



**Special School
programmes and
services**

A bit about Spark!

We believe...

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

We partner...

...with **schools, colleges, employers, councils and community organisations.**

We take...

...a **place-based approach**, embedded in the west London communities we serve, with a deep understanding of the needs, challenges and opportunities.

We work...

...with young people to **develop employability skills, knowledge, experience and access.**

Employer and
workplace
engagement
opportunities

Career
mentoring
relationships

High quality
work experience

Online
employability
and careers
portal

Supported
transitions into
work

2023 - A year in numbers

3287

young people on our portfolio of activities

21% with SEND

675

young people on work experience placements

127

Career mentoring relationships supported

369

local business and employer partners from 22 sectors

234 micro and SMEs

14,877

hours given by 778 amazing employer volunteers

After an industry insight day

85%

of young people feel more motivated about entering the workplace

After career mentoring

94%

of young people feel more equipped to achieve their career goals

After work experience

96%

of young people can identify the skills and qualities employers are looking for

"I had struggled with finding my voice when it came to my career as I lacked confidence. It was through the sessions that I gained the knowledge that I needed, and this boosted my confidence massively." Year 12 student



Some of our recent employer partners



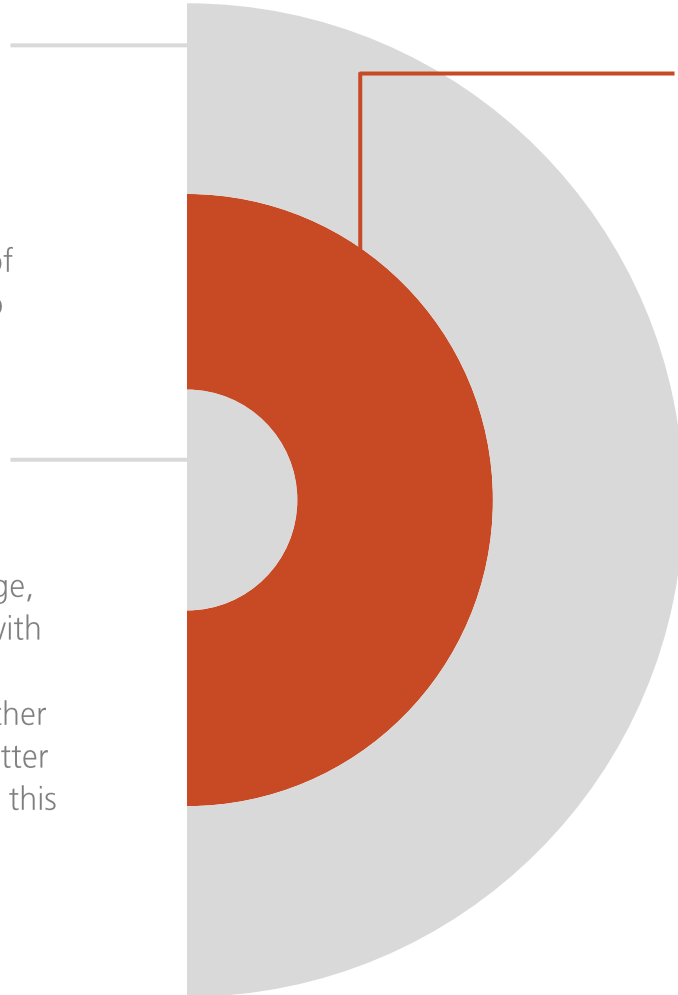
Our target population

Wider service population

Beneficiaries we are able to work with under the terms of our Memorandum of Association, i.e. 9 to 24 year olds.

Highest need population

Young people who are hardest to engage, may include those with severe learning and emotional needs. Other organisations are better placed to work with this cohort.



Target population

Young people we actively seek to work with on this high engagement programme of support, are:

- 14-to-18 year olds, who are **at risk of not transitioning** into further/higher education or employment
- Young people with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**
- Young people currently or previously on **Free School Meals**
- Young people living in **low social mobility areas**
- 18-to-21 year olds who are **currently NEET**
- 18-to-21 year olds identified as at **risk of becoming NEET** (i.e. vulnerably employed)

We remain aware, that with limited capacity and resource, every young person we help from our service population may limit our ability to support those within our target population.

To increase our engagement with young people in our target population we will **actively seek to work in regions of lowest social mobility across west London, prioritising communities experiencing structural inequality.**

We will identify and access young people who will most benefit, within schools, colleges, youth services, local authority provisions, and other community and voluntary services.

Recent Special School partners



Marjory Kinnon School



OCTAVIA HOUSE
Sector-Leading Therapeutic Schools



**LANSDOWNE
SCHOOL**

About our SEND offer to schools

OBJECTIVES

Working with school partners we explore the needs and service gaps for the students and co-design solutions that will:

1. Broaden career horizons
2. Raise career aspirations
3. Develop vital employability skills
4. Establish career goals
5. Prepare students for their transition into the world of work

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

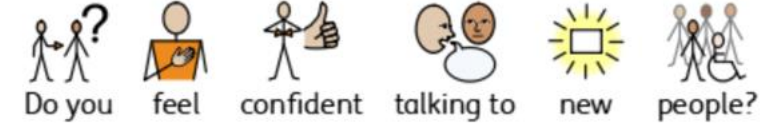
1. Work readiness and employer engagement
 - Communication skills workshops
 - Speed networking events
 - Interview skills workshops
 - Mock interview sessions
2. Industry insight visits
3. High quality work experience placements
4. Facilitated group mentoring
5. Preparation for supported internships and employment opportunities

1. Work readiness and employer engagement activities

In-school sessions with employer volunteer support

Communication skills workshops

- Help students consider and develop skills using the Skills Builder framework



Speed networking events

- Provide students with opportunities to meet and network with a range of professionals
- Students can engage in sessions individually, in small groups, or supported by an adult, ensuring that all students are able to participate

Interview skills workshops

- Provide students with an opportunity to learn about the interview process
- Experience different types of interviews and explore and practice a range of questions.

