

The Power of Coaching

Addressing employment inequity for
under-served young people through coaching

Research findings



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Foreword

Youth unemployment levels

At the time of writing, youth unemployment levels in the UK are at an all-time high. An estimated 15.1% of people aged 18 to 24 years in the UK were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in July to September 2025.¹ This figure has risen dramatically over recent years, reaching an eleven-year high of almost one million. Additionally, 60% of NEET young people are economically inactive, meaning they are not actively looking for work.² The instability of the political environment over the last decade has had a vast impact on factors that can affect young people's chances of finding employment, including changes to the welfare system, housing, the education system and initiatives for young people to enter the workplace. Additionally, over the past decade, young people's mental health has declined dramatically.³

The likelihood of being NEET is higher for young people facing 'multiple forms of disadvantage'.⁴ Research by Impetus found that young people with special educational needs and low qualifications, who are also eligible for free school meals, are nearly three times more likely to be NEET than average.⁵ They also found that young people from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds are 50% more likely to be NEET than their similarly qualified but better-off peers.⁶

We know that young people who face challenges are also more likely to be excluded from mainstream education, which can impact their likelihood of being NEET. Research by The Difference has shown that those eligible for free school meals were nearly five times more likely to be permanently excluded than their non-eligible peers in 2022/23.⁷ Further research has shown that almost 1 in every 5 'disadvantaged' pupils in Years 9 and 10 were suspended or excluded at least once in 2023/24.⁸ Supporting under-served young people with targeted interventions has been proven to address inequity.

Concerningly, 45% of 24 year olds who are NEET have never had a job.⁹ Being NEET when young can have a long-term scarring effect: those who are NEET between the ages of 18 and 19 are 20% more likely to be unemployed as much as ten years later.¹⁰ Recognising key transition points in a young person's life and intervening with appropriate support can radically change this statistic.

For the first time in 20 years, the government has launched a National Youth Strategy – a framework that recognises the realities young people face and places their voices at the centre. We are pleased to see that part of the strategy is to provide young people with someone they can trust. We want to see the role of our trusted progression coaches replicated across the country for all those young people who are most in need.



Our research demonstrates the importance of young people having a trusted adult outside of their family from whom they can seek guidance as they transition from school into employment.

1. [ONS, 2025](#)
2. [Resolution Foundation, 2025](#)
3. [McGorry et al, 2025](#)
4. As we will explain on page 8, ThinkForward has a preference not to use the term 'disadvantaged', but we have used it here when directly quoting research and other authors.
5. [Impetus, 2025](#)
6. [Impetus, 2019](#)
7. [The Difference, 2024](#)
8. [FFT Education Datalab, 2024](#)
9. [Resolution Foundation, 2025](#)
10. [Impetus, 2025](#)



Cost to society

We know that reducing the number of NEET young people in the UK would not only improve the quality of young people's lives but would also lead to a reduced cost to society and increased economic benefits. In the Netherlands, huge improvements have been made to reduce youth unemployment. Calculations by the Youth Employment Group demonstrate that if the UK reduced the number of NEET young people to the same levels as the Netherlands, it could generate as much as £69 billion in economic benefits.¹¹ The Centre for Young Lives found that for every £1 spent on youth centres, workers, and positive activities, at least £2.40 is returned in financial, social, and economic benefits.¹² Research has shown that preventing a child from being permanently excluded from school at age 14 could save the state at least £170,000 over their lifetime in costs associated with negative outcomes.¹³



Preventing a child from being permanently excluded from school at age 14 could save the state at least £170,000 over their lifetime.¹³

11. Lifetime savings calculation by the Youth Employment Group, based on the GDP multiplier calculations in *The Youth Employment Index* (PwC and The Youth Futures Foundation, p. 95). *Youth Jobs Gap, Impetus, 2025*.
12. *Centre for Young Lives, 2025*
13. *The Difference, 2024*
14. *Youth Employment UK, 2025*

Access to career support

Recent findings from the Youth Voice Census highlighted that access to career support has declined in the last year.¹⁴ Only 32% of students had received face-to-face careers advice this year, and just 30% had careers lessons, and 23% had received an employer visit. Additionally, the survey showed that young people value work experience; 74% said it helps them understand work. However, overall, just 26% of young people currently in education, from secondary school to university, undertook work experience in the past year. 47% of young people believe that a lack of work experience is a barrier to finding employment.

More access to the world of work and more work experience is vital to prepare young people as they transition from school.



Our work

In response to this context, which remains largely unchanged over the last decade, ThinkForward developed the FutureMe programme in 2016 to address these inequities. The programme provides extra support for young people who are statistically at risk of becoming NEET when they leave school. Our coaches become the trusted adults young people most at risk need to help develop their plans for future careers. Our Ready for Work activities add to the careers advice young people receive at school.

ThinkForward believes that structural barriers create the disproportionate outcomes for under-served young people to successfully navigate their transition to further education and employment. Our coaching-focused approach is one that intentionally supports young people to take responsibility and control for their solutions. However, we do not believe this supersedes the very real systemic issues that all stakeholders need to be a part of addressing.

Throughout this report we have intentionally chosen to use certain language based on current preferred terms from the people and communities they are referring to. We recognise that these terms may change over time but are the most appropriate at the time of writing. We use 'under-served' to refer to people who face challenges in their lives due to the fact they are under-resourced and under-served by societal systems, to reinforce the notion that inequity is a result of societal disparities rather than individual circumstances.

As we present the research findings from our FutureMe programme, we have an ongoing commitment to driving meaningful change for young people and their journey to education, employment and training, fuelled by a dedication to creating a more just and equitable society for all young people.

