

THINKFORWARD ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/21



Young & Black project 2021



**Think
Forward**

Coaching
Connecting
Inspiring
Young People

Welcome

We're delighted to welcome you to our latest annual review. 2020/21 was one of the most operationally challenging years in our history. It required us to continue navigating a world which was unrecognisable both to us and the young people we serve.

We continued to deliver services during lockdowns, moving to digital when required and doubling down on securing our relationships with our young people. We worked in collaboration with our schools to extend safeguarding capacity, helping to keep our young people safe and we prioritised the wellbeing of our staff, enabling us to continue our work.

Given the challenges that arose, we feel enormous pride in the programme of work undertaken during the year. We have developed an ambitious five-year strategy which we believe sets the foundations for the next stage of our evolution. We want to continue to refine 'what works' in terms of the impact of our programmes. We want to increase our reach, grow our income and become more sustainable, all of which we believe are achievable through the delivery of our 5-year plan.

As a youth organisation with a strong commitment to youth participation, we have delivered on our pledge to recruit two new young trustees to our Board. Our young trustees bring a lived experience of challenges through their education journey, overcoming barriers to employment and living with disability. Together, they bring a refreshing young person's perspective into our decision-making processes.

Looking to the year ahead, we believe we have the required focus and resilience to continue delivering high quality coaching programmes to our wonderful community of young people.



Charlie Green
Chair



Ashley McCaul
CEO

Our work in numbers

2020/21*

**YOUNG PEOPLE ON
OUR PROGRAMMES**

1,120

**1-2-1 COACHING
SESSIONS DELIVERED**

6,790

**GROUP COACHING
SESSIONS DELIVERED**

243

**PARENTAL
ENGAGEMENTS**

4,938

**READY FOR WORK
ACTIVITIES**

387

**MEANINGFUL
CONTACTS**

3,279

*All the activity data relates to 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021 for both FutureMe and MoveForward programmes.

Our equalities journey

Embarking upon a race equality journey during such uncertain times speaks to our drive and commitment to create a fairer society for our young people. We wanted to make a statement in response to the injustice playing out around us during the pandemic. With the support and guidance of our outstanding equalities consultants we undertook staff training and development and we participated in the Young and Black national UK Youth campaign. You can read more about the project on page 8 and 9.

“Change can be uncomfortable. For one person on their own, change is a challenge. So, when the leadership team at ThinkForward said they wanted to embark on this journey of training that would create understanding and action for the organisation as part of the new Equalities strategy, I was excited.



Credit to the team at ThinkForward because in the period of 7 to 8 months we covered a lot of ground. To think we went from the majority of the team knowing very little about systemic inequalities and oppression, to a situation where behaviours, practice and culture have evolved, and we see the organisation's commitment to Equalities being lived on a day-to-day basis... it's awe-inspiring.

As a trainer, coach and critical friend I can honestly say that ThinkForward have made a process that many organisations struggle with, look almost effortless. I take my hat off to you all!”

**Louis Howell, Co-founder of 7PK
Equalities Consultant**

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manifesto

ThinkForward aims to be a place where all can thrive. We will lead from the front by placing equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of all we do as an employer, in our work with young people and within our sphere of influence. We value creativity, productivity, good decision-making and reputation, and we know that good equity, diversity and inclusion practices will build these.

We are working to create a world where our young people are more likely to thrive, and the absence of uniformity is considered a strength. We want learning and challenging the status quo to be considered progressive and where people's ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disabilities, learning abilities or socio-economic origins are not the defining characteristics of their potential for success.

Our strategic objectives

Refine and expand our programmes for young people with SEND

- > Successfully deliver our DFN-MoveForward Social Impact Bond and evaluate its impact
- > Grow the number of young people supported through new SEND programmes. Broaden the reach of these programmes for young people and who have left education and are unemployed
- > Leverage employer partnerships to create more supported pathways to employment and entry level jobs.

