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FOREWORD

The voice of our Youth Council

"My name is Cara Field, and I represent the South-East on the Speakers for Schools Youth Council, which I joined this year.

The Youth Council has been a fantastic opportunity to share my thoughts on major topics, advise Speakers for Schools on how to better meet the needs of the younger generation, and help incorporate the youth voice into their work. I've had the opportunity to engage with many departments within the charity, all of whom were incredibly supportive and receptive to my experiences.

Since joining the Youth Council, I've had incredible opportunities to grow in confidence and public speaking. My first experience was a panel discussion at the Festival of Education alongside Nick Brook, where the room was so full people were standing at the back a hugely positive introduction to public speaking.

Another highlight was delivering a letter of hopes to the new Government at 10 Downing Street, followed by a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons, where I networked with government officials, business leaders, and sector professionals –opportunities that wouldn't have been possible without the Youth Council.

This impact report highlights the transformative effect of meaningful work experience. The Youth Council and I have experienced first-hand how the programmes offered by Speakers for Schools are not only vital but uniquely powerful due to their emphasis on quality and inclusivity. By equipping young people with the confidence to navigate their future paths, these initiatives are making a lasting and positive difference in their lives.

I fully support the charity's goal to ensure quality, multi-day work experiences are available to all young people and believe this is essential for levelling the playing field for state-school students. I'm pleased to see the positive impact we have made this year and hope we continue making a real difference in young people's lives."

Cara Field

Speakers for Schools Youth Council



FOREWORD

A word from our CEO

"In the summer of 2023, Speakers for Schools published a new five-year strategy with the ambition that, by 2028, every young person in this country will have access to high-quality, multi-day work experience before they leave secondary school.

This year, half of young people will leave school having had no work experience whatsoever. Those who do often rely on parental networks to arrange it. It cannot be right that access to opportunities or the workplace is dependent upon who mum or dad know or where they might work. That is why we have pivoted our focus and resources to close this gap in access to opportunity by 2028.

2023–24 marked the first year of delivering our new five-year strategy. During those twelve months, we quadrupled the number of businesses we worked with to deliver multi-day work experiences and doubled the number of young people on placements, reaching over 8,500. This makes Speakers for Schools the largest provider of work experience in the country.

Fairer access to the workplace is a 'good' in itself. However, access is only part of the solution. Opportunities need to be relevant, meaningful, and impactful. Over the past year, we have invested heavily to deepen our understanding of the characteristics of high-quality work experience and refined our processes to apply this learning across all our programmes. It is really encouraging to see the results of this work shine through in this report and in the strengthening impact measured.

What I have found most exciting of all is that, while our evidence shows that all young people can benefit from access to work experience, pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds benefit the most. This year, we observed significant improvements in participants' confidence, career awareness, and essential skills, with pupils from less affluent backgrounds reporting the greatest increases. Put simply, the more work experience we deliver, the fairer it becomes.

Talent is spread evenly across the country, but opportunity isn't. Every volunteer, funder, school, and employer that works with us is helping to level the playing field and close the opportunity gap for young people. This report stands as a celebration of their achievements, and I thank them all for their continued support."

Nick Brook

Chief Executive Officer



OUR MISSION

Making an impact

Speakers for Schools is one of the largest social mobility charities in the UK. We're dedicated to levelling the playing field for all young people by providing high-quality experiences of the world of work and inspirational talks in schools.

Our programmes demystify careers, build self-belief and open doors to opportunities that were previously closed.

In 2023, we launched our bold new strategy. We are focused on ensuring every young person in state secondary schools has access to high-quality multi-day work experience by 2028.

Building a fairer future

In the first year of our five-year plan, we doubled the number of multi-day work experience placements we provided and quadrupled the number of businesses we partnered with. This makes us the largest work experience provider in the UK.





As a charity, we are obsessive about impact.

Through benchmarking, quality assurance and external reviews, we strive for continuous improvement in all that we do. In 2023-24, we saw a significant uplift across key quality measures compared to the previous year, alongside substantial growth in delivery volume.

This impact report highlights our achievements over the past year and the strides we've made towards our ambitious goals. We showcase the stories, statistics and insights demonstrating how our work is changing lives, bridging gaps and driving real progress towards a fairer, more inclusive future for young people across the UK.





OUR REACH

What we achieved in 2023/24

In focussing on longer multi-day placements, this year we've seen a reduction in our numbers of interventions but an increase in quality and therefore an improvement in the impact we've made on young people across the UK.