We hope that this research, which presents the positive impact coaching can have on young people will influence a widespread implementation of progression coaching to support young people to secure brighter futures. We would like to emphasise the difference between coaching and mentoring; whilst there is already a plethora of research highlighting the benefits of mentoring, we are excited to present our research findings about coaching, which has the power to help young people develop a solution-focused approach to use their autonomy and equip them with the tools to navigate the challenges they face throughout the rest of their lives.





Executive Summary

Young people from under-served backgrounds are 50% more likely to be NEET than their similarly qualified but better-off peers.¹⁵ ThinkForward's FutureMe programme was designed to address this inequity by providing the support young people who face challenges in their lives need to successfully transition into employment.

The five-year programme supports young people in Kent, London and Nottingham by providing one-to-one coaching and workplace activities. Young people are supported to develop the skills, confidence and independence they need to secure employment and build brighter futures.

Our findings



The conclusion from our research, based on four key findings, is that the programme works: providing coaching from trusted adults and workplace exposure supports young people to successfully transition into employment, even if they achieve low GCSE grades. 73% of our programme graduates are EET*. The most comparable national benchmark for young people with at least two risk factors associated with unemployment is 53%.¹⁶ ThinkForward young people typically face multiple risk factors, yet still outperform this national benchmark, demonstrating the programme's impact. Additionally, our programme positively impacts wider society. A Social Return of Investment study showed that £3 of social value was created for every £1 invested in the programme. This is a higher value than research has shown for other youth work in our sector.

15. [Impetus, 2019](#)

16. [Gov UK, 2025](#) (Government destination data for post-16 to 18 year olds who have not achieved Key Stage 4 English & Maths grades 9-4, and are defined as disadvantaged, meeting at least one of the following criteria: a) Have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years; b) Have been looked after by their local authority for at least 1 day; c) Have left care through adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order).



73% of programme graduates are EET (compared to 53% of comparable peers not on our programme).

91% of post-16s with low grade GCSEs were EET

£3 of social value created for every £1 invested

More coaching sessions → More likely to be EET

0-8 sessions



34+ sessions

79 percentage points difference

79 percentage points more likely to be EET if attend more than 34 coaching sessions, compared to attending 0 to 8 coaching sessions

More Ready for Work events → More likely to be EET

0 sessions



8+ sessions

27 percentage points difference

27 percentage points more likely to be EET if attend more than 8 events compared to attending 0

*EET = in Education, Employment or Training



Four key findings emerge from our research:



1. Coaching from a trusted adult is vital: Having more coaching sessions increased young people's likelihood of being EET

Our research shows that frequent one-to-one coaching is highly effective: attending at least 34 coaching sessions significantly increases the likelihood of being in Education, Employment, or Training. ThinkForward's young-person-centred coaching model builds trusted, consistent relationships which help young people develop aspirations and navigate challenges. Coaches play a multi-faceted role - providing authentic guidance, practical employability support and safe, relatable spaces that build confidence and support smooth transitions into post-16 pathways and work.

2. Workplace exposure is crucial: Young people who attended between 8 and 13 events were 27 percentage points more likely to be EET 6 months after graduating

Our Ready for Work events give young people workplace exposure, mentoring, and practical skills, and attending more of these events is linked to higher chances of being EET. These experiences broaden career understanding, build confidence, and motivate young people to pursue future goals, while employers value the impact they see and the opportunity to develop future talent pipelines. Volunteers benefit personally, with many noting the meaningful difference they can make and the positive transformations they observe in the young people they support.

3. The programme works: Young people who graduated from our programme are 20 points more likely to be EET than the national government statistic for the most comparable group of young people

The programme effectively supports young people at high risk of becoming NEET, with 73% of graduates in education, employment or training six months after graduating - well above the comparable national statistic of 53%. Young people, parents and carers reported transformative benefits, and an independent Social Return On Investment study found that the programme generated substantial social value of £3 for every £1 invested.

4. FutureMe supports all abilities: 91% of post-16s with low grade GCSEs were EET

Our research shows that young people on our programme who do not meet key GCSE benchmarks are largely EET when they leave school, demonstrating the programme's effectiveness in supporting students with varying academic outcomes. Parents and young people consistently highlight the personal, responsive support as a transformative factor in achieving positive post-16 destinations.





Recommendations



Based on research of young people who were involved in ThinkForward's FutureMe programme during 2017 to 2025, ThinkForward proposes the following recommendations to successfully support young people to transition from school into positive destinations and be able to envision successful futures.



1. Provide young people at risk of becoming NEET with a reliable, trusted progression coach to support them during key transitions

Based on our research, every young person at risk should have a trusted adult outside of their family to speak to. Our progression coaches are pivotal to the successful engagement of young people and provide much needed personalised guidance and support during key transitions between school and work. We would like to see the role of our coaches replicated across the country for every young person who is identified as being at high risk of being long-term NEET when they leave school.

2. Ensure every young person has access to opportunities to prepare them for employment during school and post-16 provision

Based on our research, providing young people with experience of the world of work is vital to prepare them to successfully transition into employment after they leave school. We would like to see all young people at high risk of being long-term NEET being provided with clear pathways to employment and workplace exposures, including work insight visits and work experience during their school and college years.



Programme Design

To tackle systemic issues and inequity, ThinkForward developed the FutureMe programme in 2016 to support young people who are statistically more likely to be NEET when leaving school. The programme is designed to support young people to overcome the barriers they face and prepare them to find a fulfilling career and make a successful transition into further education or employment.

