

# ThinkForward Annual Review 2019/20 **Resilience in Action**

“

During the first lockdown we had no online classes and it was hard for me to get the education I needed. It was difficult to get motivated, easy to get distracted and overwhelming to deal with all the work. My coach would call every week to find out how I was, he would make sure I was OK and had everything I needed from school. It was helpful having someone to talk to.”

**Tyanna**

FutureMe student  
Nottingham



**Think  
Forward**

Coaching  
Connecting  
Inspiring  
Young People

# A year like no other...

It has been the most extraordinary year. The Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 heralded unprecedented times. Like so many businesses and other organisations ThinkForward transformed overnight to working remotely, allowing us to continue to deliver our services.

## **Resilience in action!**

We immediately pledged to carry on running our programmes, recognising that many of our young people would need us more than ever in the weeks and months ahead. We replaced face-to-face coaching with telephone coaching and created ways to run our employability events digitally.

Coaches went beyond their normal roles to ensure young people and their families were supported to withstand the impact of Covid-19. In addition to calling young people to check on their well-being and provide support with online learning, they helped families navigate access to benefits, free school meals and local services such as food banks. This contributed to our schools' ability to safeguard young people during the most challenging months.

Young people continue to bear the heaviest burden of jobs lost during the pandemic. ThinkForward added its voice to the Youth Employment Group, set up by Impetus, Youth Employment UK and the Prince's Trust. We remain committed to demonstrating why coaching and employability are now more vital than ever, and ensuring that the issues of youth employment and every young person's right to a bright future are firmly fixed on the government's agenda.

A combination of the increase in intensity of our work and a stable income, meant that we didn't have to furlough staff. This contributed to enabling us to operate smoothly over the year.

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, we developed our new five-year strategy. This provides a framework for us to meet our goals of impact, sustainability and growth and an ambition to double our income and increase the number of young people we work with over the next five years.



**Charlie Green**  
Chair



**Ashley McCaul**  
CEO

With a new strategy focused on growth came the need to review our identity and create a distinction between our organisation and programme names. As a result, our original ThinkForward programme is now called FutureMe.

We also made a commitment to strengthen our equity, diversity and inclusion. We created a manifesto to set out our intentions, a plan on how we will deliver it and are participating in the UK Youth “Young and Black movement” aimed at raising the voices of our black young people.

Our ThinkForward family of supporters has enabled us to weather the Covid-19 storm and adapt during challenging times – thank you for your partnership. With the uncertainty of what the future might hold we will continue to need our funders’ commitment, and attract new funders.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to our frontline staff for their resilience and focus. We cannot underestimate the lifeline you provided to our young people during the darkest days of lockdown.

“What I love about being part of MoveForward is that I have been able to strengthen old friendships and make new ones, be involved in learning new skills and sharing opinions together. I’ve been able to learn about local opportunities and be inspired to experience new things.

I also became part of the Young and Black Project which is something that is important to me – to raise awareness of our origins and cultural backgrounds and to have open discussions together and share positivity.

I have big ambitions for the future and would love to have a career in animation or creative media. I’m really excited for my journey through college and beyond to continue, and I’m taking each day of the journey as it comes and looking forward with hope.”



**Husen**

MoveForward student  
and ambassador  
London

# Our Covid-19 story

We all have a shared experience of living through a pandemic. Like you, we faced many personal and professional challenges. Very early on at the start of the first lockdown we made the decision to continue delivering our coaching programmes. To do that we united as an organisation and developed solutions.

We delivered coaching by telephone, and piloted and then rolled out remote ready for work activities. In Kent we worked in partnership with the Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust, who provided hardship grants which enabled students to buy items they needed to remain engaged in their education and to help them prepare for work. Through our partners and special funding applications, **150 young people received much-needed devices to get online.**

Young people who were due to leave the programme in the summer faced a particularly difficult situation with the labour market changing rapidly. We extended their time on the programme for two months to ensure they had the best possible chance of continuing in education or starting work. As a result **81% were in education, employment or training three months after completing the programme.**

Our Community Heroes Awards shone a spotlight on our young people who did amazing things in challenging circumstances, working in the NHS, social care, food retail and delivery, as well as taking on increased responsibilities as carers. The awards were our small way of saying a BIG 'thank you' for their role in keeping the UK running and supporting society. Coaches made the nominations, and we profiled the young people on social media and on our website.

We conducted a survey to better understand the impact of Covid-19, identify young people's needs and target our support. The inequalities it highlighted showed the barriers many young people face every day, but which were brought into sharp focus by Covid-19.

The survey told us that many young people didn't have access to technology or study space at home, while **35% said their coach was their main provider of support**, demonstrating the often-significant role coaches play in the lives of young people. Findings also showed that more than half are worried about their future and a third said their mental health got worse due to Covid-19 and lockdown.

