



**SPEAKERS**  
for schools

# IMPACT

Report 2022 – 2023

How we're levelling the playing field for state school students

[speakersforschools.org](https://speakersforschools.org)

# CONTENTS

## ▶ Forewords

- Thoughts from our founder
- The view of our chair
- A word from our CEO

## ▶ Our mission

- Levelling the playing field
- Bridging the gap

## ▶ What we achieved in 2022/23

### Achievements overview

### Our Inspiration programme

- Inspiration activity and impact
- Programme viewpoints

### Our Experience programme

- Experience activity and impact
- Programme participants
- Programme viewpoints

### Our influence

- Work Experience For All
- Taking action
- What we did
- The results

## ▶ What's next? Our plans for the future

## ▶ Thank you to our partners and supporters

“

I've learnt so much and now have a foundation to build my skills for the future.

Joyce, London



# FOREWORD

## Thoughts from our founder

“Every year since Speakers for Schools was founded in 2009, I’ve written that the challenges facing young people, as they prepare to make their way in the world, are daunting. And every year those challenges ratchet up another notch.

The economy, society, our way of life is being changed by a resurgence of east-west and other geopolitical tensions, climate change, the consequences of the pandemic, Brexit, and the artificial-intelligence industrial revolution, to name just a few of the era-defining trends.

Never has it been so important therefore to broaden and deepen school-students’ understanding of our changing world and what that means for where and how they will earn a living and create homes of their own.

Helping to provide that understanding is Speakers for Schools’ mission, through arranging free talks by eminent people and facilitating rich experience of workplaces. It is about sharing insights, building confidence and resilience, teaching the importance of team working, encouraging cooperation and openness to ideas.

The idea behind Speakers for Schools was a simple one, that education should be about much more than an academic curriculum. But executing that idea, when resources are so tight in schools and in partnership with a UK public sector disincentivised to take risks, has never been easy.

This is why I want to thank the Charity’s brilliant team, so ably led by Nick Brook and Mark Smith, for the progress they continue to make, and our chair Andrew Law for the generosity of his financial support and clarity of governance.

Research has proved that the kind of services we provide enhances the earning power of young people. But that is too narrow a measure of success. **I’ve always felt that if we inspire even just one in a thousand young people to move from hopelessness to ambition, we’ve made an important difference. Realistically we can do so much more.”**

**Robert Peston**  
Founder



### ► Forewords

- Thoughts from our founder

# FOREWORD

## The view of our chair

“The academic year 2022/23 was a period of targeted building on all we have achieved at Speakers for Schools over the past decade, channelling our efforts to ensure that we are fully focused on delivering the most impactful outcomes for those in state education, particularly the disadvantaged.

Notably, we have refreshed our management, and I’d very much like to welcome Nick Brook, who has joined us as Chief Executive, and has led a subsequent strategic review of our activities that we detail in this report.

The Board would like to record their appreciation for the work done by all the Speakers for Schools team over what was inevitably a period of transition and challenge.

We are concentrating our activities over the coming years in three key areas; our core work around inspirational talks in schools which are more needed than ever in this fast-changing economic and social environment; longer work experience placements delivered where possible on a face-to-face basis as evidence suggests that this is our best chance of really changing outcomes for young people, and finally advocacy on behalf of the young people who we are pledged to support.

We know that no one organisation can deliver all the change that we need, and we will continue to work to build a consensus coalition in support of our goals.

**To this end in the advocacy space, we ran a very successful evidence-based campaign on Work Experience for All, with high levels of social engagement and press coverage, which saw high levels of political buy-in across the spectrum, and has significantly shifted the argument on this important subject.**

With the support of colleagues within Speakers for Schools and all our wider stakeholders, we look forward to an exhilarating, challenging and impactful year ahead. Our collective thanks go out once again to all concerned.”



**Andrew Law**

Chair of the Board of Trustees



# FOREWORD

## A word from our CEO

“It isn’t right that access to the workplace depends on who mum and dad know.”

Our CEO Nick Brook reveals our new ambition to support every state school student

“Our overarching ambition is to increase the richness of education for state school students and level the playing field with the best fee-paying schools. That’s the reason I became a teacher over 30 years ago.

Right now, around **half of state school students leave school with no work experience whatsoever**. Too often, access to work experience depends on parents using their own networks to arrange placements. It’s not right that access to the workplace and future employers depends on who mum and dad know or where they work.

**That’s why we’ve set ourselves a new ambition. By 2028, we want to make sure all young people in state secondary schools can access high-quality, multi-day work experience, irrespective of family circumstance or location.**



We won’t achieve this ambition alone. We urgently need to collaborate with other organisations to ramp up the volume and quality of work experience placements by sharing our insights and learning widely. We’ll influence policy on the national stage to help remove the barriers that put the brakes on social mobility.

### Making a difference to students’ lives

In the 14 years since journalist Robert Peston founded our charity, we’ve made a profound difference to many young lives. We’ve helped provide a much-needed bridge between employers, high-profile guest speakers and educators from state secondary schools, colleges and other providers. With these partners, our core programmes have delivered innovative and impactful youth-focused activities that demystify careers, build young people’s self-belief and fuel their ambition.



# FOREWORD

## A word from our CEO

In recent years, we've experienced rapid growth, diversifying our programmes to become one of the largest social mobility charities in the UK. During and after the pandemic, we moved much of our activity online, providing short, virtual insight sessions into the world of work at scale, increasing the number of young people we reach every year.

