



Reach and Impact Report 2022/23



Kickstarting careers

About Spark!

We believe it's possible for every young person to be ready, equipped, motivated and able to enter the world of work.



Since 2010, Spark! has been **supporting young people's employability skills, knowledge, experience and access**, so that they are better prepared for and able to effectively transition into the workplace, finding a job and a meaningful career. We do this through:



Inspiring career mentoring relationships.



High quality work experience placements and internships.



A diverse range of employer engagement and skills development opportunities.



A powerful online employability and careers platform.



Supported transitions into employment.

Why our work is important

The UK has a serious social mobility problem, which is getting worse. A young person's prospects today are still largely defined by where they grew up and what their parents do. Put simply, while talent is evenly spread, opportunity is not.

Young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment compared to any other group. 12.5% of young people are unemployed, that rises to over 14% in London, compared to 4.2% of the population as a whole, (*as of September 2023*), and in many areas this is a long-term and entrenched problem.

In response we take a **place-based approach**, embedded in the communities we serve through a deep knowledge and understanding of the needs, challenges and opportunities, and establishing long-term, cross-sector and local relationships and collaborations.

Spark! aims to create opportunities for young people most likely to be 'not in employment, education or training', including young people:

- ▶ on **free school meals**
- ▶ with **special education needs and disabilities**
- ▶ from **racially minoritised backgrounds**
- ▶ with **caring responsibilities**
- ▶ with experience of the **care system**





In 2022/23 we worked with...

3287



young people

27% on Free School Meals

56% with English as an Additional Language

21% with Special Educational Needs

52% male and 47% female

61



school and college
partners across
10 London boroughs

369



employer
partners from
22 sectors

778



volunteers who
gave **14,877** hours
of their time

4,195



employer
engagement
opportunities

94% of young people stated that they have learnt about different career opportunities and job roles through our programmes

We are only able to deliver our work thanks to our many impactful partnerships with hundreds of local employers and volunteers, dozens of schools and colleges, local councils and community voluntary sector organisations.

Career Mentoring

Supported by a range of employer partners, Spark!'s CONNECT mentoring programme has matched hundreds of young people from vulnerable backgrounds with local employees.

Over 6 sessions, CONNECT provides an invaluable opportunity for the mentees to...

- Build essential social capital and career connections.
- Be inspired by role models in leadership positions.
- Explore ambitions and plans for the future.
- Develop vital employability skills and work readiness.
- Develop a professional profile.

And it's an opportunity for employers and mentors as well, to...

- Volunteer their time in a truly impactful and rewarding way.
- Build diverse talent pipelines and future workforce from within their local community.
- Develop new skills, with Spark!'s Mentoring Toolbox and training.
- Develop sustainable links with local schools, colleges and the community.

In 2022/23, **127** young people were matched with career mentors from 21 employer partners, including:



SEGRO Jacobs



"If it wasn't for my mentor I would have still been so confused in how I can get to where I want, sometimes you just need someone to help you lay your goals out and make you feel more confident in achieving them, it was amazing!!" *Young mentee*



IMPACT STATS

92%

of young people had a clear or some idea of what they want to do in the future and how to achieve it.

80%

of young people feel very confident communicating with new people.

94%

of young people feel very or fairly well equipped to achieve their goals.

100%

of young people plan on staying in contact with their mentor.

Case Study



CAREER MENTORING: Jack & Robbie

Jack is in Year 13 and is studying at Fulham Boys School.

Robbie works at Next DLP as a Cyber Security Solutions Architect.

How did you find working with your mentor/mentee?

Jack: Great, we were both ready to go and worked so well together. I feel more secure and established and confident to expand my connections.

Robbie: It was a good opportunity for me to teach Jack some good vocational skills that young people don't always get when they go down an academic route.

The 6 sessions allowed us to spend quite some time building a relationship, where we felt we could share with each other, and spending time focusing on Jack's goals, helping him work out what he wanted and which routes he wanted to take.

What have you found most useful?

Jack: Having a mentor! It's casual and cool, you can ask whatever questions you want. Getting insight into an industry that you want to know more about. Having that knowledge and insight is so important and your mentor can share that with you.

Robbie: Mentoring helped develop my own listening and communication skills, due to the difference between explaining things to a colleague in a working environment and having to translate those same things to someone in a different stage of life.



I never knew I had these skills until now... It's not just about employability; it's about personal growth. *Young mentee*



CAREER MENTORING: Karndip & Dave

Karndip is in Year 12 and is studying at Featherstone School, Ealing.

Dave works at SEGRO as a Group Projects Manager.