Refine the FutureMe programme

- > Continue to support 900 young people per year, further embedding our work in schools and the wider community
- > Conduct an external evaluation and refine aspects of the programme's design
- > Respond to the changing needs of young people by packaging up our coach-led activities in different ways.

Impact Sustainability Growth

1,500 young people per year

Income £5m

Young people participate in our governance and shape the design of our programmes

Become a thought leader

We will make recommendations to local and national decision makers by:

- > Using our growing evidence base of what works
- > Sharing young people's experiences of being on our programmes
- > Joining forces with other youth sector organisations.

Become a capability partner

Where our partners have a common goal of improving employment outcomes for young people we will share our expertise and resources on:

- > Coaching
- > Employment & job creation
- > Equity, diversity & inclusion.

An update on our strategy

Our new five-year strategy was developed amidst the Covid pandemic. Despite the challenging operating environment, we made the decision to press ahead, create the strategy and set ourselves the objectives we need to reach to achieve our goals. It was important for us to create a 'North Star' to guide us through future years and allow us to be optimistic about getting through the pandemic.

We're delighted with the progress in year one. Following the rebranding of our core programme from ThinkForward to FutureMe to differentiate between the organisation and the programme, we've taken the first steps to look at how we can develop FutureMe to make it available for more students and will seek to build on this work in 2022.

Independently evaluating our work is critical to our success as we need to understand which areas of our programmes work best and why. We began by commissioning an external process of evaluation which focused on our effectiveness in delivering our service and assess if we're gathering the data we need to demonstrate the difference we make. Phase one was carried out over the summer of 2021.

We began the process of reviewing the DFN-MoveForward programme. This included looking at data collection and measurement tools, understanding what works and why, and the structure of the programme promise.

We also carried out a review of our work readiness capability (WRC) framework. This is the skills framework we use within our programmes to assess the development of our seven work readiness capabilities. We needed to identify if we are capturing appropriate measures whilst making an assessment of other available tools to potentially pilot, test and deploy. This process included consulting our young people for feedback on the WRC framework and our approach.

Young & Black project

In summer 2021, 87 young people on our FutureMe and MoveForward programmes took part in the UK Youth national Young & Black campaign. We created a project to give our young people the space to explore and challenge issues around race and identity.

They were provided with a safe space to talk about their experiences and learn about allyship. Young people created pieces of artwork and made a pledge about the future. ThinkForward, our business partners, funders and schools signed an open letter which contains a commitment to create inclusive, diverse spaces where young people from all backgrounds can thrive. Everything was brought together in a book and in a virtual exhibition which were launched at a national celebration event.



During our Young & Black sessions everybody learned things we didn't know before. We covered topics including solutions to problems, for example using social media to spread awareness and speaking out if possible; barriers a person of colour may experience when applying for a job and learned new terms such as microaggressions and gaslighting.

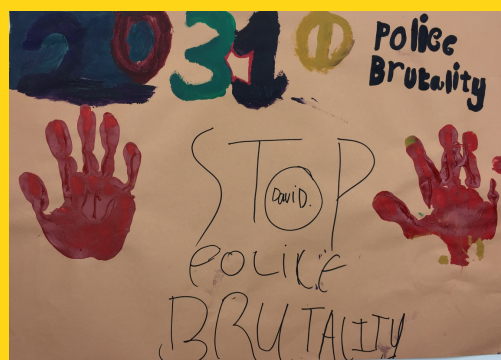
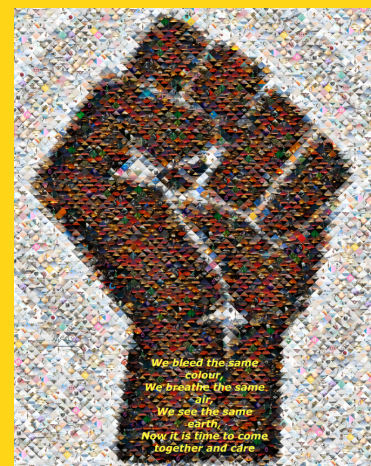


One of the best parts about the project was connecting with lots of young people and coaches in Kent to share our ideas and thoughts with each other. It was so good to take part in the event to celebrate everything we've done.

