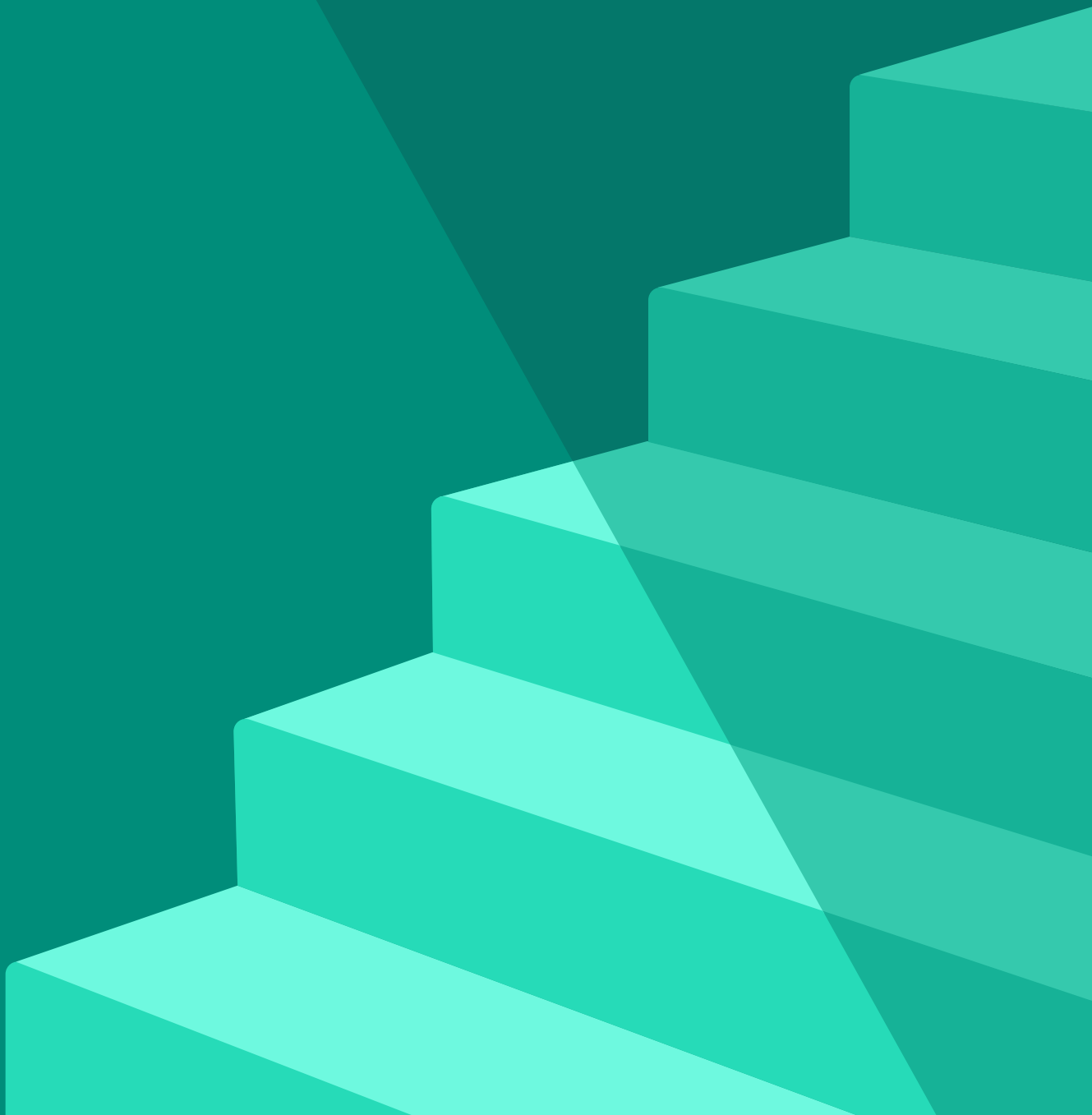




Addressing employment inequity for young people with learning disabilities and autism through coaching

Research findings



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Foreword

The system is consistently failing young people with learning disabilities and autism. These are young people who dream of working and who have unique talents and strengths to offer an employer. Many young people with learning disabilities and autism in employment demonstrate that they are loyal workers, yet as a marginalised group experience some of the poorest employment outcomes of any underserved group ThinkForward supports.

Only 4.8% of people with a learning disability in England known to adult social care **achieve paid work.**¹

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are statistically more likely than their peers to become long-term NEET.
(Not in Education, Employment or Training).²

Employment rates for people with autism or a learning disability are lower than for people with any other form of disability.³

1. [Employment Rates - BASE UK, December 2023](#)

2. [The Employment of Disabled People - Gov UK, February 2022](#)

3. [The Employment of Disabled People - Gov UK, February 2022](#)

Unfortunately, opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and autism to engage in work experience are limited. Some employers face challenges as they don't have access to the specialist skills and knowledge needed to support the development of work placements for young people with additional needs. This puts young people with learning disabilities and autism at risk of missing out on the opportunity to gain experience in context, develop their work readiness skills and access future paid sustainable employment.

Young people with learning disabilities and autism experience a complex and fragmented system of education, welfare, health and social care, and skills, training and employment provision, particularly as they transition from children to adult services.

