

10 years of coaching to tackle inequity

Impact Report 2024/25





Welcome

2026 marks 10 years since ThinkForward became an independent charity. We are delighted to update you on the new programmes, projects and impact we have achieved over the last academic year, as well as looking back on our achievements from the last decade.

We feel immense pride looking back upon the last 10 years. ThinkForward has developed from delivering one programme in London to delivering three core programmes, alongside additional projects, in London, Kent and Nottingham. We are proud to have adapted our flagship programme to tailor it to more specific groups of young people in need of extra support; delivering programmes for young adults with learning disabilities and Black and South Asian young people at risk of exclusion. We now support over 1,500 young people per year. Another key achievement was continuing to deliver our much-needed services to young people during the pandemic. We are proud to have provided a lifeline for many of our young people, delivering online coaching and mentoring during an extremely difficult time.

However, the current environment for young people and the charity sector is tough. 2024/25 proved to be the most challenging year for many charities since the pandemic, with a 74% increase in the number of charities closing down since the previous year. The sector has suffered from significant, long-term funding cuts, including a £1.2 billion reduction in local authority spending on youth services since 2010.

**1,500+
young people
supported in
2024/25**

**3 core
programmes
delivered**

**Programmes
in London, Kent,
Nottingham**

An impressive volume of grant applications made by the ThinkForward Development team has enabled us to continue our vital work. However, we are posting our first deficit since 2018 during which time many organisations in the sector have seen their income severely affected, have shrunk in size or closed down.

Despite these financial challenges, we are pleased to share our achievements from 2024/25, during which we launched new projects and initiatives, and reached more young people than ever before. We held our first thought leadership webinar in November 2024 titled 'Addressing race inequity and risk of exclusion through coaching.' We held our second webinar in March 2025 entitled 'Addressing employment inequity for young people with learning disabilities and autism'. One of the main findings of our research was that the role of our trusted progression coaches is key to the success of our programmes. We are pleased the Government has launched its first National Youth Strategy which contains an action to provide young people with someone they can trust.





A new 2025-2028 strategy

Refreshed values in 2025

August saw the end of our 2020-2025 strategic plan. Our new 2025-2028 strategy, which you can read more about on page 10, has two simple goals: to grow by increasing the number of young people we support and to build an even more robust evidence base for our work. We are convinced of the power of coaching and want to give many more young people the opportunity to benefit from it. We want to be in a position to publish research which proves that goal-oriented coaching from a trusted, qualified coach increases young people's likelihood of being in education, employment or training when they leave school.

Following 18 months of staff, Board and stakeholder consultation, we published our refreshed values in 2025. We will **collaborate** with our young people with empathy and **compassion**, fostering mutual accountability for our actions. Through continual **innovation**, we will extend our reach to more young people. In all that we do, we will remain **authentic** and **inclusive**. We have internal working groups focused on each of the five values to ensure we embed our values in our behaviours. We have also set up an equity, diversity and inclusion staff group to continue to embed our EDI work and extend support for all protected characteristics. You can read more about this on page 12.

Our financial security and future are only assured due to the funding we receive from many donors, commissioners and grant-giving bodies. We are extremely grateful for their continued support. We are very fortunate to have some deep relationships with business partners who provide valuable work insights, mentoring and work experience opportunities for our young people.

Our sincere thanks go to our Board of Trustees, especially to Asi Panditharatna who retired after five years of support as a trustee and to Sally Cartwright who was one of our young trustees since 2020. We are excited to welcome four new Trustees: Adam Bailey, Arnaud Vaganay, Laura Fauvel and Simon Davidson.

We look forward to continuing our ongoing journey – consolidating our efforts to drive meaningful change for young people as they transition to education, employment and training, fuelled by a dedication to create a more equitable society for all young people.



Ashley McCaul
CEO



Matt Tate
Chair



Celebrating 10 years of impact

The external landscape

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, housing and education systems and initiatives for young people to enter the workplace.

The pandemic disrupted education, work experience, internships and early-career entry points. Additionally, over the past decade, young people's mental health has declined dramatically. In 2024/25 our coaches supported 45 mental health-related safeguarding incidents, over a quarter of all safeguarding incidents.

We asked our 2024 FutureMe graduates who were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) what challenges they were facing. The top three reasons provided were:

- 1. Seeking employment opportunities but haven't been successful **42%**
- 2. Poor mental health **27%**
- 3. Responsibilities as a carer **2%**, poor physical health **2%**, and other **2%**

It is against this external landscape that we have developed our programmes.

CHALLENGES FACED BY OUR GRADUATES

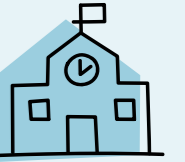
10 years in numbers

10,000+

YOUNG PEOPLE WE HAVE WORKED WITH FROM 2016-2025

300 CORPORATE PARTNERS

49 SCHOOL PARTNERS



5,000+ READY FOR WORK EVENTS

75,000+ COACHING SESSIONS

OVER £20m OF SOCIAL VALUE CREATED



6 MOUNTAINS CLIMBED BY SUPPORTERS TO RAISE MONEY FOR THINKFORWARD

TOTAL MILES SPENT TRAVELLING TO INSIGHT EVENTS



5* TRIPS AROUND THE EARTH



500* HOT CHOCOLATES MADE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE OFFICE

10,000+* ICEBREAKERS COMPLETED AT READY FOR WORK EVENTS



* ESTIMATION



Our Journey

2016
ThinkForward becomes independent from our founder to prepare for growth. The programme is expanded to 6 schools in Nottingham.



2018
The pilot of a new programme **DFN-MoveForward** under a Social Impact Bond rolls out to seven schools, working with young adults with learning disabilities. Win Lord Mayor's Dragon Award with ICG.

2017
Further expansion to six schools in coastal Kent.

ThinkForward creates a new structure to support standardised delivery to six schools in London, Nottingham and Kent, reaching a total of 900 young people with our **FutureMe** programme.



