



# Future First

I went to state school, won an Olympic gold medal and now I am an activist campaigning to protect our planet for everyone and all to come

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OLYMPIAN / CLIMATE ACTIVIST



Annual Review  
2019 - 20



# A world where a young person's start in life does not limit their future

For too many young people their start in life is limiting their future. They do not have access to relatable role models to help them understand what they can achieve, nor the networks, knowledge and tools to help them to get there. Future First is here to change that. We are the UK education charity helping young people in state schools and colleges broaden their horizons by connecting them with past pupils.

Our purpose is to see every state school and college supported by a thriving and engaged alumni community, so students

gain the confidence, motivation, and inspiration they need to live successful lives.

Over the years, alumni networks have made a huge difference for the seven percent of pupils attending independent schools. We believe that every child and young person should be given the same advantage so they know how to make connections and have a network that can help them to succeed.

Relatable role models show students a world beyond their current experience and expectations: a future that could be theirs.



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## INTRODUCTION

# Never before has our work been so vital

### **The year 2020 has been one the world will never forget.**

The devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic is there for all to see. Young people's learning has been turned upside down, despite the valiant efforts of teachers and families. Our important work – at its best in the classroom and workplace – has been cancelled, postponed, re-shaped and delivered on-line. We have learnt fast and adapted well.

It is a decade since Future First was formed, providing an opportunity to reflect and prepare for an uncertain future, building on our achievements and refining our focus on what we know has the greatest impact. This report shares some of our many successes and highlights our plans for the years ahead.

The past year's challenges have not prevented us from continuing to achieve for young people. We have worked with nearly 70,000 young people in over 400 schools and colleges, grown our alumni network to over 266,000 and helped enhance the horizons of tens of thousands of state school pupils. Alumni are relatable role models, mentors and homework buddies; they show pupils how what they learn in the classroom relates to the world outside. They provide connections to universities, colleges, apprenticeships and employment, and inspire young people with stories of how they have overcome

life's challenges. Alumni also support schools as governors, fundraisers and much more.

Our primary school pilot programme, funded by the KPMG Foundation, is showing how valuable alumni are for younger children and has been well received by headteachers. Our work with the Careers and Enterprise Company – across Opportunity Areas, Careers Hubs and areas of disadvantage – has connected thousands of young people with alumni, providing pathways to further and higher education, apprenticeships, jobs and careers.

We have also continued to work with Uni Connect partnerships across England, with projects during the year covering Cumbria, South Yorkshire, the South West, the West Midlands and East Anglia.

The pandemic has accelerated our use of technology with exciting initiatives such as the Future Me mentoring programme, which saw alumni provide online messages to support student mentees in participating schools to deliver high quality outcomes.

Other highlights saw us sign the Time to Change pledge, setting out Future First's commitment to tackle the issue of mental health stigma and ensure that we are equipped to support wellbeing through our work. We launched our first-ever crowdfunding campaign raising more than £19,000 to support targeted schools in Lincolnshire. We were also



delighted to be named the official charity for the MJ Achievement Awards 2020.

In ten years, we have come a long way from working with just six schools in Camden. We have now worked with more than 1,200 schools and reached around 465,000 students across the country and are proud to be an established part of the education community. We are using time out of the classroom to lay the foundations for our future success with a new strategic plan, a three-year financial strategy, a technology partnership and new collaborations with employers and others.

Looking to that future, the relevance of our work becomes clear. Movements such as Black Lives Matter have highlighted the deep inequalities that remain in our society. Indeed, the gap between poorer pupils and others is now widening. The work Future First does helps individual students and delivers measurable benefits for schools. But it also helps create a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable society and supports young people to grow into good citizens ready to contribute to their communities. Never has our work been so vital and so we are optimistic about the future.

We are grateful to all those who make our work possible: our schools and colleges; our funders and supporters; our employer partners and our staff and trustees. Most of all, we thank the thousands of alumni volunteers who give up their time to support current students across the country.



**Christine  
Gilbert**  
CHAIR



**Lorraine  
Langham**  
CEO



## OUR PRIORITIES

# Our four priorities



### Extending

reach and impact –  
to more schools and  
pupils, including more  
disadvantaged students



### Building

a national  
movement



### Designing

new interventions to  
tackle entrenched  
issues in schools



### Developing

organisational  
effectiveness



## OUR WORK

# Connecting to make a difference

**Anne-Marie Canning MBE is Chief Executive Officer at The Brilliant Club. With the help of Future First, she returned to her old school, Outwood Academy Adwick. Here she reveals the importance of the visit.**



I'd wanted to return to my old school for a while, but it can be difficult for schools without the facilities to enable visits. Future First creates the infrastructure and support for role models to come in and interact with students sitting in the same seats they've sat in.