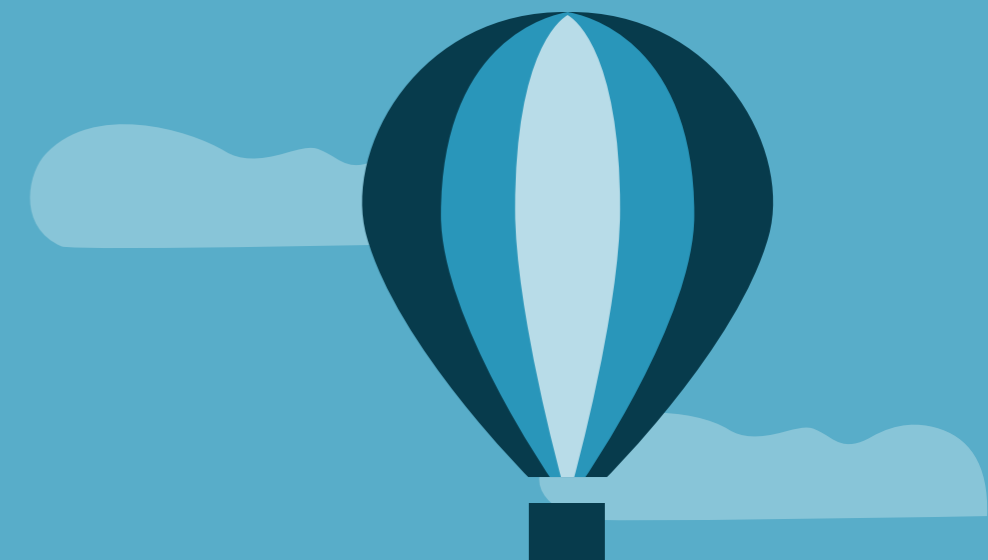
Our experience of working with young people with learning disabilities and autism and their circle of support has shown that they were disproportionately affected by the pandemic; they need others around them to believe in their potential and ability to work; and they face complex pathways into employment and training, with no single continuous point of navigation and multiple short-term interventions.

In addition, we know that employers, at a system level, need specialised support to be more inclusive. This includes adapting recruitment processes and accessing in-work support which goes beyond Access to Work funding parameters. Supported Employment providers often strive to arrange more innovative job brokerage solutions such as working interviews and work trials. However, they sometimes have no choice but to rely on traditional recruitment processes if these are not offered, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not allow young people with learning disabilities and autism to showcase their true potential.



Whilst we welcome the current significant focus on developing the supported internship pathway into employment for young people with learning disabilities and autism, our experience of working successfully alongside this model has identified a number of issues. The quality of internship placements and programmes can be variable, especially when not tied to an immersive workplace experience. The current requirement for an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) excludes a number of young people from taking up this option; we know that many young people with neurodiverse needs do not meet the threshold to secure an EHCP. Young people often need additional support wrapped around their internship to enable them to get the most out of the opportunity. Often job development can be started too late in the process, therefore meaning interns run out of time on their internship and leave without viable employment options.

The systemic issues which face young people with learning disabilities and autism have not changed since this programme was designed in 2017. It is within this context that ThinkForward's bespoke coaching and employability programme for young people with learning disabilities and autism was created.





Executive Summary

With only 4.8% of adults with learning disabilities known to adult social care in paid employment⁴, the system is ineffective in supporting young people with learning disabilities trying to enter the world of work. ThinkForward’s programme to support young people with mild to moderate learning disabilities and autism was designed to address this inequity.

The five-year programme ran from 2018 to 2023 and qualitative and quantitative research was commissioned to assess its impact from 2021 to 2024. Operating in London, Kent and the West Midlands, 283 young people were enrolled on the programme over the five years. 61 young people chose to leave the programme for a variety of reasons including maternity, pursuing other opportunities and disengagement.

When the programme ended in 2024, 104 young people remained in school or college. Of the 118 young people who were of working age and still on the programme at its closure, 80.5% were in education, employment, or training. 71% of this group were in paid employment, which is almost 15 times the national average for adults with learning disabilities in paid employment.

4. [Employment Rates - BASE UK, December 2023](#)

Over the duration of the programme

283
young people
enrolled



3 locations:
**London, Kent,
West Midlands**

£12m
created in
social value



Over £3 of
social value was created
for every £1 invested.

At the end of the programme, of those who were of working age and still enrolled



80.5% of young people were in education, employment, or training.



71% were in paid employment (15 times the national average for adults with learning disabilities).



Six key themes emerged from the qualitative and quantitative research:

1. Coaching and workplace insights led to positive transitions for participants.

Of the 118 young people who were of working age and still on the programme at its closure, 80.5% were in education, employment, or training. Those in employment or supported internships had high rates of one-to-one coaching and Ready for Work event attendance.

2. Tailoring the programme to young people's individual needs led to successful transitions.

The programme was designed to adapt to the needs of individual young people, being delivered 'with', not 'to' them, and supported them to find the education and employment outcomes that worked for them and their circumstances.

3. Providing wraparound support for participants' families is critical to support positive transitions.

Qualitative feedback highlighted how families felt better able to support their child to make an informed decision about where they should go next and were greatly reassured that their coach would be with them throughout the journey. Individuals with a higher number of parental engagements were more likely to have attended a higher number of one-to-one coaching sessions.

4. The transition from school to employment is likely to be more than one step for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Young people who ended the programme in full-time employment had an average of 3.7 transitions, suggesting that young people with learning disabilities and autism require more time, experience and opportunities to develop the skills and qualities required to achieve their desired full-time employment outcome.

5. Employers and education providers value extra support to provide employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Employer partners reported that they value the expertise and connections enabled by the programme which made engaging with young people with learning disabilities more efficient and focused. Employers reported benefits for their staff who described increased wellbeing and satisfaction from supporting young people to progress or to overcome challenges. Education providers welcomed ThinkForward's blend of support which enhanced their own offerings by finding employment opportunities for young people.

6. The programme created high value long-term outcomes for its participants and society.

The programme clearly delivered long-term value. It led to the creation of £12m in social value with £5m directly attributable to the programme. Over £3 of social value was created for every £1 invested.



Recommendations

Based on research of young people with learning disabilities and autism who were on ThinkForward’s programme from 2018 to 2023, ThinkForward proposes the following recommendations to successfully support young people to gain the skills and qualities they need to transition from school into positive destinations and be able to envisage successful futures.



1. Provide programmes with qualified coaches⁵ at their core.

The coach’s role is pivotal to the successful engagement of young people with learning disabilities and their families. They help build confidence and skills for the young people and enable their families to see the possibilities for future success. They are a vital link with the business community, creating work insight and placement opportunities which would otherwise be closed to the young people. They are trusted advocates for all parties without whom the programme would not work.