2019
Win England category at National Mentoring Awards.



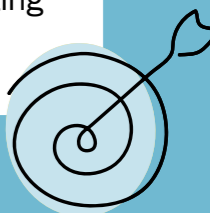
2020
ThinkForward launches its five-year strategy (2020-2025), focusing on three key goals – Impact, Sustainability and Growth – and the ambition of refining our programmes and becoming a thought leader.



2022
In partnership with the Greater London Authority (GLA) ThinkForward launches a two-year pilot, **Future Leaders**, to improve the post-16 outcomes of Black students in mainstream schools and Alternative Provisions in London.

2023
Building upon the findings of the external evaluation of MoveForward, ThinkForward launches **Making Strides**, a new project working with young people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

She Speaks project launches, providing specialised support for young women in London. We reach a milestone of supporting over 1,500 young people.



2024
Future Leaders Phase 2 begins in West London, working with Black and South Asian students.



2025
Achieve Gold Quality Mark for our Youth Participation work.



10 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

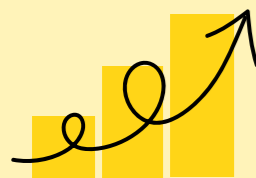


Creating brighter futures

Our strategy

Creating a forward-looking strategy in a time of economic, political and social unrest is a challenge. We need to be bold and aspirational at the same time as being pragmatic and realistic.

Our staff and board have debated long and hard, following consultation with all stakeholders and are convinced that although we have to be mindful of the funding, employment and education environment, we want to set ourselves some stretch goals for our next strategic period.



Growth

Our vision remains to support young people to gain the confidence and skills they need for a better and brighter future once they leave school. We will continue to focus on young people who have been identified as likely to be furthest from employment, education or training when they leave school. Our overarching goal is to **triple the number of young people with whom we work.**



Evidence-based delivery

To do this we need **to create the evidence to demonstrate the power of coaching.** We need to build robust research showing what conditions are needed to improve young people's likelihood of an improved EET (Education, Employment or Training) status. We want to be able to show how and when a qualified, trusted coach can best support young people to identify and pursue their goals, and how Ready for Work activities, business insights and mentoring from corporate volunteers contribute to successful transitions. We want this evidence to be strong enough to drive systemic change in the sector.

Leading with our values

In 2024, we launched our new set of values.

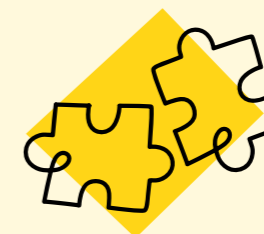
With an emphasis on making sure every voice was heard, our team facilitated a series of workshops over 18 months. Through focusing on what is important to us, we have articulated a comprehensive definition of our values, with a set of guiding principles and indicators that embody our commitment to fostering meaningful connections and relationships within our organisation and with young people and partners.

Our values are more than words; they are the principles that guide our actions and decisions every day. By embodying these values, we create a positive and empowering environment for ourselves, our colleagues, and the young people we serve.



Authentic

We commit to show up authentically



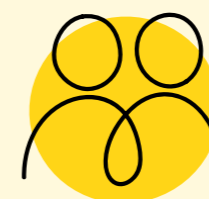
Collaborative

We support and learn from one another



Compassionate

We foster kindness and respect



Inclusive

We ensure that all voices are heard



Innovative

We adapt to ever-changing needs



Our commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

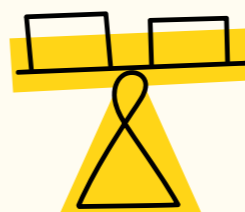
Over the past three years, we have been on an intentional journey to strengthen our organisational culture, guided by our commitment to equality, inclusion and the wellbeing of the young people and communities we serve.

We've recognised that to create meaningful and lasting impact, our internal culture must reflect the same principles we champion externally. This has led to focused work across three interconnected strands: embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all that we do; rearticulating and living our organisational values; and adopting restorative approaches that centre relationships, accountability, and repair. These journeys have shaped how we lead, how we work together, and how we deliver our programmes, and they continue to evolve as we learn and grow.

We have been on a significant journey to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across our organisation. We've invested in a comprehensive programme of learning and development with expert partners like 7PK, helping staff and leaders deepen their understanding of anti-racism, interpersonal inequality, allyship, and restorative conversations. Our training offer spans whole-team sessions, leadership development and we are developing a tailored induction for new starters, ensuring that our culture, decision-making and delivery are consistently approached through an EDI lens. This work is supported and sustained through our internal EDI Group and Inclusion Value Group, which help us reflect on practice, challenge assumptions and champion inclusive ways of working across the charity.

Over the last year, our EDI Group have focused on objectives relating to recruitment practices, our business partnerships, lived experiences, learning platforms and executive team accountability.

We are committed to tackling inequity both organisationally and more widely systemically. Our organisational commitment has directly informed our programme design and delivery. We have developed programmes and projects to tackle inequity for specific groups of underrepresented young people through our Future Leaders programme, Making Strides programme and She Speaks project.



We recognise reporting pay gaps is not mandatory for a charity of our size, however we are continuing to voluntarily report ours. We have worked hard to ensure our ethnicity pay gap is almost at parity which is a vast improvement on previous years. Our gender pay gap has gone from -8.9% (women being paid on average more than men) to men being paid on average 6% more. This is due to some higher paid female staff leaving and one male apprentice leaving.