How did you find working with your mentor/mentee?

Karndip: It was honestly an amazing experience and allowed me to tap into the knowledge and experience of my mentor to learn as much as I can.

Dave: We worked not only on the syllabus but on a couple of general life mentoring topics, which linked back to the mentoring model. It was an honour to develop Karndip's public speaking and break his mental block that he had for it. Seeing him stand up at graduation and speak without notes to a room of strangers was one of the best work moments for a long time.

What have you found most useful?

Karndip: The selection process was perfect, the way it was structured, I don't know how Spark! did it, but you paired me up with a future version of myself.

Dave: It's really great the way that it's structured, it takes you all the way through from start to finish, but there's also a flexibility there which enables you to tailor it to the needs of both the mentor and mentee. The programme gives you the tools that you need, and the reward is phenomenal.

Work experience

Spark! work experience placements give young people an invaluable insight into the world of work, the opportunity to learn new skills, develop their independence, motivation, and self-confidence.

The programme provides young people with the opportunity to take part in high quality placements during Key Stage 4 or 5. Typically, a week in length and in-person.

Spark! has a network of hundreds of businesses, from local high street employers to large international organisations, all of whom are excited to work with young people from their local area and to grow local talent.

675 students benefited from work experience through Spark! last year.

25 schools, colleges and communities partnered with Spark!

271 employers hosted work experience students.

51% of employers offered work experience with Spark! for the first time in 2022/23.

“ It provided me with a better understanding of the different sectors of work and I have learned that I am really interested in jobs where you are writing articles and other pieces. This has been a wonderful opportunity.
Work experience student

IMPACT STATS

96%

of young people ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that they can now identify skills and qualities employers are looking for.

87%

strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that they are clearer about what they need to do to achieve their ambitions.

85%

“strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that they are better prepared for the workplace after their work experience placement.

Case Study

openreach Women in Engineering

In 2023, Openreach and Spark! partnered for a 4-day "Women in Engineering" programme aimed at diversifying the engineering sector. Initially piloted in 2020, the programme targeted young women from London schools and colleges.

The programme was structured to offer a comprehensive experience. *Day 1* included an orientation at BT Tower, focusing on Openreach's history and career opportunities.

Day 2 involved hands-on activities and speed networking at Openreach headquarters.

Day 3 allowed students to shadow female engineers.

Day 4 focused on reflection and career development.

The impact was significant:

- ▶▶ For **50%** of the young women this was their first time meeting a female engineer
- ▶▶ After the work experience **75%** of the young women said they would consider a career at Openreach.
- ▶▶ **100%** learnt about different career opportunities.
- ▶▶ **All** the engineers rated their experience as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.

“ It’s been great to show them this job is not just for men, we have some excellent female engineers out there who do a fantastic job day in day out.
Openreach engineer



Workplace & industry insight

Working in partnership with schools, colleges and employers, Spark! designs targeted solutions to the unique challenges and needs of young people. The **Kickstart Express** programme exposes Key Stage 4 young people to the world of work in an engaging and fun way.

Over 3 days, young people take part in a range of employability and career focused workshops, developing their skills and raising their aspirations.

They then get to spend the day at one of our employer partners, touring the workplace, meeting staff and taking on a real-life business challenge.

Back in school they present their experiences and learning for the rest of their year group.

In 2022/23, **312** young people benefitted from the Kickstart Express experience, visiting 12 of our employer partners, including:



I was able to explore the workplace more and was able to meet new people and see how they work and what they do for their living. It's way different than how I imagined.

Year 10 student



This opportunity has allowed me to develop my skills and become more confident when speaking to an audience. The programme helped me gain a better understanding of job opportunities.

Year 10 student

IMPACT STATS

94%

of young people said they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they can identify the skills and qualities employers are looking for.

94%

of young people stated that they have learnt about different career opportunities or job roles.

88%

of young people 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they have a better understanding of employability skills.

85%

of young people feel more motivated about entering the workplace



Showcase Partnership



SEGRO are a large employer operating across much of west London.

They are Europe's leading owner, manager and developer of industrial property, and are the largest UK real estate investment trust, worth £21 billion.

They own, develop and manage warehouse and industrial properties for customers in the UK and Europe, including for Amazon, DHL, Netflix, Mars and ASOS.

Spark! and SEGRO continued their partnership into a second year, working together in west London (with 10 schools across 4 boroughs: Hounslow, Hillingdon, Ealing and Brent), to increase young people's prospects of securing and remaining in employment, as well as increasing employer engagement in the local communities and schools. Having reached over 1,000 young people together, the programme has 4 key objectives:

- To increase employability and work readiness of young people.
- To raise confidence and career aspirations of young people.
- To elevate awareness of the property and logistics sector as an employer.
- To develop diverse talent pipelines for the property and logistics sectors.