I'm proud we've gone through all of this together and I'm proud of being part of a solution and helping address the problem, because sitting back isn't going to change anything. The project also helped me with my communication skills. It feels so cool to have my own page in the book and show off everything I've done.

Since I took part, I've shared more stuff on social media about racism, I've spoken to my friends more about it and in English [lessons] it's nice to have a different perspective and think deeper into it. If I raise my hand I can talk more about racism in class, I don't just have to sit by myself and think about it. I've noticed more microaggressions in school and online now I know what they are, but if I see it, we can talk about it and raise it with other people."

Young & Black project



87

young people
took part

41

sessions

50

pieces of artwork
created

96

pages in the
Y&B book

61

pledges
made

82%

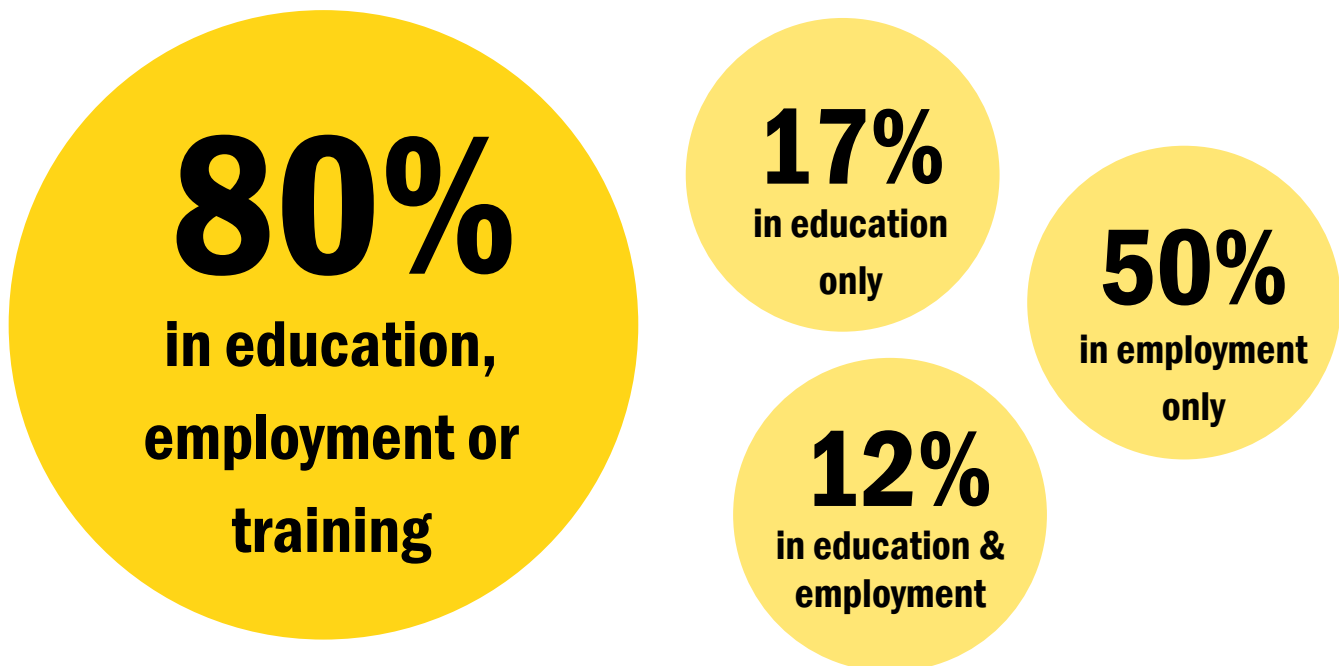
of young people who took part said they'd never had the opportunity to talk about race before.