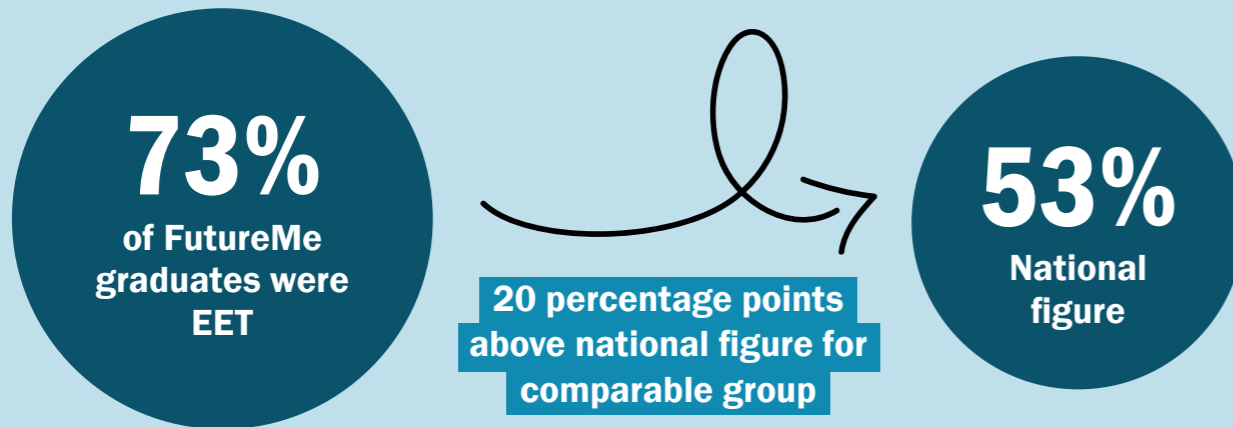
	Gender pay gap		Ethnicity pay gap
2019	0.1%	2019	10.8%
2021	5.7%	2021	11.8%
2024	-8.9%	2024	6.2%
2025	6%	2025	0.6%



Our 2024/25 impact

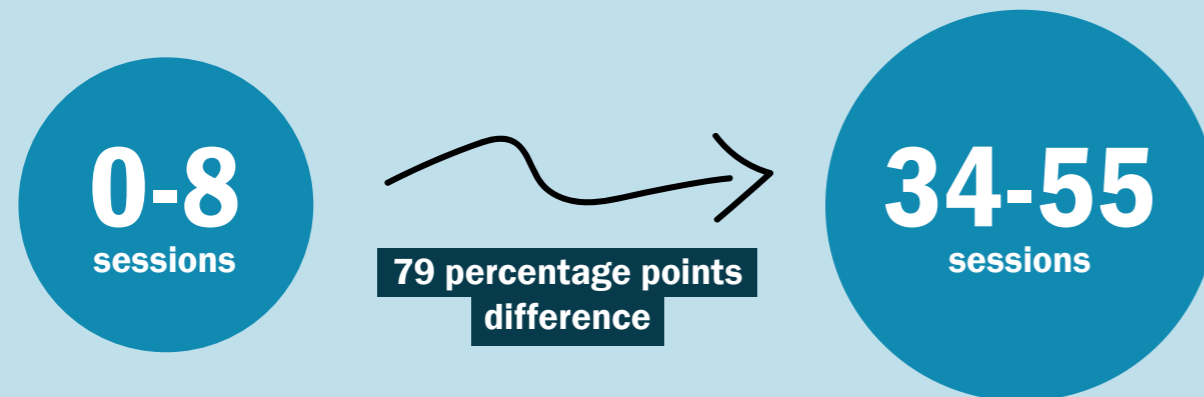


ThinkForward graduates more likely to be EET



More coaching sessions → More likely to be EET

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

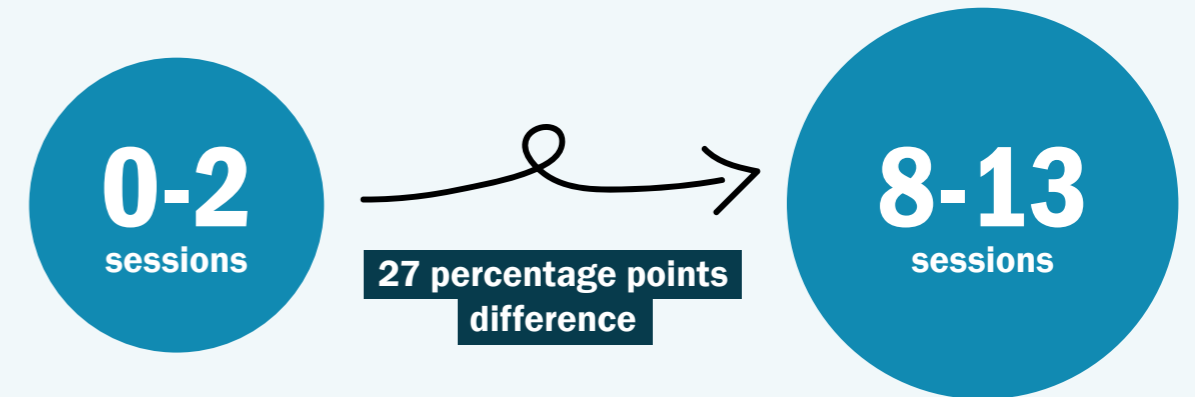


Social value created



More Ready for Work events → More likely to be EET

27 percentage points more likely to be EET if attend more than 8 events compared to 0-2.



EET = in Education, Employment or Training



Raising young people's voices

Our aim for youth participation is to provide opportunities for young people to meaningfully engage in our work and programme design, which will contribute to the development of their work-readiness skills and to the improvement of our programmes.

This year, we were delighted to be awarded London Youth's Gold Quality Mark. The Gold Quality Mark recognises the quality of our youth work provision, commitment to continual organisational development, and dedication to involving young people in decision-making and the design of provision. London Youth has over 500 members and ThinkForward is one of only nine members to have achieved this award, demonstrating our dedication to youth participation. The award is a testament to our organisational commitment to keeping young people at the heart of everything we do.

In 2025 our Youth Advisory Board (YAB) created a resource designed to tell adults how they would like to be communicated with and treated, titled '**Young Voices, Big Respect**'. This resource is continuously shared with our partners and supporters. The YAB hosted a meeting with ThinkForward staff to share their project and answer questions about it. Young Voices, Big Respect features in our **asset-based guide**, which invites readers to move towards using a more positive, asset-based approach by considering the words and behaviours they use when working with young people.