Whenever I do a talk, I always say that I'm from Doncaster. I'm not really from Doncaster, I'm from a village called Carcroft, but there's no point in telling anyone that because they won't know where it is.

**The nicest thing about my visit was standing up and saying I was from Carcroft and seeing the students' eyes flash with recognition. Being able to tell them I was from their village created an amazing moment of connection.**

My advice to alumni is to not be afraid to tell your story and show emotion. It's really powerful for young people to see an adult talking in an emotional way about being successful academically or professionally. It shows them that they too can succeed.

## OUR WORK

# Alumni crossing the generations



*Katie*

**Katie Nelson and Lewis Holmes work at property company Cushman & Wakefield, and both are alumni of Robert Clack School in Dagenham, East London. The connection created by Future First has helped them both to find successful careers.**

I became aware of Future First in Sixth Form. During that time, Cushman & Wakefield came to the school to present their apprenticeship scheme for the first time. I was inspired by what I heard and applied for a job there. The teachers were really supportive and I got the job. I realised that it was really important to go and give back to my old school and continue the partnership.

In 2017, I went in and presented to the Sixth Form about the apprenticeship scheme and one of the teachers put me in touch with Lewis and asked me to give him some guidance. I helped him through the process and answered his questions about

the application. Like me, he got onto the apprenticeship programme and we would meet regularly for catch ups at work. Now we have a fantastic working relationship.

I think it's massively important that we go back to the school as role models for current students. As part of the alumni, we've gone through similar things, we are part of the community, we may even have similar home lives.

**When the students can see someone who has been in their shoes go on and be successful, it's so powerful. It was life-changing for me and Lewis.**



“““

While the school someone attended may go some way to defining them, I emphasise to the students that in a work situation it's more important to have the right work ethic and positive attitude.

### Frances Jenkins

Associate at law firm Hausfeld and one of the alumni of City of Norwich School



Lewis

When I was in the Sixth Form, Katie came in to give a talk about Cushman & Wakefield. She gave an introduction to the apprenticeship and I thought it sounded interesting, so I signed up to attend an insight day. After that I decided to apply for the apprenticeship with Katie's advice and support, which she still gives me today!

I'm currently in year four of the five-year apprenticeship. My first team was a global team specialising in office transactions and I now work in the City of London office agency team.

I wouldn't have known what to do before and during this apprenticeship if it wasn't for Katie.



To give back to the school and alumni programme that helped me, I joined the Future First alumni network at Robert Clack.

**Last year I created a mentoring programme for students in Year 9, a few of which had challenges like I did at school. Being able to support them through the programme was great.**

## OUR WORK

# Putting in the primary foundations

Our partnership with the KPMG Foundation to work with primary schools has thrived this year.

The project aims to extend Future First's reach to primary schools, so they engage with former pupils and local supporters to improve the life chances of their pupils.

Access to role models at an early age can make a huge difference and research has shown children's self-view forms at a young age.

Much of the support to schools moved online during lockdown, as we adapted the programme to respond to remote schooling. We focused on supporting school staff to keep pupils motivated and all our member primary schools received updates and remote learning resources every two to three weeks.

These materials included letters from alumni with advice for the future, sharing memories from their time at primary school and encouraging pupils to see the importance of primary school.

Now in its second year, the programme includes a network of 330 alumni across 20 primary schools and is helping around 600 pupils.



### YEAR 6 STUDENT:

**What I have learnt most from being part of Athelstan Primary School is to listen to other people's opinions as they might have a better idea.**

## A primary focus

**Engayne Primary School in Upminster, East London is one of Future First's most active participants in the KPMG Foundation Primary Programme. The school's Assistant Head, Nicky Wyman, explains how the initiative helped pupils despite the Covid-19 lockdown.**

Future First have been amazing throughout lockdown. They asked us what our topics were, sent through information to help our Year 6 pupils with the transition to secondary school and reached out to alumni to get things that we could use as inspiration for the children for writing.

When we said some of the Year 6 pupils were worried about transition, Future First immediately reached out and got alumni to write letters to give them information. It's just been such a supportive process.