Of those who graduated from our programme in 2025:

71% received Free School Meals	73% were eligible for Pupil Premium	39% had a Special Educational Need
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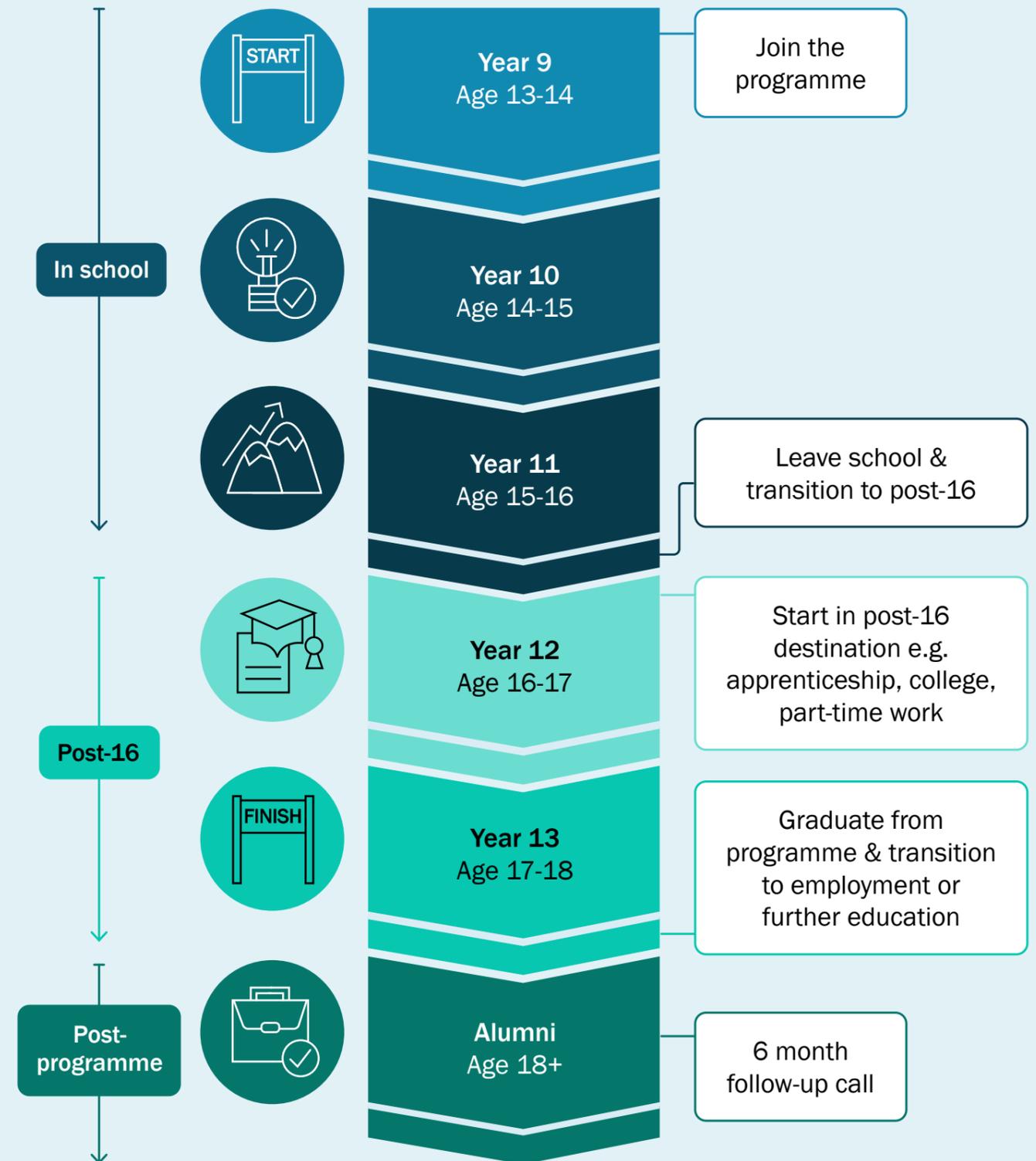
The FutureMe programme is currently delivered in 15 schools across London, Kent and Nottingham, with a ThinkForward Progression Coach based in each school.

The programme provides one-to-one and group coaching and parental engagement, as well as employability activities including work insight visits, work experience and mentoring from volunteers from our business partners.

Young people are supported to develop seven Work Readiness Capabilities:
Driven, Good Communicator, Organised, Receptive, Resilient, Self-assured and Self-aware.

Our FutureMe programme is based on a dynamic theory of change that evolves as the organisation learns more about the impact of our programme on its stakeholders. The theory of change provides a roadmap for tracking the progress of our expected outcomes and impact.

FutureMe Timeline





Research Methodology

Two separate quantitative analyses based on data collected between 2017-2024 were carried out by Dartington Design Lab and ZK Analytics, both independent data analysts, to help us understand the value of the FutureMe programme. The analyses utilised a combination of rapid-cycle design testing, descriptive statistical analysis, and regression and autoregression models (using conventional significance thresholds).



The sample size in the evaluations comprised over 300 participants who have completed the full 5 years of the programme.

The data was based on ongoing data collection about programme participants collated over the full period of the programme on ThinkForward's secure case management database.

A total of 27 semi-structured interviews and one focus group were conducted in 2025 to assess the impact of the programme. During their final year of the programme 11 interviews took place during March and April 2025 to gain insight into young people's engagement and enjoyment of the FutureMe programme; their relationship with their coach and peers; the short- and long-term benefits of the programme and the changes in young people's skills, attitudes and aspirations since joining the programme. Additionally, 7 semi-structured interviews with employer volunteers for the FutureMe programme were conducted in August 2025 to understand the impact of volunteering on businesses; the value of our partnerships and how the FutureMe programme contributes to wider employability outcomes. In Autumn 2025, 41 parents completed a survey to provide their feedback on the FutureMe programme.