We are also pleased to have invited two young adults to complete a 6-month Trustee Induction Period, one of whom was previously a participant in our FutureMe programme. When their induction period is complete, they will have the opportunity to be appointed to our Board as Trustees to represent youth voice.



We worked with 1,580 young people in 2024/25

I found the meeting fantastic, but scary at first. I feel great knowing my work is shared and may inspire people. I have learned that working in a team isn't always so bad, I used to try to stick to myself but I now quite like teamwork. I'd recommend joining the YAB because it helps you improve so many skills that you're going to need to improve anyway so why not join and have fun while improving them.

Ryan
YAB member, FutureMe, Kent





Another area of our youth participation work is our Ambassadors project, where young people plan and deliver social action projects to address issues that affect their communities. In 2024/2025, we delivered a total of 133 Ambassador sessions. Young people delivered projects focusing on a range of issues including racism, bullying, youth violence and mental health.

We delivered 133 Ambassador sessions in 2024/25

Our social issue is bullying; we made a worry box for Year 7s. I've definitely got better at communication and organising. It's definitely given me a lot more confidence because I feel more like I can talk to people. I think the most rewarding part of the project is the skills I've gained from it.

Lucy
Ambassador, FutureMe, Kent



I developed my communication, being driven, tolerance and team-working skills. I have better learnt how to communicate with my peers and how to effectively work as a team to make an amazing project! The highlight of my experience has been meeting new people outside of London and being able to see how the project came together integrating everyone's views and opinions.

Neveah
YAB member, FutureMe, London





Combining coaching and Ready for Work events leads to success

Every young person on one of our programmes receives one-to-one coaching and exposure to the workplace, including insight visits, work experience and business mentoring.



We currently run three programmes:

FutureMe

Supports young people who are statistically more likely to be NEET when they leave school in Kent, London and Nottingham.

Making Strides

Supports young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism in London (Hounslow, Islington and Tower Hamlets).

Future Leaders

Supports Black and South Asian young people who are at risk of becoming excluded, or have been excluded, from mainstream education in West London (Brent, Ealing and Hammersmith & Fulham).



Additionally, our **She Speaks** project provides tailored support for young women on our FutureMe programme in London.

Future lawyer – Radwan’s story



Radwan

**FutureMe graduate,
London**



“When I started in Year 9 I was just a kid that had no aspirations, I never really thought about what I was going to do long-term until I joined the programme. I started to dissect my interests when talking with my Coach. He got me into thinking about law because I liked arguing and public speaking. I started pursuing it as a career and he put me onto that pathway and made me discover things about myself. I’ll never forget one time he told me he saw me as a team leader. When I was a kid, I never thought of myself like that, so to have that belief in me was unbelievable.

Coach took us on trips to businesses like Bank of America and Credit Suisse, which were very beneficial because my head was always so focused on law and it was good to see other avenues I could go into. The programme helped me develop my communication and networking skills, because I was kind of introverted, so it got me out of my comfort zone.

When I finished my A levels, I didn’t like the results I got. I spoke to my coach, and he gave me my options, and gave me the influence of going ‘you know what I can do this again and I am going to resit [my exams]’. I believed in myself. So without ThinkForward, I wouldn’t be at university now.

I would 100% recommend the programme to anybody, because when you’re in Year 9 you feel like ‘I don’t need help’, but accepting that help is what helped me grow, improve and develop.

I am now studying Politics and International Relations. My future goals are to finish my degree, then hopefully do a conversion course and try to become a lawyer or solicitor.”

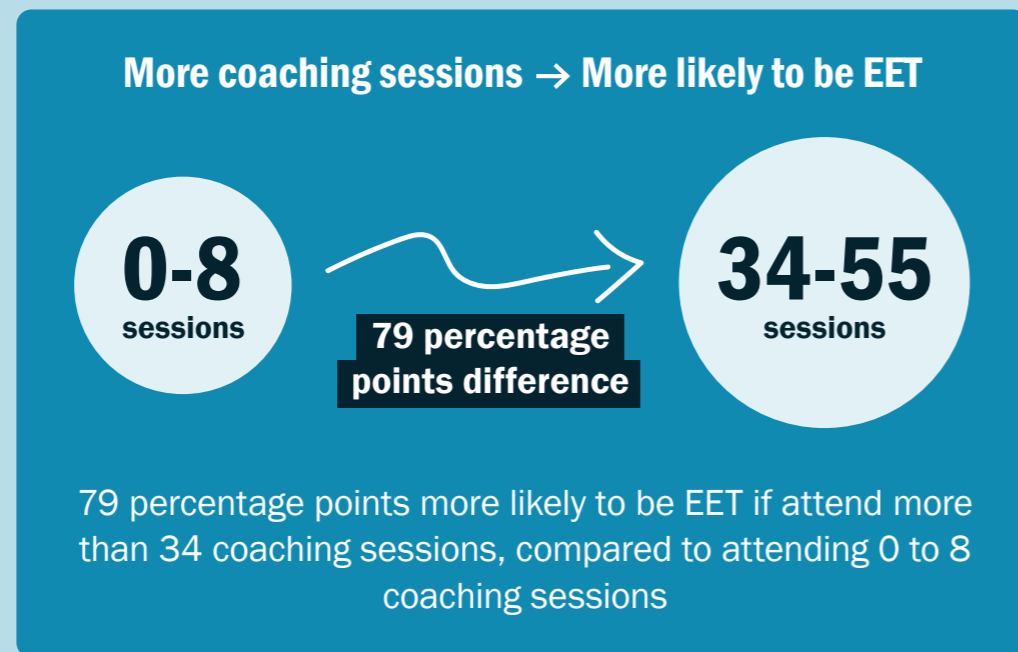
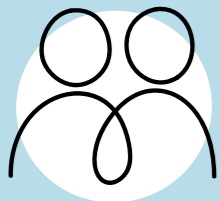


Coaching develops autonomy

Our dedicated progression coaches support young people through one-to-one coaching sessions, where young people are given agency over their decision-making and space to discuss challenges. ThinkForward staff use an **asset-based approach** with young people, which enables young people to be aware of their strengths. Our approach 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.