Originally, I saw alumni as a source of support for fundraising, but actually, in terms of curriculum, education and aspiration, it's worked much better than I expected.

Now we have a brilliant alumni network which includes a doctor, forensic scientist, a lifeguard, driving instructor, people working in social care and financial services and a couple of teachers. So, we've got a big range – including those still studying.

**All in all, it's been a great success.**

## OUR WORK

# Three steps to success

Building a strong alumni network with real impact can be hard to achieve. With extensive experience of already delivering for thousands of schools, Future First can help schools overcome the barriers.

We help schools along the steps to success...

### Build the network

- Tried and tested tools to sign up past students and embed the network into school culture
- Online portal to maintain contact with leavers and search alumni to meet specific needs
- A dedicated Alumni Programme Manager to offer expertise on building network

### Engage and activate

- Wealth of practical resources to keep networks actively engaged in school life
  - Support to get alumni involved in workshops, mentoring, fundraising or other activities
  - Growing digital and online offer to share alumni learning

### Sustain and thrive

- Annual survey to track former students' journeys
- Online platform to maintain alumni connections with minimum effort
- Staff training and networking opportunities to share ideas and good practice

### New for 2021

- Improved online platform to revolutionise engagement with alumni
- A national pool of alumni volunteers to connect you with more specialists, employers and opportunities
- Comparative information about impact, including against national benchmarked data sets

## OUR WORK

# What an alumni network can do



Provide relatable role models to expand students' career horizons and aspirations



Help build students' confidence, resilience and motivation to study harder



Enrich the curriculum by providing real-world insights in the classroom



Provide one-to-one mentoring to overcome barriers and challenge perceptions



Create a community of volunteers from governors and fundraisers, to mentors and speakers



Boost career strategies to help meet Gatsby Benchmarks



Provide insight into future education and career destinations



Create opportunities to meet employers and gain work experience



Strengthen the community around a school, providing a rich resource for generations to come



## EXTENDING REACH



### Lord Porter backs campaign

**Future First conducted its first ever crowdfunding campaign in 2020 raising more than £19,000. Much of the money will go to supporting our work with schools in Lincolnshire. Here Lord Porter of Spalding, the Leader of South Holland District Council, explains why he backed the scheme.**

If I can make it into the House of Lords after a career as a builder, there's no limit to what pupils in our schools today can achieve. But to succeed they need support.

The support I needed didn't come when I was at school but much later when I entered politics. Politicians get support from their peer group all the time, but that support isn't always there for young people. That's why I was

delighted to spearhead Future First's crowdfunding initiative on behalf of the Lincolnshire district of South Holland.

If you went to state school, it's very easy to think that all the best careers are only open to young people who went to independent schools.

Having relatable role models that provide a sense of belief for young people is so important if we are to break this perception.



**Staggeringly, more than a third of disadvantaged young people don't know anyone in a job they want to do. That's why Future First's work to establish alumni networks in schools is so crucial.**



## EXTENDING REACH

### Malet Lambert inspires

This year we continued to expand our reach through developing new partnerships with schools across the country, whilst also maintaining our work with our member schools.

We are truly a national charity, having partnerships in place with schools right across England, and some in Wales too. This year saw joiners from all areas – from Kimberley School in the East Midlands, to Malet Lambert in Hull, and Ruislip High in West London. Wherever you live, relatable role models are a powerful force to help students build the confidence, inspiration and determination they need to succeed.

At a time of rising unemployment and uncertainty, the positive influence of alumni on students is crucial. While we are always working to increase the impact from our initiatives, the evidence already shows they make a real difference.

More than seven in 10 students who took part in our Future Me mentoring programme said that meeting former students showed them that they could succeed. Nearly all of these pupils said that the process had also encouraged them to work harder.

As Patrick Sprakes, headteacher of Malet Lambert, put it:



*"We want our pupils to be confident in their own abilities and have high aspirations for themselves."*

*"Hearing from former Malet Lambert pupils will no doubt help to inspire them towards their future goals."*

## Building new partnerships

Ruislip High School teamed up with Future First in February 2020 and, in spite of the lockdown, has already got 124 alumni signed up: 50 are 2020 leavers.

Despite being a young school - it was founded in 2006 - Ruislip High still has strong diversity in alumni career paths. Former students include a fashion designer, a Coca Cola employee, an IT apprentice at BT, a trainee solicitor, a Sessional Coach at Chelsea Football Club, a software developer and a medical student at University College London.