2. Shape programmes led by the skills and aspirations of young people.

The co-design of the programme with young people, parents and employers is vital to its success. The programme needs to have flexibility built in to adapt both to the needs of individual young people and the local labour market.

3. Focus on employers’ needs as much as those of young people.

Employers require support in order to feel confident delivering opportunities in their workplace for young people with learning disabilities. Programmes need to include preparatory training and guidance for employers to support them to take on young people as volunteers, interns and employees.

4. Provide wraparound support for young people’s families.

Families benefit from support to have discussions with their child about making informed decisions about their future and appreciate reassurance that their child is capable of achieving a positive transition.

5. It is important to note the distinction between ThinkForward progression coaches and Systematic Instruction-trained job coaches. Both play integral roles in the 'navigate and sustain' aspects of supported employment, with the former focusing on personal development and overcoming barriers alongside brokering experiences and opportunities, while the latter specialises in teaching on the job-specific skills and structured learning.

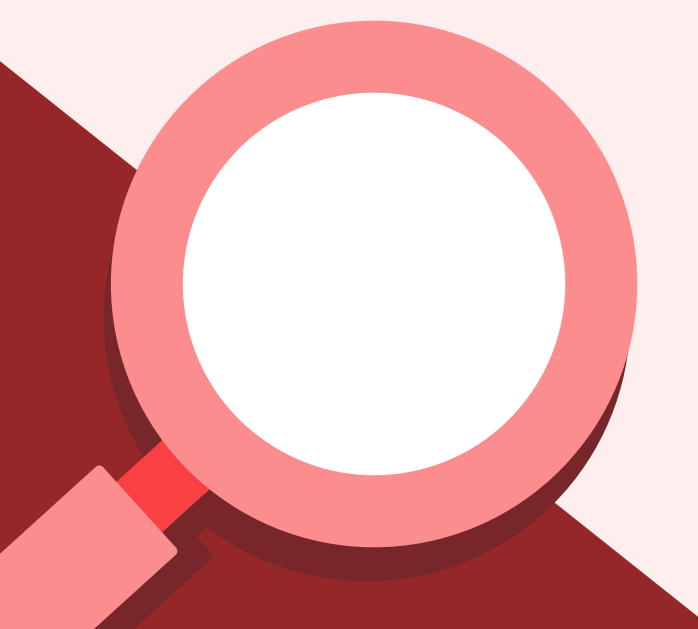


Background

Approach

The programme was developed in response to recognition that the life chances for young people with learning disabilities remain below their peers. Having identified the gap in support, ThinkForward provided long-term coach-led support to develop the employability skills of young people with learning disabilities and autism and connect their career aspirations to paid employment. Following a pilot in 2017, the programme started in earnest in 2018 in London, Medway in Kent and the West Midlands. It supported young people with mild to moderate learning disabilities to assist them into sustainable paid employment. The programme ran over the course of five academic years from 2018 to 2023, involving a total of 283 young people across five cohorts. The 2020 and 2021 cohorts were smaller due to restrictions in implementing the programme during the Covid-19 pandemic. ThinkForward continued to support young people through to March 2024.

The five-year programme was set up under a Social Impact Bond (SIB). It was funded by two commissioners; DFN Foundation (a private foundation) and Life Chances Fund (administered by the National Lottery Community Fund with funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport). Big Issue Invest was the investor in the SIB.



The programme supported young people with learning disabilities and autism through their journey from school to sustainable employment.

Funding through the SIB was based on four outcomes being delivered by ThinkForward: the number of young people enrolled in the programme; the number of activities which helped the young people prepare for the world of work; the number of work skills qualifications achieved by the young people on the programme; and the number of sustained paid jobs secured by the young people on the programme.

A team of qualified coaches were employed by ThinkForward to support the young people for the full five years through their transition journey, advocate for them and prepare them for moves from school into college, supported internships, apprenticeships and employment. Their role was also to build partnerships with local businesses. They secured volunteers in businesses to provide young people with insights into the world of work, work experience placements and, ultimately, employment opportunities.

Research Methodology

ThinkForward commissioned three strands of independent research to assess the programme qualitatively, quantitatively and to model its social value. Over 50 in-depth interviews were conducted with young people, ThinkForward partners and staff, schools, employers and commissioners by Paul Rhodes Consulting, an independent research organisation, between 2021 and 2023. Quantitative analysis based on data collected over the five years of the programme was carried out by Sarah Tipping, an independent data analyst, at the end of the programme. A social return on investment (SROI) modelling analysis of the full five-year programme was conducted by Envoy Partnership, a social value and impact management consultancy.

For more detailed information about the research methodology, see our appendix on page 32.



Key Themes

Coaching and workplace insights led to positive transitions for young people

Coaches advocated for and supported young people to progress into college, supported internships, apprenticeships and other job creation schemes. Of the 118 young people who were work-ready, of employable age and still on the programme at its closure, 80.5% were in education, employment, or training. 71% of this group were in paid employment, which is almost 15 times the national average for adults with learning disabilities in paid employment.

The programme involved coaching and Ready for Work events, which when analysed, gave clear indications of their effectiveness and impact.

One-to-one coaching sessions between the young person and their coach provided participants with support and enabled coaches to monitor progress. On average, young people attended nine one-to-one coaching sessions while enrolled on the programme. Those who ended in employment or supported internships had high rates of one-to-one coaching attendance, but the group who attended the most one-to-ones were those who were NEET or volunteering (see **GRAPH A**). This supports the theory that coaching is a critical aspect of the programme, for those who ended in a positive destination, but especially valued by those who are struggling to secure full-time employment.