Young people report trusting their coach so they feel comfortable talking to them about the challenges they face. Young people benefit from having a consistent, trusted adult in their life, who can act as a role model and provide positive representation.

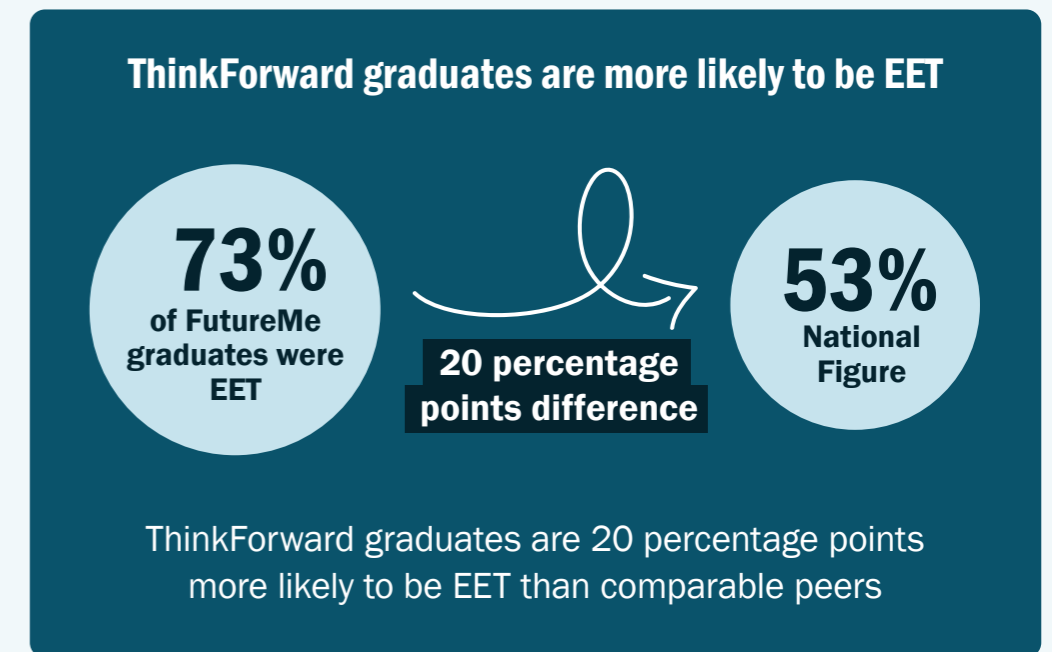
7,972
one-to-one
coaching sessions
delivered in
2024/25



EET = in Education, Employment or Training

Our research found that **attending 34 to 55 one-to-one coaching sessions** over the course of the 5-year programme **increased the probability of being EET by 79 percentage points**, compared to those that attended 0 to 8 coaching sessions.

When we asked young people how they were doing 6 months after graduation, 79% were EET. This figure excludes those we were unable to contact (unknowns). When we include unknowns as presumed NEET the figure is 73%. The national government figure for the most comparable group of young people is 53.1%.¹



1. [Gov.UK](#)



73%
in EET

EET = in Education,
Employment or Training



62.5%
in employment
only



24%
in employment
and education



13.5%
in education
only

Of those in employment:

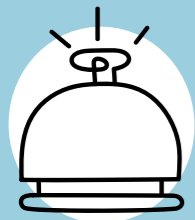


98%

reported they were
earning at or above
minimum wage

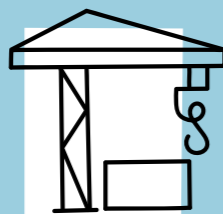
This compares to 93.6%²
of all 16- to 20-year-olds
in the UK earning at or
above minimum wage.

The top 3 sectors young people were working in:



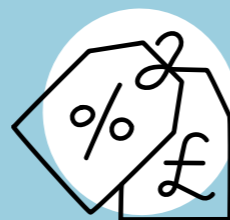
22%

in hospitality,
food or events



17%

in construction,
property and trades



12%

in retail
and sales

2. Office for National Statistics

I think the 1:1s helped me balance everything a lot better. Being able to lay out my options and then pick apart the pros and cons of each one was very helpful and allowed me to pick the option that best worked for me and my goals.

Charlie*
FutureMe, Kent



My relationship with my coach, I feel like it's open and I feel like when we do a 1:1 session, it's like good because I feel like I can be like straight up with him.... I don't sit there and have to hide anything... like I can just be open. He gives honest advice about it, and it helps me express my feelings in a way.

Jack*
FutureMe, London



I think my coach is definitely a driving factor of like 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*
FutureMe, London



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

Lola*
FutureMe, Nottingham



Your One

When things feel too big, and you don't know what to do
Just find your one person who believes in you.
A teacher, a coach, a mentor, a friend.
The one who stands with you, right to the end.
The one person's faith is a powerful start.
It can change your whole world,
it can strengthen your heart.
So look for your one.
Let them see you be true.
Their belief is the key to the future in you.

A poem by Asha,
FutureMe 2025 graduate

*Pseudonym used to ensure anonymity



My coach has never given up on me – Leon’s story



Leon
Future Leaders



“My coach Sharn is a great guy. He’s always open and there for me to talk to, he never makes me feel shut down. He’s helped me with being able to talk to other people, not just people that I know. Sharn is one of the only people who’s never given up on me and he’s always coming and checking and make sure that I’m alright.

We talk about problems that I have at home, problems in life and the conversation like no matter what I’m talking about, it could be the saddest thing, the happiest thing but it’s never dead, the conversation keeps going. It always makes me have a better day as well after the conversation.

The best thing about having a coach is having someone to guide me and someone to help me because obviously I’m still young so I need that role model in life and Sharn’s a very good one.

