raised £1,548,406 through our partnerships and donations, spending £1,540,480 on delivering our charitable mission.

Our full Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2024 [is available on our website](#).

Speak to Cate Smith or Jenni Anderson at The Talent Foundry to learn more.





Thank you to...

Our Partners

ABM UK

Barclays LifeSkills

Dell Technologies

ICAEW and Rise partner firms

KPMG

Logicor

M&G plc

Mace Group

Maven Securities

The NHS

Network Rail

PwC UK

Rail Standards and Safety Board

SAS UK

Tees Valley Combined Authority

University of Birmingham

Centre-UB

Our Sponsors

Flywheel IT Services

Morgan Sindall

Reds10

Willmott Dixon

Our Funders

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The Swire Charitable Trust

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University of Dundee

University of Essex

University of Manchester

University of Warwick

Rochdale Council & Rochdale Development Agency

Roehampton University

Chris Skarratt

Angus Walker

York St John University





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