We provided 199,769 interventions with 2,213 state schools/colleges.

Work experience programme:

Total number of students attended experiences of the workplace:

16,300

8,521

students attended multiday work experience

students attended Insight Days

Overall we provided 521 opportunities

working with 218 leading employers

Inspirational talks programme:

Total number of students attended talks:

183,465

students attended 515 in-person inspirational talks

registered for 188 livestreams and 11,340 watched our post-talk videos

1,445 speakers were part of our diverse network

826 young people attended and watched our National Teen Book Club

WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

Introduction

Through our work experience programme, we help bridge the gap between education and the working world. By partnering with employers across different industries, we provide meaningful, high-quality work experience opportunities for young people aged 14 to 19. These placements offer invaluable exposure to real-life professional environments, empowering students to gain practical skills, build confidence and prepare for their future careers.

In 2023/24, we focused on delivering more 3-to-5-day experiences. Our data shows these longer experiences make a greater impact on young people. Responding to an appetite for more face-to-face experiences, we ensured two-thirds of our multi-day opportunities included an in-person element this academic year.

We also launched targeted projects to reach young people in areas of the UK where opportunities are more limited. This helped us increase our understanding of how we connect with and support young people who can gain the most from our work experience programme.



154,720

learning hours completed by young people across our multi-day work experiences this academic year.



Programme participants

Who benefited from our **Work Experience Programme?***



23%

of young people who attended our in-person work experiences lived outside London and the South East



of young people who told us their ethnicity were from ethnic minority backgrounds

Student, 17, London



of young people on STEM-related* placements identified as female

*Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

8%

of young people had special educational needs

of young people

were eligible for

(FSMs)

Free School Meals



Gender breakdown:



(or preferred to self-describe)



Who did in-person, hybrid or virtual multi-day work experiences

Overall total: 4512



During the placement, I gained knowledge of different

careers within the company, which helped me to better

understand my future options and skills I need to develop.

Scotland

1256 Yorkshire

& Humber

West Midlands

London

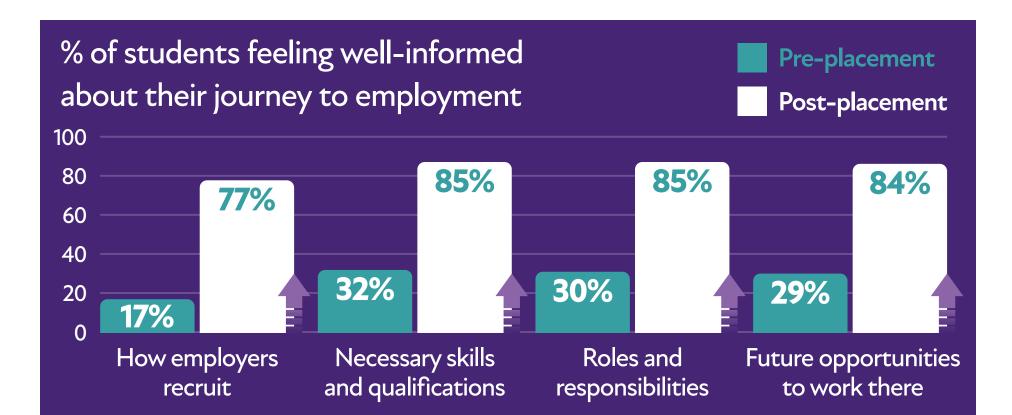
Programme impact

The data is clear: high-quality work experience has a transformative impact on young people's lives.

This year, our programme has strengthened young people's confidence, skills and clarity about their future. After completing a placement, 89% of participants felt confident they could achieve their career goals – proof of our programme's influence.

We've seen gains in young people's understanding of career pathways, increased confidence in vital skills like speaking and listening and better ability to make informed career choices. Young people consistently tell us that our work experience programme not only builds essential employability skills. It also broadens their awareness of opportunities, empowering them to take meaningful steps toward their ambitions.

How the experience changed young people



What young people said about our programme



of young people said their work experience placement helped them understand what career opportunities are available to them (compared to 59% in 22/23)



of young people said their experience of the workplace raised their awareness of the routes they can take to a career in their industry of interest (compared to 70% in 22/23)



of young people eligible for Free School
Meals said taking part in our work experience
programme helped them make a decision
on the job they want to do in the future



of young people said they have all the information they need to make an informed decision about pursuing a career in the industry their placement was in



of young people said the placement helped them feel more confident in their speaking skills and 57% said they were able to build confidence in their listening skills



Overall, young people rated their work experience

4.3 out of 5

09

Programme impact

Our work experience programme provides valuable outcomes not only for young people but also for educators and employers. Educators see stronger student engagement and career awareness, while employers report high levels of satisfaction and meaningful impact from being involved. Together, these insights highlight our programme's broad, positive influence across schools and workplaces alike.

What educators said about our programme



Almost 9 in 10 (89%) educators said that taking part in our work experience programme left their students better informed about available jobs and careers



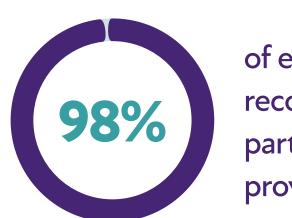
1 in 3 educators (32%) said that after taking part in our work experience programme, they noticed their students were better engaged with their education



of relevant educators reported student participation against Gatsby benchmarks or DYW/Curriculum for Excellence (only 74%) reported against these benchmarks last year)



What employers said about our programme



of employers would recommend us for partnering with to provide work experience



of employers said young people were engaged with the placement



of employers said they were able to achieve their outcomes/motivations for providing work experience through their partnership with us (2 in 3 reported that this "was to a great extent")



The programme won a 98% satisfaction rating

Programme success stories



Discover! Creative Careers

Speakers for Schools, in partnership with Discover! Creative Careers programme, delivered a transformative series of opportunities for young people across 100 places in the UK. They included inspirational talks, hands-on workshops, a National Teen Book Club, virtual insight sessions and workplace visits. Discover! Creative Careers programme is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport with extra support from Arts Council England.

With over **8,400** interactions across **463** schools, we collaborated with **31** employers to bring young people insights into industries like architecture, museums and media. Highlights included career advice sessions and in-person workshops with companies like Autotrader, Sky Studios and Get into Theatre, offering invaluable exposure to creative career paths.



Very accessible and clear delivery describing the value of creative industries in the UK, followed up by helpful info and advice to students applying to higher education courses.



It allowed me to hear stories from people who work in the industry and opened my eyes to a clearer perspective on how these jobs work.



3 Days in the Life of Ad Agency, Lucky Generals

Award-winning advertising agency Lucky Generals are known for work with Yorkshire Tea, Co-op and Virgin Atlantic. They hosted an eye-opening **3-day work experience** with a group of young people from our school and college network in their London studio.

Lucky Generals used this **in-person placement** to showcase the advertising industry to its fullest. This included a jam-packed agenda with job shadowing and hands-on activities giving young people the chance to build their skills and develop a much deeper understanding of what it's like to work for them.

"Finding people from different walks of life, different backgrounds, who can bring different perspectives is really important to the success of our business... The advertising industry needs to appeal to young people to keep interesting creators, makers and thinkers coming into the industry."

Dave Mannell, Client Partner at Lucky Generals





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Impact Report 2023 – 2024 Young Person

Programme success stories



Your Sustainable Future

Your Sustainable Future was a **pilot project funded by the Department for Education through the Careers and Enterprise Company** and run across multiple regions. In York and North Yorkshire, this project was carried out in partnership with Speakers for Schools **through the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority**.

Together, we partnered with nine schools across the region, including four coastal, three rural and two urban schools. Over 20 employers got involved, each sharing their expertise through a multi-day, in-person work experience, benefiting over 900 students in total.

We designed, coordinated and delivered activities focused on increasing meaningful workplace experiences for young people facing disadvantage, and engaged more employers in the net-zero and green industry sectors. It equipped schools/young people with the tools to explore sustainable careers and make informed employment choices for the future.



The project was useful, linked to GCSE topics like electricity and energy, and got the students to think about sustainability. The careers links were eye-opening.



of young people said that post-placement they now felt knowledgeable about employers and industries.





Rethinking virtual work experience with the CEC

In 2024, we designed and delivered a project to enhance access to meaningful virtual work experience for young people in partnership with and funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC).

The project focused on identifying and tackling barriers faced by employers, schools and students in providing effective online placements. Together, we evaluated the role, quality and content of virtual experiences to deepen young people's understanding of the working world. Structured around six sector themes – Calculator, Connector, Carer, Constructor, Computer and Creator – the project aligned with the National Curriculum and Skills Builder framework. This made sure it was relevant to students' wider learning.