At the start of the year, the school had alumni come to support a careers fair and the event was a great success.

According to Careers Lead, Jo Brown: "It was really good. We aimed it at our Year 9s, Year 10s and Sixth Form students and what's great about having recent leavers there is that they are not very old and relate so well to the students.



*"As the alumni are coming in, the teachers recognise them and there is this picture being painted for the students."*

*"It was also interesting that, as well as having the bright flashing major companies, you could also see the gravitational pull to alumni doing other things for students particularly interested in that career."*

Ruislip High has gathered alumni videos and profiles to inspire current students and is now reaching out for support with Oxbridge and Russell Group university applications.

## EXTENDING IMPACT

# Our impact 2019-20

*Over ten years we have:*

- ✓ Reached nearly half a million students
- ✓ Worked with over a third of all secondary schools and colleges in England

### TEACHERS

**90%** Would recommend workshops to other schools

**96%** Judged them relevant to students

**79%** Helped students make informed decisions

### CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE COMPANY PARTNERSHIP:

**9,000** Students reached

**15,285** Volunteers supporting schools

### UNI CONNECT PARTNERSHIP:

**65** Schools supported

**6,000** Students reached

### KPMG FOUNDATION PRIMARY PROGRAMME PILOT:

**20** Primary schools engaged

**600** Students reached

### YOUNG PEOPLE

*More than*  
**70%**

of young people now think they can succeed and are committed to working harder after meeting alumni

*More than*  
**80%**

rated sessions 'good' or 'excellent'

### FUTURE ME MENTORING:

**89%** Students now confident of succeeding (up 30%)

**77%** Students now knowing what they want to do (up 20%)

*Doubled* Students motivated to work harder at school

### COMMERCE IN THE CLASSROOM:

**94%** Students now understanding trade (tripled)

**63%** Students now confident of getting a job in international trade and commerce (doubled)

# Mentoring leads to Future Me

In 2019-20, Future First received a donation from Nick Strong, Managing Director of HPS Investment Partners, to design and pilot an alumni mentoring programme, supporting Year 12 students to prepare for leaving school.

Thirty six students based in two schools – Sydney Russell in Dagenham, East London and Ormiston Forge Academy near Dudley in the West Midlands – both with a high proportion of students in receipt of free school meals, participated in a series of two-hour mentoring sessions.

Over six weeks, the students took part in three fortnightly mentoring sessions and eight in 10 of the mentors on the programme were former students of the two schools, with the rest being former students from other local schools.

The programme saw the number of students saying they knew what they wanted to do when they left school increasing by more than a fifth to almost eight out of 10.

It also improved students' confidence in their abilities and made them feel more positive about the future, with the number saying they felt confident they'd be successful increasing by nearly a third to just under nine out of 10.

One pupil put it succinctly: **"I've learnt that confidence is very important in everything that you do, you will excel more when you have confidence."**

Crucially, the initiative also improved the motivation of students, with the proportion saying they felt motivated to work harder at school more than doubling.

# A student's perspective

**Siya Luggah, a Year 12 student at Sydney Russell School in Dagenham, East London talks about how the Future Me mentoring programme helped her.**

The mentoring programme was very useful because it meant I had a mentor close to my age. I felt like I could relate to them more than my teachers.

I was able to research different options and it was really helpful to hear from someone who'd actually experienced an apprenticeship.

One of the skills that I developed throughout the programme was my communication. I was able to talk about what I like and what I wanted to do further in life.

**I feel more confident about the future. Before, I just had an idea about what I wanted to do whereas now I'm able to visualise myself in a career and being able to see yourself in the future makes you believe in yourself a bit more.**

I think there are many young people in the same position as me who are unsure about their future and programmes like these can help give you clarity on what you want to do, help you explore different steps, and help you know how to get there.





### Making sense of commerce

In 2019-20 Future First partnered with the Commercial Education Trust to deliver a pilot project, Commerce in the Classroom.

The project connected professionals working in international trade and commerce with young people in 10 secondary schools in regions of low social mobility across Norfolk, Sussex and East Cambridgeshire.

More than 200 students took part in workshops, providing them with an insight into various careers in the sector and opportunities to develop transferable skills.

Over 200 professionals with a background in the sector and experience of fields ranging from government policy to agricultural markets took part.

At the start of the project, less than a third said they understood what international trade was. By the end, nearly all of them knew.

Furthermore, at the start of the project, two thirds of students said they were not sure if they were capable of getting a job in the sector but by the end, this had nearly halved.