Overall, we've focused our resources and efforts on where we can make the biggest difference to improving young people's life chances.

Brief, isolated interactions with employers are valuable for young people. But they're unlikely to create lasting change on their own. **That's why we'll invest time and effort in developing deeper relationships with schools and employers.** That way we'll expand young peoples' understanding of the world through our speaker programme and open doors to future employment through our Experience programme.

### Staying focused during a year of change

It's been a year of change. But our team has maintained sharp focus on delivering quality core programmes, as you'll read in this report.

I give my heartfelt thanks to the people that make this possible. This includes the fantastic staff at our charity, the inspirational speakers that give so freely of their time and the employers who open their doors to provide life-changing opportunities for young people.

I'm also very grateful to the schools that experience first-hand the value of our programmes and prioritise involvement when faced with so many other competing priorities for curriculum time.

I want to give particular thanks to the board of Trustees, our founder, Robert Peston, and our Chair, Andrew Law and the Law Family Charitable Foundation, for their continued generosity supporting our charity.”



**Nick Brook**  
Chief Executive Officer



# OUR MISSION

## Levelling the playing field

Our ambition is to increase the richness of education for state school students and to level the playing field with the best fee-paying schools.

We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to reach their potential, regardless of their starting point in life. We boost social mobility by enabling young people aged 14-19 to access life-changing and career-enhancing opportunities at zero cost to the young person, their parents or carers, or their place of study. These include inspiration talks from high-profile speakers and invaluable work experience.

We exist because **7% of the UK population go to an independent school**, and yet their alumni continue to dominate the leading professions. Research by the Sutton Trust has shown that around **40% of those in 'top jobs' in the UK attended a private school**.

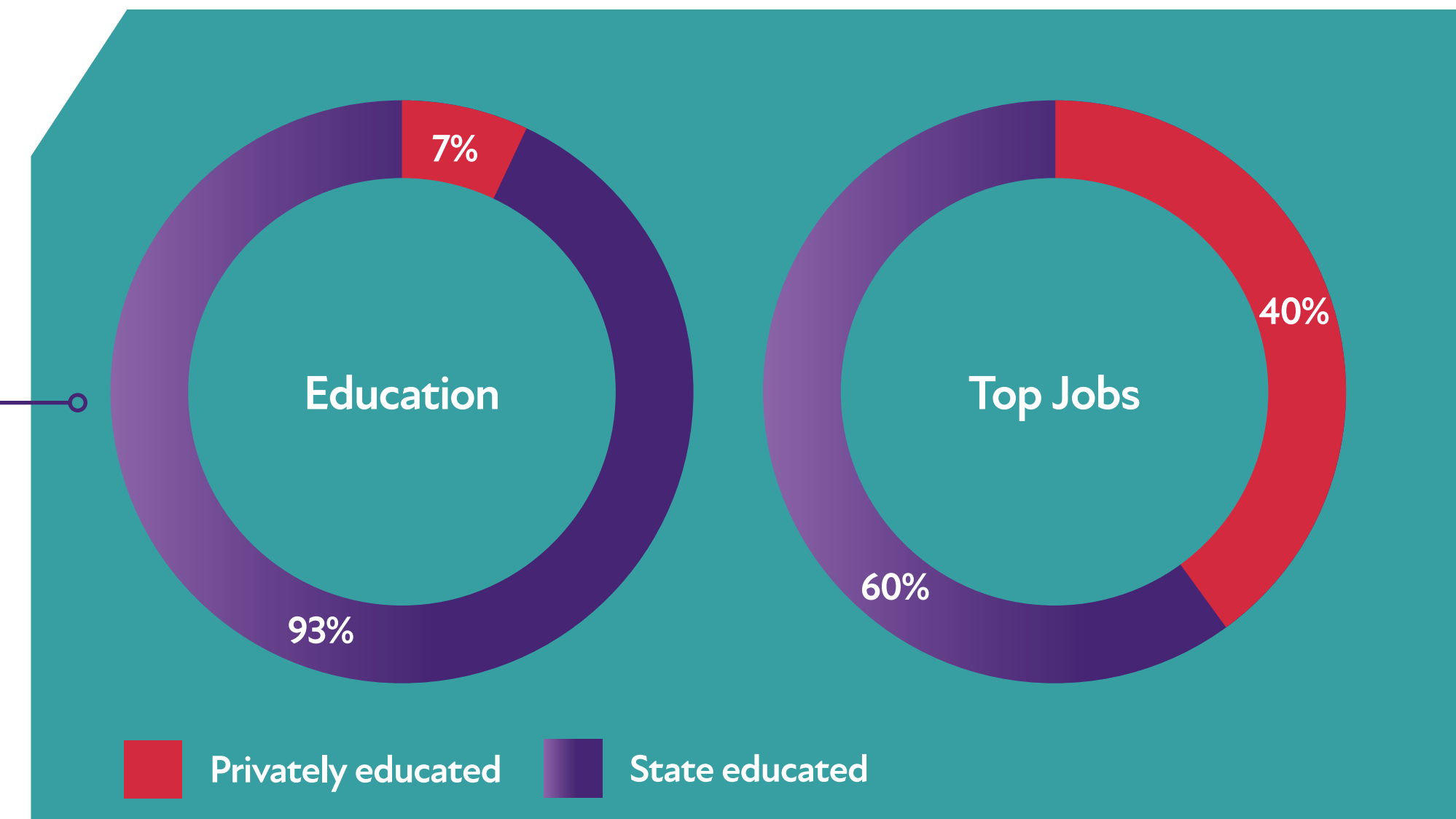
Evidence from UCAS also shows that young people from the most advantaged backgrounds are 10 times more likely to go to university than their less advantaged peers.



Doing the online Embracing Talent work experience has helped me identify my skills and qualities and how they are suited to my preferred career path.

I am now working towards a career in Midwifery and I know what my future career entails.

**Caiomhe, Strabane**



\*Source: The Sutton Trust

# OUR MISSION

## Bridging the gap

We aim to level the playing field for young people with limited access to social capital so that they have a better chance of success.

We provide a much-needed bridge between employers, high-profile guest speakers, and educators from state secondary schools, colleges and other providers. With these partners our core programmes deliver innovative and impactful youth-focused activities that demystify careers, build young people's self-belief and fuel their ambition.

In 2023, we launched a new, five-year strategy, concentrating our efforts on where we can make the biggest difference to improving life chances of young people. **Our ambition is that every young person in this country has access to high-quality multi-day work experience, by 2028.** We want all young people to benefit from rich experiences of workplaces and to have the opportunity to build networks with potential future employers. In doing so, we will help open doors to opportunities that were previously closed.



► Our mission



# WHAT WE ACHIEVED IN 2022/23

## Our achievements

In 2023 we made

**341,935**

interventions in young people's lives  
and worked with **2,073** state schools.

### Experience programme

**62,792** young people experienced the workplace.

We delivered **858** opportunities working with **354** employers.

### Inspiration programme

**92,215** young people attended live in-person and virtual talks from the **1,601** expert speakers in our network.

### National Teen Book Club

**23,074** students from **316** schools have registered for the club.

National Teen Book Club provides a welcoming reading community for 11-19-year-olds with the opportunity to meet a diverse range of speakers and industry experts.



► What we achieved  
in 2022/23

# OUR INSPIRATION PROGRAMME

## Activity and **impact**

Our Inspiration programme inspires young people to think bigger about their futures.

We support them through **live talks** from eminent speakers and authors plus access to a comprehensive **online library** packed with recorded talks and career insight sessions. Nearly half of our talks were held outside London and the South-East.



“It’s really special having a talk like this. It can really have a positive impact in your life later.”

Year 10 student



► What we achieved in 2022/23

## Inspiration activity and impact

# 200,000

In the last year we delivered **915 talks** to nearly **200,000\*** young people from inspirational figures. These included Amanda Pritchard, Chief Executive of NHS England, Deborah Meaden from Dragons' Den and celebrity chef Marcus Wareing.

We organised talks themed around key dates like **Black History Month, International Women's Day, National Careers Week.**

During the year we also secured funding from the **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** to deliver a special talk series to commemorate the **75th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush generation to the UK.**

\*200,000 includes live in-person and virtual talks: 92,215 young people; Live broadcasts: 99,702 young people; Post-talk video views: 85,524 young people



## Windrush inspiration

Case Study

Actor, **Paterson Joseph** took part in our *75th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush generation* talk series, supported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. His talk inspired year 9 students, aged 13 to 14, from Harris Academy Clapham, Lambeth.

“Our students responded well to Paterson’s energy and the stories about his life experiences at their age. They were particularly engaged when he read his book aloud. They were really excited to hear that Paterson had played Brutus in the same adaptation of Julius Caesar that they had seen in school.”

**Alice Whitaker, Careers Lead**



# Inspiration activity and impact

Our Inspiration Programme were fortunate to have worked with some exceptional partners – such as **Penguin Talks, Tesco, Gamma Communications, the V&A, Parliamentary Outreach Trust, IntoFilm** and the **Royal Economic Society**.

Together we delivered both in-person and virtual talks from industry leading speakers to hundreds of young people from state schools and colleges.

Our heartfelt thanks to you all.



Along the way, we strengthened our **National Teen Book Club (NTBC)** through a powerful **partnership with publishing company Penguin Random House**. This connected us with the rising stars of young adult fiction who joined us for live events. It also meant we could offer books to participating schools at heavy discounts.



# Chief Executive goes back to school

Case Study

**Amanda Pritchard, the CEO of NHS England**, took part in our NHS75 talk series – which saw 150 senior leaders and executives from across our National Health Service in England offer their time and expertise to speak, as part of their 75th anniversary.

Opening up the celebrations, Amanda returned to her former school, Durham Johnston Comprehensive.

Amanda shared her favourite subjects at school, opened the students' eyes to the sheer scale of the NHS, and talked about what her job entails. She also surprised students by sharing that she didn't know what she wanted to be when she was their age.