Analysis of interviews was undertaken to identify common themes within participants' and volunteers' experiences on the FutureMe programme. Three evaluators separately used inductive coding to assess themes from the interviews which were compared and applied to the remainder of the interview transcripts to ensure they were reliable. Each of the documents were read and coded a final time to ensure validity and reliability.

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis was conducted externally by Envoy Partnership using data from the 132 young people who graduated from ThinkForward's FutureMe programme in August 2024. The model draws on the SROI Guide published by the Cabinet Office and additional methodology guidance from Social Value International.¹⁷ It incorporates seven outcomes for programme participants, including employment income (from sustainable EET), education income (earnings premium from qualifications), wellbeing increase from employment, confidence and self-esteem, social connectedness, immediate fiscal benefits (e.g. tax, NI, UC savings), and NEET social cost avoidance. 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 from the Department for Education 16-18 Destination Measures (2022/2023)¹⁸ was used for benchmarking. The DWP Working Paper on employment programme evaluation was used to assess displacement. ONS ASHE 2024 salary data and job advert data for 19-year-olds by region and sector were used to value employment outcomes.¹⁹ BIS/London Economics studies and CVER research were used to value education returns. Three wellbeing outcomes were measured via WRCA data: employment wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem and social connectedness. Lastly, the University of York study for Audit Commission²⁰ was used to value NEET social cost avoidance.

17. [Social Value International](#)

18. [Gov UK, 2025](#)

19. [ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\), 2024](#)

20. [Coles et al., 2010](#)



Finding One

Coaching from a trusted adult is vital:

Having more coaching sessions increased young people's likelihood of becoming EET

Research Question: How does a ThinkForward progression coach influence young people's education and employment outcomes?

ThinkForward's coaching methodology is a key element to each young person's success on their programme, underpinned by the trusted relationship with their professional coach. Our dedicated progression coaches support young people through one-to-one coaching sessions, where young people are given ownership and agency over their decision-making and held accountable through structured feedback and ongoing support. Coaching builds young people's aspiration, supporting them to discuss challenges and achieve their goals. ThinkForward staff use an [asset-based approach](#) when speaking to, and about, young people, which supports young people to be aware of their strengths. ThinkForward's approach to coaching is young person-centred and solution-focused, to support young people to reach their full potential. It ensures that at the core of every interaction coaching principles are applied, skilfully guided by a coach-led dialogue using the GROW model.²¹ It also emphasises the importance of working with young people based on their needs and allows them to access a wide range of holistic support from their coach.



Attending at least 34 one-to-one coaching sessions increased the probability of being EET by 79 percentage points

Our research found that one-to-one coaching is the most impactful activity we deliver - **having more sessions increases a young person's likelihood of being in Education, Employment or Training (EET) for a full six months after they graduate from the programme.** Attending 34 to 55 one-to-one coaching sessions (compared to 0 to 8) over the course of the 5-year programme increased the probability of being EET by 79 percentage points. In 2024/25, 58% of FutureMe 2025 graduates attended at least 34 one-to-one coaching sessions by the end of their time on the programme.

Our research highlighted that the role of a progression coach is multi-faceted. Coaches play a key role in providing a consistent, trusted relationship during transitions from pre-16 to post 16 and post-16 to employment, as well as employability support and pastoral support.





Trusted relationship



The interviews with young people show that throughout their time on the FutureMe programme, coaches act as consistently reliable and supportive adults. Young people have no doubt that if they need help, their coach will be there for them.

Coaches provide safe spaces for young people to have honest and open conversations and feel understood. Young people also reflected that because they knew that their coach had undergone similar experiences to them, they felt that they could overcome the challenges they were facing too.

He [coach] can relate to some of the stuff that I'm going through now because he's gone through it. And obviously because he's where he is now, it sort of just makes you feel a bit more secure that this is just a little blip in the road and you'll be fine.



– Ava*

My coach or any of the staff get back to you and they'll help you out. They won't leave you stranded. They won't let you down.



– Luca*

My coach doesn't like, tell me what I want to hear. He will literally tell me the truth, and I really appreciate that. I can talk to my coach about anything.



– Whitney*

Pastoral support

Many of the young people we interviewed reported that their coach has supported them with self-regulation strategies that are having long-term positive effects on their attitudes and behaviour.

To be honest, I used to respond to stuff badly. I was quite argumentative. I didn't really go about it the right way, but then, because my coach was like someone to go to and calm down and speak to, like it kind of changed towards the end, I got better, like I can control it better, I didn't just kick off.



– Kayleigh*

After ThinkForward, my perseverance has grown and my ambition has grown and so I don't give up as easily now and that creativity around challenges has just grown even more.



– Ali*

I used to get like, really angry. Now I just, like walk away from it. I'm more chill. Like I don't argue back. It's not gonna get me anywhere. My coach helped me realise that.



– Rhys*





Employability support

Coaches support young people to recognise and develop the skills and confidence they will need to succeed in the future. Coaches work with young people to collaboratively assess a set of Work Readiness Capability (WRC) assessments, identifying how they feel they rank on seven key Work Readiness Capabilities: Driven, Good Communicator, Organised, Receptive, Resilient, Self-Assured and Self-Aware.

For the 24-25 academic year, **67% of 2025 graduates²² improved their Work Readiness Capabilities.** For those who saw positive WRC score changes, the average percentage change was a 53% increase over their original score. Analysis determined that Driven and Organised are the WRCs which have a significant effect on EET status 6 months after programme completion. For Driven, scoring between 7-10 increased the probability of being EET by 40 percentage points compared with scoring between 0-3. For Organised, scoring between 7-10 increased the probability of being EET by 26 percentage points compared with scoring between 0-3.



Scoring 7-10 on our Driven scale increased the probability of being EET by 40 percentage points

22. This includes young people who had qualifying WRC assessments, meaning they had completed at least 2 WRC assessments at least a year apart.