Mock interview sessions

- Provide students the opportunity to participate in 1:1 mock interviews with a volunteer from a local employer
- Gain experience of speaking to new people in a professional context in a supported environment.

2. Industry insight visits

Spark! sources, plans and facilitates insight day visits to local employers, allowing students to explore different roles with local employers.

Some examples of insight visits we have run recently, include **Park Plaza Waterloo, Heathrow, Berkeley Group, Novotel.**

Spark! works collaboratively with employers to co-design engaging, accessible and inclusive industry insight visits, appropriate for students of all levels.

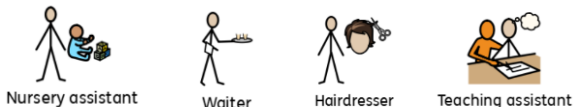


3. Work-experience placements

Spark!'s work experience provides young people with the opportunity to take part in high quality work experience during Key Stage 4 or 5.

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

We know work experience may look different for different students, so we work flexibly with schools to find experiences that are appropriate for the needs of the students, whether this is a 2-day placement, full week or virtual experience.



4. Facilitated group mentoring






Spark! sources, plans and facilitates group mentoring sessions, with employer volunteers leading sessions aiming to help students:

- ...develop communication skills and work readiness
- ...build vital social capital
- ...explore ambitions and plans for the future
- ...be inspired by role models





 My problem solving goal is ...






 I will try to be more creative by ...



5. Preparation for supported internship and employment opportunities

Spark! runs workshops to help support students, families and carers prepare for next steps

Whether this is supported internships, apprenticeships or full-time work.

Case study – Marjory Kinnon Special School

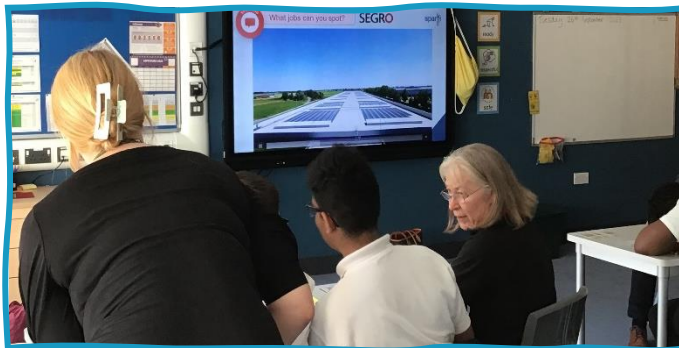
Spark!, in collaboration with SEGRO and Heathrow Airport, **launched an employability programme** with Marjory Kinnon Special School, to help Year 10 students develop their social confidence and interaction skills and to explore local employment opportunities.

30 students completed the programme, which provided students with a range of opportunities:

Employer engagement activities

Students completed a range of workshops, supported by employer volunteers, developing employability skills, inc. communication, teamwork and leadership.

Students got the chance to meet and work with a range of volunteers.



Industry insight visits

Students participated in industry insight visits to Heathrow Terminal 5 and a SEGRO Cargo Centre, to gain experience of the workplace and explore career pathways.

Students got the chance to speak to over 10 different employee volunteers.



Facilitated group career mentoring

Students completed 6 facilitated group mentoring sessions with Heathrow and SEGRO volunteers.

Students developed communication skills, reflect on personal strengths and set goals for future.



What Marjory Kinnon students and employers told us



The best part of the trip was when we learned about different jobs

100% of students told us they **enjoyed their visits** to the workplace

100% of students told us it has **helped them to learn about different jobs**

Gareth Baker, Director at SEGRO, said:

"We are acting as a catalyst in bringing together our commercial, charity and educational partners, pooling our expertise and resources to give a local school the opportunity for its pupils to gain an invaluable, first experience of the world of work on its doorstep."



I enjoyed going to the [Heathrow] pods and talking to new people and learning things.

Confidence levels about having the skills to get a job **rose from 45% to 70%**.

Becky Coffin, Director of Communities and Sustainability at Heathrow, said:

"Getting out in the community to help local young people prepare for their next step is exactly what our Giving Back Programme is all about – opening our doors so those who live closest can access the benefits of being our neighbour."

Overall the trip was extremely informative and very educational.

Case study – Lansdowne school

In partnership with the school Spark! co-designed **interview skills workshops and mock interview sessions**, meeting the needs of 20 Year 11 students.

The objectives were to:

- Provide students meaningful encounters with employers and employees.
- Prepare students for adulthood, by focussing on their strengths and capabilities and setting career goals and aspirations.
- Develop student confidence in presenting themselves professionally to employer volunteers.

Hannah Sullivan, Environmental Advisor at Kier, said:

“It was such a rewarding day for me. let alone the confidence I hope it built in the students too. I feel very proud of each one of them for grasping the opportunity and actually taking part in speaking with us.”

Kelly Strong from Strong Tourism Recruitment, said:

“The pupils seemed so motivated and well behaved and happy and it was a pleasure to go through the mock interview stages with them. I do hope they enjoyed the experience too.”

Work readiness and employer engagement activities

Students participated in mock interview workshops, developing their readiness for interviews and confidence in talking about their strengths and hobbies.

Students then practised their skills during mock interviews, supported by employer volunteers from a range of industries.



Next steps

If you are interested in finding out more about these programmes and services or to discuss working together to design bespoke interventions and support, please get in touch.

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