“It's great to have someone return to our school who has achieved such success in their life. **Andrew O'Sullivan, Headteacher**”



# Programme viewpoints

What teachers said:

96%

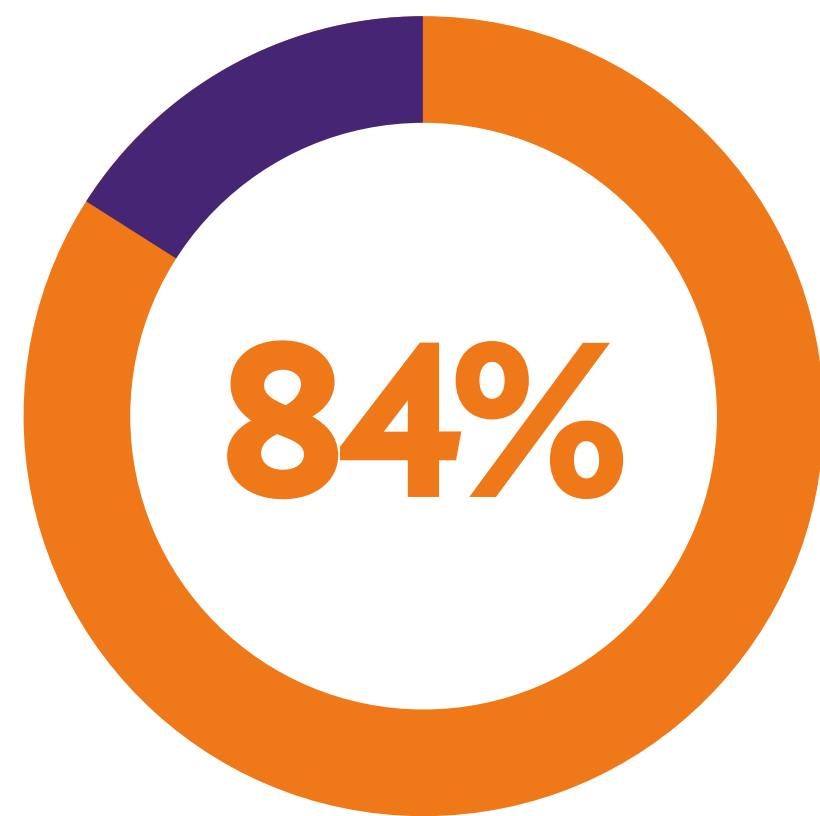
of educators felt fairly or fully supported to deliver our Inspiration programme activities.



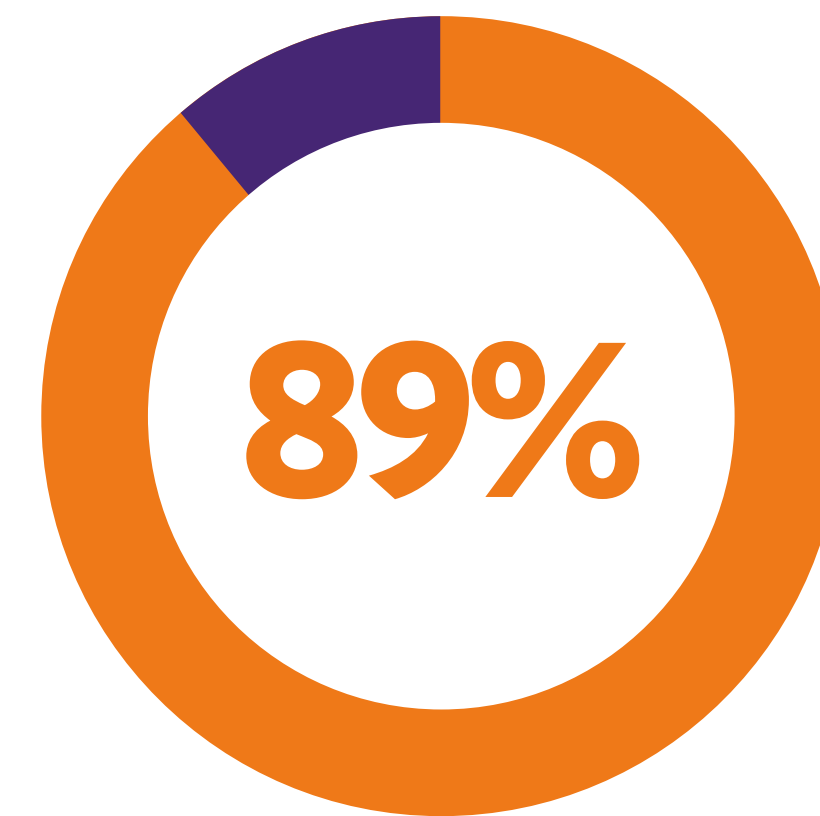
What our speakers said:

94%

of speakers would recommend us to other inspirational people.



■ Educators who said the talks gave young people an improved understanding of the workplace.



■ Speakers who said the Inspiration programme supported them in achieving their motivation to work with us.

► What we achieved in 2022/23

# OUR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

## Activity and **impact**

We help arrange **high-quality work experience** for young people between 14 and 19 as they move through Key Stages 4 and 5.

We support schools, colleges and students in making the most of this experience and work with employers to develop their programmes.

Throughout the academic year we ran several campaigns designed to increase youth engagement with our Experience programme. The campaigns were linked to national events like National Apprenticeship Week, International Women's Day and National Careers Week. We also delivered The World Cup of Careers – a hugely popular work experience programme inspired by the World Cup to raise awareness of careers in football. **It reached 30,000 young people.**

“Offering virtual opportunities, alongside in-person placements in the last year means that we have been able to reach more schools and more students than before.”



Gemma Breslin, Kainos



► What we achieved in 2022/23

- Experience activity and impact

# Experience activity and impact

Taking part in well-targeted, high-quality work experience can have a **profound impact on young people**.

Students that complete work experience feel they have a better understanding of the realities of working and develop stronger employability skills. These skills include problem solving, communication and negotiation skills and working as a team.