### Trading places for success

**Louis Kaszczak, a European Business Development Director, talks about his post-school journey and why he volunteered at our Commerce in the Classroom workshop.**

During my time at school, I attended a two-week work experience placement with Midland Bank and I really loved it.

From school, I joined Barclays Bank thinking it was a job for life, but five years later I realised that the world changes and adapts.

It's all about transferable skills that you can take into an alternative role.

I've had many different roles in my career, moving from banking to financial services and from there, to insurance and lending.

When it came to Future First's Commerce in the Classroom workshop, I wanted to share the experiences of working across borders. You get to meet people from different cultures, different backgrounds, travel, try different food and just be in different environments. It's such an interesting, great experience!

It's important to teach students about trade deals and resources that come from overseas. The card swapping trade game we did was a great way to learn about strategy and at one point I helped them engineer a three-way trade. It showed, on a simple game level, the complexity of trading.

The advice I'd give to the students is to focus on adaptability and building transferable skill sets.

**As the world evolves and changes, some things you can predict and others are a complete surprise. Don't be frightened of change, look at it as an opportunity even if you aren't in control of it!**

# Providing a supporting hand on the career path



**Bethan Williams returned to her old school, Copleston High, in Ipswich, as part of Future First's Careers and Enterprise Company initiative.**

It's wonderful to see how much effort Copleston puts into helping their students and supporting them to find rewarding careers.

A lot of students had an interest in studying Law, but they didn't necessarily know where to start.

I recently went back to Copleston for a working lunch session which involved talking to a small group of Sixth Form students. They were high achievers, academically, but unsure what route they wanted to take after school. I gave them an overview of my personal journey in

Law as well as an overview of the different routes available to them.

It's been wonderful to be able to offer some help to current students. I suffer with chronic brittle asthma and I had multiple hospital admissions in my time at Copleston. This meant that I had to spend a lot of time out of school and Copleston liaised regularly with my Mam to make sure all my homework and reading materials were sent to the hospital. Without my Mam's tenacity and Copleston's willingness to provide extra support, I honestly don't believe I would have got the grades required to get into university to study Law.



## DESIGNING NEW INTERVENTIONS

# Taking the opportunity to build careers

THE CAREERS &  
ENTERPRISE  
COMPANY

Future First has continued its partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to create alumni networks for schools and colleges in areas of the country most at need of support.

The CEC's aim is to facilitate a world-class careers education, inspiring and preparing young people for the world of work. We have been running the initiative since 2015 to support students from areas of particularly low social mobility, bringing alumni role models from a range of jobs into schools to talk with students.

Extended funding allowed us to continue this work in 2019-20 across areas identified by government as Opportunity Areas, Areas of Disadvantage and Careers Hubs. A total of 118 schools benefited across the most educationally disadvantaged areas of the country – from Blackpool to Hastings.

During the year, over 3,500 alumni signed up to support the project, bringing the total number of volunteers across CEC-funded schools to 15,285.

Initiatives delivered via the programme included World of Work workshops, which were designed to introduce students to alumni and build their confidence, help them learn broader skills and think creatively about the career options open to them.

Before school closures in March 2020, over 4,000 students had benefited from these workshops, supported by 132 alumni volunteers. A further 124 alumni had supported additional activities at their old school, with a total of almost 9,000 students meeting alumni across the year.

### STUDENTS:

**“It shows that even if you are having a bad time in school, you can still be successful if you work hard.”**

**“It’s really inspiring when people come in and talk to us about their past.”**

**“I thought there was no point in school but now it makes me want to try.”**

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Florentina Cristea, Newham College alumna and Assistant Project Manager at Transport for London:

**“I wish I had someone to inspire me when I was younger and to give me more information about a career in transport whilst I was in school.”**







## DESIGNING NEW INTERVENTIONS

### Making a difference for children with special educational needs



During 2019-20, Future First piloted work with Shaftesbury High, a special school in Harrow, North West London, thanks to generous funding from the John Lyon's Charity. The initiative has already begun to have an impact.

The coronavirus pandemic may have complicated our pilot scheme, but groundwork has been done for great things in the future.

Our online portal has created the means for Shaftesbury High School to stay in touch with alumni in a meaningful and sustainable way. They now have a network of 34 alumni.

