



Future First Employability
Skills Programme in
partnership with
Rothschild & Co

Evaluation Report
2016-2019

Future First
November 2019

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Introduction

Future First works across the UK to help build, engage and activate thriving state school alumni networks, to ensure that all young people have access to relatable role models, trusted mentors and meaningful social capital. Between 2016 and 2019, Future First partnered with Rothschild & Co. to deliver a three-year Employability Skills Programme supporting young people most at risk of leaving school and not going onto further training or education.

Over three years, students based in five schools across Cornwall, Bristol, Cambridgeshire, South Tyneside and Bognor Regis attended a series of employability workshops and mock interview sessions co-facilitated by Future First and supported by alumni and local employers.

All students were asked to complete baseline and exit surveys to measure their progress over the duration of the programme. This report summarises the key evaluation findings of the 110 students that took part with a particular focus on the 42 students across three schools which completed the full three-year project.

Project Context

It is estimated that there are around 788,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and this disproportionately affects young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. However, according to research, young people who have four or more employer encounters with the world of work while at school are five times less likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET), and on average will go on to earn 16% more than their peers who did not have such opportunities.¹ In addition, having contact with a 'positive,

¹ Mann A. (2012) *It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults*. Available from <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/its-who-you-meet-why-employer-contacts-at-school-make-a-difference-to-the-employment-prospects-of-young-adults/>

relatable role model can have substantial impacts on young people's interest in applying to university, and is particularly effective at encouraging those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to aim high', according to the Behavioural Insights Team at the Cabinet Office.²

The employability skills pilot programme provided some of the most at risk of NEET students in four schools with access to employer encounters and positive role models over three years.

Project Overview

The Employability Skills programme launched in 2016 and consisted of a series of nine skills workshops and two mock interview sessions over three years targeted at students in Year 9, 10 and 11 at risk of becoming NEET.

Workshops were facilitated by Future First staff and provided students with opportunities to meet former students, exposing them to a range of different careers and post-18 pathways. The workshops focused on improving students' knowledge about future pathways as well as increasing their aspirations, confidence about the future and motivation to work hard.

Schools were invited to apply for the programme. To be selected, schools had to have a current membership with Future First and be able to identify 22 Year 9 students who were at risk of being NEET, committing these students to attending workshops over the three years.

Four schools based in four areas with a lower than average rate of social mobility and with a large number of vulnerable students at risk of becoming NEET were selected to take part; these schools were Neale-Wade Academy in Cambridgeshire, Looe Community Academy in Cornwall, the Orchard School in Bristol and Jarrow School in South Tyneside. From 2018, Jarrow School was unfortunately no longer able to commit to the final year of the programme. Consequently, an additional 22 Year 9 students from Felpham Community College in West Sussex were invited to participate in one year of the programme.

² Sanders M., Selley E. (2017) 'More Evidence on the Power of Role Models', *The Behavioural Insights Team*, 31 July. Available at <https://www.bi.team/blogs/more-evidence-on-the-power-of-role-models/>

The first year of workshops introduced Year 9s to former students and a range of different career pathways available after school. Students were taught how to identify potential future barriers and were provided with techniques on ways to overcome these. The final workshop in Year 9 focused on developing students' interview skills and building their professional conduct. At the end of the year, students participated in a mock interview session co-facilitated by volunteers in a range of different industries. These took place at Rothschild & Co, Greenergy and South Gloucestershire and Stroud College.

Year two provided students, then in Year 10, with three workshops designed to help them explore post-16 educational and vocational pathways, supporting them to make informed decisions, improve their decision making skills and understand the benefits of work experience for future applications.

In the final year, students participated in three workshops focused on exploring their skills and strengths and how to develop a personal brand. Students were introduced to job application processes and given the opportunity to develop their interview skills. The programme concluded with an employer interview workshop where students participated in mock interviews with local employers including Fresh Egg, Master Roast, Balfour Beatty, Computech IT, Iconik Photography, X-press legal services and the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce.

Evaluation Methodology

110 students participated in at least one year of the programme. Of these, 42 students completed the programme in full. Students completed baseline and exit surveys at the beginning and end of each annual series of workshops. These were designed to measure career aspirations, levels of confidence in future job prospects, knowledge about accessing jobs as well as students' motivation to work hard. In addition, students were asked a range of questions to assess their general feelings about the future and the impact of meeting former students. The report uses a combination of matched data from students who attended all three years of the programme as well as data from all students for the school-level data.