Young people also report raised aspirations and the ability to think more clearly about their career as a result of getting involved in well-structured work placement weeks. Schools and colleges say that work experience can improve confidence, contextualise learning and have a positive effect on academic outcomes.

# Passport to Change

Case Study

In partnership with **Virgin Atlantic**, we designed and delivered the yearlong *Passport to Change* programme.

It showcased careers in the world of aviation to **300 Year 8 students** from partner schools in Crawley and Swansea as well as **100 young people** from Atlanta, Georgia.

Over a 12-month period, the young people took part in **25,000 hours of hands-on learning** which included inspiring talks, interactive activities, and mentoring. The project culminated with young people applying what they had learnt when they presented ideas for their own airlines to a panel of judges.

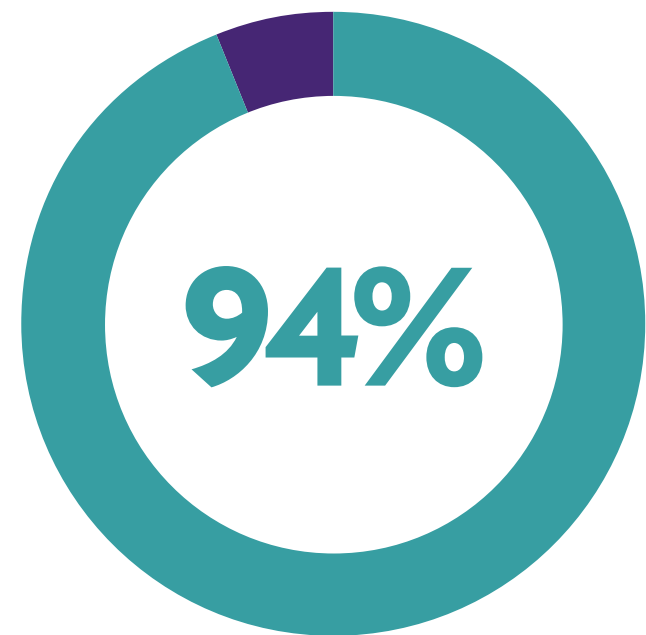
► What we achieved in 2022/23

- Experience activity and impact

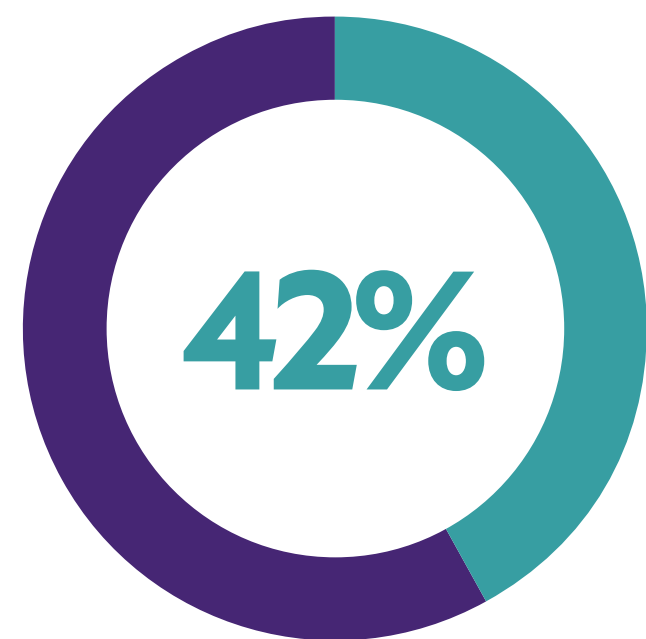


# Programme participants

Which young people take part in our Experience programme?



■ of high-need young people attended placements that enabled them to engage with people in jobs different from their parents' or carers'.



■ of students on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) placements identified as female.

**70%**

of young people aged 14-16 had never previously done any kind of work experience.

**65%**

of young people live outside London and the South East.

**370**

young people have special educational needs.

**48%**

were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

**20%**

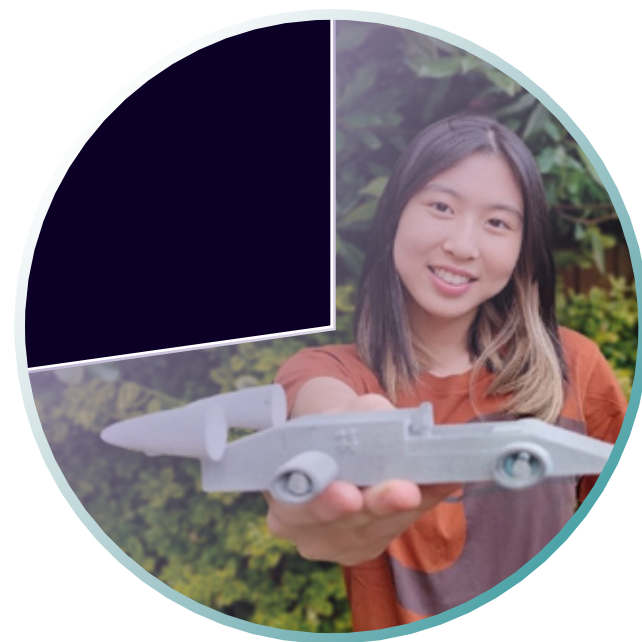
receive free school meals.