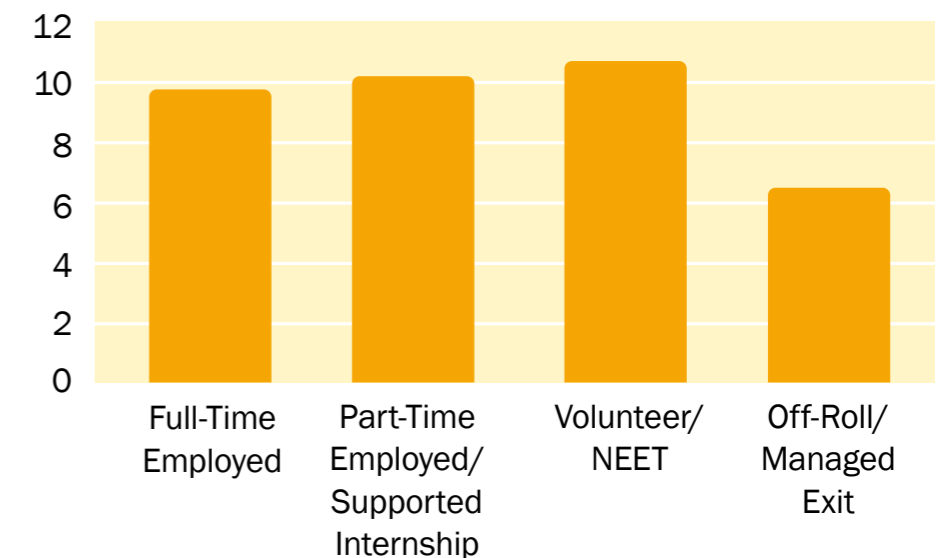
I don't have a job at the moment but I'm currently doing a barista course because I've always had a passion to work as a catering assistant. My coach taught me about CVs, cover letters and how to be interview ready.



– Jordan, young person

Coaches motivated and supported young people to believe that employment is a viable option for them and provided the opportunities and support to connect employers to young people for mutual benefit. Coaches presented these pathways without leading or prescribing and, crucially, enabled young people to have direct experience of some of them. The follow-on support, embodied by the coach, during and post-education or an internship, increased the likelihood of successful, sustained transitions. Key moments of change most commonly happen as a young person approaches the end of school or college. There is likely to be a causal relationship between the more intensive support offered by community-based coaches working with both young people and employers and the outcomes achieved.

Mean Number of One-to-Ones Attended



GRAPH A



Ready for Work events attended included business mentoring, insight days, transition preparation and work experience. Those who secured employment or supported internships had higher rates of Ready for Work event attendance (averaging between 9 and 14 events) than those who were NEET or volunteering (see **GRAPH B**). Those in part-time work or on supported internships were the most actively involved. The evidence indicates that low attendance is linked to exiting the programme.

Work readiness was measured using a capability score of 1 to 5 to assess young people’s employability skills. The 10 skills measured were aspiration, interpersonal communication, being receptive, verbal communication, being self-assured, resilience, being self-aware, independent living skills, independent travel, and organisation.

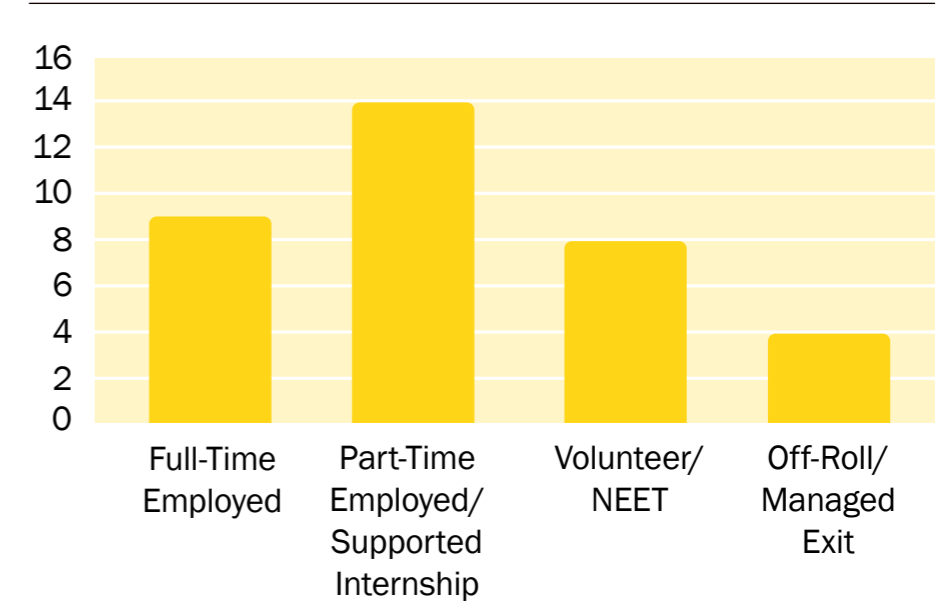
A composite score was generated to combine the scores for each of the work readiness capabilities given to each individual. The average composite scores were consistently higher for young people who ended the programme in full-time employment and lowest for those who exited the programme (see **GRAPH C**).

I am seeing massive progress in A. Now I can see him talking more, not only to me, but his team members. He’s starting to talk to customers.