Key findings

Job aspirations

Students were asked what jobs they would like to do in the future at the start of Year 9 and again in Year 11 to see if they had a clearer or more refined idea as to what they would like to do in the future. The responses show that 54% of students' aspirations were either raised, refined, or created by the end of the programme.



Less refined student is interested in a career with a lower entry level qualification requirement
Consistent: Student is interested in the same career or a career on a similar level
Created: student has gone from being 'not sure' to having an idea of what they would like to do
Raised: student is now interested in a career route with a higher entry level qualification requirement
Refined: student is interested in a more specific role in their originally named sector

One student in Year 9 said he wanted to become a basketball player, by Year 11 this had changed to an astrophysicist. Another student opted for engineering after considering a career as a PE teacher in Year 9. 19% of students did not have any idea what they wanted to do in Year 9 but all

these students gave examples by Year 11. One Year 10 student from Neale-Wade Academy said the programme “helped me choose what I want to do in life”. Another student at Looe Community College said “They have given me an idea about what I want to do when I leave and how to achieve it.”

Confidence

Students were asked how confident they were that they'd be able to get their job of choice in the future.

In Year 9, 64% of students reported that they were “quite confident”, “confident” or “very confident” they would be able to get the job they wanted in the future. By Year 11 this had risen by 21% to 85%. In addition, the percentage of students reporting that they were not/not at all confident reduced from 17% to 0%.

Recent [Future First/YouGov research](#) published this year showed that 65% of 15 year olds are worried about the job they will get in the future and that this anxiety increases as children grow older. It is therefore very encouraging to see that this was the opposite for students participating in the programme. These findings suggest the programme has had a positive impact on students' confidence in their future job prospects.



At the end of each workshop series students were asked how they felt the workshops had helped them. A majority of respondents reported an increase in confidence in a number of areas:

"Helped me become more curious in what I want to do and speaking to the former students helped me build up my confidence." Year 9, Orchard School

"It has made me more confident with talking to people I don't really know." Year 10, Looe Community Academy

"The workshops have helped me be more confident in interviews." Year 11, Neale-Wade Academy

"The workshops have helped me boost my confidence, I'm not afraid of interviews anymore." Year 11, Orchard School

Informed decision making

Students were asked if they knew what they needed to do to get the job they would like in the future. 43% of students in Year 9 did not know what they needed to do or were unsure. By Year 11 this reduced to 8%, with 92% reporting they had gained knowledge on how to access their ideal job.



Students reported that attending the workshops and meeting former students:

"Made me understand a lot more about my future." Year 11, Orchard School

"They have given me an idea about what I want to do when I leave and how to achieve it." Year 10, Looe Community Academy

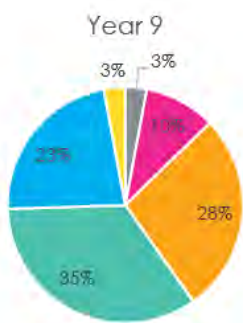
"They have expanded my knowledge on my opportunities." Year 9, Jarrow School

"I better understand what qualifications you need for different jobs"- Year 10, Neale-Wade

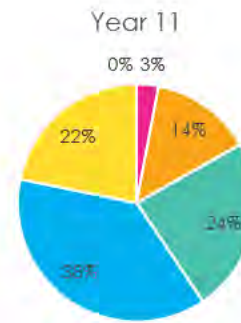
Motivation

Students were asked how motivated they were to prepare for the future. In Year 9, only 60% of students were motivated, by Year 11 this had risen to 84%.

Following the first year of the programme a Year 9 student at Neale-Wade Academy said the workshops *"Showed me that even if you struggle at school you can still get somewhere if you try."*