I think the FutureMe programme has definitely helped me to ensure that when I go into uni or go into a job, I'll be able to have the skills I need to get through it.



- Ali*

[The programme helped me become] more resilient. If I did something wrong, I'll just keep going or ask someone for help instead of like giving up.

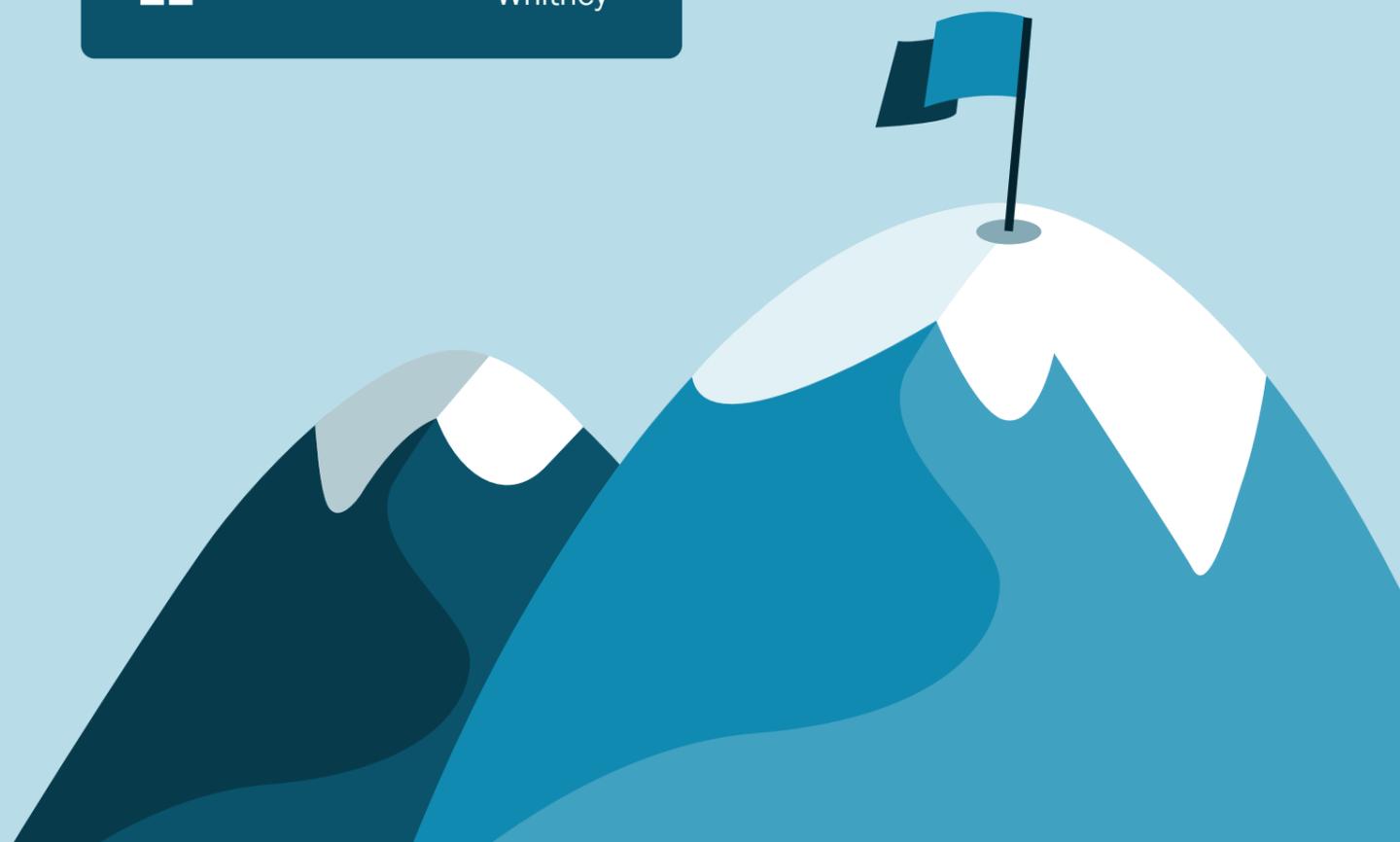


- Tiana*

Especially like when it comes to like school as well. Like I kind of feel motivated to try. Which would not be the case if it wasn't for my coach.



- Whitney*





Finding Two

Workplace exposure is crucial:

Young people who attended between 8 and 13 events were 27 percentage points more likely to be EET 6 months after graduating

Research Question: How does exposure to workplace environments influence young people's future outlook and EET outcomes?

The FutureMe programme involves Ready for Work events, including visits to workplaces, business mentoring sessions involving volunteers from corporate partners, and work experience. These events provide young people with access to opportunities, networks and social capital to help move them closer to the world of work.

Our research found a strong association between the number of Ready for Work Events young people attend and EET status. Young people who attended between 8 and 13 events during the programme were 27 percentage points more likely to be EET 6 months after graduating. In 2024/25, 54% of young people on FutureMe (who graduated in 2025) attended at least 8 Ready for Work Events by the end of their time on the programme.



Young people who attended 8-13 events were **27 percentage points** more likely to be EET 6 months after graduating



Completing 7 out of 9 elements increases a young person's probability of being EET by **77 percentage points**

Workplace exposure

Our Ready for Work events exposed young people to the world of work and opened their eyes to new opportunities. In interviews, young people spoke about how beneficial these events were.

