

Young Talent Impact Report

2025 - 2026

the
switch

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Why Young Talent?

Young people have huge potential, but the transition from education into employment can be challenging. Access to professional networks, workplace experiences and tailored support can make a meaningful difference in helping young people understand their options, build confidence and take their next steps.

The Challenge

13.5% of 16–24-year-olds in the UK are not in education, employment or training (NEET) – equivalent to more than 1 million young people (Jan–Mar 2026).¹

Despite the breadth of opportunities available, many young people continue to face barriers to the networks, experiences and support they need to progress.

Young Talent helps bridge this gap by connecting young people with employers, meaningful experiences and personalised support that build confidence, skills and pathways into employment, education and training.



1. Office for National Statistics. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: May 2026 [Internet]. London: Office for National Statistics; 2026 [cited 2026 Sep 23]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/may2026>

Young Talent is our employability initiative, designed to bridge the gap between education and employment for 16–25-year-olds across East London. Through personalised employability support, skills development, mentoring, real experiences of the workplace and access to a diverse network of employers, Young Talent empowers young people to build confidence, unlock their potential and take meaningful steps towards employment.



Nicky Sahota

Young Talent Project Manager at The Switch

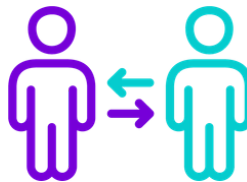
It has been a true privilege to lead the continued development of Young Talent over the past academic year. This has been a year of building stronger foundations - strengthening relationships with employer partners, expanding our connections with youth organisations across East London, and, most importantly, working alongside the young people at the heart of everything we do.



Megan Hunter

CEO at The Switch

"Young Talent supports our young people to enter the workforce for the first time, and therefore plays a crucial role in securing their better future. It has been fabulous to see our young people make better choices through our programme and even secure roles directly through our work with them. This is the deep impact that we are now achieving and will grow year on year with the wider community's support."



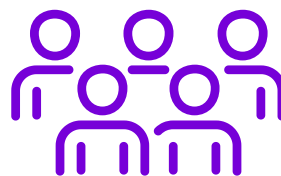
136

Young People Engaged



456

Portal Registrations



86

Volunteer Interactions



10

Employer Partners

The Programme Design

Young Talent is designed to support young people at different stages of their journey - from discovering new industries, to building confidence and skills, to taking meaningful next steps into employment, education or training.



1

Explore

Young people are introduced to new industries, employers and career pathways through real-world experiences that broaden their understanding of what is possible.

Examples: Employer insight days, Workplace experiences, Industry conversations



2

Develop

Through workshops, mentoring and practical experiences, young people develop the skills, confidence and networks needed to progress.

Examples: Skills workshops, Mentoring programmes, Professional networks



3

Progress

Young Talent supports young people to turn insight and development into action through clearer pathways towards employment, education and training.

Examples: Next-step support, Career guidance, Employment opportunities

Careers in Consulting Masterclass

In Collaboration with Boston Consulting Group

Building on the success of last year's collaboration, Boston Consulting Group welcomed a new cohort of Year 12 students for an engaging careers masterclass. The programme combined industry insight with practical employability training, helping students strengthen their CVs, interview skills and understanding of careers in consulting.



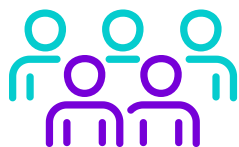
20

Volunteers



8

Colleges



20

Attendees



83%

Attendance



Why it matters

Consulting can feel like an unfamiliar career pathway. By sharing industry insight and practical guidance, Boston Consulting Group is helping make these opportunities more accessible to young people from diverse backgrounds.

On average...

**The event received a
4.56 out of 5 rating!**



Looking ahead, students plan to...



"Update my CV according to the tips and feedback of the BCG employees."



"Improve my CV, and look for more work experience. Do more research into different careers"



"Look into and research consulting further"



Students reported confidence in...



"Structuring interview responses and communicating effectively."