The project engaged 43
employers who delivered 56
sessions, with a total of 4,307
young people registered
across 84 schools. Each
placement provided students
with real-world tasks to
develop essential skills, expand
their professional networks
and learn about careers beyond
their local communities.

- 93% of young people said they now understood what skills employers look for.
- 94% of educators educators
 who took part told us that,
 because of the project, they have
 more ideas about non-traditional
 or innovative ways of delivering
 workplace experiences

Educator, North Yorkshire

INSPIRATIONAL TALKS PROGRAMME

Introduction

Our inspirational talks programme empowers young people to expand their horizons and visualise ambitious futures. This past year, we delivered 619 talks, reaching over 180,000 young people with insights from leading speakers and authors offering guidance and motivation for students as they explore their potential paths.

This year, we introduced Industry Spotlight Talks – live-streamed webinars designed to give young people an inside look into specific businesses and industries. These sessions cover how each industry operates, the roles available, skills required and potential career pathways. They provide valuable insights to help students understand and explore their options.

We're immensely proud of the impact our programme has on schools, young people and educators. We're grateful to our speakers who generously volunteer their time to inspire and motivate the next generation.



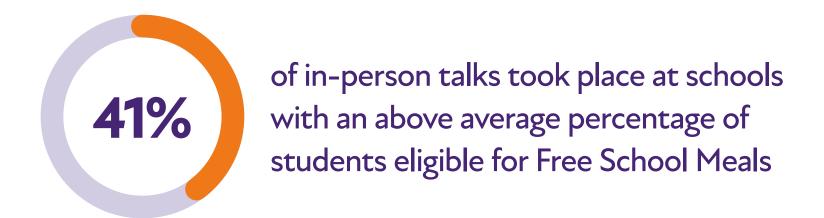
Programme participants

Who benefited from our Inspiration Talks Programme?*

schools got involved in our inspiration talks programme

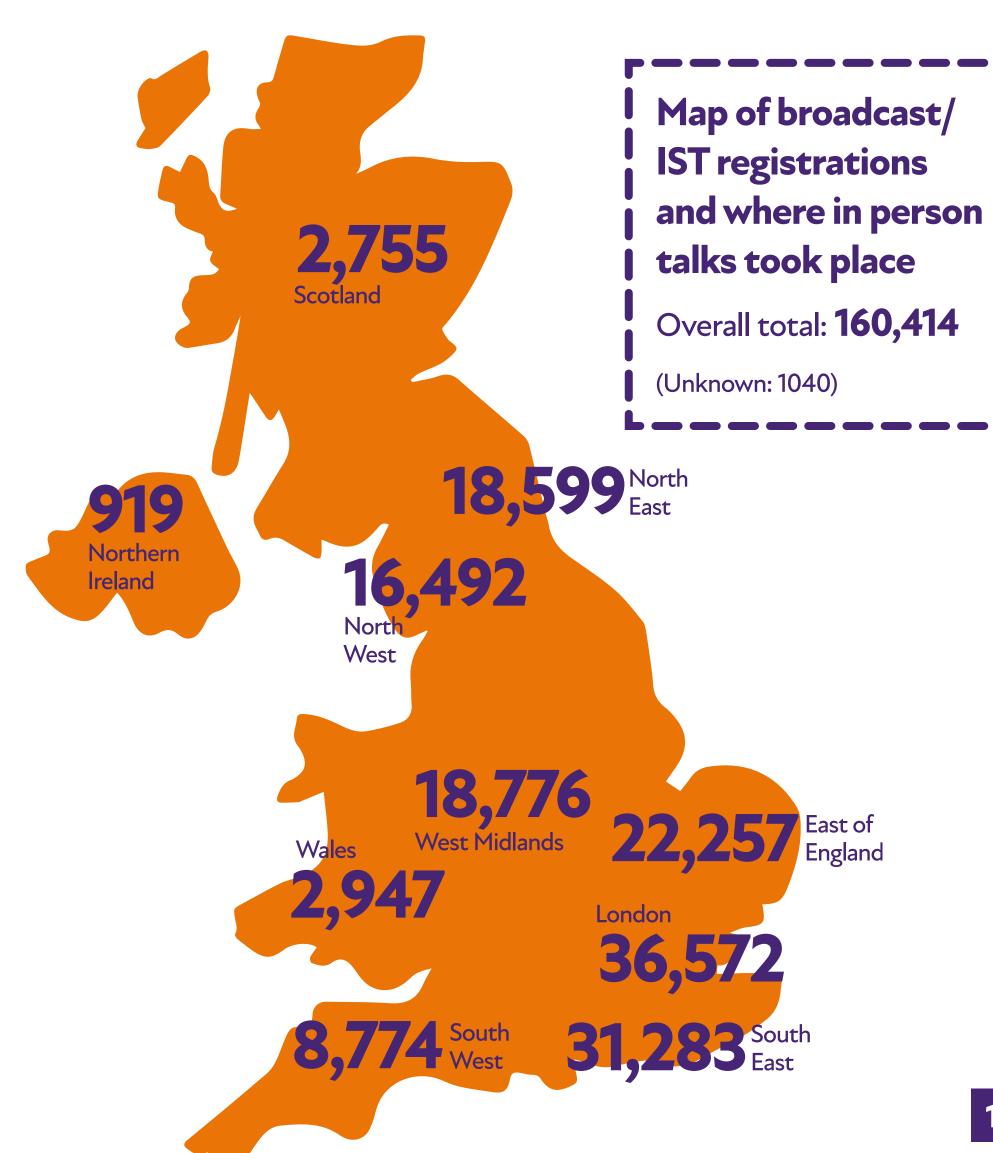
We delivered talks at 108 schools in 'social mobility cold spots'.