Debbie Stone, Community Engagement Manager and Careers Leader at the school, said:

**“We have learnt so much working with Future First. They have guided us all the way. Without their help Shaftesbury would not have an**

**alumni programme, as we didn't have the experience nor the resources to do it ourselves.**

“Having an alumni programme is going to be a very important part of our future. It has proved a great success story, albeit it's still in its infancy.

“We were very appreciative of the way Future First kept in touch with us during lockdown, sending us ideas and resources that we could use to help our leavers maintain mental health and wellbeing.”

A key achievement for the programme this year has been the creation of three brand new alumni workshops for special schools to utilise: 'Preparing for adulthood'; 'Ready for work'; and 'Skills for your future'.

#### ALUMNI



It's great to see that the school remembers us and also we can see where our friends have gone after Shaftesbury.

#### SCHOOL



Everyone loves the posters; they are up all around the school and very well received.

# Our successes 2019-20

Reached

**69,587**

Students



Built

**266,000-strong**

alumni network

Worked with

**over 400**

schools and colleges



**Raised**

£19,000 for  
Lincolnshire  
schools



**Reduced**

cost of core  
programme  
to schools



**Worked**

across Opportunity  
Areas

**Secured**

a new and exciting  
technology partnership



**Named**

MJ Achievement  
Awards official charity



**Extended**

into primary schools



## BUILDING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

# Lifting the veil on higher education

Over the past year Future First has continued to work with Uni Connect partnerships across England.

During 2019-20, we worked with several of the 29 Uni Connect partnerships, covering Cumbria, South Yorkshire, the South West, the West Midlands and East Anglia.

The partnerships aim to support the government's social mobility goals by increasing the number of young people from under-represented groups who go on to higher education. They focus their work on local areas where participation in higher education is low.

For several years we have worked with many organisations to deliver this crucial support, including Aspire to HE, Sussex Learning Network and the collaborative outreach programmes for Cumbria, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

This year, through our work with HeppSY+, neaco, AimHigher West Midlands and Next Steps South West, we supported 65 schools to help around 6,000 students to understand what it's like to study at university and the steps needed to get there.

## Widening career horizons

**One of Future First's partner schools as part of the Uni Connect initiative is Marshland High in West Walton, Norfolk. Here Marshland High's Head of Character and Culture, Dom Stannard, explains the benefits the scheme has brought to students.**

One of the main things we wanted to do when we teamed up with Future First was to raise the aspirations of students by using alumni as positive role models.

A lot of students at Marshland think they are just going to leave and work locally. We wanted to show them that former students have actually done very well for themselves.

As well as using assemblies, we also had an apprenticeship week and a careers week. They were an excellent way of helping students understand about future career paths and the ins and outs of apprenticeships, because we had a host of speakers come in and take them through the details.

Our work with Future First fits neatly alongside our partnership with neaco, which builds links with the University of East Anglia. Among the things neaco has supported us with has been helping students through the process of applying for colleges and apprenticeships. We're now preparing to do video and virtual sessions for the students.

The support we've got from Future First, with things like posters, has also been really good and we're now looking to make these the screen savers on students' computers.

**It's amazing what some alumni have gone on to do. One, who recently sent in a video, now works on aerodynamics for a Formula One team. It shows that alumni can be a really powerful tool for inspiring current students.**

They hear us talking about these things all the time, but when they meet an outsider who comes in to speak to them it normalises it and they really take it on-board.



## WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

### Ashurst uses video to show pupils the way

Law firm Ashurst has worked with Future First since 2012 to deliver the First Steps programme.

This year, 60 Year 6 pupils from Bonner Primary School in Tower Hamlets, East London, took part in insight mornings with Ashurst, meeting with employees. Following lockdown, we also worked with Ashurst to develop pre-recorded videos to share with pupils.

The aim of the First Steps programme is to enhance pupils' awareness of the types of jobs they might want to do in the future,

develop their understanding of the steps to pursuing them and begin to build the confidence and skills needed to excel in their academic and working lives.

The impact came through from one student who said: **"I believe in myself much more and feel more confident now."**

Another said: **"I've learnt about so many new jobs and I'm going to work hard to get one."**

Ella Blakesley, Corporate Responsibility Manager at Ashurst, said: "Our partnership



with Future First and Bonner Primary School has been running for many years and it is as popular with volunteers as it is with the students!"



## WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

# An insight into working life

Future First's partnerships with companies from a wide range of sectors have been instrumental in offering students the chance not only to build their confidence about entering the world of work but also to understand the wide range of careers that could await them.