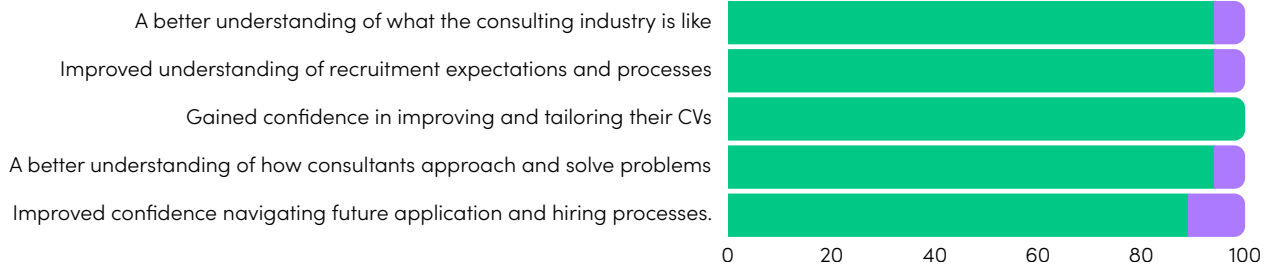
"Understanding the consulting industry and how it works."



"What to expect during interviews and what to put on your CV."

As a result of attending, Young Talent reported...

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree



Introduction to Barista Careers

In Partnership with Well Grounded

Well Grounded introduced young people to careers as Baristas through an immersive, hands-on coffee bar experience. Participants developed practical skills, explored opportunities within hospitality and gained first-hand insight into the profession. The session also introduced Well Grounded's specialist training programme, providing a clear pathway into further training and employment.



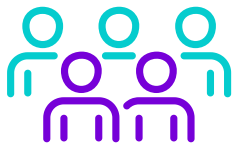
2

Training
Hosts



3

Referral
Partners



13

Attendees



100%

Attendance



Why it matters

Many young people are unaware of the opportunities available within hospitality and the pathways into the industry. Well Grounded helps make these careers more accessible through practical experience, industry insight and specialist training.

On average...

**The event received a
4.35 out of 5 rating!**



Young Talent Feedback

"The communication was really useful and efficient. I felt like I understood the information given to me and it was accessible. The workshop itself was very fun and informative and will help me with my future career options."

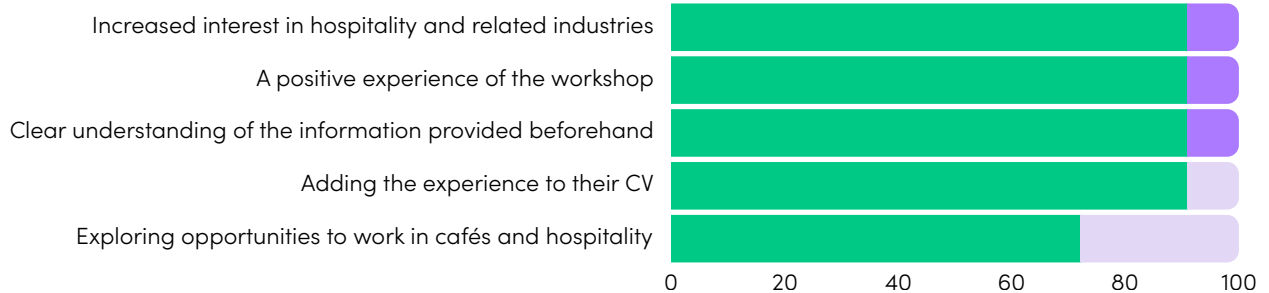


Students reported confidence in...

- "I enjoyed learning new skills and working with other people"*
- "The teaser day was a blast. Thanks for the opportunity."*
- "I enjoyed the environment they made as i felt very comfortable"*

Following the workshop, participants reported...

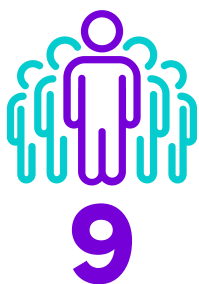
● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree



Interview Ready with Year 12's

In partnership with Barclays CEO Office Team

Young Talent partnered with the Barclays CEO Office team to deliver an interview preparation experience for Year 12 students at Stepney All Saints School. