

Impact report 2023-24

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented in professional occupations. This is an issue for society and business. Young people need to see 'someone like me'.

Future First's vision is for a world where a young person's background does not limit their future. Our mission is to see every state school and college - and every learner - supported by a thriving and engaged alumni and employee volunteer community which improves students' motivation, confidence and life chances.

You can't be what you can't see – that's why our programmes work to connect young people with relatable role models so they can see 'someone like me'.

We focus on three key principles:

1

Alumni and employee volunteers are a powerful resource

We help state schools and colleges connect with alumni and employee volunteers. We are the only UK charity working exclusively with alumni in this way. Because they have grown up in the same place and attended the same school, they act as relatable role models. Employee volunteers also help students envision their own paths to success and motivate them to strive for their goals – often opening doors to previously gatekept industries.

2

Building careers capacity in state schools and colleges

Careers support in state schools is heavily under-resourced. By providing the technology, skills and knowledge to develop alumni and employee volunteer networks, and the training to run sessions, we build in school capacity. Each year the community grows.

3

Digital is so much more than technology

We harness the power of technology to extend volunteer reach through our Future First Hub – a safe, social media style interface that allows our schools to build and manage every aspect of their alumni and employer network in one place. It also supports virtual volunteering and enables schools to access role models regardless of geography.

Headlines

45%

of the schools we worked with were above the national Free School Meal average*.

1/3

of the schools we worked with were in the 100 most deprived Local Authorities in England.

1/3

fully funded memberships provided to schools across the UK, supporting schools with limited budgets.

"It was a really fun experience, and it definitely helped me feel more secure in my future career." Ismael, learner

A Year 9 student reiterated the importance of this work to me in one of our alumni sessions. She said 'after today it's not I want to... it's I will.' Tash Cooper, Bulwell Academy

121,000+

alumni and employee volunteers registered on the Future First Hub.

9,000

"Near peer" alumni.

50

sectors represented on the Hub, from architecture to digital, health, and science.



"I believe the socioeconomic makeup of our students means that they rarely see themselves represented in careers work. Meeting alumni is the perfect way to correct this and increase engagement and aspiration. However, funding is the only issue." Teacher

29,465

young people directly benefited from Future First's activities (e.g., workshops, insight days, interactions on the Hub).

81%

of young people said meeting former students showed them "people like me" can be successful.

73%

of young people said meeting alumni made them want to work harder at school.



"I think the alumni have enjoyed our careers days and gone back to their employers and looked at different opportunities they might be able to offer such as work experience and internships. It transforms from just a one-off day into something a bit more meaningful." Andy Lewis, St Bonaventure's School



*FSM = Free School Meals 2.1 million young people are eligible for FSM in England. That's 24.6% of all state-funded learners. This is the highest rate since 2006. FSM eligibility is based on households with an income of less than £7,400 / year after tax and not including benefits.

Our work in partnership with others

By working with others in the social mobility space we increase our impact and reach. As well as our core work, we are proud to work with a wide range of partners on collective action projects. Two highlights this year:



Planet Possibility

Future First manages the Planet Possibility consortium on behalf of the Institute of Physics. This multi-year initiative is designed to build a diverse community of future physicists through inspiration, opportunities and careers guidance in schools and colleges across the UK. Since launching in 2022 it has reached over **60,000** people, trained over **1,000** teachers and run nearly **200** workshops and clubs – all designed to help young people see the diversity of opportunities in physics, and believe that this sector could be an option for them.



Primary transition workshops

Research shows that by the age of seven children start to adopt thinking around the stereotypes they see and by the age of nine are aware of constraints on their futures. The earlier we can break down these stereotypes, the higher the chance we can stop self-limiting views. Future First has been piloting transition work with primary schools in Devon, East Anglia and East Sussex with the support of the Dulverton Trust and in London through Investec funding. In our pilot rural primary programme we worked with **600** primary school learners. As a result of our work, **85%** of learners participating strongly disagreed that 'some jobs are for men and some jobs are for women' and **81%** said they felt more prepared for secondary school.