The programme has helped me realise about the choices that I have after school. It’s helped me definitely with exams coming up in year 11 and sitting down and focusing, because when we went to all these trips, I thought it was going to be hard to sit down and focus, but I realised that when I get a job you can’t just do what you want to do. You have to have that focus. I have more discipline now, like before I just used to walk out of lessons but now I have self-respect and self-tolerance. So whenever I feel like I’m getting dysregulated now, I just ask for a break nicely. I won’t just walk out and do my own thing. I’d say I’ve matured as a person.

On a trip to Canon, one thing I realised is that when I started talking, people liked me just for my personality, not for me putting on an act. I was being genuine that whole day, I didn’t change, but the more you express yourself, the more people like you the way you are. It’s a good thing. It’s all about having your voice, not other people’s voice.

The trips have given me a lot more knowledge that I wouldn’t have had if I didn’t go on them. So if I didn’t join the programme there’s a lot of knowledge that I would have been missing.

My future goals are starting music, hopefully soon, but also I want to maybe go into construction because I know it’s a good job that I wouldn’t find too boring.”



Providing exposure to the workplace builds confidence

Work insights open young people's eyes

Young people on all of our programmes take part in work insight visits to a range of industries including construction, hospitality, finance, fashion and tech. It gives young people an opportunity to hear success stories, think about their future goals and the available pathways to achieve them and become more comfortable in professional environments.

Young people also benefit from witnessing positive representation – meeting people who are from similar backgrounds to themselves who have achieved successful careers. Our Future Leaders participants attend insight days at businesses with Black and South Asian employees, and young women on our She Speaks project attend insight days with female employees.

Ready for Work events help young people to develop their work readiness skills. 78% of Making Strides young adults saw a positive aggregate change in their Work Readiness Capability scores. 69% of young adults saw a positive score change for Resilience, Self-Assured, and Self-Aware.

We are extremely grateful to all of our corporate partners who generously give their time to provide invaluable insights into the world of work.



99

Ready for Work events

1,989 attendances



We saw the challenges that women face in the workplace and their achievements. She Speaks gives the opportunity for young women to see what it's like when they get older, to work in one of those places.

Raianne
She Speaks



I've found the trips beneficial, and it opened my eyes on different careers. It showed me that people from my race are successful or at least can be successful.

Jayden
Future Leaders



My work experience has made me feel a lot more positive about working in the future. Like it just makes you feel like I'm able to do to go out there and just get started really. It's given me a lot of confidence.

Eleanor
Making Strides





Business mentoring provides positive representation

Year 10 FutureMe students take part in our Business Mentoring programme, where they are mentored by volunteers from one of our business partners. Our Future Leaders students are mentored by Black or South Asian professionals. Mentors share their advice and expertise to support young people to identify their strengths, create CVs and practise mock interviews. 64% of Future Leaders students said that Business Mentoring had helped them develop their communication skills and 59% said it had helped them develop their Self-Awareness.

When asked to describe Business Mentoring in 3 words, the most commonly shared words were:

helpful, fun, amazing, experience, exciting, insightful.



128

Business Mentoring sessions
1,904 attendances



My mentor was a very nice amazing lady. She talked to me in such a kind way. I got advice from her, that there are people who can help you, you don't have to do it by yourself. Mentors are not telling you what you need to do, they are trying to find a way for you to realise it yourself.

Tyreik
Future Leaders



The good thing about having a mentor is that whatever past mistakes that mentor has gone through, they try and make sure it won't happen to you. They give you good advice based on the stuff that has happened to them. They have really good opinions on what to do in life.

Sofia
Future Leaders





Work experience is vital

Young people on our programmes benefit from work experience opportunities, including short-term placements, the UK Youth Summer Jobs programme and our Extended Recruitment Programme.

90% of Making Strides young adults agreed with the statement: "I know what's expected of me in a work environment", compared to 80% at the beginning of the academic year.

Our Extended Recruitment Programme (ERP) has provided work placements tailored to the specific needs of young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to create effective pathways into entry-level jobs. Our ERP is a 3-week work placement, where young people demonstrate their skills, work ethic and competence by fulfilling a job role, rather than applying through a written application or multistage interview process. It gives young people the chance to understand if they are suited to and enjoy the role. At the end of 3 weeks, the employer decides whether to offer the participant a permanent role. During the placement, we provide coaching to the employer, to support them to develop their understanding of employing young adults with learning disabilities and/or autism and their inclusive practices.

18
young people have taken part in our ERP

7
young people have secured permanent jobs as a result of our ERP



I learnt how to work in a fast-paced environment and to adapt. It's given me an insight into what work can be like in a different environment and made me more open to new opportunities. I'd like to work here for a couple years and save and invest my money, it's a good place to start. This opportunity means a lot to me. I will be able to support my family and gain experience.

David
Making Strides



I've learnt not to judge a book by its cover, previously when interviewing someone who struggled through an interview, I'd just dismiss them. This has made me see that although they might not do well in an interview, they have a lot to give. Hopefully we can expand the project and give more young adults this opportunity. Other businesses should consider it; there are a lot of young adults out there with learning disabilities that can add a great deal of value to your business.

DHL manager





For the second year, we partnered with UK Youth on their Summer Jobs programme which supported young people to complete paid 5-week work placements over the summer holidays. We were impressed with the commitment of the young people who were paid London living wage for the programme duration, all of whom completed the full five weeks. Managing a programme of extended paid work experience is proving to be valuable in preparing our young people for the world of work.

This was the first time I have delved into a working environment with an incentive; it was amazing to co-operate with like-minded co-workers over the course of 6 weeks. My highlight was interacting with many people from many diverse backgrounds and creating new bonds. I learnt how to address different people and how to have a balance of humour and professionalism within a working environment. What surprised me was the ease of working in a new environment and the enjoyment of being here consistently every day.

Ayan

Summer Jobs participant



The value of work experience – Rizwana’s story



Rizwana

Making Strides



“On my work experience placement, one of the things that I learnt is to be yourself and to show employers and businesses, organisations who you are, the way you are. Not to, I guess, filter yourself to what people or to what the employers would want to see...”