**150**  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
RECEIVED A DEVICE  
TO GET ONLINE

**81%**  
ARE IN EDUCATION  
EMPLOYMENT OR  
TRAINING

**35%**  
OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
SAID COACH WAS MAIN  
SUPPORT PROVIDER

“During the lockdown I found the online lessons really hard to focus and concentrate. I felt fed up because I felt that the teachers expected too much from me. My coach Zoe helped me by not giving up on me, she made me feel more positive and more willing to learn. I spoke to her about my feelings during lockdown and the sessions she delivered made me feel better. I felt much happier and it helped me to motivate myself to do more school work.”



**Joba**

MoveForward student  
Kent

“Due to Covid I was furloughed from my job on a heritage railway, then made redundant. I saw it as an opportunity to start building a website to help people find all the information they need about travelling round Kent by bus. Unfortunately, my laptop broke but my coach, Julian, helped me apply for a grant from the Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust to get a new one. I was successful and it was brilliant because it allowed me to start work on my website. I also use it to search for and apply for jobs. At the time I wasn’t earning any money at all and it would have been impossible to save up for a new one.”



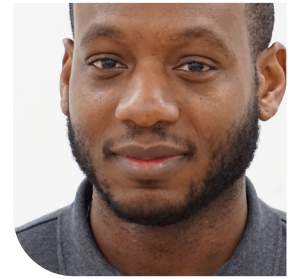
**Cameron**

FutureMe student  
Kent



# Coaching in focus

Coaching is at the heart of what we do and makes both our programmes unique. As wraparound support for young people it empowers them to identify and overcome their challenges and make the most of other opportunities and services. One of our FutureMe coaches at Swanlea School and two of his students, reflect on the special nature of our coaching work.



**Ashley**  
FutureMe Coach  
London

“I consistently describe my role as: **“The best role I have ever had...”** I say role and not job, because being a coach doesn’t feel like a job. Yes, it is hard work, and there are times that are trying and tiring but every day has something or someone to raise your spirits and inspire you.

Coaching works for young people because while it focuses on moving them forward from an issue, the approach gets them to look at various aspects that have an input into that hurdle. Coaches do not tell young people what to do, they support their empowerment to resolve things for themselves. Our five-year programme means we have time to reflect on what has worked well, focus on what would have been ‘even better if’ and assist in scaffolding a more positive mindset to difficult situations.

**I have a unique relationship with each of the 50 young people I work with.** That personal bond and focus on their needs means they are heard and supported in a way that works for them. Coaching removes the ‘one size fits all’ mentality and while some goals may be generic i.e. improved attainment, attendance and engagement, I walk that journey in a different way with every young person.

I always focus on four aspects - say it, show it, do it and most importantly mean it. Integrity is a trait that means so much to young people – one that doesn’t get highlighted as much as it should – and without this, you cannot be your authentic self.

The first group of young people I enrolled are about to graduate. Five years have flown by and seeing them flourish physically, emotionally and mentally to where they are today reinforces what a privilege this role is.”

“I think FutureMe is a completely unique experience compared to the more generic approach of other programmes because FutureMe has a long-term investment in the students - my coach Ash was with us from the beginning of the five-year programme to the end. It’s also different from the other services at my secondary school because most of them don’t have the same commitment to developing the skills of young people, something FutureMe prides itself in.

If I had to speak to a Year 8 student to convince them to join FutureMe I would simply say that this programme will significantly improve your chance of overcoming the challenges you might face later on in life for example, finding a part-time job or getting an apprenticeship. One of the impacts that FutureMe has had on me is that I have now gained the necessary employment skills to find a part-time job after years of searching for one.

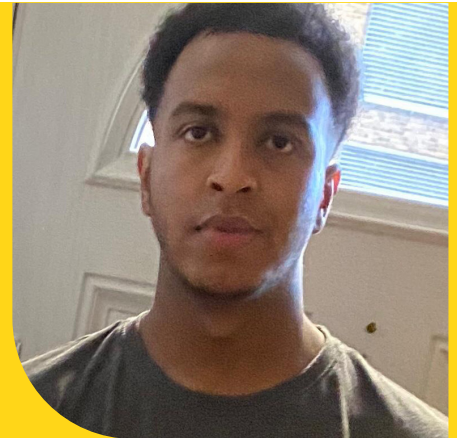
I would like to give my utmost thanks and appreciation to Ash for always doing the best for his students and always prioritising our needs and being the best ambassador for ThinkForward.”

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“When I got my FutureMe coach he took a real interest in me. Ash didn’t just look at my school behaviour, he looked at my life and everything that was going on. Ash looked at the good in me, what I could do in the future to help myself and get over things. Other people had just focused on one thing and that’s why we didn’t really make progress.