Thank you!

Our volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of our work. Over 121,000 alumni and employee volunteers are registered on the Future First Hub representing a diverse array of sectors and jobs. This includes nearly 9,000 'near peer alumni' – those young people that have recently finished school – and who are at a stage in their journey that often feels immediately most attainable for many learners.

This year, we raised funds for a National Volunteer Manager post - to support the development of our volunteer network: their focus is on enhancing the volunteering experience and building that community. We are also focused on publicly championing the special role that alumni have to play in careers and are working with our alumni to develop this campaign further.

Our funders

We are supported by a diverse range of funders – from corporates, to trusts to individuals. Focused on our common cause – helping young people see who they can be - we know we are more impactful working together.

Our employer partners

Our employer partners play a vital role – opening doors to previously gatekept industries and helping young people access new opportunities. In working together we are helping to champion diversity in the workplace and run a number of schemes.

Employers that invest over the long-term in well-structured, high-quality outreach gain a significant advantage by supporting the development of a skilled and diverse workforce and saving on recruitment costs.

CEC Employer Standards for Careers Education

[Join our employer partners now to make the change you want to see.](#)

"It was so exciting to meet these passionate young people, it's given me great confidence in tomorrow's workforce."
Freddie Eltringham, DRD Partnership

Our staff and trustees

Our small but ambitious team worked hard to support schools, learners and our volunteers. We were recognised nationally – winning a People's Award at the National Smiley Charity Awards for our film 'Someone Like Me.' The team also ran its inaugural Careers Conference.



Looking ahead

Roadmap

We have published our [roadmap to 2034](#). We are committed to ensuring that every state school and college across the UK is supported by a thriving, engaged network of alumni and employee volunteers. This vision, rooted in collaboration and innovation, will empower all young people to explore the diverse opportunities available to them, regardless of their socio-economic background.

We estimate that 11 million days of paid volunteering time are available across UK businesses annually; however, the majority of those go unused. If just 10% of those days were used to volunteer in state secondary schools and colleges, **an additional 946,000 days of real time careers support** and meaningful employer engagement would be available in the system. We will carry on working with employers across the UK to make this a reality.

Amplifying the alumni voice

We know that alumni bring a unique and relatable perspective to careers work. They can help to challenge careers misconceptions and stereotypes and inspire and motivate young people. As someone who 'walked in my shoes' they can help young people 'see who they can be'. We plan to amplify the alumni voice in the next operating period even further:

- We will showcase alumni stories – to encourage more to come forward
- We will campaign and work with alumni to ensure that the volunteer experience is a valuable one and that schools are nurturing this relationship
- We will continue to lobby nationally for greater recognition of the unique role of alumni in careers work.

In the next operating period the Gatsby Foundation will conclude its review of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Used by over 90% of schools and colleges (over 4,700) the Benchmarks are the world class framework for secondary schools and colleges to design careers guidance programmes for young people. Future First will continue to champion the unique role of alumni with the Foundation and others in 2025.

Civic Society

We believe that collaboration in the social mobility space is critical: grass roots charities working in local communities have an important role to play and will provide the critical capacity to create lasting impact. We will continue to work with the sector to build the evidence base, ensure that grass roots charities have a seat at the table and work to develop solutions that encourage collaboration and champion innovation.

Sector breadth

Increase our work with employers

We plan to increase the number and diversity of employers we work with across the UK to give more young people access to relatable role models. In doing so, we will increase opportunities for meaningful employee volunteering that links directly back to early career pipeline and workplace diversity.

Help businesses to engage with schools and colleges

We will help to bridge the gap between education and employment and support businesses to focus a percentage of their volunteering days in schools and colleges: through accessible, trackable, micro and hybrid volunteering opportunities. We will run pilots with businesses that are UK wide as well as those focused on single communities, to demonstrate what is possible and scalable.

“With your continued support, we can unlock even more potential, build stronger connections between education and industry, and create a future where young people from any background can find their path to success.” Sue Riley, CEO

Find out more:

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