The things that we learn are all things that we need now and we need in the future and things that will have to stay with us for many years to come. I think one of the skills I developed on my placement is time managing.

One thing I enjoyed in my placement is the person who led the work experience managed to accommodate one of the sessions for me to go and speak to someone that works in the finance department, as I’m looking to get into working in finance.

This experience has affected my view of work in a positive way. I feel like before people go into work without knowing about like self-awareness and self-management. This opportunity has made me feel a bit more comfortable to go into work in the future because I don’t think a lot of people take notice of the fact that you should just go into work the way you are, present yourself the way you are, not change yourself for someone.

I’m currently looking at working in finance. I would like to see if it is something that I would like to do. My next steps are to try and get a job, but if not then get valuable experience which will help me get into something I want to do.”



Volunteering changes lives – Stephen’s story



We are extremely grateful to all the volunteer mentors who give up their time to help impact young people’s futures. We would like to highlight one volunteer who has been a committed mentor and advocate for our work for a number of years.



Stephen Pevsner
Tax Partner,
Proskauer Rose

Over the last 8 years, Stephen has supported our partnership with Proskauer, personally mentoring young people on our programmes, and advocating for wider team engagement and critical financial support.

He has worked with young people to develop their work readiness, supporting CV writing, goal setting and mock interviews. He has had a huge impact in terms of young people growing in confidence and developing key skills they need to prepare for work. He has advocated for students within his firm, helped onboard new volunteers, and shaped how senior professionals engage with young people from underserved backgrounds.

Stephen continually went above and beyond with his commitment to mentoring, even dialling in to the final business mentoring session whilst on holiday, because he did not want to disappoint his mentee and wanted to congratulate them on their growth.

We nominated Stephen for London Youth’s Volunteer of the Year award, in recognition of his work with ThinkForward. We are absolutely delighted that he won the award.

Stephen has now reached a well-deserved retirement. We are confident that his legacy will continue through our ongoing partnership with Proskauer.

It has always been such a pleasure and privilege to work with you all at ThinkForward and with the lovely young people who show such bravery in stepping out of their comfort zones and embracing the opportunity that you give them to improve their life chances with such commitment and enthusiasm. It is fantastic for me to have been able to play a small part in the wonderful work that you do.

Stephen Pevsner
Mentor



Having Stephen as my mentor was one of the littest times of my life. He changed the way I see myself and my future. I never imagined someone like him, a whole partner in a law firm, would make time for someone like me. I can’t lie I’ve had a tough journey, but Stephen didn’t judge me, he just listened.

He helped me see that where I come from doesn’t have to decide where I end up. We worked on real things like preparing for interview questions, doing my CV, how to present myself and stop swearing so much. He helped me build my confidence and my communication and I won’t ever forget that. He’s my G for life.

When coach told me he wasn’t going to be at our last session, I was heartbroken. But then he surprised me by video calling from his holiday. That showed me how certi he is. He showed me that I actually matter and that I need to start acting like it.

Masud
FutureMe, London





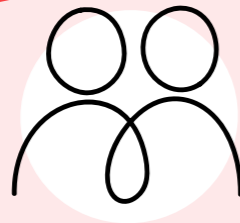
Engaging Parents and Carers with our work

A key element to the success of our work is our coaches' relationships with parents and carers. Our coaches regularly check in with young people's parents and carers to update them on their progress. Coaches use asset-based language when talking to parents and carers about their young people, focusing on young people's individual strengths and potential.

This year we conducted a survey with parents and carers. 97% of parents/carers reported that their child benefits from the programme 'very much' or 'quite a lot', and 100% of parents/carers reported 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.

6,163
parental
engagements
in 2024/25

100%
of parents/carers
reported that they are
very or extremely happy with
the coaching support their
child is receiving.



The ThinkForward programme treats my daughter as a young adult and has given her tools ready for the next step when she leaves school.

Parent/carers



My daughter has received fabulous support from her coach. He is supportive, kind and goes above to help her succeed. She is happier at school and feels supported by him.

Parent/carers



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/carers



[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. I like how us parents are always kept informed of their progress.

Parent/carers





Our finance

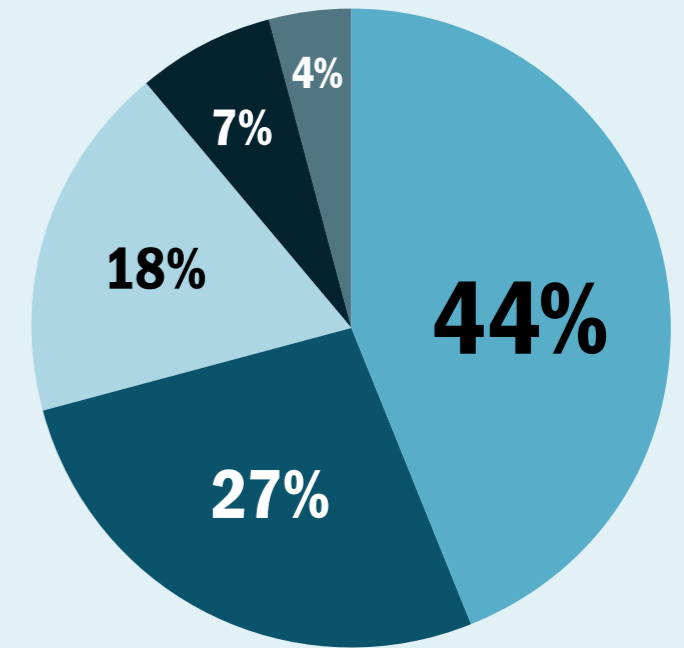
2024/25 proved to be the most challenging year for many charities since the pandemic. According to data from the Charity Commission, the number of charities closing has increased by 74% over the previous year. 64% of charities have made redundancies and cut vital services due to financial strain. Rising costs due to rising inflation and the impact of the increase in employer National Insurance contributions have taken their toll. Income, especially restricted to programme activity, has materialised slower than anticipated.