100%

of young people who took part said it built their confidence.

Our impact - FutureMe

The progress our 2020/2021 FutureMe graduates have made:



All figures are based on known outcomes of 122 young people out of 155 graduated young people, rounded to nearest whole number. Figures are based on 2021 graduates, 6 months after graduating.

“Working with my coach, Julian, helped me gain confidence doing things such as talking to new people and doing things outside the box. Julian helped me in school - if there was something wrong he would address it right away. If I was struggling with something he would have a look to see if he could help and if needed, he would contact the teacher. He helped me explore my options and find the best one.



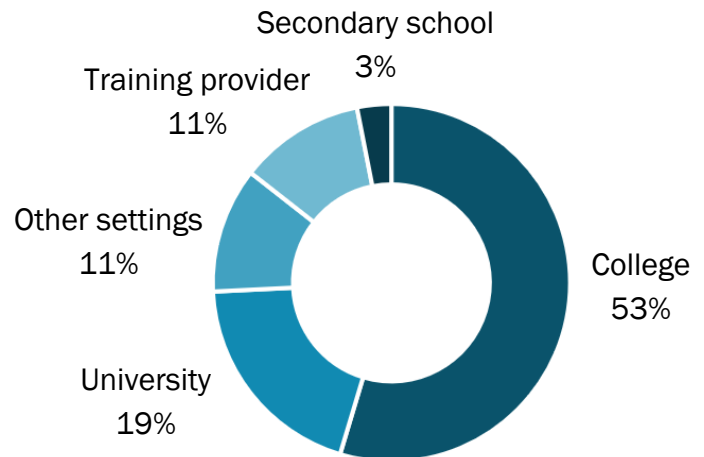
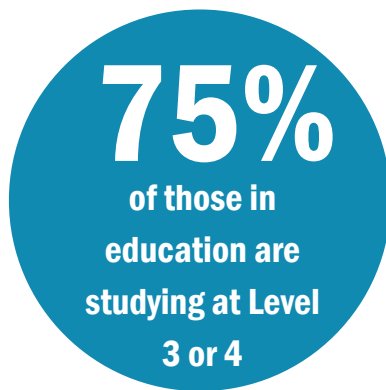
I decided to go to college for a fresh start and to do something I love. I'm studying fine art at MidKent. I felt like if I stayed at sixth form I wouldn't be as happy, or get to where I want to go. My course is great, I highly recommend it. It's fun, the tutors are very nice and support you with your work.

My plans are to hopefully get a Distinction in art and pass Maths and English. Once I've finished college I would like to work with disabled children. I want to do art with them and help them learn. Uni is also an option I'm looking into for next year.”

Kodie, FutureMe, Kent

Our impact - FutureMe

FutureMe graduates in education:



FutureMe graduates in employment:



All figures are based on known outcomes of 122 young people out of 155 graduated young people, rounded to nearest whole number. Figures are based on 2021 graduates, 6 months after graduating.

“FutureMe helped me a lot because it made me so confident and now I can go and talk to people that aren’t confident and try and help them. Business mentoring, ambassadors and the trips brought other personalities out within me. Coach Ash helped me with personal issues and with things like my application form for Ambulance Cadets. I feel like my life would be more difficult if I hadn’t been part of ThinkForward, it would have taken longer to come together.



I’m now at uni studying Criminology and I’m the only girl from my family who has gone to uni ever, so they’re all really proud of me. Recently I’ve been thinking about my future, and my plan is to stay in my current job while I’m studying at uni, and then find a stable job in Criminology, hopefully in forensics.”

Arshdeep, FutureMe graduate, London

Ready for Work events

Before Covid, young people would attend a number of Ready for Work events at local businesses to gain an insight into the world of work. Due to Covid we had to adapt and move many of these insight sessions online.

