

**2021**  
**2022**  
**2023**  
**2024**  
**2025**  
**AND BEYOND...**



“Only now, as a mature adult can I really see how much ThinkForward impacted my life for the better. Without this programme during such a crucial time in my secondary education I doubt that I would be where I am today, on my way to becoming a teacher. I can honestly say that ThinkForward inspired me to aim high and pursue my goals. I am grateful for the amazing opportunities I was given and hope ThinkForward can keep changing young lives.”

**Brooke**, alumna, London



“I am delighted that the new strategy supports the growth of our SEND programmes. This is just reward for the team who work tirelessly to improve job outcomes for young people with additional needs. By expanding our reach, we will create sustainable routes to employment for more young people with mild to moderate learning disabilities.”

**Sean Porter**, Head of Programme, ThinkForward



“I am really proud of our partnership with ThinkForward. They place every young person at the heart of what they do and have delivered exceptional outcomes for our most vulnerable young people. I have every confidence the new strategy will enhance their ability to have a positive impact on the life chances of our students.”

**Kabir Miah**, Deputy Headteacher, Swanlea School



“We want to work with employers who understand the value of empowering young people and raising their career aspirations. By building strategic partnerships across all sectors, we bring the world of work to life, prepare young people for their futures and create fairer access to job opportunities. Every young person will also be supported to build their digital confidence.”

**Nicolette Bassan**, Lead Business Partnerships Manager, ThinkForward



Embarking upon the development of a new strategy is always a powerful time for reflection. In looking back, we recognised 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.

It was also the time to consider the future, particularly in the context of Covid-19. Young people facing challenges will find it even harder to make a successful transition into work and our programmes will be needed more than ever as the impact of the pandemic continues to filter through the education system and labour market.

Our five-year strategy takes us to 2025. By then we aim to have achieved our three goals - **Impact, Sustainability and Growth.**

Creating a new strategy in the middle of the pandemic added extra demands to the process, so we would like to thank Bain & Company and Impetus for challenging and supporting our thinking during such exceptional times.

A new strategy brought with it the need to update our vision, mission and logo. In preparation for future growth, and to provide clarity, we also changed the name of our ThinkForward programme to FutureMe.

In the summer of 2020, global events shone a very stark light on the issue of race equality. We reflected deeply on what this meant for us as an organisation and also committed to developing an **equity, diversity and inclusion** plan.

We believe our new strategy will enable us to mature into a stronger organisation that will be well-equipped to empower young people to have better and brighter futures. We look forward to working with you on the next stage of our journey.



**Charlie Green**  
Chair



**Ashley McCaul**  
CEO

“My FutureMe coach took a real interest in me. He didn’t just look at my school behaviour, he looked at my life and everything that was going on. My coach looked at the good in me and what I could do in the future to help myself and get over things. FutureMe is nothing like any other service and at the end of it you realise how much it actually benefits you. My coach went outside the box and he made me go outside the box too, to find my true self. All schools need FutureMe.”

**D'Angelo**, student, London



In response to the new strategy we developed a fresh vision, mission, logo and programme name which embrace our new objectives and provide breathing space to remain relevant as we grow.



## Youth participation

Our new identity was developed with support from young people on our FutureMe and DFN-MoveForward programmes across the country.

They provided valuable insight and opinions as we edged closer to final decisions, enabling us to ensure our visual and written identity speak to our most important audience – young people.

With their help, we also conducted a review of the words we use when we describe our young people. As a result, we have moved away from generic, negative language that is commonly used to talk about the circumstances and needs of young people who receive support from programmes like ours. Instead, we endeavour to use words that focus on the strengths in every young person and the potential of what they can achieve.

## 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.

There are three goals at the heart of our new five-year strategy - **Impact, Sustainability and Growth**. Behind our goals are four objectives which will keep us focused on our mission and ambition to increase 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.

# How we will achieve our goals and objectives

## Impact

We want to ensure our coaching and ready-for-work activities make a positive difference to young people's lives and that they are able to gain employment as a result of being on our programmes.

How we will achieve this:

### Carry out independent evaluations

We will externally evaluate our FutureMe and DFN-MoveForward programmes. We will start with a **process evaluation** to understand if we are delivering activities as intended, we will then conduct a more detailed **impact evaluation** to assess if our activities result in the outcomes we aim to achieve. The findings from both will help us refine and adapt the design of our programmes so that they have greater impact and respond to the needs of young people in a fast-changing world.

### Improve our ability to track impact

We will further refine the tools, measures and methodologies we use to track and analyse the difference our programmes make to the lives of young people. We will ensure staff are trained and confident using them, that they are relevant for the external market and are meaningful for young people e.g. our ready for work capabilities and ready for work passport.