I have great memories of the programme including the trips, the one-to-one and group coaching that we did, and business mentoring at Bank of America. Ash also helped me get my college place and even went to the open day with me, which meant a lot.

FutureMe is really helpful. It’s nothing like any other service and at the end of it you realise how much it actually benefits you. Lots of programmes focus just on that moment in time, but FutureMe is still with me. Ash builds a relationship with the people he works with. He went outside the box and he made me go outside the box too, to find my true self.”



**Halac**  
FutureMe student  
London



**D'Angelo**  
FutureMe student  
London

# Our work in numbers

In response to the pandemic, schools closed their doors to the majority of students and many businesses were forced to shut down. This meant we had to adapt to remote delivery of both the coaching and employability elements of our programmes.

The changes led to a reduction in the numbers of some of these activities. For example, we held fewer group coaching sessions compared to the previous year. However, reaching out and supporting families with their child's learning and engagement on our programme, as well as maintaining one-to-one coaching sessions with young people, was more important than ever. This led to an increase in the delivery of these activities in 2019/2020 compared to 2018/2019 by 113% and 5% respectively.

As a direct consequence of the pandemic additional needs emerged in the families of our young people, and coaches also spent time going beyond their day-to-day pastoral responsibilities to focus on providing extra support and signposting. Brought together, overall delivery across our programmes was in fact 19% higher this year compared to last.

2018/19*		2019/20**
<b>1122</b>	<b>YOUNG PEOPLE ON OUR PROGRAMMES</b>	<b>1082</b>
<b>6960</b>	<b>1-2-1 COACHING SESSIONS DELIVERED</b>	<b>7284</b>
<b>4099</b>	<b>GROUP COACHING SESSIONS DELIVERED</b>	<b>571</b>
<b>4039</b>	<b>PARENTAL ENGAGEMENTS</b>	<b>8589</b>
<b>515</b>	<b>READY FOR WORK ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>632</b>
<b>908</b>	<b>MEANINGFUL CONTACTS</b>	<b>2772***</b>

\*All the activity and demographic data relates to 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2019.

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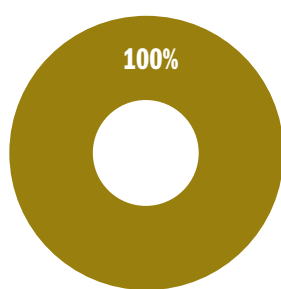
\*\*\*Additional support provided beyond our programme promise in response to emerging needs from the pandemic e.g. bereavement, mental health and referrals to other services



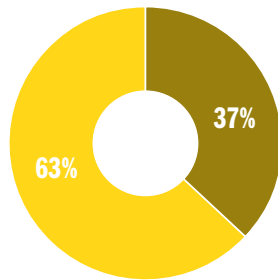
# Our young people's characteristics

Our data shows us that 59% of young people on both programmes receive Pupil Premium so we know we continue to reach vulnerable students who will benefit the most from our support. The figure is more than double the percentage of secondary students in England who receive Pupil Premium – 28%.\*

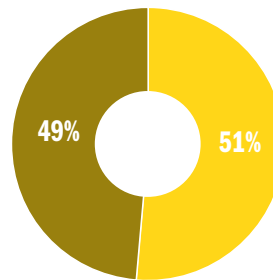
\*www.gov.uk



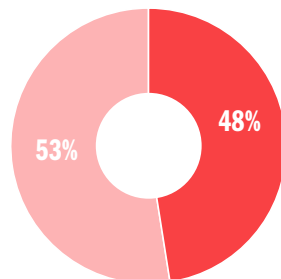
**SEN MoveForward**  
● YES  
● NO



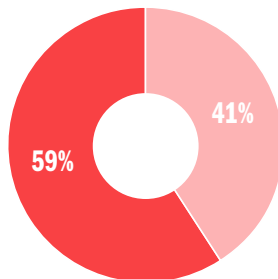
**SEN FutureMe**  
● YES  
● NO



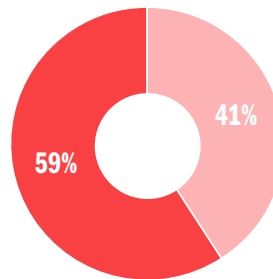
**ALL SEN**  
● YES  
● NO



**PUPIL PREMIUM MoveForward**  
● YES  
● NO



**PUPIL PREMIUM FutureMe**  
● YES  
● NO



**ALL PUPIL PREMIUM**  
● YES  
● NO

“I was really not sure where to go or what to do when I leave school. I was very confused and very worried because I did not want to make the wrong choice. All of my friends were applying for college. In my coaching sessions it took about three months for me to research colleges and courses and finally make a decision.

My confidence got better and better and I applied for A levels in Business, Sports and Sociology at Bilborough. I am really excited to start in September. Without my coach I might still be confused about where to apply and what to do.”

## Jayda

FutureMe student  
Nottingham

# Impact

## The progress our 2019/20 FutureMe graduates have made

117 young people graduated from our FutureMe programme in 2020. To help mitigate against the impact of Covid-19, these young people stayed on the programme over the summer and left in October. In the period Dec 2020 – February 2021, **81% were in education, employment or training EET** (known outcomes).

Out of the 38% of graduates this year who are in education, **82% have progressed onto level 3 or 4 courses**, 53% of our graduates were in work and 11% were in both work and education.

We know that many of our young people work in sectors hardest hit by the impact of Covid-19 such as retail, construction and hospitality, so it is heartening to see strong employment outcomes in a year dominated by a global pandemic.

In comparison, the 2018/19 cohort had a known EET rate of 83% three months after completing the programme. A report by the Institute of Employment Studies noted a 5% drop in the employment rate for 18-24 year olds. This suggests our programme graduates have collectively demonstrated incredible resilience in a challenging labour market, outperformed their peers and kept pace with the previous year's graduates.

**81%**

ARE IN  
EDUCATION  
EMPLOYMENT  
OR TRAINING

**82%**

OF THOSE IN  
EDUCATION ARE  
STUDYING AT LEVEL  
3 OR 4

**28%**

OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE EMPLOYED  
IN RETAIL OR  
HOSPITALITY

"I always wanted to be a musician but didn't know how to go about it. During one-to-one sessions with my coach Patrice, I worked to develop my self-assurance and drive. This helped me believe in myself and propelled me towards my goal of being signed. We spent time searching for a back-up plan - I didn't want to put all of my eggs in one basket. We identified job roles that I knew I was well suited for and created an action plan to set out how I would get there.

Lockdown was difficult but I was in regular contact with Patrice and he helped me to stay focused on my new job, whilst balancing making my music. Patrice also put me in touch with the HR department at EY who gave me some brilliant advice on my CV.

I am happy to say that I am now a manager of my team in the hospitality industry and I've been signed to OT Entertainment. My ambition is to be a global artist and having a full-time job in the hospitality industry gives me more confidence to get there. My coach has definitely helped me to get me to where I am today."

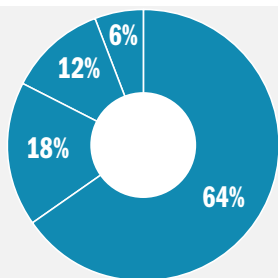


**Elliott**

FutureMe graduate  
London

# Impact

The progress our 2019/20 FutureMe graduates have made



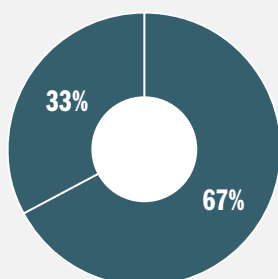
## FOR THOSE IN EDUCATION

64% progressed to FE college

18% progressed to university

12% in other settings

6% progressed to a training provider



## FOR THOSE IN WORK

67% are working full-time

33% are working part-time

**38%**  
ARE IN EDUCATION

**11%**  
ARE IN BOTH WORK  
& EDUCATION

**53%**  
ARE IN WORK

**19%**  
ARE NEET

All figures are based on known outcomes of 88 young people out of 117 graduated young people, rounded to the nearest whole number.

# Impact

## Progress on our DFN-MoveForward programme

DFN-MoveForward programme is funded through a Social Impact Bond (SIB). The DFN Foundation is the commissioner for the five-year outcomes-based contract which is worth £1.9m.

We also have match funding from the government's Life Chances Fund and social investment through Big Issue Invest. We will support more than 300 young people in London, Kent and the West Midlands over the lifetime of the project. The impact of MoveForward is measured by the number of young people who gain work skills, achieve educational qualifications and ultimately enter sustained employment.

2019/20 was our second year of delivering the SIB and while the focus was still on the outputs, we started to achieve employment outcomes for those young people who were ready to start work. The vast majority of our young people, **90%, undertook at least four ready for work events**. Examples include business mentoring with Fusion in Birmingham, insight days at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon and work experience at Kent Life.

Supported internships are for people aged 16-24 with learning disabilities, who need extra support to get a job. They are widely recognised as being a stepping stone to employment and one way our MoveForward team prepare young people for work.

**45 MoveForward young people undertook a supported internship. 11 of our young people are now in sustained work** with employers including three major London hospitals.

**90%**  
COMPLETED  
AT LEAST FOUR  
READY FOR WORK  
ACTIVITIES

**45%**  
COMPLETED  
A SUPPORTED  
INTERNSHIP

**11**  
ARE IN SUSTAINED  
WORK

"One of the reasons I was so keen on joining DFN-MoveForward was that I was concerned about getting into the wrong crowd and the impact this would have on my future. Working with my coach, helped me to have the confidence to make the right choices. I did a supported internship at MoorFields Eye Hospital and because of that, got an apprenticeship in IT at Moorfields and a part-time role as an A&E administration assistant.

I have learnt how to become a good team member and accept responsibility when it's needed. It has been hard and challenging at times but I'm always ready for a challenge. I love my job because although we work hard and in a professional manner, we can also have a laugh when the time is right. I feel everyone treats me the same as everyone else and they help me when I need it. Thank you DFN-MoveForward for all the help and encouragement you have given me."



**Matthew**  
MoveForward  
London

# Our new five-year strategy

Despite the challenges of the pandemic we pressed ahead with the development of our new five-year strategy. We were guided through the process by consultants Bain & Company who both challenged and supported our thinking.

We reflected back on what we have already achieved - the development of our coaching expertise and the significant partnerships formed with schools, funders, employers, local authorities and of course our wonderful young people and their families – then focused on what the future could look like, and our place in it. We also considered the long-term impact of Covid-19 on young people.

We are proud of our new five-year strategy, which takes us to 2025. By then we aim to have achieved our three strategic goals - **Impact, Sustainability and Growth**. We want to **reach 1500 young people per year and double our annual income to £5m.**

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion will sit at the heart of our work to achieve our goals, and we will also ensure that young people continue to participate in our governance and shape the design of our programmes.

## How we will achieve our goals and objectives:

Carry out independent evaluations

Improve our ability to track impact

Become financially sustainable

Grow our strategic partnerships

Transform our work digitally

Build on our unique coaching model

Develop our organisation and team



# Our strategic objectives

Behind our goals are four objectives which will keep us focused on our mission and our ambitions to grow our reach and influence.

## Our four objectives

### Refine and expand our programmes for young people with SEND

- > Successfully deliver our DFN-MoveForward Social Impact Bond and evaluate its impact.
- > Grow the number of young people supported through new SEND programmes. Broaden the reach of these programmes for young people who have left education and are unemployed.
- > Leverage employer partnerships to create more supported pathways to employment and entry level jobs.

### Refine the FutureMe programme

- > Continue to support 900 young people per year, further embedding our work in schools and the wider community.
- > Conduct an external evaluation and refine aspects of the programme's design.
- > Respond to the changing needs of young people by packaging up our coach-led activities in different ways.

## Impact | Sustainability | Growth

**1500 young people per year**  
**Income £5m**

Young people participate in our governance and shape the design of our programmes

### Become a thought leader

We will make recommendations to local and national decision makers by:

- > Using our growing evidence base of what works.
- > Sharing young people's experiences of being on our programmes.
- > Joining forces with other youth sector organisations.

### Become a capability partner

Where our partners have a common goal of improving employment outcomes for young people we will share our expertise and resources on:

- > Coaching.
- > Employment & job creation.
- > Equity, diversity & inclusion.

# Our equalities journey

In the summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd shone a stark light on the issue of race equality. We reflected deeply on what this meant for ThinkForward and our work with young people and took action.

We produced an equity, diversity and inclusion plan and we will report our progress every year, holding ourselves publicly accountable to commitments made in the plan. One action we have already taken is to recruit more diverse talent to our board with the appointment of new trustees and, for the first time, two young trustees.

Crucially, we wanted to provide our black young people with a platform to tell their stories, express their feelings and campaign for change, but also create a wider understanding amongst our white young people of allyship and what it means to be anti-racist.

We started to develop a Young and Black project which is being run alongside UK Youth's Young and Black campaign. Coaches will host open, inclusive and safe space sessions for young people to explore their identities and share and learn about racism.

We will also be encouraging our young people to create a piece of work which represents how they feel about race and identity. These will be brought together in the form of a digital exhibition and book. Our partners will also be invited to contribute pledges as part of their own commitments to racial equity, diversity and inclusion and our staff will also provide personal pledges.

"I am incredibly proud of the steps ThinkForward have taken to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of their strategy, values and behaviours.

I trust their new strategy and manifesto will ensure that the young people they continue to support will exceed their ambitions and fulfil their potential while leading by example for their peers.

The last year has already seen some very tangible progress made and I can only see this development continuing. I'm glad I have the opportunity to support a valuable organisation like ThinkForward through this journey."



**Joanna Abeyie MBE**  
Blue Moon  
Consulting Group

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manifesto**

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ThinkForward aims to be a place where all can thrive. We will lead from the front by placing equity, diversity and inclusion at the heart of all we do as an employer, in our work with young people and within our sphere of influence. We value creativity, productivity, good decision-making and reputation, and we know that good equity, diversity and inclusion practices will build these.