In 2021, young people attended digital events including:

- HMRC – what is tax and why do we have to pay it?
- Red Bull Racing – what it's like to work in a Formula 1 team
- Microsoft skills workshop – how to start your own business
- The Nottingham: Jobs in financial services
- International Womens Day Session with Dataiku
- Work experience with Multiplex
- Apprenticeship & Traineeship information
- UCAS - university applications
- National Careers Week skills workshop.

Throughout the year, we ran online etiquette sessions to build up our young people's digital skills. We also delivered our award-winning business mentoring programme virtually for Year 10 students.



I have always been passionate about buildings and so decided to study Construction and the Built Environment. Through the FutureMe programme, I attended insight events and work experience with CBRE, who have given me lots of support and helped me with applications. I am grateful to Coach Phoebe, Chanelle and Shelly [from ThinkForward] for giving me this opportunity and supporting me with it, I have really learnt so much about real estate and my future career options.”



Fardows, FutureMe, London

Business mentoring



Business mentoring had an amazing impact on my young people. They were challenged and learnt about their skills and gaps in their development. At first students and some mentors were uncomfortable as it was new territory for them, but as the weeks progressed, the quality of the conversations and young people wanting to stay on longer than the 2 hours given showed that they really enjoyed it and were learning.



When students went back into the school environment, teachers commented on their confidence. They were ahead in some of the activities that were taking place in school because of the process.

Initially, there was apprehension as this was a new way of delivery, and with technology, anything could happen, but it went smoothly. Students each had an individual device with headphones and were able to build up their own digital skills. They had to be mindful of engaging through a screen, so body language and online etiquette were important. Delivering digitally showed that there are benefits such as cutting out travel time, the ability for more people to join the session, and that the outcomes were still positive.”

Kemi, FutureMe Progression Coach at New Line Learning Academy



I can honestly say that I’ve seen real progression in many of the mentees whom I have been involved with. I’ve seen confidence levels increase and a willingness to fully engage in video calls that wasn’t there at the start.”

Helen, DHL Mentor

Youth participation

It is important to us that young people have a say in how we develop and deliver our programmes and experience opportunities to allow their voices to be heard.

We recruited 14 young people from FutureMe and MoveForward to our Youth Board, to choose an issue within ThinkForward and complete a research project on it. They decided to look at the issue of low post-16 engagement with the programme. They presented their research project to ThinkForward staff members, allowing them to develop key skills that will benefit them in the world of work. They also engaged in a consultation regarding the ambassador programme to provide feedback.



We also delivered our Ambassador programme, where young people created a social action project that focused on an issue in their local community. 98 FutureMe and MoveForward ambassadors produced social action projects with local charity partners. They chose issues including knife crime, homelessness and mental health.

Following the recruitment of two young trustees, Dan Easterbrook and Sally Cartwright, to our main board in November 2020, they continue to be active members of our board and represent the organisation externally.

In Spring 2021, young people engaged in a consultation to help us understand their views on digital events. We used these findings to inform our digital programme offer so that as we emerged from Covid and returned to face-to-face events, we understood the need for young people to learn about digital etiquette. Young people also had the opportunity to sit on the interview panel for some staff interviews.

“ We chose knife crime for our project because we thought it was a great subject to touch on, everyone’s passionate about it, and the numbers of people carrying knives in Nottingham and other places is astonishing and terrible. We made posters and a podcast and shared it on social media to make sure people were aware that this is happening and needs to be stopped. Unfortunately, Covid hit while I was an Ambassador so we had to do most things online, which wasn’t good, but we still had fun and completed the project. It boosted my confidence talking online and my resilience as well because I had to keep motivated.”

Caroline, Ambassador, Nottingham

Our impact - MoveForward

Supported internships are for people aged 16-24 with learning disabilities, who need extra support to get a job. They are one of the ways our MoveForward team prepare young people for work. Of those now in sustained work, employers include Tesco, Whittington Hospital, Mitie, Pret a Manger and Ground Control.