Together, we work to offer young people the chance to attend insight days, gain work experience and participate in mentoring initiatives.

We are grateful to the many organisations who have joined with us over the last 10 years to take forward our work.

We continue to work with impressive and influential companies who are helping to ensure every young person has the potential to flourish after they leave school. And of course, our alumni represent a wide variety of employers and sectors, bringing jobs and careers to life, and linking their work to the curriculum. For example, hearing a chef talking about how proportions and fractions are vital in the everyday preparation of meals.

We appreciate the on-going support of all our employer partners and alumni employer representatives.

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## Giving young people a firm footing **TaylorWessing**

Legal firm Taylor Wessing is Future First's longest-standing corporate partner.

This year we continued our two-stage programme of insight days and mentoring with the firm. The two insight days at their London offices gave 88 students the chance to meet staff, strengthen their skills and find out what it would be like to work in a global law firm.

The students, from schools across the country, were then invited to apply for our mentoring programme with Taylor Wessing. Over eight weeks, the young people took part in four half-day sessions with a designated mentor from the firm. During these sessions, the students focused on key professional skills needed to work at a law firm and gained advice on how to prepare CVs and interview responses.

Lauren Clarke, an Associate at Taylor Wessing, said: "Our Careers Insight Days and the mentoring programme develop students' professional skills, foster a space for everyone to share experiences, and allow Taylor Wessing's employees to provide best practice advice to prepare the students for the world of work.

**"It is great to know that Taylor Wessing actively encourages its staff to get involved in this kind of volunteering, and it is apparent how refreshing the volunteers find it to have an experience which is completely different to that which they are usually exposed to by working in a law firm."**



# Learning the law

**Vishali Poojara, 17, an A-level student at Nower Hill High School in Pinner, North West London, was one of the students to spend time with Taylor Wessing. Here she talks about the experience.**

Ever since I was little, people have said I was going to be a lawyer when I was older, but it wasn't until last year that I decided I really wanted to do it.

I didn't know where to start, because Law is a lot about connections and knowing people you can ask for work experience. I didn't really have anyone, so when my school said this opportunity with Taylor Wessing could be something I'd find interesting, I was intrigued.

The Insight Day at the firm was a really good first experience, because we learnt about all the different disciplines, heard from a partner and took part in skills workshops.

I was also lucky enough to participate in a mentoring programme that took place over eight weeks. **Having a one-to-one mentor really helped, because I had someone to talk through my ambitions and issues.**



“““

**The whole experience with Taylor Wessing was fantastic and has really convinced me that I want to become a lawyer.**

## WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

# Spreading the benefit

**Nancy Scott is a local government partner at recruitment specialist GatenbySanderson. Here she explains how local government would benefit from supporting the charity's work.**



I was delighted when Future First was chosen as the charity for the MJ Achievement Awards 2020. The event celebrates the many achievements within local government and for this wonderful charity's work to be promoted as part of it was fabulous.

Future First already works with hundreds of state schools and colleges to link young people with alumni and employers, but there are many more that could benefit.

The benefits to young people are obvious but there are equally advantages to employers and, for two reasons, local government should be at the forefront of championing Future First's cause.

Firstly, with the rebuilding of local economies so central to the future work of councils, it is vital students in local schools are motivated to succeed.

Engaging young people makes such a difference, not just for themselves but also for their schools and communities. With an ageing UK workforce, especially in senior positions, local government can only benefit by encouraging more young people to consider careers in the sector.

Secondly, though local government is at the forefront of driving change and transforming services, the outside world is often unaware of this challenging, creative environment that is so central to shaping futures.

Today's students need to be inspired to strive for success by meeting local government officers who have made a difference to communities. They also need to be motivated to consider a career in local government by being shown the fulfilment it can bring.



**Heather Jameson,  
Editor of The MJ:**

**Choosing Future First to be the MJ Achievement Awards' official charity was an easy choice, because it is a charity very much pulling in the same direction as local government.**

**The more young people prosper,  
the more communities prosper.**

**Future First's work to help young people thrive, especially those in the most disadvantaged communities, is at the heart of what all councils are trying to achieve.**

**I was particularly delighted by how our delegates took to Future First's cause - helping raise £2,000 for the charity's crowdfunder in the time the ceremony was taking place.**

## FINANCES

# Finances 2019-20

### Value:

**92p in each £1** we spend goes directly on programme delivery. The remainder is spent on fundraising and ensuring good management and governance.