Research also highlighted the positive effect of young people completing our Ready for Work Passport, which comprises nine elements for young people to complete: CV; work experience; volunteering experience; professional email address; bank account; career goal; professional voicemail; part-time job and mock interview. As the number of completed elements increases, a young person's likelihood of being EET increases. Completing 7 out of 9 elements (compared with 0 elements) increases a young person's probability of being EET by 77 percentage points 6 months following graduation. By the end of their time on the programme, 75% of young people on FutureMe (who graduated in 2025) had completed at least seven Ready for Work passport elements.

Hearing about people's careers and stuff, and there's a lot of things that you think you know about a certain career and then you find out it's completely something different.



– Ali*

It sort of like opens up my eyes into the working world and it sort of just helps me to see what it's like to actually have a full-time job and prepares me to see myself in a future career.



– Lola*



Positive representation

Ready for Work events also enable young people to see positive representation through meeting successful people who are from similar backgrounds to their own. Young people reflected on the benefits of speaking with the volunteer mentors while at Ready for Work events. Young people saw the mentors as professional role models willing to provide career advice based on their wealth of experience.

They're getting people with experience to teach us, instead of just teaching us in school.



– Aisha*

At businesses, each staff member would explain in full detail about their life, you know, about how they went through things. The professional people gave us good advice.



– Luca*

You get to ask questions that you might not have been able to ask your year leader or your parents, and you get to ask someone experienced in that kind of field.



– Sofia*

Increased aspiration

The young people's experiences at Ready for Work events have motivated them to pursue the future they want, as well as supporting them to develop their sense of autonomy and confidence. Young people stated in the interviews that they are excited for what comes next.

I feel like I got a direction of what path I want to do like a career I want to do after college.



– Tiana*

I see myself in a bright future, to be honest. But I'm more confident in going into a job and actually starting my own life per se, where I've taken everything that I was taught by my coach and use it to my advantage.



– Lola*

Through that work experience it has really changed what I want to do in the future. And like, now I know the steps to actually achieve that dream.



– Whitney*





Benefits for employers

Ready for Work events also benefitted the employers who were providing young people with insights into the world of work. The interviews with our employer volunteers highlighted the improvements they saw in the young people with whom they worked and the organisational benefits they experienced from working with ThinkForward.

Our volunteers shared that giving back to young people and their communities helped them see that their work is truly making a positive difference.

Another benefit highlighted by employers was that engaging with FutureMe supports their recruitment targets. One organisation explained that it has a specific goal to increase representation among the 18–25 age group. By partnering with ThinkForward to support young people through full mock assessment days, the organisation has already seen positive results: two FutureMe candidates have successfully passed and are now in its talent pool waiting to turn 18 so they can be offered full-time positions.

It makes perfect sense for us to partner with ThinkForward to help our need for filling vacancies and to get that pipeline of youngsters through.



– Edd Hallford-Nye, Southeastern

The aim is to get to the point where there are people on our payroll who are from the school we mentored and they're in jobs with UTB because of the links we have with the school and ThinkForward. That would be brilliant.



– Bill Pike, United Trust Bank

We would love young people to want to come and work with us. I would love to see us have more local talent in the building. The longer-term impact we would love to create is careers for young people that have been on the programme with us.



– Laura Thomas, Nottingham Building Society

Employers also mentioned feeling positive about the differences they witnessed in the young people they worked with.



95% of volunteers surveyed stated that they found our Ready for Work events to be a positive experience.

We managed to see some amazing transformations. I always find it really interesting to see every member of each cohort between the beginning and end of the business mentoring programme. I think it's amazing, they all change a lot. You can see the confidence and that trust growing.



– Delphine Hecquet, Ardian

The amount of difference that can be made if they're [young people] open to it is phenomenal. We've had some very talented young people come through who just needed that chance or bit of mentoring or guidance.



– Andy Lewis, ICG



Finding Three

The programme works:

Young people who graduated from our programme are 20 percentage points more likely to be EET than the national government statistic for comparable young people

Research Question: How do EET outcomes for programme graduates compare with national government statistics for similar young people?

Our findings show that the programme works as it successfully supports young people who are most at risk of becoming NEET to transition into Education, Employment or Training.

Outcomes for young people

In March 2025, we conducted 6-month follow-up calls with the Class of 2024 graduates. Of the 132 graduates, we were able to contact 122 of them. Of the graduates we were able to contact, 79% were EET. When we include the young people who we were unable to contact (Unknowns), 73% were EET. The most comparable national benchmark²³ for young people with at least two risk factors associated with unemployment is 53%.²⁴ ThinkForward young people typically face multiple risk factors, yet still outperform this national benchmark, demonstrating the programme's impact.



73% of our 2024 graduates were EET 6 months after graduating

The national government statistic for the most comparable group of young people is 53%

Young people also mentioned the benefits of the programme on their lives:

I brag about ThinkForward to my friends and my friends are genuinely jealous that I get to have ThinkForward. They're always like 'you always get to do fun things and you like, have so many amazing opportunities, like your CV must be like loaded!' – which it is, so I would recommend it to people. Like to others, to my peers and stuff, because it's not only helped me, but it's also been like one of the biggest highlights of my secondary school experience.



– Ali*

It genuinely is like life changing.



– Whitney*

I would recommend it to anybody who's struggling to see themselves in the future.