24
young people
completed a
supported
internship

12
young people
started in a paid
job of 16+ hours
a week

47
young people obtained
an accredited
employability
qualification

All figures are based on data from September 2020 to August 2021.



What I enjoy the most is cooking, learning to work as a team, communicating with other people and socialising with them so I can learn how to work well with other people. I hope that in the future I'll be able to work somewhere like this.

I like being in the kitchen because I'm more comfortable, I'm in my comfort zone and I like focusing on prepping and preparing food - that's what I like to learn.

I studied catering at school then did a level 1 at MidKent College, then level 2 though because of Covid that was hard, but I got through it. Now here I am doing a level 3. The three most important things you need when you're working are teamwork, communication and respect, and I think I've now got the skills I need to be in the workplace."



Supported internships in Warwickshire

ThinkForward's commission with Warwickshire County Council focuses on improving the quality of supported internships for young people with SEND and is in the second year of a three year agreement.

The aim of the commission is to improve the employment rate of supported internship graduates; onboard new host businesses; provide quality assurance and facilitate best practice networks for employers, educators and parents and carers. A supported internship is a structured, work-based study programme for people with learning difficulties which is designed to help them progress onto full-time employment.

Success stories to date include the creation of six supported internship placements with the Heart of England Forest, a registered charity committed to reversing centuries of woodland decline. The programme launched in September 2021 with work placements in forestry, horticulture and maintenance.

Operating under a commission with a local authority supports the profile and growth of ThinkForward. In Warwickshire, it places us at the heart of the SEND eco-system by providing connections to statutory services, education providers and parent/carers forums. The commission has also supported access to local businesses through for example, the local authority's Fair Chance Employers Network. This network is designed to promote inclusive practice amongst local businesses and promote SEND young people as a viable alternative to traditional talent pools.

Nationally, there has been little progress in overcoming the huge challenges for people with SEND to find work, with employment rates remaining shockingly low at around 6%. What ThinkForward is learning through its commission with Warwickshire County Council is that by being positioned centrally within the eco-system of SEND provision and working collaboratively with statutory bodies, positive change and impact are more achievable.

Supported internships in Warwickshire

Harry and Matt were part of the Heart of England Forest's supported internship programme.

“ I chose to do this supported internship because I enjoy being outdoors and I wanted to do something that would benefit the wider community. I also like the thought of knowing that I am doing my own bit to help against climate change.

The supported internship contains four rotations round different departments. I have seen the whole process of how to grow the trees, from planting chestnuts and acorns into trays in the polytunnel, to planting fully grown saplings of many different tree species out in the fields. I have enjoyed learning about all the different species and planting them. I have also enjoyed working as a group with the other supported interns.

The time I have spent on the internship has helped me to become more independent, be better at working as part of a team and allowed me to get to know new people. It has also shown me what it is like to work in an outdoor work environment.

A supported internship is a good opportunity for young people with additional needs to gain new knowledge and experience of a work environment. I have learned that the sort of job I want in the future will definitely be something that involves working outdoors doing activities such as wildlife observation or managing the environment.”

Harry, West Midlands



“ I decided to do a supported internship because it would give me more skills to use in general life. I also wanted to do a job with carpentry and the Heart of England Forest were able to offer me these opportunities.

I have been making bug hotels and planting sweet chestnut and acorn seeds as well as working with estate maintenance making dedication plaques and building a fence for new cottages. I've also been planting trees and helping at the Garden of Heroes and Villains where there are statues of historical figures. When the internship finishes, I'm hoping to get a job working on the maintenance side of things. I enjoyed working with everybody, but I seemed to enjoy these jobs more because I was better at them.

To someone thinking about doing a supported internship I would say to them that they shouldn't really worry or stress about the type of job they are doing, and that they should just try and enjoy getting the experience, making friends and working with new colleagues.”