► What we achieved in 2022/23



# Programme viewpoints

What young people say:



73%

of young people attending a placement felt confidence in their ability to thrive in the workplace, rising from 45%.



70%

of young people said their placement was particularly helpful in raising their awareness of different routes into the industry.

# National Boots Camp

Case Study

“I didn’t realise that I can be a good leader! I actually surprised myself by how confident I was.”

Young person

Last year we worked with **Boots** to deliver eight interactive sessions and two discovery session where young people learned more about the company and the wide range of careers on offer.

Overall, **311 young people** took part in work experience sessions while 477 were involved in the discovery sessions. After the sessions, **97% of students said they were more confident** with teamwork and 93% were more confident in their leadership skills. Plus, 93% of said that participating helped provide them with experience to go on their CV.



► What we achieved in 2022/23

# Programme viewpoints

What teachers said:

94%

of educators said getting involved in our activities left young people better informed about available jobs and careers.



78%

agreed young people who did work experience improved their understanding of the workplace.

98%

were satisfied or very satisfied with their Experience programme.

97%

would recommend us to other schools or colleges.

What employers said:

89%

of employers think that activities on their placement improved students' understanding of their workplace/sector.



84%

think their placement gave students access to information about jobs and careers.

88%

think that activities on their placements left students more informed about pathways to future careers.

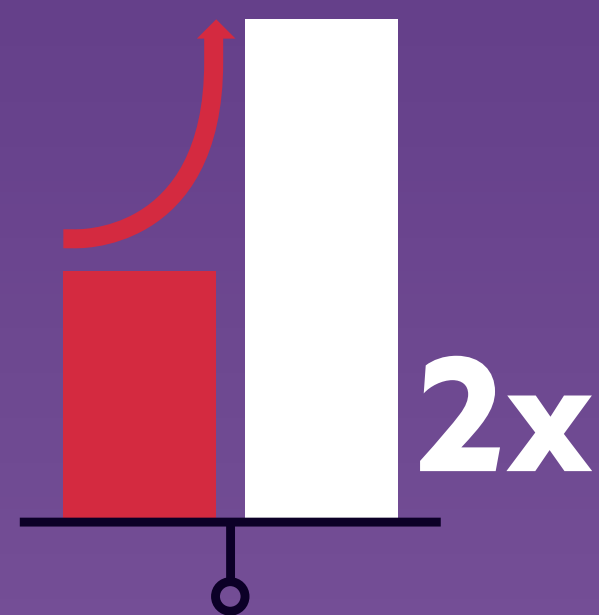
► What we achieved in 2022/23

# OUR INFLUENCE

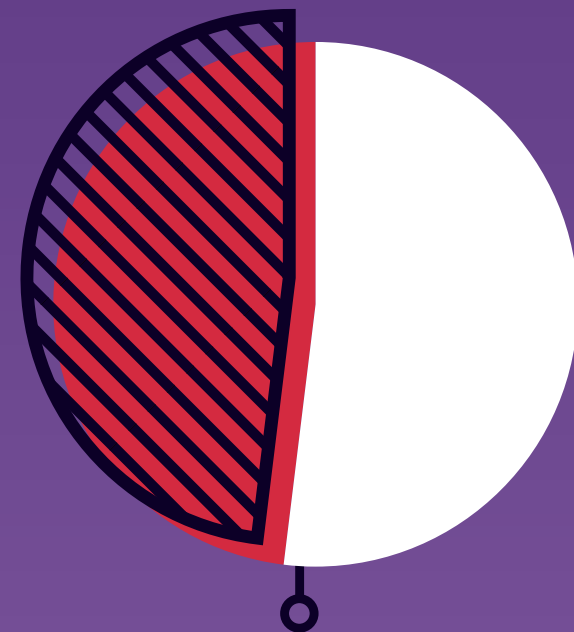
## Work Experience For All

How we influenced government policy to change students' lives through our Work Experience for All campaign

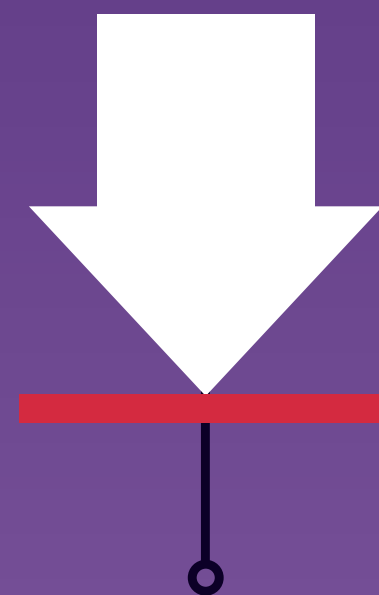
In June 2021 we commissioned YouGov to research young people's access to work experience. The results were stark. The survey of 2,098 young adults found that:



Privately-educated students were twice as likely to complete multiple types of work experience



52% of 14-16-year-olds recalled completing work experience, and only a third of 16-18-year-olds (37%)



Access to work experience was neither universal or fair

Our analysis proved that completing work experience in education increased young people's future early years' salary, career trajectory and confidence while also reducing their chances of becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).



► What we achieved in 2022/23

• Work Experience For All

# Taking action

In 2022/23 these findings inspired our largest-ever campaign: **Work Experience for All**.