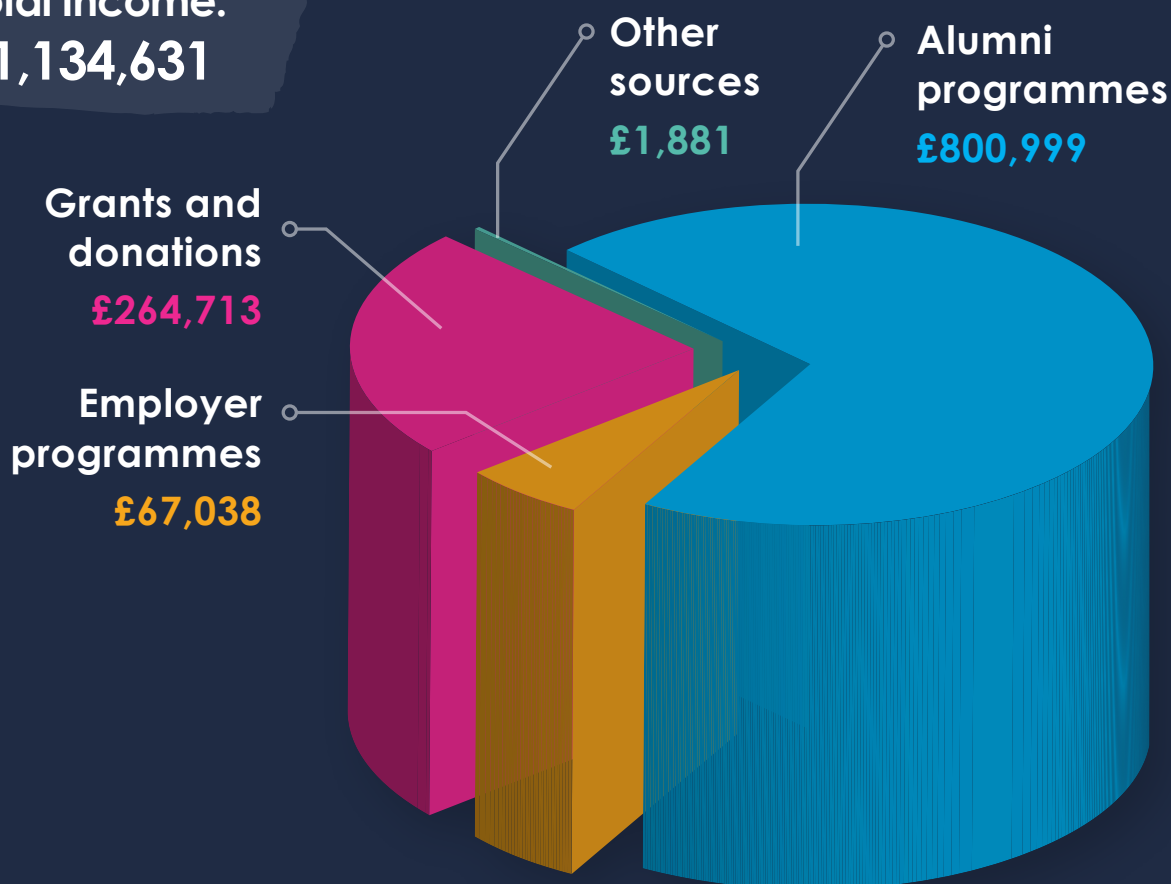


Cost per pupil:

**£17.75**



**Total Income:**  
**£1,134,631**





## OUR SUPPORTERS

# Our supporters 2019-20

The great work Future First has done over the past decade could not have happened without the generous contributions of our many supporters.

We would like to thank all our supporters, both past and present, who have helped our work to enhance the future of so many young people.



We are big believers in supporting charities with long term core funding, allowing them to grow and adapt. We are pleased to be one of Future First's longest standing funders, having supported the organisation for over six years through core funding and training and development opportunities.

**Sir Trevor Pears CMG**

Executive Chair, Pears Foundation

**AimHigher West Midlands**

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**Arc Pensions Law**

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**Ashurst LLP**

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**Deji Davies, J.P. Morgan**

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**Hello Future**

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**John Lyon's Charity**

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**Network for East Anglian  
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**Next Steps South West**

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**Sally Nelson, Fidelity International**

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**Future  
First**

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At the University of Light  
We study the sky  
We stay awake at night  
And await the Alumni

**LEMN SISSAY** POET