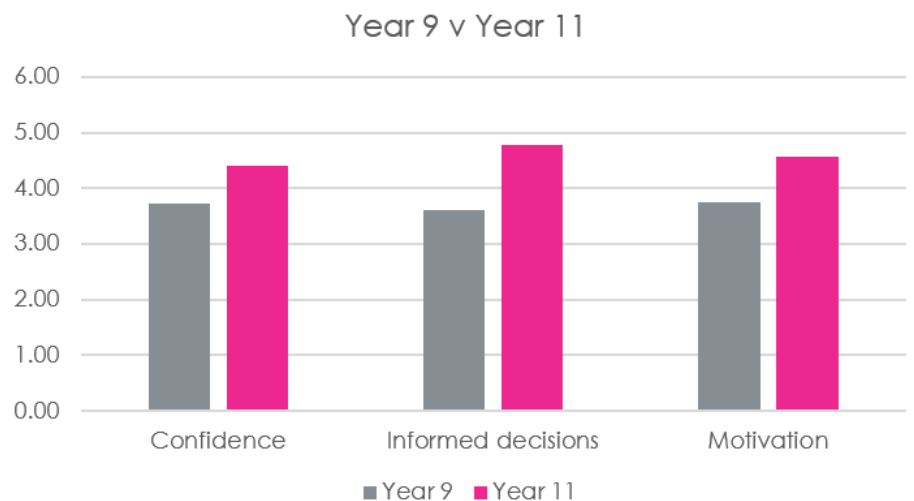


■ Not at all motivated ■ Not motivated ■ Not that motivated
■ Quite motivated ■ Motivated ■ Very motivated



■ Not at all motivated ■ Not motivated ■ Not that motivated
■ Quite motivated ■ Motivated ■ Very motivated

Overall, students' confidence in getting their job of choice, their knowledge of how to access these jobs and their sense of motivation to prepare for their future increased over time. The graph shows the average responses of students who participated in all three years of the programme (weighted on a scale of 1-6 where 1 = lowest 6 = highest) in Year 9 and again in Year 11.

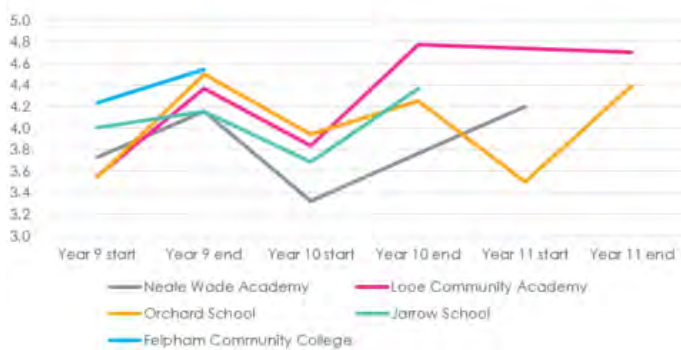


School results

Students' confidence in their job prospects, knowledge on how to get a job and their motivation to work hard increased, on average, across all schools.

The graphs below show the average response rate for each of the three outcomes broken down by school and year.

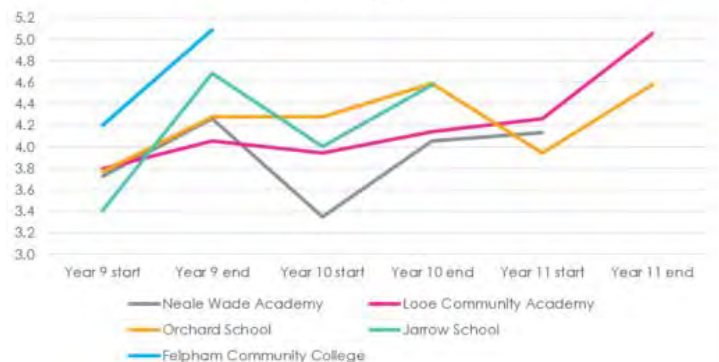
Confidence



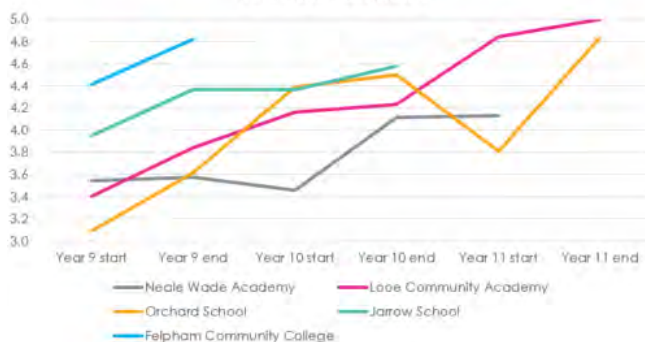
All three outcomes improved regardless of the number of years students participated in the programme, however, students participating in all three years of the programme at Neale Wade Academy, Looe Community Academy and Orchard School saw a larger increase in confidence and decision making than their peers who participated in one or two years.

At the start of Year 10 there was a reduction in confidence and motivation across students in all schools. This is likely to be, in part, as a result of students starting their key stage 4 year, the transition into GCSEs. It could also be due to the gap in the programme caused by the summer break.

Motivation



Informed Decisions



However, by the end of Year 10, students, on average, felt more confident and motivated, and this trend, overall, continued into Year 11 for schools participating in all three years of the programme. The results reflect the significance of a multi-year intervention.