Matt, MoveForward, West Midlands



Our partnership with parents

Working together with everyone involved in the wellbeing of our young people is at the heart of making our programmes successful. One of our most important partners are our parents and carers and we always work hard to ensure they're involved in their child's journey with us. If they know and understand the role we play and the expectations of the programme they can back up our work with support at home. Our coaches are in touch regularly with parents and carers to keep them informed of their child's progress and are available to be contacted if there are any concerns or questions. We know our parents and carers really value our coach in their child's life, and their role as a trusted adult who supports and works with their child long-term and holistically. We would like to thank all our parents and carers. We couldn't do it without you.



If the FutureMe programme wasn't there, I don't know where Elias would have ended up. If you weren't involved in his school life, he could have gone down the wrong path. He wouldn't have been given the guidance to get where he is today and he could have chosen the wrong way.

When he joined, his behaviour completely changed – not in an instant because it took a while – but I could see gradual changes in the way he was holding himself. Before he would walk with his shoulders hunched down, literally head to the floor, no self-esteem, low confidence and then when his coach became involved and started to tell him he has potential, listened to him and guided him, his confidence grew. It was amazing to see.”

Nicola, parent of Elias, Swanlea School, London



Agreeing to join the MoveForward programme is the best decision you can make because your child will get the support and help they need. They will also be getting the best and safest advice to point them in the right direction and help them make the best decisions for the future.

Coach Kerry has worked very hard with Michael. She's extremely passionate in what she does and makes sure he's making the right decisions. She helps to encourage him and he's gained more confidence in what he wants to do and in himself. Kerry is extremely professional in her job. Well done - please keep up the good work we need more wonderful people like you to work with our young people.”

Flavia, parent of Michael, The Westminster School, Sandwell

Finance and operations

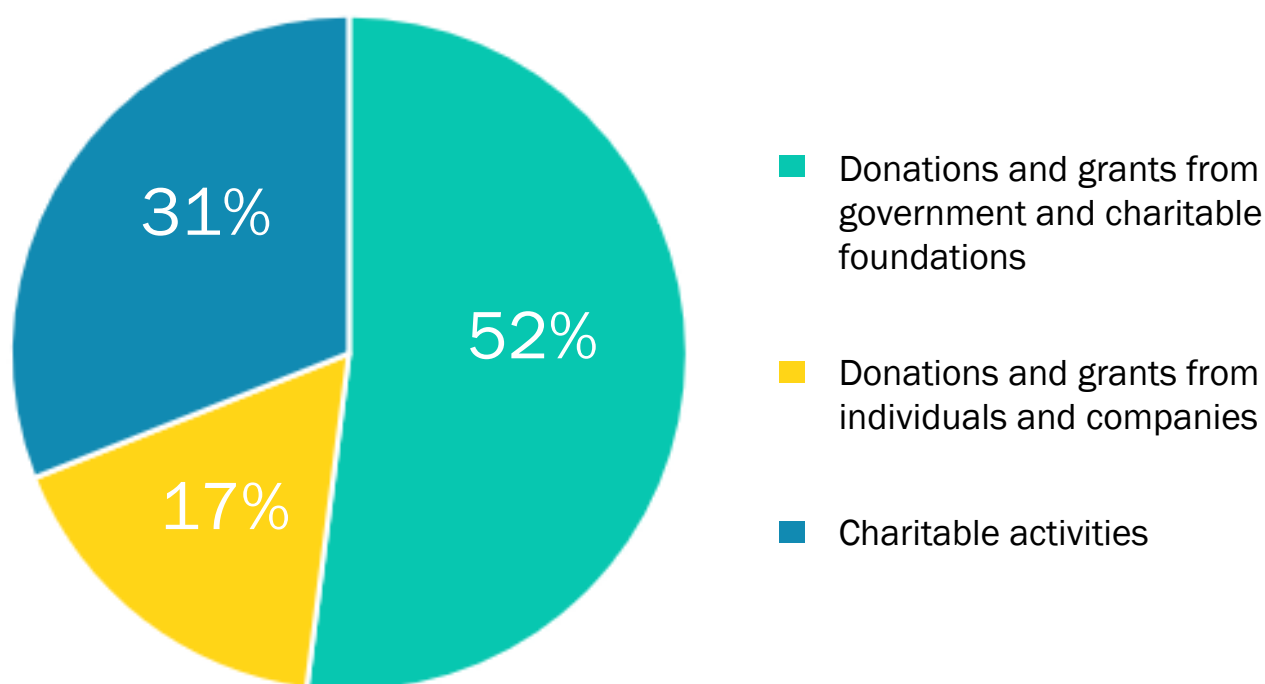
Income for the year which ended in August 2021 was £2.46 million which, given the pressures we and all those in the sector faced, was a remarkable achievement. We thank all of our loyal and generous supporters who believed in the importance of supporting our work during the lockdown restrictions.