“The Credit Suisse EMEA Foundation has funded ThinkForward for six years through capacity building, most recently to support their impact measuring work. This focus on impact underpins the new strategy and demonstrates their potential in supporting young people. As well as funding, we have provided mentoring and other engagement opportunities, connecting young people with our organisation as part of their employability journey. We are pleased to have supported ThinkForward as they have built their capacity.”

**Guy Varney**, Trustee of Credit Suisse EMEA Foundation





## Sustainability

We have been successful in developing our philanthropic income, securing some statutory funding and delivering on two Social Impact Bonds. We have formed significant, long-lasting and strategic relationships and we value them hugely. To expand our work, we need to be sustainable both financially and in terms of our programme design.

How we will achieve this:

### **Become financially sustainable**

Grow our statutory income and ensure our funding mix is balanced so that it is not over-reliant on a particular type of funding. Increase our fundraised income to ensure funding is multi-year and linked to long-term outcomes. Within the period of the strategy we aim to double our income to £5 million per year.

### **Grow our strategic partnerships**

Define our role within the wider ecosystem of support for young people by facilitating networks and joining forces with employers and funders who can help us achieve our ultimate outcome of supporting young people to gain employment and fairer access to career opportunities.

### **Transform our work digitally**

Build and invest in a digital transformation plan which will allow us to make aspects of our programmes more flexible, efficient, relevant and accessible. Ensure young people are equipped with the digital skills they need for the future world of work.

“Big Issue’s investment in ThinkForward’s SEND programme as part of their Social Impact Bond is really important to us. Now more than ever there is greater need for high quality, personalised employability and skills support for young people. The five-year strategy builds on their work to date and demonstrates approaches that can be scaled and mainstreamed which is core to our investment strategy.”

**Mark Lovell**, Head of Outcome Investment Fund, Big Issue Invest



# How we will achieve our goals and objectives

## Growth

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the youth labour market. Over the next five years we want to support more young people into sustainable, paid work. We aim to work with 1500 young people per year.

How we will achieve this:

### **Grow our SEND programmes to reach more young people**

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are more likely to be unemployed than any other section of society. Our mission is to develop new programmes to double the number of young people we work with who have mild to moderate learning disabilities to support them into sustainable, paid work.

### **Refine FutureMe to support more young people**

Explore how FutureMe can support more students in school, young people at risk of exclusion and young people at risk of long-term unemployment.

### **Build on our unique coaching model**

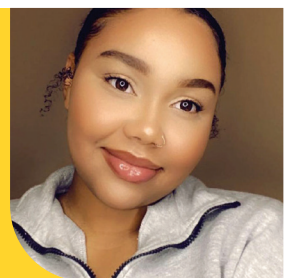
Continue to refine our coaching methodology, develop and deliver our own coaching training, and adopt a coaching approach in the performance management of staff. Test elements of the coaching offer that could stand alone.

### **Develop our organisation and team**

Create a strong operational foundation for growth by developing the right structure, processes, policies and procedures. Improve diversity and inclusion through our governance and leadership, the way we develop our services, and how we attract and retain staff. We aim to become recognised as a “great place to work.”

“In the future, I want to see more young people receiving support from ThinkForward. I strongly believe in the power of effective coaching to guide young people like myself to be independent and confident, not just in our surroundings but more importantly in ourselves, and the FutureMe and DFN-MoveForward programmes successfully do this.”

**Sally Cartwright**, Trustee, ThinkForward





# Equity, diversity and inclusion

Our equity, diversity and inclusion plan is at the heart of how we will flourish both as an organisation and in our work with young people. Crucially, we will be accountable for delivering on commitments made in the plan, and we will publicly report on our progress every year.

To succeed in our future ambitions, we need to model the values, behaviours, and culture that we wish to see in our partners, funders and in the world around us. We know that in leading a programme of change, it is essential that we strive for diversity in leadership roles. We took action to ensure our trustee and young trustee recruitment in 2020 paid close attention to this goal, and we continue to identify ways to nurture existing and aspiring managers and create development opportunities wherever possible.

We believe there is an important link between diversity and inclusion and improved social mobility. Through our SEND programme, we are already promoting fair access to opportunities for young people. We aim to extend the conversation to all of our employer partners to explore how we can support them to improve their approach to recruiting and retaining more diverse talent.

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

We aim 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.

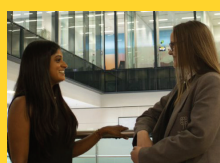
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