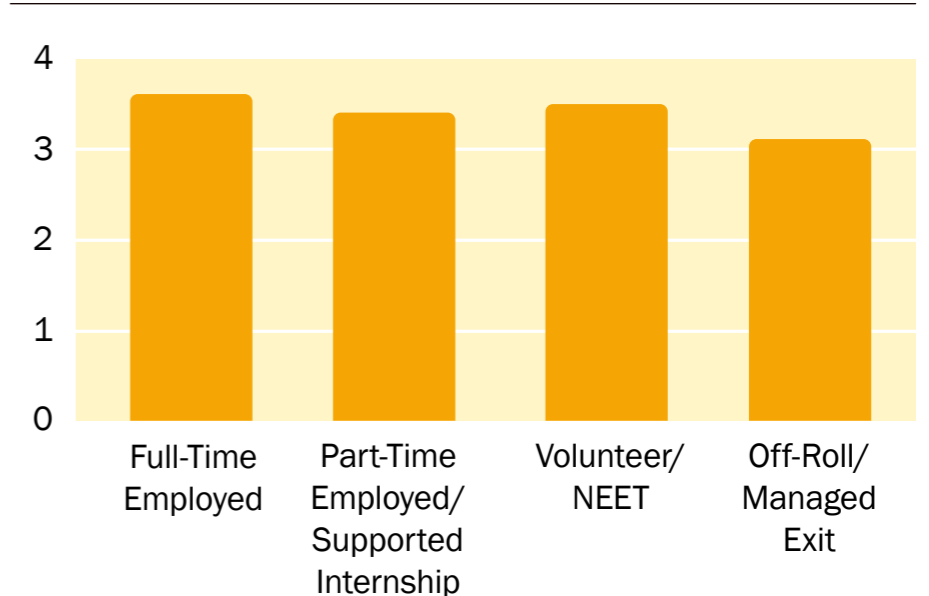
– Ivan, Barfection

Mean Number of Events Attended



GRAPH B

Mean Composite Skill Scores



GRAPH C



The research also found that work readiness skills generally increased over time, reflecting the improved skills and confidence young people gained over the course of the programme. The amount of change varied according to the specific skill. The biggest increase in scores was for resilience, followed by independent travel (see **GRAPH D**).

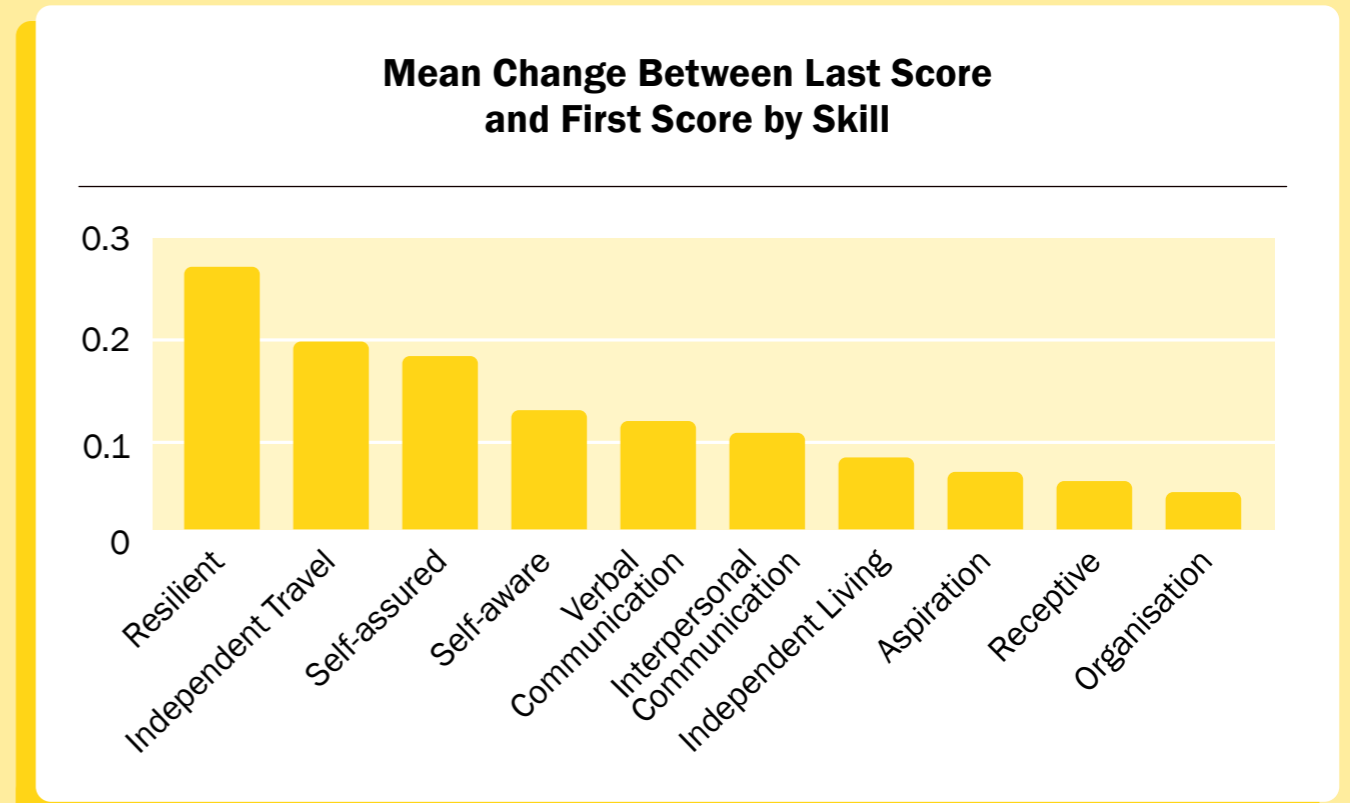
Whilst those in full-time employment generally had higher scores than those in part-time employment or supported internships, the latter group generally had larger change scores over time, suggesting the programme supported those in part-time employment or supported internships to catch up to those who secured full-time employment (see **GRAPH E**).

While there are other influences involved, the majority of the young people became more aware of their strengths, skills and interests while on the programme, and crucially how these might relate to future work. Feedback from stakeholders suggested that the development of employability skills is accelerated for young people when they have the opportunity to use them in real employment situations. Case study evidence supports this, for example, employers observing young people who developed their skills on real life work rotations in different roles.

