

Briefing for partners

ThinkForward's 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 embarked on an equalities journey and produced an equity, diversity and inclusion manifesto and plan. This plan is at the heart of how we will flourish as an organisation and in our work with young people. We will be accountable for delivering on commitments made in the plan, and we will publicly report on progress every year.

Young and Black Project

Over the summer we developed a Young and Black project, run alongside UK Youth's [Young and Black campaign](#), and supported with funding from our partner Citi.

The project responded to the needs of young people from racialised backgrounds who told us they wanted a platform to share their views and lived experiences of what it is like to grow up in a world where racism and discrimination exists. White young people were able to develop empathy and an understanding of the lived experiences of their peers. Coaches created safe and inclusive spaces for all young people to develop an understanding of allyship and anti-racism.

The culmination of the project is a digital and printed book, showcasing young people's creative work which represents how they feel about race and identity. The book will include an open letter to young people from ThinkForward, our business partners, schools and funders. We are inviting you to sign this letter.

What our young people are telling us

Below are some of the reflections and experiences shared by young people through the Young and Black sessions:

"A girl sat across from me and called me the N-word to my face... I was shocked, that I told the head, and they did nothing – neither of our homes were called – I thought... why am I black?"

"We had to read a book in school that had the N-word in it, teachers would say it and not do anything about it ... how's that ok?"

"We only get a month to talk about Black Lives Matter, in school it should be all year"

"Some of my old friends made fun of my first name so I said they could just call me a more 'regular' name"

"Saying you don't see colour is downplaying the problem, and it isn't true, you do see it. It downplays other people's experiences"

"Ridiculous that the colour of someone's skin could impact someone getting a job. It's disgusting. It makes me really angry"

"No matter the colour of your skin, you deserve the same opportunity as everyone else."

"It's really good to have a deeper talk about these things. I think it should be talked about everywhere and more often"

Join us

We are inviting our school partners, business partners and funders to join us on our equalities journey. As a collective we can create a different world for our young people to live in, where they can thrive whatever their background. We want to ensure that young people's views are heard within our spheres of influence. This includes working with our partners to create fairer access to opportunities for young people and ensuring that when we work in partnership, young people feel welcome and are able to be their true selves.

For schools, this will include doing meaningful work around racism within education and equipping young people to challenge racism where they see it. For our business partners and funders, this will include recognising the different challenges that our young people are growing up with and making changes to create more equitable workplaces.

You have a unique opportunity to hear directly from young people about what they see and understand to be the barriers holding them back in education and work. By joining us on our equalities journey we can learn together and make sure that young people are a part of shaping our equity, diversity and inclusion commitments. We can make sure that young people from all backgrounds know there is a better and more equal future for them.

Step one:

Add your organisation's name to ThinkForward's open letter to young people. The letter sets out our commitments to young people on our programmes.

To add your name to our open letter please confirm your intention to join us on our equalities journey and provide your logo by **Thursday 14th October**. We think young people will connect with logos more than just names. If you would prefer not to display your logo we can list your name.

The letter will be included in our Young and Black project's celebration book and on our website, which is the culmination of our first Young and Black project. A printed copy of the book including the letter will be given to each young person who participated in the Young and Black project and to each of our partner schools. A digital copy will be shared with our partners and funders and be published on our website. The book will be published on **Wednesday 3rd November**.

Over the next six months:

To support your commitment to joining us on our equalities journey, we will:

- Create opportunities to talk about our organisations' equalities journeys. Share and learn from how we are changing the way we run our organisations and how we behave. This will kick off with a workshop designed and led by social mobility, diversity and inclusion trainer Louis Howell, bringing together our schools, partners and funders in one space to learn from young people and each other.
- Provide an ongoing platform for young people to share their feedback on what we could be doing differently and better.
- Include equity, diversity and inclusion in our training for volunteers so that young people are represented and celebrated in the activities that they take part in.
- Report back to our young people about the progress we are making as a group.
- Share our progress as an organisation in our Annual Review and on our social media channels, and include examples of your progress too.