We are working to create a world where our young people are more likely to thrive, and the absence of uniformity is considered a strength. We want learning and challenging the status quo to be considered progressive and where people's ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disabilities, learning abilities or socio-economic origins are not the defining characteristics of their potential for success.

# Raising young people's voices

As an organisation that works with young people, it's important to us that young people have a say in how we develop and deliver our programmes.

As part of our youth participation programme more than 100 young people from the FutureMe and DFN-MoveForward programmes are now ambassadors and youth board members and contribute their insights and ideas.

For example, young people contributed significantly to the creation of our new logo, vision, mission and programme name. They took part in focus groups, voted on different options and suggested language to use, and not use, to describe what we do.

One element of our youth participation programme is for young people to create a social action project that focuses on needs in their neighbourhood. Covid-19 meant this had to be put on hold but our young people had a fantastic opportunity to support communities across the country by partnering with tea business Bird & Blend to write letters to people who were isolated or lonely during lockdown.

Fourteen young people joined our youth board to represent their peers and regions. They have been co-designing the youth board and ambassador programme. We have also recruited two young trustees to our adult board, and they will work with the youth board to represent young people's voices at the highest level of our governance.

Part of our mission is to raise the voices of our young people. Their lived experiences of Covid-19 were heard at the highest level when students from London, Nottingham and Kent took part in research by the Department for Education about the impact of the pandemic on young people, and the support they needed.

"I'm really pleased to be a ThinkForward ambassador. It's an important role because it allows young people to raise their voice, be heard and help others. I think I'm a good listener and work well in a team, but being an ambassador means I also need to be able to communicate well, so I want to use this opportunity to really develop my online and face-to-face communication skills. I'm looking forward to our social action project which will focus on young people's mental health and well-being. We have already begun to contact local charities and spoken with the principal of the school!"

**Lizzie**  
FutureMe student  
Kent

# Brand review

With a new strategy came the need to revamp and future-proof ThinkForward's logo, vision and mission.

We also wanted our programmes to have their own distinct identity. To provide clarity, and give us scope to develop new programmes, the name of the ThinkForward programme was changed to FutureMe.

We needed an updated identity that reflected our greater reach (two programmes across four regions) and gave us the flexibility to grow. We also wanted to highlight the unique coaching relationship that is at the heart of what we do.

We'd like to say a big 'thank you' to every young person who contributed their creativity and insights throughout the process. They also provided valuable opinions as we edged closer to the final decisions, enabling us to ensure our visual and written identity spoke in a meaningful and effective way to our most important audience – young people.



## Vision

That every young person is empowered to gain the confidence, independence, and skills they need for a better and brighter future.

## Mission

ThinkForward delivers unique, personalised coaching programmes for young people at a key stage in their lives, enabling them to overcome the challenges they face and make a successful transition into work. Every young person takes part in workplace activities to develop their life goals and readiness for work. We raise the voices of our young people and support employers to provide fair access to opportunities.



# Our governance

We made significant changes to our board with the recruitment of four new trustees. As we start to drive change through the implementation of our new strategy, they bring fresh skills and experience which will broaden and strengthen the board's knowledge base.

Alongside our existing trustees, Kathryn Jack, Robert Craig, Keith MacDonald and Asi Panditharatna will play a key role supporting the CEO and the executive team.

For the first time ThinkForward appointed young trustees. This is part of our commitment to ensure the insights and lived experiences of young people inform decision-making at the highest level. We looked for young people who are driven and have fresh ideas from their own experiences of overcoming barriers. After a rigorous selection process, we were delighted to appoint **Sally Cartwright** and **Dan Easterbrook** to the board.

Sally is from Nottingham and was a student on our programme at Ellis Guilford School, joining in 2016. She instantly embraced the benefits of the coaching relationship and the opportunities the programme provided. Sally is now working for Citizens Advice. During the Covid-19 pandemic Sally was a care assistant in a residential home and was nominated as one of our Covid-19 Community Heroes.

Our second young trustee is Dan Easterbrook. Dan is from Dorset and works for the civil service. He was inspired to join the board due to his own experiences as a person with Cerebral Palsy Hemiplegia. As a university student, Dan was responsible for overhauling the governance of the Exeter Students' Guild and is a firm believer in stakeholder engagement.

"I would not be where I am today without coaching and mentorship, which enabled me to overcome the obstacles and labels I have been subject to as a disabled person. I cannot wait to use my experience having overcome those barriers to support, amplify and champion incredible young people as a trustee for ThinkForward."