A Progression Pathway Approach

- ▶ **First** of all young people get exposure to SEGRO as a local employer and their employees' career journey, through our employability and career workshops.
- ▶ **Next** young people get to visit a SEGRO workplace, gaining insights into the industry, the employment opportunities and pathways in to work. These visits were made possible by SEGRO's supporting partners, Brompton, DHL, GXO, G4S, Glencar and RD Studios.
- ▶ **Finally**, young people are matched with a SEGRO employee for a powerful one-to-one Career Mentoring relationship, supporting the young people to develop their skills, confidence and social capital.

Impact STATS

95%

of mentees have crafted new or improved CVs, positioning them to seize employment opportunities with confidence.

86%

of young people felt either 'fairly well equipped' or 'very well equipped' to achieve their career goals.

100%

of the young people have a good understanding of the career opportunities available to them.



“ It was honestly an amazing experience and allowed me to tap into the knowledge and experience of my mentor to learn as much as I can.
SEGRO mentee ”

“ This programme provides young students with an excellent opportunity to refine their skills and gain experience in communicating with professionals.
SEGRO mentor ”

Showcase Partnership



Inspire to Work Programme, with Woodbridge Park Education Service



Woodbridge Park Education Service is a multi-site Alternative Provision based in the London Borough of Hounslow, offering tailored education and support to learners who are not in a position to be in a mainstream school.

In partnership with WPES, and with support from Inspire Hounslow, Spark! launched a 2 year pilot programme, Inspire to Work – a new Alternative Provision careers and employability model.

All students taking part in this programme have been excluded from mainstream education for a variety of reasons and have severe barriers to educational engagement and transitions into sustained education, employment or training.

Year 11 students were matched with a local employer for one-day-a-week supported internship placements for 30 weeks, to:

- Improve their employability skills and work readiness skills.
- Raise their career aspirations and confidence.
- Successfully transition to a relevant post-16 course, apprenticeship, training or employment.

In 2022/23 placements took place at:



Rory was placed at **Audi**, and was so keen to stay he applied for an apprenticeship with the employer.



I had no clue that I'd be able to take on the amount of work there is at Audi. I wanted to be a mechanic, but I didn't even know how to change the oil, so it was just a mind image, and now it's a reality. *Rory, WPES Student*

Charnelle was placed at **Novotel** and was ready to dropout after 5 weeks as she was 'bored', and not interested in doing the job. After an intervention with the young person and the employer her role was adapted to better align with her interests. At the end of the placement, Novotel offered her a permanent role.

"Before her placement Charnelle said she wouldn't be told what to do and she'd walk off the job – 10 weeks in she's an asset to the team. If only I could have 3 Charnelle's."
Antonia, Novotel Supervisor



Employers told us that not only were there benefits to the young people, but to their company as well. They said that the importance of providing young people with a variety of experiences in order to keep them interested was also a benefit to other members of staff.

"I think it did teach us some things, especially with it being so extended, usually work experience pupils come in for two days, three days, maybe five at the most. We've never had something where it was over a six-month period. So, it taught us a lot in terms of trying to vary things, so it wasn't all just stagnant." *Employer partner*





Calls to Action

Host young people on work placement

A lack of work experience is the number one barrier highlighted by young people in securing sustained employment, and yet only 29% of young people report having had this opportunity at secondary school, with many more young people seeking a meaningful work placement than there are opportunities.

Spark! supports employers every step of the way to ensure they are able to provide a safe and rewarding work place experience for all.

Launch a community partnership

We are always seeking long-term strategic community partnerships with employers, working together to dramatically improve the employment prospects of young people, whilst simultaneously raising the profile of the employer and their sector to build diverse local talent pipelines.

Get in touch to find out how we can work together to kickstart careers.

Support young people at risk of becoming 'NEET'

The more schools/colleges and community partners we work with, the more young people at risk of becoming 'Not in Employment Education or Training' we can reach.

Get in touch to explore what opportunities we have available and how we can work together over the long-term, to benefit the young people you work with.

We wouldn't have been able to achieve all we did last year without our valuable partnerships with employers, schools/colleges and community partners or without the generous support from the below funders:

Charites Aid Foundation
Drapers Company
Garfield Weston
Inspire Hounslow

John Lyons Charity
Mayor of London
National Lottery Community Fund
Peabody Community Foundation
Youth Futures Foundation



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