Through our campaign, we aimed to:

- remove systemic barriers to make work experience a universal right for every young person in the country
- raise awareness of the danger of ignoring the problem
- get enough support to convince the two main political parties to include universal, fully funded access to work experience in their manifestos
- increase the number of registrations and applications for work experience through our Experience programme.

## What we did

We provided evidence to and engaged with senior politicians from both main parties to demand change.

**Our team:**

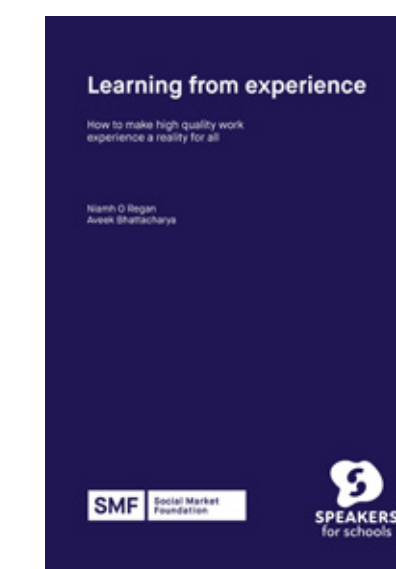
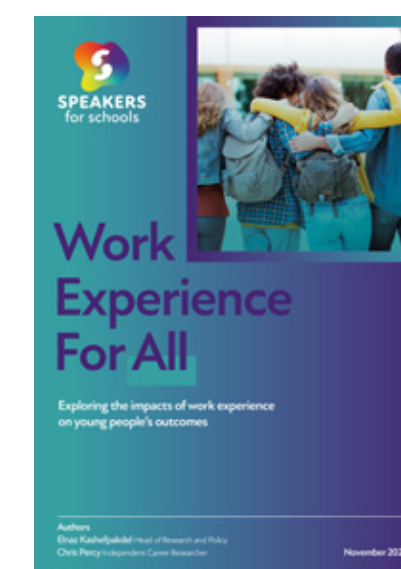
- **contributed evidence to the Education Committee's inquiry** into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

- **gave evidence to the Lords Select Committee for Education** for 11-16-year-olds in 2023
- **ran a round table event** with the shadow Schools Minister, as well as chairing panel discussions at the Festival of Education with other leading experts from the world of education and careers education.
- **published three major research papers** (plus a report on our YouGov results). The research highlighted why work experience should be seen as an essential part of a robust and comprehensive careers education for every young person

**1: Work experience for all (November 2022)**

**2: International work experience practices (December 2022)**

**3: Learning from experience (March 2023)**



- **launched a marketing campaign** featuring work experience stories from high-profile celebrities including Deborah Meaden, Guz Khan, Mary Portas and Steph McGovern, raising awareness and galvanising public support for our recommendations

► What we achieved in 2022/23

# The results

Our campaign drove a:

# 415%

— increase in traffic to the Speakers for Schools website

# 176%

— increase in active users on our Experience portal

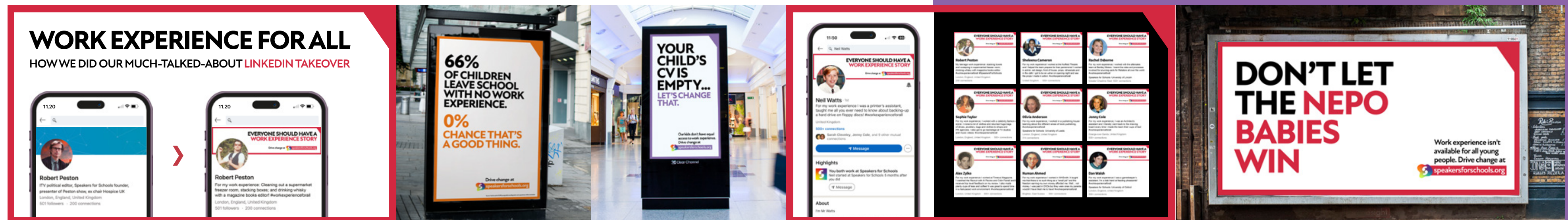
# 86%

— increase in work experience applications from young people



Plus, several of our recommendations to the Education Committee inquiry were included in the latest **CEIAG report** published on 29 June.