These are the top 10 local authorities with the lowest levels of social mobility in the UK, according to Promising Prospects index.





Student, 17, Berkshire



Programme impact

Our inspirational talks programme has a broad impact, empowering young people not only to think bigger about their futures but also gain practical insights into a wide range of industries. Beyond inspirational talks, these talks provide young people with knowledge about specific career paths and the skills needed to pursue them.

Educators value the programme for motivating students to actively explore career options, while speakers find it rewarding to connect with and guide the next generation. Together, these perspectives showcase the programme's positive influence in expanding aspirations and providing real-world career insights.



Our school has hosted so many incredible speakers since 2018, they have been inspirational for our students and staff. Thank you for these ongoing opportunities.

Educator, London

What young people said:



of young people said the talk allowed them to gain insight into a career or industry they didn't know about before



After the talk, 1 in 3 young people said they were considering a career in the same sector as the speaker who delivered the talk



8 in 10 young people agreed that: "I can achieve whatever career I set my mind to," following an inspirational talk



of young people agreed that the talk showed them that a career in the speaker's industry is suitable for people from their background

The programme won a 5.3/7 average enjoyment rating



The programme's content got a 5.5/7 average content rating



Programme impact



What educators said:



of relevant educators reported student participation against Gatsby benchmarks or DYW/Curriculum for Excellence. Only 64% reported against these benchmarks last year.



of educators believe that, by participating in our inspirational talks programme, their students were encouraged to do more careers-related activities to achieve their ambitions, like work experience.



The programme won a **98%** satisfaction rating



What our speakers said:



of speakers would recommend us



of speakers said young people were engaged with their talks

66

I am very grateful for the work you have done for us as it has enriched the students' cultural capital and inspired them.

Educator, London

Programme success stories





Infrastructure Industry Foundation Talk Series

This year, we partnered with the Infrastructure Industry Foundation (IIF) to create more opportunities for state secondary schools and colleges to engage directly with infrastructure finance leaders.

Through a series of 25 in-person talks and 5 online broadcasts, industry experts from IIF's membership delivered insightful, inspiring content. Each session demystified infrastructure finance and highlighted the skills and qualities needed for success.

As part of IIF's Social Mobility partners, we look forward to deepening this partnership and expanding access to career opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach for young people.







Baroness Warsi powers-up students in Wakefield

In a heartwarming return to her roots, **Baroness Sayeeda Warsi** wowed **students at Ossett Academy** with her remarkable life story. The Wakefield local, and Britain's first Muslim Cabinet Minister, captivated the audience with tales of her rise to the House of Lords.

Baroness Warsi understands first-hand how crucial it is for young people to have access to relatable role models who can inspire them to believe that anything is possible. Then, with hard work and focus, they can achieve their dreams.

She told the students that "there'll always be people saying you don't have the right accent, clothes, or even skin colour, but don't let that get you down. Keep focused on the horizon and on your goals". This inspiring visit from a true hometown hero, as part of our inspirational talks programme, aimed to fuel the ambitions of the next generation of future leaders from Wakefield.