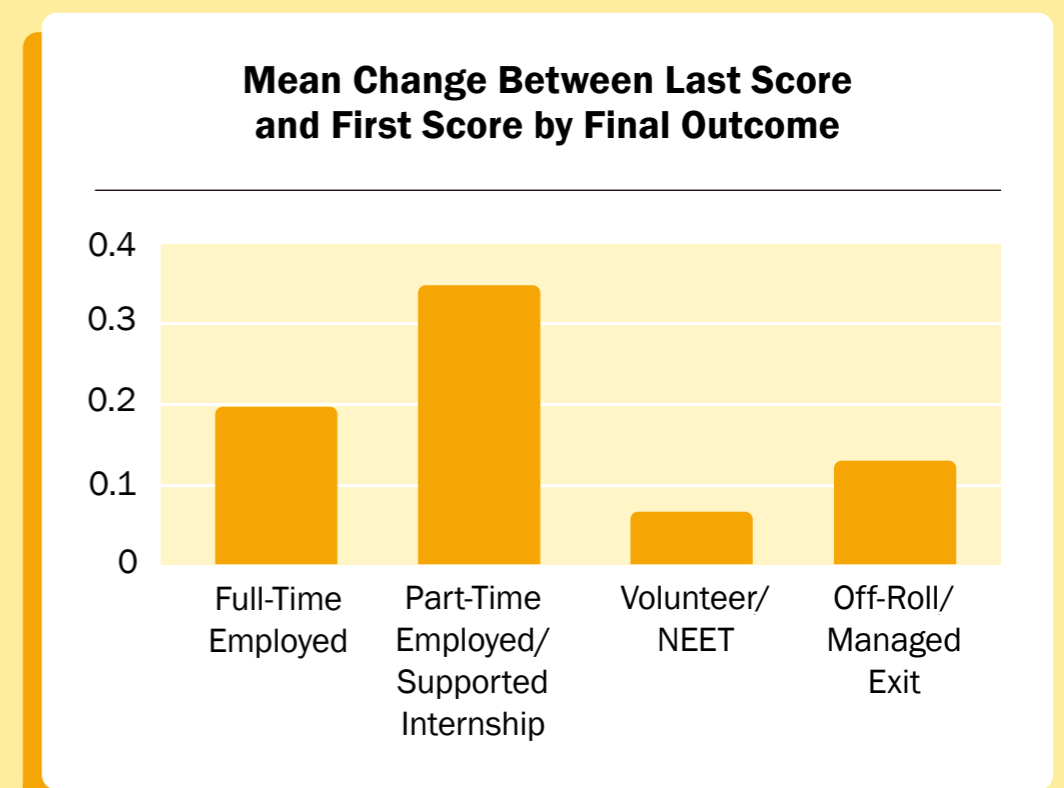
Four young men joined us for a 3-week placement. They were split across the warehouse floor and the office, learning real practical skills that full-time employees would exercise, from dealing with customer enquiries and drivers on the phone to pallet wrapping. It was clear from our first insight day that they were unsure what to expect and were quite quiet and reserved. But as the placement started, they clearly grew in confidence. You could tell they were being themselves, bringing their humour and energy to work, and were really part of the team.



– Emma, DHL



GRAPH D



GRAPH E



Key Themes

Tailoring the programme to young people's individual needs led to successful transitions.

A valued feature of the programme is the extent to which progression coaches tailored delivery to the skills and aspirations of young people, helping them to connect to suitable opportunities. Young people remained in control and decided, with support, what was the best next step for them towards employment.

Young people with learning disabilities and autism have a variety of different needs and requirements for employment opportunities. A small, but significant proportion of young people were in part-time employment at the end of the programme.

The ThinkForward team assessed Matt's needs and really took the time to get to know him and his strengths. They provided the space for him to express interests that I hadn't elicited as a parent, for example that he enjoys fixing things.



– Mandy, parent

It's a really good programme because it really focuses on what the young person wants.



– Jake, young person

The way the coaches have helped me is they recognise my potential and my passion to where I want to be, which is working in transport.



– David, young person

There were a number of reasons for young people opting for shorter working hours which included studying whilst working; it suited their physical and mental health needs; pay levels did not cross the threshold for stopping benefits and changing household finances; it allowed young people to engage in other activities such as volunteering and gaining further experience, and completing driving lessons in regions where transport is a challenge.

Young people are also going through huge life changes – some are entering employment as well as starting to live independently, and part-time hours supports this adjustment. Once young people have their 'foot in the door' there is more likelihood of increasing their hours to suit their needs and desires. Quite often if young people start in full-time positions and this becomes overwhelming, they are less likely to sustain their job, bringing them back to square one. The programme did not have a set route or outcome that participants had to follow, allowing them the freedom to find the right opportunities for their individual needs.

Another valued feature of the programme is the extent to which coaches successfully built on the core programme elements to tailor delivery differently in each region to reflect both their cohorts' needs and the needs of local employers. Analysis of the factors underlying the change in young people's work readiness revealed that regional factors are a strong predictor of success. While employability skills are universal, rather than regional, the programme's ability to navigate and connect employability skills to the strengths and aspirations of each young person and to the needs of local employers is key. This adaptability is particularly important given regional variations such as access to other services, differences in the labour market that affect job opportunities and the nature of available work, and transportation barriers, especially in rural areas.



Key Themes

Providing wraparound support for participants' families is critical for the success of the programme.

Stakeholders affirmed that family support is a critical factor in the success of a young person's transition to employment and in social mobility more broadly. Young people need to know their families are supporting their journey and, equally, their families need reassuring that those journeys are accessible for the young people. Young people and families reported that they could rely on ThinkForward to be there for them – greatly reducing their anxiety. The belief, connections and persistence of the coaches normalise the concept that young people will work – for parents and families. Qualitative feedback highlighted how families felt better able to support their child to make an informed decision about where they should go next and were greatly reassured that their coach would be with them throughout the journey.

ThinkForward uses an asset-based approach, focusing on young people's strengths, this can help young people's circles of support to re-examine what they consider their child to be capable of. Coaches and employment partners consider the positive views of the family to be vital as without their support and influence, young people may be more reluctant to take on new experiences and opportunities.

The families of those who completed the programme in full-time employment had the lowest number of parental contacts whereas those who ended the programme NEET or volunteering had the highest number of parental engagements. Individuals with a higher number of parental engagements were also more likely to have attended a higher number of one-to-one coaching sessions, supporting the theory that the greater the need, the greater the engagement.