– Lola*

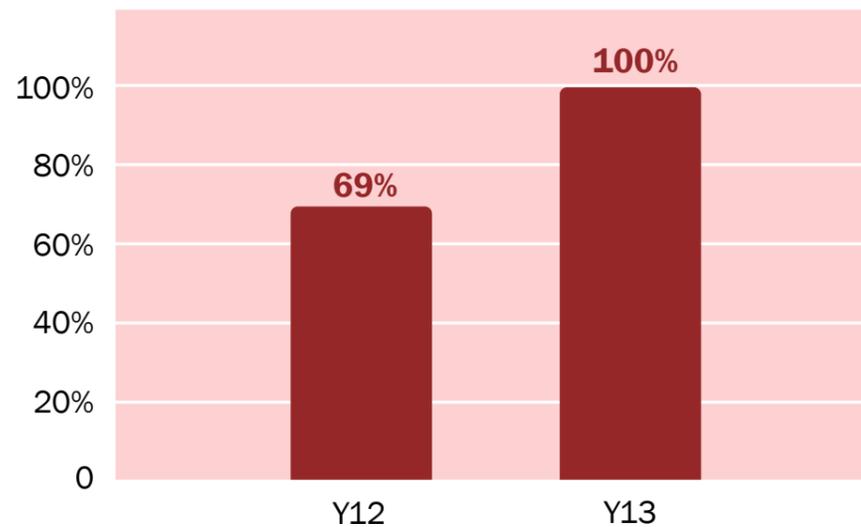
23. Government destination data for post-16 to 18 year olds who have not achieved Key Stage 4 English & Maths grades 9-4, and are defined as disadvantaged, meeting at least one of the following criteria: a) Have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years; b) Have been looked after by their local authority for at least 1 day; c) Have left care through adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order).

24. Gov UK, 2025

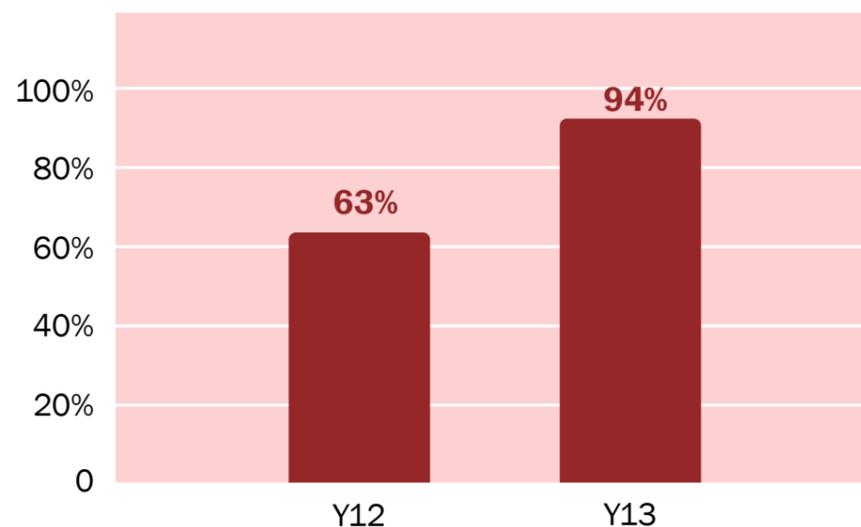
*Pseudonym used to ensure anonymity



Percentage of 2025 graduates who agree or strongly agree with the statement: 'I can produce a CV and/or fill out a job application for myself'



Percentage of 2025 graduates who agree or strongly agree with the statement: 'I feel motivated and able to look for job opportunities'



Outcomes for 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.

A cost benefit analysis conducted by The Centre for Young Lives in June 2025 found that the return on investment of youth activities is £2.40.²⁵ In contrast, findings from ThinkForward's own commissioned SROI study showed that FutureMe creates approximately £3 of social value for every £1 invested. The programme created £6.5 million of social value over a ten-year benefit period, of which around £3 million is directly attributable to FutureMe. This was calculated from increased income and wellbeing through sustainable employment and education pathways, as well as fiscal benefits when FutureMe prevents NEET status.



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

25. Centre for Young Lives, 2025



Parents' perspectives

The benefits of the programme are also seen by young people's parents and families, with **97% of parents/carers reporting that their child benefits from the programme 'very much' or 'quite a lot'**, and **100% of parents/carers reporting that they are very or extremely happy with the coaching support their child is receiving. 97% of parents/carers feel more confident about their child's future in education, employment or training.**

It is clear that by supporting young people into employment, benefits are experienced by a wide range of stakeholders, from the young people and their families to employers and wider society.

I feel that the coaches are invested in the children and always have the time to help them and have given them amazing opportunities towards the future.



– Parent/carer

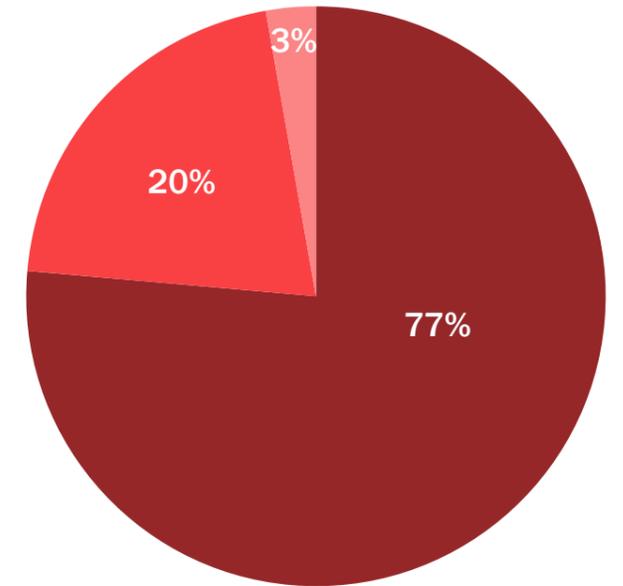


[What makes the programme different is] the one-to-one support and the business element which gives them an insight into what is expected of them in the future. The one-to-one coaching is fantastic and has helped my child overcome some fears of dealing with new people. He built an amazing relationship with his coach. I like how us parents are always kept informed of their progress.