We don't get many people to come in to speak, so to hear a local success story makes me feel like I can achieve something good. If she's done it, then I can as well.

Alec, age 15

Programme success stories

TV presenter and author Bobby Seagull shares his formula for success

We offered celebrated mathematician Bobby Seagull the opportunity to deliver an **in-person talk to inspire year 10 students** at his former secondary school, **St. Bonaventure's** in East Ham. It was a true full-circle moment that was too good to miss.

Like a large portion of the young people who attended his talk, Bobby wasn't born into privilege. The second-born son to first generation immigrants, he grew up on a council estate in one of the most deprived and diverse boroughs of London.

Never one to shy away from working hard to realise his dreams, Bobby shared with his audience the important role education played in his life journey. Students and staff were enthralled to hear how the city trader turned maths teacher, TV presenter and author had generated so much success by following his passion for numbers.



It's really special having a talk like this and it can really have a positive impact in your life later.







One of the main benefits of attending talks like this is it helps students create a plan and see the steps that it takes to get from where they are now to where they want to be in the future.

Educator

NATIONAL TEEN BOOK CLUB

In the 2023-24 academic year, our National Teen Book Club (NTBC) continued to provide young people with engaging, affordable access to Young Adult literature through online book clubs.

We partnered with Penguin Random House Children's to supply 4 out of 6 titles, with sessions featuring expert speakers from the worlds of writing and publishing. These sessions **not only encouraged a love of reading but also offered career insights, demystifying the publishing industry and promoting writing and publishing as accessible career paths.** Aligned with the Skills Builder framework goals of Staying Positive and Aiming High, NTBC aims to challenge stereotypes, inspire ambition and broaden perspectives among young readers across the UK.

Our Impact

Educators reported that participating in NTBC supported their students in at least one of the following ways:

- Enhancing engagement with reading for pleasure
- Strengthening their sense of connection and community within the school
- Increasing awareness of available job opportunities and career pathways



of educators were satisfied with their NTBC experience, with 80% 'very satisfied'.



Impact in action

Author Manjeet Mann joined us for a second time in 2023/24, leading a Q&A session on her powerful verse-novel, *Run, Rebel*. The book explores themes of self-expression and breaking free from fear and expectations. We were also joined by Neetu Singh, Assistant Director of the book's stage adaptation, who offered insights into adapting stories across different media. This discussion on storytelling helped lay the groundwork for NTBC's new 2024/25 model. This will explore themes across books, TV, film and graphic novels as well as a broader catalogue of stories, aiming to stimulate engagement with something for everyone.



Manjeet shared a memorable piece of advice with young people: "Don't be scared to fail... if you try something and it doesn't work out... that's not failing, that's learning."





Young people are at the heart of what Speakers for Schools do.

So our Youth Council is vital to ensuring that our charity continues to provide the very best support we can. Each year, a diverse group of 15-17-year-olds from acrossthe UK join us to provide insights into the challenges facing millions of state-educated students today.

This year, we have representatives from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and every corner of England from Sunderland to Newton Abbott. They're selected based on their interest in and passion for the causes that match our social mobility mission.

Read more about our Youth Council here: Meet our new Youth Council.





"I hope that through my role I not only improve my confidence through public speaking, but I have my voice heard for the good of other students who are in the same position as me – facing problems with access to work experience in our local regions and reaching our potential."

Bitania Selamyihun, Youth Council member

Highlights of the Youth Council's activities this year include:

- Working with the National Teen Book Club team to create a youth-led offer of the club
- Giving their opinions on some work experience pilots in development
- Making suggestions on how we could develop an alumni offer
- Representing the council on panels at the Festival of Education
- Supporting our impact team in improving the way we collect feedback about our programmes
- Providing valuable insights to our inspirational talks team
 on Industry Spotlight broadcasts and career talk resources
- Attending the All-Party Parliamentary Group youth panel discussion on mentoring
- Writing a letter to the Prime Minister outlining their key requests for the new government, based on five focus areas for young people





"I think the Youth Council has contributed positively in suggesting things that can attract more and more young people to do work experience. I think the work SFS does is essential because of the changing landscape in the job market. A resource like this is invaluable."