Confidence: “How confident are you that you could get this job in the future?”	Year 9 start	Year 9 end	Year 10 start	Year 10 end	Year 11 start	Year 11 end	Years on programme	Average difference
Neale Wade Academy	3.7	4.2	3.3	3.8	4.2	n/a	3	+0.5
Looe Community Academy	3.6	4.4	3.8	4.8	4.7	4.7	3	+1.1
Orchard School	3.5	4.5	3.9	4.3	3.5	4.4	3	+0.9
Jarrow School	4.0	4.2	3.7	4.4	n/a	n/a	2	+0.4
Felpham Community College	4.2	4.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	+0.3

1= Not at all confident
3= Not that confident
5 = Confident

2= Not confident
4= Quite confident
6=Very Confident

Informed decision making: “Do you know what you need to do to get this job?”	Year 9 start	Year 9 end	Year 10 start	Year 10 end	Year 11 start	Year 11 end	Years on programme	Average difference
Neale Wade Academy	3.5	3.6	3.5	4.1	4.1	n/a	3	+0.6
Looe Community Academy	3.4	3.8	4.2	4.2	4.8	5.0	3	+1.4
Orchard School	3.1	3.6	4.4	4.5	3.8	4.8	3	+0.7
Jarrow School	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.6		n/a	2	+0.6
Felpham Community College	4.4	4.8	0.0	0.0	n/a	n/a	1	+0.4

1= Not at all
3= Not really
5 = Mostly

2= No
4= A bit
6=Definitely

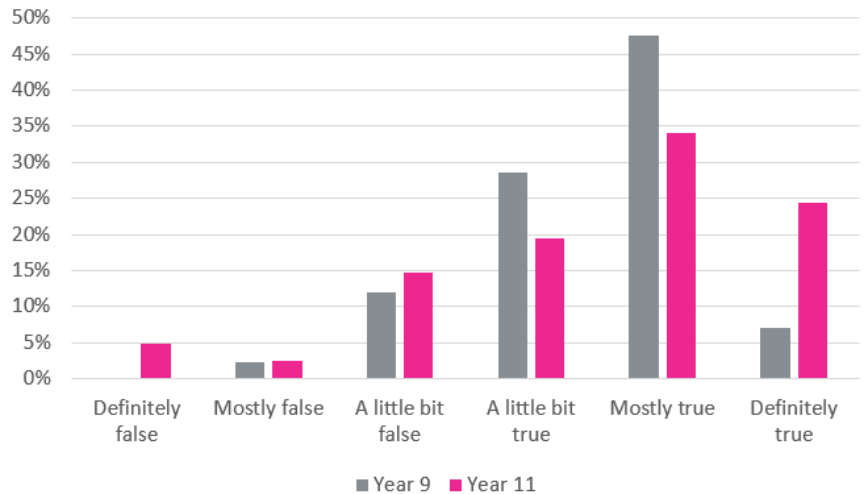
Motivation: “ At the moment, how motivated do you feel to prepare yourself for the future?”	Year 9 start	Year 9 end	Year 10 start	Year 10 end	Year 11 start	Year 11 end	Years on programme	Average difference
Neale Wade Academy	3.7	4.3	3.3	4.1	4.1	n/a	3	+0.4
Looe Community Academy	3.8	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.3	5.1	3	+0.5
Orchard School	3.8	4.3	4.3	4.6	3.9	4.6	3	+0.8
Jarrow School	3.4	4.7	4.0	4.6			2	+1.2
Felpham Community College	4.2	5.1					1	+0.9

1= Not at all
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6=Definitely

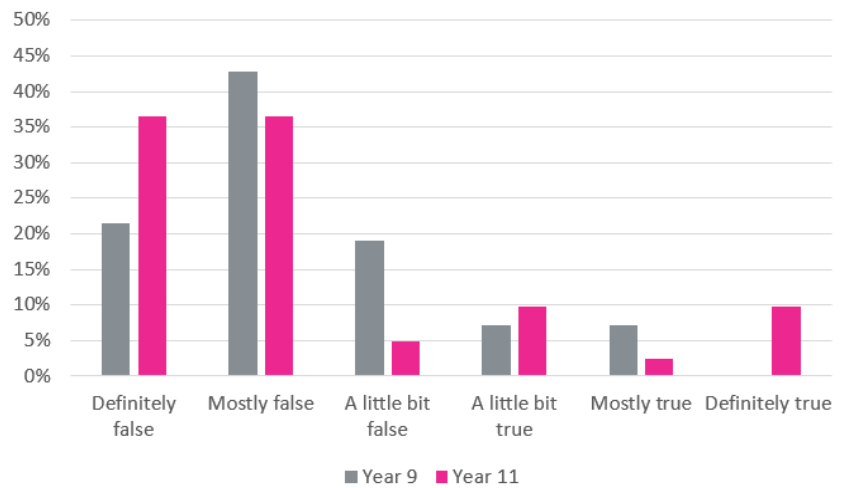
Students feel more positive about the future