Our income is made up predominantly of grants and donated income from a mix of funders including individuals, corporates and charitable trusts. We also secured programme contributions from all of our schools in 2020-21.

In the year to August 2021, we delivered a surplus of £38k, with expenditure totalling £2.42 million. To ensure we deliver the highest-quality programme, we invest over 80% of our costs on our highly qualified staff. Our operations and support costs account for just over 22% of expenditure.

Our free reserves were £911,000 at the end of August 2021 which equates to approximately four month's operating expenditure. Our cash levels give our trustees reassurance that we are in a strong financial position.

Sources of income



ThinkForward supporters

Our incredible community of partners provide valuable funds and volunteer their time, allowing ThinkForward to work with young people most in need of our support.

STRATEGIC FUNDERS



C. Hoare & Co, Credit Suisse, ICG and Impetus are also Ready for Work partners.

FUNDERS

17Capital*
Ardian Foundation*
Big Mamma Group*
Bird & Blend Tea Co.*
Charles Hayward Foundation
The Childhood Trust
Cinven
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Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
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State Street*
ThinkForward Trustees
Tides Foundation*
Warwickshire County Council

READY FOR WORK PARTNERS

ArcelorMittal Kent Wire
Ashminster House Care Home
ASK Apprenticeships
Aspinall Foundation
Benjamin Film Photography
Birmingham Repertory Theatre
British Motor Museum
Border Force
Boston Tea Party
C M Sounds
Cadent Gas

Catch22
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Construction Youth Trust
COOK
Delphi
Department for Work and Pensions
DFN-Project Search
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EY
Fusion
GLAA
Hadlow College
Heart of England Forest
Hilton Hotels & Resorts
Howlett's Wildlife Park
HMRC
Into Games
Islington Ecology Centre
Jenner
JP Morgan
KAMCOP
Kent HR
Kent Life
Kent Police
Kineton STEM Ambassadors
London City Airport
Maidstone TV Studios
Marriott Hotels
Metro Bank
Microsoft
MidKent College
Moorfield's Eye Hospital
National Farmers Union
National Grid
National Theatre
NatWest
NFU Mutual
NHS
Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Nottinghamshire Police
Open Doors Construction

Open Doors Construction
Pickering Perforated Products
Playground Games
Price & Buckland
Red Bull Racing
Rider Levett Bucknall
Royal British Legion Industries
Royal Shakespeare Company
Ruffles Doggy Day Care
SDL/MSSL
Sky Academy
Soapbox
Switch Cafe
The British Army
The Kids' Cookery School
The Royal Air Force
The Royal Navy
Tiger Cubs Nursery
Trent Barton
University of Kent
University of the Creative Arts
VOA
Wagamama
Wedlake Bell
West Kent and Ashford College
Winterwood Farms

PRO BONO AND IN KIND SUPPORTERS

Bain & Company
Capital One
Nottingham Sustainability and Enterprise Hub
Raspberry Pi
Travers Smith

*Also a Ready for Work Partner