Matei Costinescu, Youth Council member

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RESEARCH AND POLICY

Our research

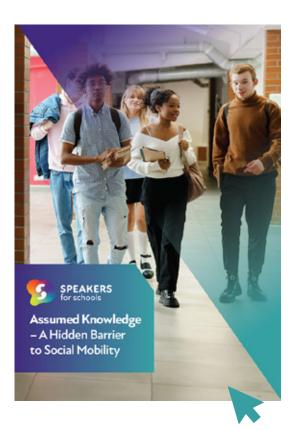
In the 2023/24 academic year, we expanded our research efforts to address critical barriers faced by young people in accessing higher education and meaningful employment. Our **Double Disadvantage report** highlighted the challenges faced by young people from less affluent backgrounds, who often lack access to the extracurricular activities and insights needed to strengthen their university applications – particularly Russell Group institutions. This "double disadvantage" widens the attainment gap, further limiting opportunities for these students. Our findings have coincided with policy changes by UCAS, signalling a step toward greater equity in university admissions.



I think the letter around assumed knowledge really brings up the issues I think face most pupils that don't seem to quite get the attention they need. It's really encouraging to see an organisation that aims to support state students get work experience which is something crucial to getting a job you're happy with, university or not.

Molly Elizabeth Willsher, Youth Council member







Levelling the playing field

Our **Assumed Knowledge report** explored the informal knowledge that young people need to transition successfully from education to employment. Our research, **carried out in partnership with Social Market Foundation**, found that young people from privileged backgrounds, especially those with graduate parents, are more likely to possess this knowledge. This boosts their confidence and ability to navigate the education-to-career pathway.

Together, our studies underscore the need for timely, accessible support to level the playing field for all young people.



Our policy work

Getting young people's voices heard

This year **our Youth Council wrote a letter to the Prime Minister**, outlining their hopes and priorities for young people across the UK. The letter, tackling issues they feel should be central to government policy, was hand-delivered to 10 Downing Street. It was a symbolic and direct call for action on the issues that matter most to today's youth. This engagement underscores our commitment to empowering young people to actively participate in shaping policies that affect their futures.

Leading the conversation on work experience policy

We've led the national conversation around work experience and career readiness. Our CEO, Nick Brook, contributed to the House of Lords' inquiry on education for 11-16-year-olds. He provided both spoken and written evidence to push for a stronger, more equitable approach to work experience in schools. Through this engagement, we emphasised the importance of accessible work experience opportunities and meaningful career guidance for all young people.

At the **Festival of Education**, we held two influential panels, furthering our advocacy for improved career pathways. The sessions, titled 'Don't Let the Nepo Babies Win' and 'The Role of Education in Keeping Students Ahead of the Al Curve,' featured our CEO, members of the Youth Council and other thought leaders. These discussions tackled critical challenges in education, from equity in career opportunities to the skills students need to thrive in a rapidly evolving job market.

Working with the new Government

Our commitment to work experience policy continues as we engage with the Government following their recent pledge to provide two weeks of work experience and improved careers guidance in schools. Speakers for Schools is working to shape the implementation of this promise, ensuring that it benefits all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Plus, we want to make sure that career guidance in schools equips young people with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to succeed. Through ongoing advocacy and collaboration, we aim to influence policy to create fairer, more impactful work experience programmes across the UK.



THANK YOU

to our partners and supporters

Our work is made possible by a powerful network of volunteers, partners and supporters - the true backbone of our mission.

The more than 1,445 speakers driving our inspirational talks programme generously share their expertise and experiences, sparking ambition in young minds across the country. Through our work experience programme, hundreds of employers open their doors, offering young people valuable insights into the world of work and paving the way for a diverse and dynamic future workforce.