► What we achieved in 2022/23

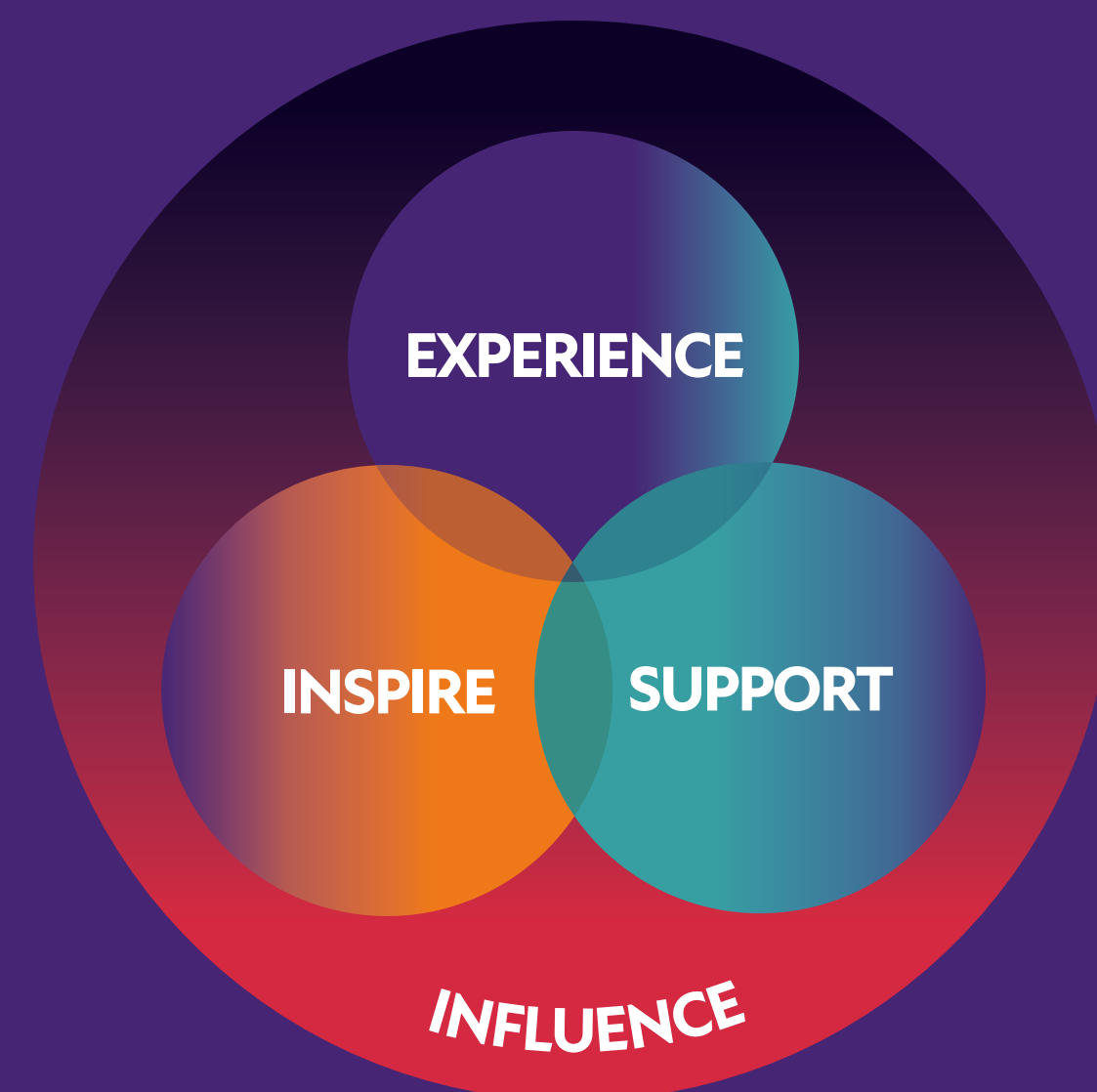


# WHAT'S NEXT?

## Our plans for the future

When Nick Brook joined us as CEO in 2023 he led an extensive review of our charity with contributions from speakers, employers, schools, plus all our staff and Trustees.

The review recognised our significant growth and the impact we've achieved so far. However, we realised we were spreading ourselves too thinly. Instead we need to focus our energy and resources on what makes the greatest difference to the future life chances of state-educated young people.



Our new five-year strategy focuses on what we do best: providing inspirational talks in schools by eminent people and facilitating high-quality multi-day experiences of the world of work. With this at its heart, our fresh strategy sets out four main pillars of activity, for 2023 to 2028:

-  **INSPIRE**  
Inspiring young people to consider their futures, through talks from eminent speakers and career insight sessions.
-  **EXPERIENCE**  
Facilitating life-changing experiences of the world of work at scale, through multi-day employer led placements.
-  **SUPPORT**  
Ensuring young people receive personalised support, encouragement and advice to seize opportunities and realise their potential.
-  **INFLUENCE**  
Sharing insight and expertise widely to drive improvements in provision nationally, while removing systemic barriers that hamper social mobility through political influencing.

# THANK YOU

## to our partners and supporters

The work we do wouldn't be possible without our extensive network of volunteers and partners. They're at the heart of our Inspiration programme with over **1600 people registered as speakers**, giving their time and expertise generously.

Through our Experience programme we partner with **hundreds of employers** and their staff to open up the world of work for young people, delivering real change for our communities and securing young and diverse talent for their organisations.

We work in partnership with a number of **Charitable Trusts and Foundations** as well as with **Local Enterprise Partnerships**. We're experiencing strong demand for our services from this segment and anticipate significant growth in this channel through 2024.

The need for our work has never been greater. Expanding our network of supporters will allow us to reach all the young people who need us while satisfying the needs and ambitions of employers to reach young talent and make a transformative impact on their communities.

Everything we do is in partnership with our new **Engagement Directorate** set up through our restructure. It works to secure the long-term partnerships we need to make a sustainable difference.



# THANK YOU

## to our partners and supporters

We've been privileged to maintain the generous support of **The Law Family Charitable Foundation**. Their financial support has provided invaluable investment in our capacity and capability to grow and deliver nationally.

Building on these strong foundations, we want to work with an ever-expanding network of supporters, employers, Charitable Trusts, Foundations and individuals, to expand and deepen our impact while ensuring our work remains free to access for schools.

We give our **heartfelt thanks to the 2,000 state schools and colleges in our network** for your continued dedication in supporting your students, **to the young people** who engage so positively with our programmes, and **to our Youth Council** who amplify young people's voices across a range of topics relating to careers education and future careers.