Matt's coach helped him with his CV and to prepare for interviews, supporting him to get an internship. She also helped break down what roles are, gave him positive feedback and helped him identify his skills.

The team were very responsive to mine and Matt's queries and questions, which I really appreciated. One main difference ThinkForward offer is a respectful approach, they included Matt and gave him the opportunity to shape the way things moved.

I feel a weight lifted off my shoulders, ThinkForward took my worries related to Matt's future away.



– Mandy, parent

MoveForward is centred around the individual, it offers the tools and life skills to become independent. Confidence is the main skill I have seen Charlie* develop.

Charlie has big ideas and inspirations. I didn't want to pop his balloon, and MoveForward has really helped him to navigate these big ideas.

I really think Charlie would be lost without MoveForward – it's so hard for parents to find out what support there is.



– Charlie's* parent

If parents aren't with us, then it's not happening.



– Coach



Key Themes

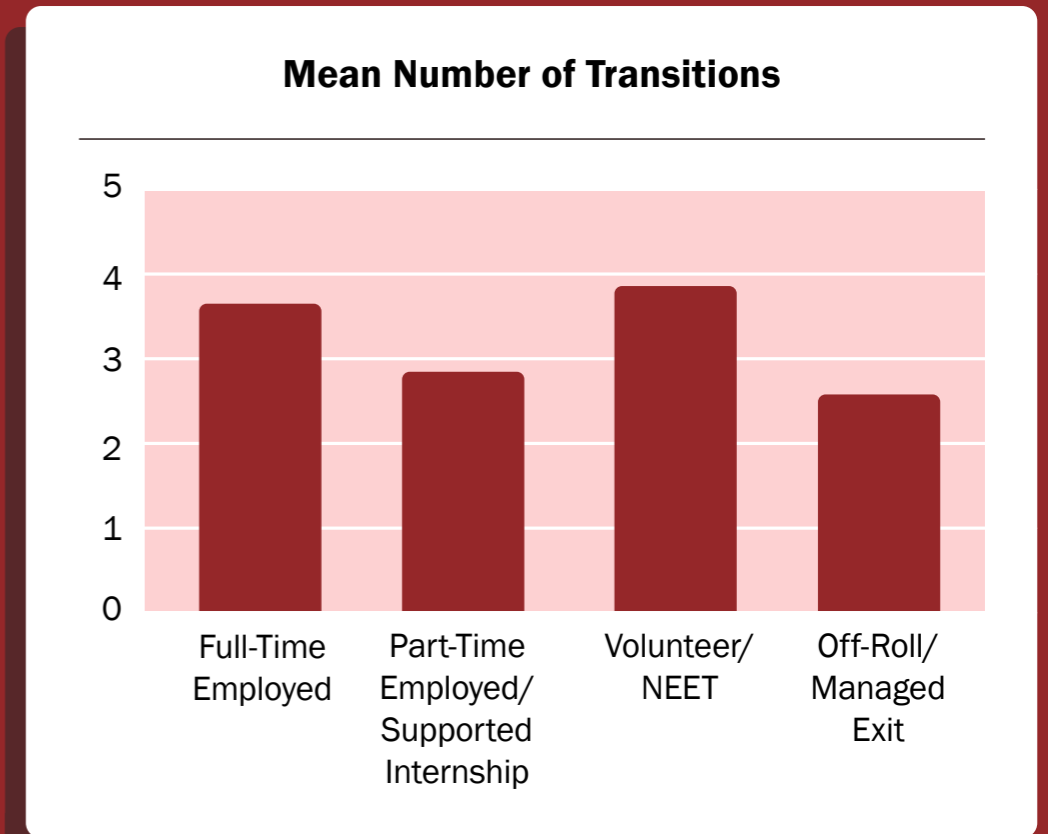
The transition from school to employment is likely to be more than one step for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Transitions from school to education, volunteering, training or employment were examined to understand the journeys this group of young people undertook. **The whole group made an average of three transitions**, but this hides some variation across the cohort. Those who ended the programme as NEET or volunteering had the highest average number of transitions (3.9), followed by those in full-time employment (3.7) and those who ended the programme in part-time work or a supported internship (2.9), (see **GRAPH F**).

The high number of transitions for NEET young people and volunteers is caused by their continued engagement in the programme but highlights their setbacks and need for additional support. The lower number for part-time workers and supported interns suggests they were making more straightforward progress but at a slower rate.

We also observed that young people with learning disabilities needed more work-ready skills preparation in schools as part of the curriculum. By the time they were of work-ready age, they were still further away from the labour market than we had anticipated.

Over the full programme, 90 young people entered into a supported internship with 9% of participants who completed the programme ending in supported internships. Over half of the participants who ended the programme in full-time employment had been on a supported internship, demonstrating how useful these are as a pathway to employment for young people with learning disabilities and autism. They experienced accelerated and sustained outcomes, making them well-placed for future employment.



GRAPH F

I tried lots of different things. It helped me realised the jobs I don't want to do as well.



- Stephanie, young person





Key Themes

The programme effectively supported employers and education providers.



Employers

The programme worked effectively in partnership with local supported internship providers and employers to ensure the talents of young people are understood, supported and nurtured. Employers were a vital part of the programme, enabling connections and opportunities for young people that would not otherwise take place. ThinkForward’s skill in identifying, supporting and enabling employers to get involved has been beneficial for all involved. Partners praised ThinkForward’s proactiveness, relational skills and connectedness to the local labour market.

Coaches also were positive role models for businesses, especially in the way they interact with and talk about young people with learning disabilities and autism, by focusing on young people’s strengths.

Employers reported that as a result of working in partnership, they are more aware of learning disabilities, and much more attuned to the skills and talents young people have. Businesses that recruited have become advocates for the contributions young people with learning disabilities and autism can bring to their workforce.

Employers gained from these encounters too, highlighting a range of benefits for businesses, not least increased profitability.