Visit our **Social Mobility Partner Directory here**



























































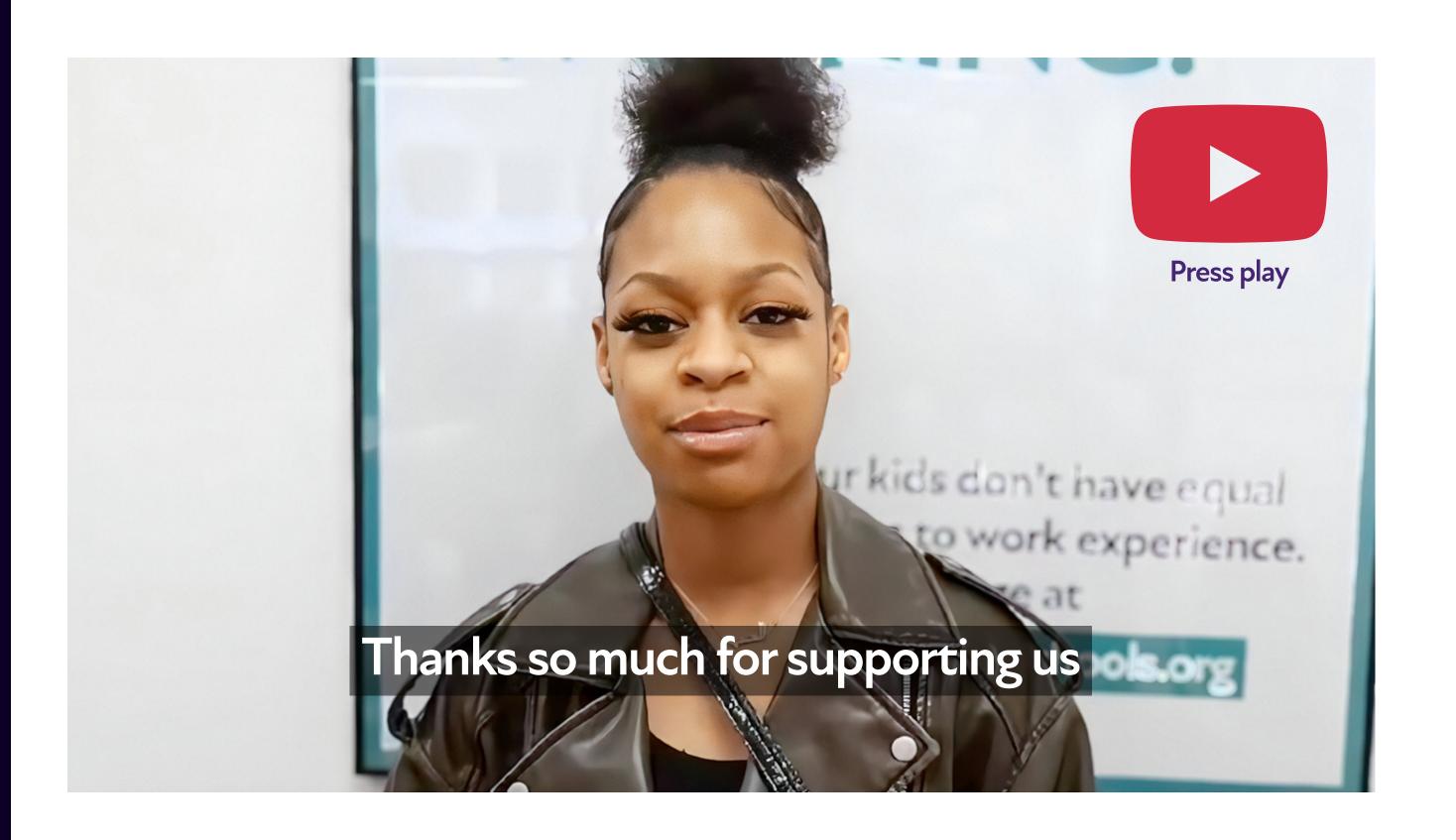
Every new supporter brings us closer to ensuring that all young people, regardless of background, gain access to opportunities that enrich their futures and contribute to thriving communities.

The Law Family Charitable Foundation continues to provide generous funding that empowers our growth and enhances our capacity to operate on a national scale. We thank them for their trust and commitment, which allow us to plan ambitiously and drive lasting impact.

THANK YOU

to our partners and supporters

A special thanks goes to key supporters from the 2023-24 academic year, including the Infrastructure Industry Foundation, Drax Foundation, Lord Nash, Westminster Foundation, Penguin Random House, Sir James Knott Trust, Rigby Foundation, Indu and the Hugh Fraser Foundation.



Expanding our reach

Building on these robust partnerships, we look forward to welcoming even more advocates –employers, charitable trusts, foundations and individuals alike. Together, we're dedicated to expanding our reach and keeping our programmes accessible for all schools, creating meaningful, lasting change for communities and organisations.

And finally...

To the 2,000 state schools and colleges in our network: thank you for your tireless dedication to supporting students' futures. To the young people who engage so positively with our programmes and to our Youth Council, who elevate youth perspectives on critical career topics – your involvement is vital to our impact. Thank you for being the driving force behind our mission.