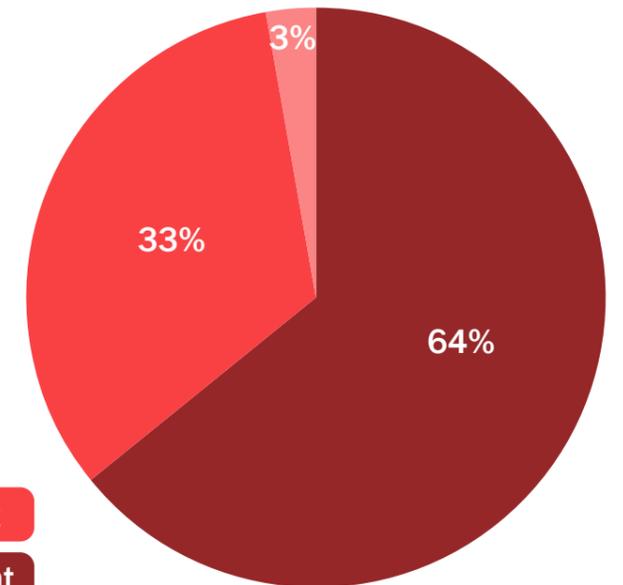
– Parent/carer

How much do you feel your child benefitted from being part of ThinkForward's FutureMe programme?



- 3% Somewhat
- 20% Quite a lot
- 77% Very much

How confident do you feel about your child's future in education, employment or training since joining the FutureMe programme?



- 3% No change
- 33% A bit more confident
- 64% Much more confident



Finding Four

Low academic achievement does not predicate poor EET outcomes: 91% of post-16 students who did not achieve grade 4 or above in 5 GCSEs are EET

Our research shows that **91% of post-16 students who did not achieve grade 4 or above in 5 GCSEs are EET** within the first 3 months of leaving school at the end of Year 11 (age 16). This demonstrates that the FutureMe programme successfully supports students who do not achieve high grades to transition to positive post-16 destinations. This is a promising finding given the fact that young people with low qualifications are more than three times as likely to be NEET than those with high qualifications.²⁶

These findings show that the programme is successful at supporting different types of students, who achieve a range of different academic outcomes, to transition into education or employment at post-16. This emphasises that the programme follows best practice as defined by OECD and the Gatsby 8 benchmarks that career guidance and support should be tailored to individual needs.²⁷

The FutureMe programme is unique in that it is tailored to the individual needs of each young person. Coaches support young people to make decisions about their futures and pursue the career pathways that interest them.

[ThinkForward] actually listens to my child and tailors help around her needs.

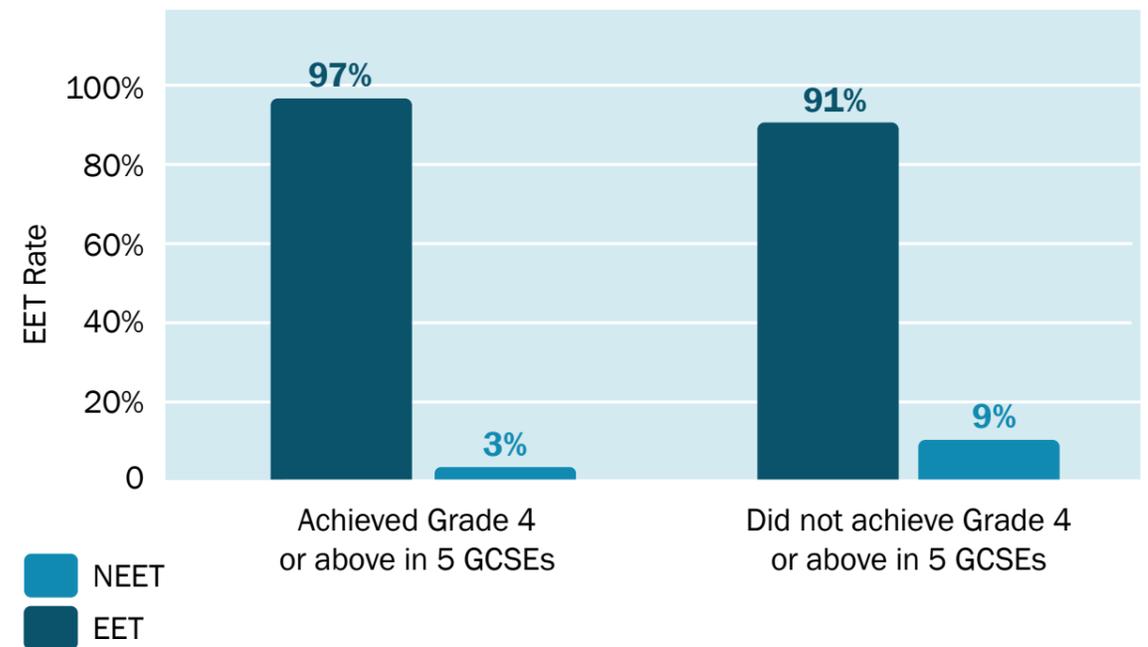
“ – Parent/carer

The coaches know you as well like personally through the years and then they'll be able to help you and they get understanding of what you want to do.

“ – Sofia*

*Pseudonym used to ensure anonymity

Grades Achieved and EET Status



I think my coach is definitely a driving factor of trying to get me to a point of like success and I guess trying to get me to understand what my version of success looks like.

“ – Ali*

They listen to the child and take in what is said.

“ – Parent/carer

With the support my daughter has received from ThinkForward she has managed to get a part-time job, explore different places and have personal support. It is fantastic.

“ – Parent/carer

This seems like a realistic approach to real life after school, coupled with the fact the support received was very professional, yet was tailored personally to my daughter and her behaviour.

“ – Parent/carer

26. [Impetus, 2019](#)

27. [OECD, 2024](#)



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