Employers have very little to lose and much to gain.



– Credit Suisse

They approached the placement with a desire to be disciplined and work hard which was refreshing. The unexpected part was how their presence brought even more out of my team.



– Peter, DHL



Education Providers

Qualitative feedback indicates the strong added value that education providers gain from working in partnership with ThinkForward, by adding capacity and expertise for students and staff. School senior leaders report how ThinkForward is benefitting their teacher practice and supporting improvements in the curriculum, such as taking aspects of the Ready for Work activities and including them in their own practice as well as re-writing the careers curriculum to start earlier – from age 11.

Schools and colleges also described how ThinkForward’s blend of one-to-one support, Ready for Work activities, and employer encounters extends and enhances what they can do for themselves – finding valuable employment opportunities for young people. Schools reported that they would be very unlikely to find ThinkForward’s employer connections for themselves. Over the last seven years, Samuel Rhodes school has reduced the percentage of college destinations from 100% to 56% and increased the percentage of supported internships from 0% to 44%.

The impact that ThinkForward’s programme has had on our provision has been phenomenal. We started working with Vinny in September 2017, which was the first academic year we had a pupil go into a supported internship, she is now working full time at Moorfields Eye Hospital.



– Jenny Johns, Deputy Head at Samuel Rhodes School



Key Themes

The programme created high value long-term outcomes for its participants and wider society.

The programme provided support to young people at a formative time in their lives, therefore creating the conditions for longer-term economic and social impacts to be achieved.

The findings from ThinkForward’s commissioned Social Return on Investment (SROI) study showed that the overall programme led to the creation of £12m in social value with £5m directly attributable. The SROI ratio was 3.22:1 meaning that over £3 of social value was created for every £1 invested. This was calculated from increased income and wellbeing through sustainable employment; increased income from supported internships; and fiscal benefits from sustainable employment.

Young people who progressed into sustained work described a range of benefits as well as financial, including independence, improved mental health and pride at developing a career.

Coaches reported that young people in work often start to consider moving out of the family home to be more independent; something they were unlikely to have considered before. Given the additional barriers faced by young people with learning disabilities and their families, work plays an important part in overcoming societal inequalities, the development of social capital and reducing isolation and social exclusion.

£12m
created in
social value



Over £3 of
social value was created
for every £1 invested.

I'm having more confidence. I'm having my own money come in. I've got my own savings account. I'm saving up for a house and I've become more independent at home. I do my own cleaning, my own washing, I'm doing my own shopping for work. I travel on my own and travel to work.



– Jody, young person

I can spend the money on things I want to spend it on. I also pay my taxes now! For my moped.



– Matt, young person





Appendix – Methodology

Quantitative Analysis

283 participants were enrolled on MoveForward. 61 young people chose to leave the programme for a variety of reasons including maternity, pursuing other opportunities and disengagement. A further proportion were too young or joined the programme too late to see it through to completion. These low sample sizes impact on the scope of the data analysis. The numbers are too few to allow robust statistical testing between groups of participants or allow any statistical modelling (the statistical power will be low due to the small sample size, meaning it would not be possible to say with certainty that differences identified are genuine or due to random variation).

The quantitative analysis was therefore confined to descriptive statistics, such as means and proportions. It shows the proportion of participants (or the mean number of participants, where appropriate) who have specific characteristics or have reached specific milestones/participated in each activity. Hence the analysis will show the overall proportion of participants who had completed a CV, for example, then show how this broke down by relevant demographics giving an indication of the variation between groups of participants in reaching different milestones.

Qualitative Analysis

The evaluation summary covers the period 2018-2023. It draws on all monitoring evidence available as of May 2023 and 50 new evaluation interviews with young people, delivery team and partners, schools, employers and commissioners. The goal was to arrive at a balanced, honest assessment of progress towards three Key Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent has the DFN-MoveForward programme created the best conditions for positive transitions for young people and their families?

2. Did the programme effectively support education partners and employers?
3. Did the programme create better value long term outcomes for participants?

Social Return on Investment modelling

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) model was commissioned to give an estimate of the social value created by the programme. The model draws on the SROI Guide published by Social Value International using data that ThinkForward collected on the programme along with additional qualitative and quantitative research gathered.

It incorporates five outcomes. For programme participants it includes increased income through sustainable employment; increased wellbeing through sustainable employment; increased income through supported internships and increased wellbeing through supported internships. For the government it assessed the fiscal benefits created through sustainable employment. Value is calculated for each outcome individually through the SROI, firstly in the first year of benefit and then for subsequent years of benefit.

Data was based on the 2018 cohort, as students from more recent cohorts had less time to achieve employment outcomes. The SROI model was based on 283 young people and data on employment outcomes was based on a sample of 117 young people.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS Annual Population Survey regression models) and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Quality Adjusted Life Years were used to assess wellbeing and value. The model draws on the Adults Social Care Outcomes Framework and used displacement rates from the Department of Work and Pensions. A future year discounted rate was applied drawing on HM Treasury guidance.



Acknowledgements

The ThinkForward team would like to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this research report.

We are grateful to DFN Foundation, Life Chances Fund, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Big Issue Invest. Their commitment to our mission enabled us to undertake this important research and work towards our shared goal of improving employment outcomes for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Thank you to all the young people, their families, our business partners and school partners who took part in the research. We are grateful to our research partners for carrying out this research: Paul Rhodes Consulting, Sarah Tipping and Envoy Partnership.


We appreciate the dedication and hard work of our staff members who contributed to writing this report. Thank you to Jo Pike, Kathryn Wood, Robert Posner and Vincenza De Falco.

Thank you to Jess Yanzio for designing this report.

We are grateful to the original programme designers, Emily Sun from YM&M and Joe Prendeville. We could not have delivered this programme without our school partners: Bradfields Academy, City & Islington College, Samuel Rhodes School, The Westminster School and Welcombe Hills Academy.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to acknowledge and thank all the incredible young people who took part in our programme.

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