We also asked students a series of general questions about how they felt about the future. In Year 9, 55% of students responded mostly/definitely true to the statement 'I feel positive about the future'. By Year 11 this had increased to 59%. Those responding 'Definitely True' increased from 7% to 24%.



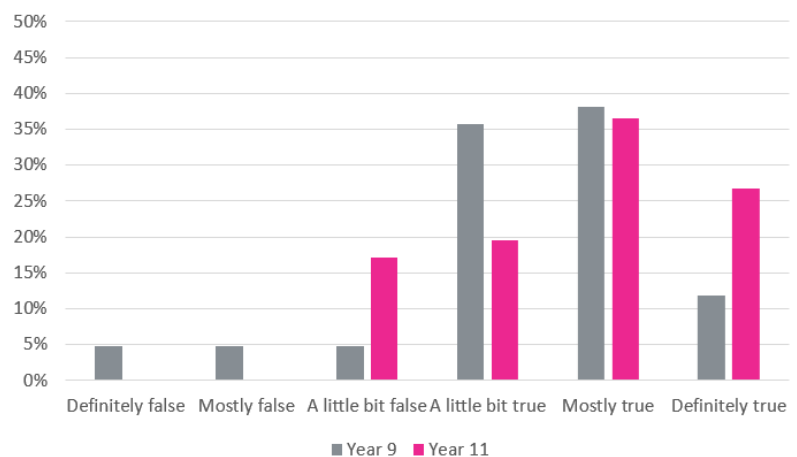
Students are less likely to think planning for the future is a waste of time

Students were asked if they felt making plans for the future is a waste of time. The percentage of students responding definitely/mostly false increased from 64% to 73%, highlighting students' increased awareness of planning for the future.



Students are more likely to believe they can succeed in anything to which they set their mind to.

In Year 9, only 50% agreed this was mostly or definitely true. By Year 11 this increased to 63%.



At the end of the programme we asked students how did meeting former students had helped them.



83% said "meeting former students improved my knowledge of pathways I could take in the future"



62% said "Meeting former students made me think differently about how I approach learning and school"



86% said "Meeting former students shows that people like me can be successful"

Amiera's story



Amiera Gorgulu, Year 10, Looe Community Academy

When Amiera spoke to us she had only recently moved to Looe Community Academy and was finding her way in a new town. She had lots of responsibilities at home which kept her busy, and as she put it, and "hasn't always been the biggest fan of school." She spoke to us last year about her experience on the Employability Skills Programme.

"Before I took part in the workshops, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But by taking part, they got me to a place where I am starting to have a clearer idea of what I want in my life.

Before I started, I was thinking about going into hair and beauty but chatting to the former students and thinking about pathways made me change my mind. I liked the idea of doing hair and beauty but I realised there

weren't as many paths it could lead to and that travel was important to me.

It was great hearing from the volunteers. You get to understand from another person what their experiences were and that they all had different views. Hearing a range of experiences is good – you need more than one opinion as it helps you understand more. There's more to relate to and it helps to remind you that you don't have to be like one person.

One of the volunteers wanted to do computing, but changed his mind when he left school. I liked hearing about this because it made it okay to be uncertain and to change your mind. It made me feel like it's not stupid to test out ideas. He talked about how his ideas had formed into something different, and how he now works in video game design.

It made a difference that he had been at Looe before. He knew how things worked, and what it's like to go to school here. He understood the area and it was easy to chat to him. I only came here myself recently, so talking to him also helped as it told me things I didn't know and let me see what I might expect in the future.

Since starting the workshops I've spoken to my parents and teachers about what I want to do. I'm still deciding but I think I want to travel and work at the same time, working on cruise ships. I'm still thinking about my options but I know that if you are an entertainer you could also go into being an entertainment agent, talent spotter, manage a location, or be a presenter. My dad has experience

here and he has given me some advice – I wouldn't have had that conversation at this point without the workshops.

I like thinking about my options in this new way as I can now see them going somewhere in the future.