"By being a young trustee on the ThinkForward board I aspire to bring more opportunity and equality to all young people. ThinkForward helped me by developing my self-assurance, resilience and drive. My mission is to help ThinkForward grow and be accessible to more young people."



**Dan**



**Sally**

# Finance and operations

Fundraising successes contributed to an **increase in our income of 7%** as we secured new funders and renewed a large number of existing funders.

Our **income of £2.6 million** is made up mainly of grants and donated income from a mix of funders including individuals, corporates and charitable trusts. The increase is mainly from a rise in donations from corporate foundations, many secured via our partnership with the Epic Foundation. We also secured programme contributions from all but one of our schools in 2019-20.

Our Social Impact Bond outcomes contract performed well and exceeded targets until the onset of Covid-19.

In the year to August 2020, we delivered a surplus of £135,000, increasing our financial resilience, with expenditure totalling £2.45 million.

Seventy percent of our costs are for the delivery of our work which ensures we run high quality programmes. We have invested in roles to oversee programme evaluation and impact, as well as youth engagement, instilling a culture of continuous improvement across the organisation. Our essential running costs account for 30% of expenditure and this includes operations, IT and finance, leadership, fundraising and communications.

Our free reserves are £680,000, which equate to approximately three and a half month's expenditure, falling within our target range of three to five months of expenditure.

Our cash levels give reassurance that we are in a sound financial position which will enable us to manage any impacts of the pandemic.

**1082**

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
23 SCHOOLS  
AND COLLEGES**

**£2,589**

**AVERAGE ANNUAL  
COST PER PLACE**

# Funding and ready for work partners

We are grateful to our many funders who stood by our side as we adapted to new ways of working and continued to fund our vital coaching and ready for work activities.

Due to our programmes being long-term and targeted, we were not able to attract funding from emergency Covid response funds. However, additional funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation meant we could train our frontline staff to be able to deliver digitally. We worked with several partners to ensure young people had devices and data to engage in online learning and employability activities. Raspberry Pi, Capital One, Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust, EY, Chatham Financial and Yorkshire Building Society provided donations.

Many of our corporate funders are also volunteering partners, whose staff provide young people with insights into the workplace. We were delighted to create new partnerships with the DHL Foundation, CBRE GI and 17 Capital (via the Epic Foundation) who all fund our work and host activities for young people.

There were other funding initiatives in the year. Before Covid, we benefitted from a successful Big Give campaign which many of our individual supporters got behind. We were honoured to work with Rosemarie Ghazaros, who galvanised her friends and networks to raise £4,000 through a 'Closing the Covid Gap' campaign. We continue to be impressed by individuals who step forward to challenge themselves taking part in events which raise funds for our work.

Our growing community of funders and ready for work partners are highlighted on the back page. Each has been critical in helping us build our organisational resilience and has supported many more young people to create a positive future for themselves.

We were delighted to be chosen as a ChariTEA partner with Bird & Blend, an award-winning tea company. As well as raising funds through proceeds from their Mint Choc Rooibos Tea, the partnership provided an opportunity during lockdown for our students to connect with others in the community.

Young people supported a PostTEA campaign, writing letters to key workers and people who were isolated by the pandemic, which were packaged up with delicious Bird & Blend tea. We were proud of the thoughtfulness, humour and empathy that shone through the letters. Young people also took part in a Q&A with founder Krisi, who shared insight into what it takes to start a business.



A perfect partner during Covid-19

“The DHL UK Foundation is a charity dedicated to supporting young people to be able to access the best possible education and to secure meaningful employment. Our strategic partnership with ThinkForward involves donations from the Foundation combined with a wealth of support and interaction from the DHL business.



The team at ThinkForward have worked hard to understand the complex nature of working with a charitable foundation and their parent company and have proved themselves to be collaborative, agile and innovative. We are looking forward to joining the business mentoring programme and offering work insights on our sites when possible. **I highly recommend ThinkForward as a charity partner,** their successful programmes are transforming the lives of many young people.”

**Sonia Chhatwal**  
Director

“The Credit Suisse EMEA Foundation focuses on improving the educational attainment, employability and aspirations of disadvantaged young people through partnerships involving both financial support and employee engagement. **The EMEA Foundation has funded ThinkForward for six years, recognising that the charity develops young people’s essential skills so they can pursue their goals in education and work.** Our funding has included capacity building, most recently to support ThinkForward’s impact measuring work, which demonstrates their potential in supporting young people at an early stage and setting them up on a positive trajectory for the long term.



**Caroline Courtois**  
Head of EMEA  
Corporate  
Citizenship

As well as funding, our partnership has provided mentoring and other employee engagement opportunities, connecting young people with our organisation as part of their employability journey. Recently, we extended our mentoring relationship to support young people with learning disabilities on the MoveForward programme. Mentoring placements enable our colleagues to use their experience to support young people and is a beneficial experience for mentees and mentors alike.”