ThinkForward has not been immune to the challenges the sector has faced and as a result is posting our first deficit in 2024/25 since August 2018. The team has worked ceaselessly to ensure that as much income as possible was delivered, raising a total income of £2.39m. We have faced an incredibly hard funding environment, slow decision making and unavoidable delays in receiving income. Expense management has been extremely tight, with savings made throughout the year, leading to a total expenditure of £2.78m. We invest 81% of our expenditure on highly qualified staff to deliver our programmes, an increase of 1% over the previous year. Our free reserves were £698k at the end of August 2025 which translates to approximately 3 month’s operating expenditure which is within our reserves policy.

We thank all of our funders, including corporates, central and local government, individuals, charitable trusts and foundations, for your continuous and generous support. We also thank our partner schools for contributing to the cost of running our programmes whilst facing your own economic constraints. We started 2025/26 with extremely strong support, and our board of trustees are reassured that our long-term financial position is secure.

Where our income comes from:

- Corporate Partners
- Trusts and Foundations
- Statutory bodies
- Income from schools
- Donations from individuals

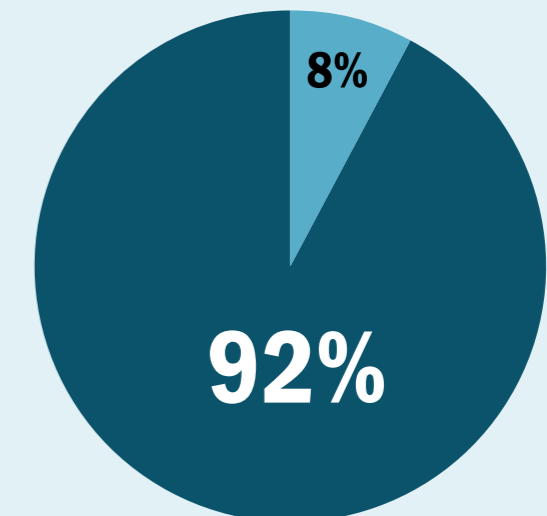


63%
Unrestricted income

37%
Restricted income

Where our income goes:

- Charitable activities
- Raising funds





Our supporters

Funders

17Capital*
 The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
 Aesseal plc
 Ardian Foundation*
 The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund
 BGF Foundation
 Birmingham City Council
 The Blgrave Trust
 The Careers and Enterprise Company
 CBRE IM*
 Centurion Management
 Charles Hayward Foundation
 The Childhood Trust
 Citi*
 City Bridge Foundation
 The De Laszlo Foundation
 DHL UK Foundation
 The Dulverton Trust
 The Ellis Campbell Foundation
 Epic Foundation
 Finatal*
 Fishmongers' Company Charitable Trust
 Garfield Weston Foundation
 Greater London Authority
 The Henry Smith Charity
 Hounslow Council
 Howden Group*
 ICG*
 The John Swire (1989) Charitable Trust
 Kennedy Wilson*
 Life Chances Fund
 London Youth
 Mayor of London
 The National Lottery Community Fund
 Nottingham Building Society*
 Propel

Proskauer Rose*
 State Street Foundation*
 St James's Place Charitable Foundation
 Swarovski Foundation*
 Swiss Re*
 The Tides Foundation
 UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 UK Youth
 United Trust Bank*
 United Way
 The Weavers' Company

Ready for Work partners

7PK
 Atkins Réalis
 BNP Paribas
 Boston Tea Party
 Business Design Centre
 Canary Wharf Group
 Canon EMEA
 CC Cousins
 CD&R Private Equity Foundation
 Chanel
 Chatham Maritime Trust
 Coutts
 DHL
 Equifax
 Experian
 Flyp
 Garden Studios
 HMP Maidstone
 HMRC
 Ideagen
 Jenner Contractors Limited
 John Deere
 Kirkland & Ellis International LLP
 KPMG

Ledian Gardens
 Mace
 Marriott Hotels
 Microsoft
 Mitie
 Moorfields Eye Hospital
 NatWest
 Nottingham College
 Nottingham Fire Service
 Nottingham Police
 Nottingham Theatre Royal and Concert Hall
 Paramount International
 Reed Smith
 River Partnership
 Royal Albert Hall
 Royal Mail
 Sky Up
 Smart Works
 Soapbox Youth Centre
 SouthEastern
 Springpod Foundation
 Twycross Zoo
 Uber
 UK Black Business
 University of Creative Arts
 Wagamama
 West London Green Skills Hub
 XMO Strata
 ZSL London Zoo Academy

School partners

Alec Reed Academy
 Ark Burlington Danes Academy
 Ark Elvin Academy
 Bishop Douglass School
 Bluecoat Beechdale Academy
 Bluecoat Trent Academy

City of London Academy Islington
 City of London Academy Highbury Grove
 Claremont High School
 Ealing Alternative Provision
 Ellis Guilford School
 George Green's School
 Greenford High School
 Hammersmith Academy
 Harris Lowe Academy Willesden
 Hartsdown Academy
 Hendon School
 Islip Manor High School
 London East Alternative Provision
 Marsh Academy
 New Line Learning Academy
 Nottingham Academy
 Nottingham University Samworth Academy
 Queen's Park Community School
 Robert Napier School
 Roundwood School & Community Centre
 Strood Academy
 Swanlea School
 Wembley High Technology College

Pro bono supporters

Bain & Company through the Acumen
 Fellowship Academy
 Motion Learning
 State Street
 Travers Smith LLP
 TrustLaw, Thompson Reuters Foundation
 Tulba Associates through City Bridge Foundation
 Urban Locker Storage
 White & Case LLP

*Also a Ready for Work partner

Contact Us

 0300 102 4475

 info@thinkforward.org.uk

Social media:

 ThinkForward UK

 @ThinkForwardUK

 @thinkforward.bsky.social

 @ThinkForwardUK