After the workshops, I went on work experience to a salon in Looe. It was really good and I got to learn a lot of things. It was a great experience, but it confirmed that I definitely want a career with a wider range of things to do. I used the skills I learned in the workshops by asking lots of questions of the people that worked there, like what they think about their job and the opportunities it gives them.

Before I did the workshops I thought work experience would be a bit of fun. But when I started the placement, it felt like I was working. Working with Future First helped me to see how the placement is really important now, even if it's not what I decide to do after I leave school. It helped me see how I hadn't thought much about what I had chosen before, and helped me to be more serious about what I want to do and how it can help me in my future.

I have started to think differently about my school work. I'm knuckling down and revising a lot more as I want to succeed and do my best. I have confidence that as long as I work to get the grades I want, I will be fine.

My favourite part of workshops was talking to the people and the discussions we had. I found out lots of information – what they were saying was really useful. I'm looking forward to finding out more about college and interviews next year!"

Jamal's story



Jamal Chamberlain Sinclair, former student, Orchard Bristol School

"I didn't really enjoy school at all if I'm honest, other than playing sports. I did extracurricular sports; in fact, I was in every sports team the school offered! When it came to thinking about future careers I had so many ideas of what I wanted to do once I left school but I never really got to the bottom of what I truly wanted, there was no one specific thing that I stayed focused on.

The Future First workshops helped me in that I saw people who actually went to my school achieve great things, earn themselves a decent amount of money and have a successful career. The workshops pushed me forward because I knew that I could become successful like the volunteers who had come into the school to talk to us.

It was really easy to relate to the volunteers because a lot of them came from the same position that I was in, they didn't necessarily enjoy school but when they progressed further they started to enjoy it, found their career path and prospered from it.

I gained some new skills from the workshops, I distinctly remember one of the volunteers gave me a couple of tips on how to make a good CV. I also felt as though the workshops helped me to refresh and refine the skills that I already had such as communication skills.

The mock interviews were really helpful because some of the volunteers gave me really useful advice when it comes to being successful at interviews. They told me to create a balance between confidence and over confidence; my personality is really confident so they told me not to overdo it.

The workshops also helped prepare me for what I might do when it comes to having a job. There were sessions on what to do in the workplace environment, do's and don'ts and how to behave; there were some things that I didn't know you should do in the workplace so that was quite helpful.

Overall, the things I enjoyed most about the employability skills workshops was interacting with the volunteers, asking how they got on at school and how they got to where they are now; asking them simple questions like do you enjoy what you do. It was helpful to know that people have gone down a career path which they enjoy.

My goal now is to become a chartered accountant; in fact, I have an interview next week for an apprenticeship at an accountancy firm! I'd really like to recommend the Future First workshops, the programme was really good and it has helped me move forward."

Conclusion

The Employability Skills Programme provided students with access to multiple employer encounters and relatable role models, broadening students' horizons, raising their aspirations and helping them to make more confident and informed decisions about their futures.

Between 2016-19, 110 students at risk of becoming NEET participated in a series of employability skills workshops and mock interviews supported by former students and local employers. 42 students completed the full three-year programme. The evaluation findings highlight the positive impact the programme had on students' knowledge about future pathways, their confidence to succeed and drive to work hard to secure future education and career opportunities.

- 85% of students felt confident they'd be able to get their job of choice in the future
- 92% gained knowledge on how to access their ideal job
- 84% felt motivated to prepare themselves for the future
- 54% of students' aspirations were either raised, refined, or created by the end of the programme.

Students were also more likely to feel positive about the future, less likely to think planning for the future was a waste of time and were more likely to believe they can succeed in anything they put their mind too. Students taking part in one year of the programme saw improvements in these outcomes but the largest gains were seen amongst students who participated in all three years, highlighting the benefit of multiyear interventions and multiple encounters with former students and employers.

Next steps

To understand the impact of the pilot on students' post-16 pathways we would like to track the destinations of students who participated in the programme and have contacted all the schools involved in the pilot to share this data.

In addition, sustainability is at the core of our work and over ten years we have worked with schools supporting teachers to embed a long-term culture of alumni engagement into school practices by providing teachers with CPD and access to resources via our Digital Toolkit. Following the success of this programme we have developed a suite of nine skills and pathways workshops which will be widely available to our member schools on our Toolkit. These include one and two-hour session plans, presentations and resources alongside volunteer briefing notes. We also plan to share our findings across our schools network, signposting schools to our resources via e-newsletter, blogs and via the press.