“Our Forest is for everyone and everyone has a role to play to help it to grow. **Our new partnership with ThinkForward has been one of the most exciting developments to come out of 2020.** Through delivering a work experience programme for one young person we have learned more about how to motivate and support younger employees and those with SEND. This means that we have increased our capacity and can achieve more with the resources we have available. Our supported internship programme will commence in September 2021 and we can’t wait to see what else we can achieve together.”



**Elaine Skates**  
Head of Learning  
and Skills

# Our school partners

Our partnerships with schools are central to the success of ThinkForward and we are hugely grateful to every leader who welcomes us into their school and entrusts us with their young people.

We have a different but equally special relationship with every school. Our coaches are the face of ThinkForward but there is a whole team behind them, all working to ensure we always deliver the FutureMe and DFN-MoveForward programmes to the highest standard and always with the best interests of the young people at heart.

All successful relationships are built on trust. Coaches occupy a unique place in schools because they are trusted by both the school and the young person, often bringing the two together to have a more constructive and happier experience with each other.

By working intensely with small numbers of students, our coaches really get to know their students. Personalised coaching encourages young people to find solutions to overcome their challenges, make positive changes and take control of their futures.

Our ready for work events support schools to deliver on the Gatsby 8 Benchmarks and we often broaden out mentoring and insight events to other young people, extending the benefits of these valuable experiences.

“We’d like to thank our schools for recognising how important it is for their students to be part of a programme that supports them to develop their life goals and readiness for work.

From the schools that have been with us the longest to those who have joined the ThinkForward family more recently, we look forward to continuing to work with you and the fantastic young people we all want to see have a better and brighter future.”



**Matt Archer**  
Director of  
Programmes



# What our schools say about us

“ThinkForward has worked incredibly successfully and consistently through the years. **It’s an organisation that I highly recommend.** All of our students have, in different ways, not succeeded in mainstream schools, so they’ve come to us.

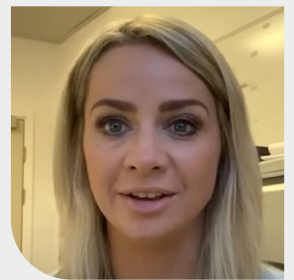
One of the things that really strikes me about ThinkForward is that they provide our students with different experiences and put them into different environments which can be really daunting, yet all the students have thrived while they’ve been on work experience, insight days or at business mentoring. It shows it’s all about how you prepare every young person. ThinkForward do that really well, and ultimately it means **young people are well-supported to get ready for the world of work.**”



**Af Hannan**  
Deputy  
Headteacher  
LEAP, London

**“It’s a genuinely impactful programme and it can absolutely 100% change lives.** When I think of ThinkForward, the things that come to mind are impact, positive relationships with students and families, and one-to-one mentoring. I think of incredible support for the school, and I think of it as being really, really student focused.

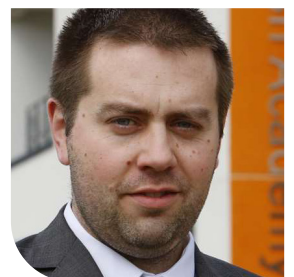
ThinkForward offers students who are transitioning onto the next part of their educational journey, not just different avenues and opportunities, but also incredible support and absolutely outstanding care and attention to their needs, their hopes and dreams for their futures and for their careers. **ThinkForward is really bespoke, and for our students you can’t beat that.** In a world where young people are often driven down an academic route whether that’s right for them or not, ThinkForward offers them an opportunity to look at a bigger picture, and I just absolutely love that.”



**Amy Lewis**  
Deputy Head  
Teacher, Samuel  
Rhodes School,  
London

**“Our coach was a valuable and continued support for our FutureMe students and families throughout the periods of lockdown,** keeping in regular contact, sourcing funding for technology to allow students to engage with online learning, pointing them in the direction of suitable skills-builder resources and liaising with Academy staff to provide the best possible care.

Nina’s continued drive to organise and motivate the students in her care, even through these challenging times, is of **immeasurable benefit to all involved.**”



**Shaun Simmons**  
Principal,  
The Marsh  
Academy, Kent

# ThinkForward supporters

Our incredible community of partners provide valuable funds and volunteer their time, allowing ThinkForward to work with young people most in need of our support. The names below represent those who supported our work between September 2019 and August 2020.

## STRATEGIC FUNDERS



C. Hoare and Co, Credit Suisse, ICG and Impetus are also Ready for Work partners.

## FUNDERS

Ardian Foundation\*  
 Bank of America Merrill Lynch\*  
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\*Also a Ready For Work Partner

## MAJOR DONORS

Charlie Green  
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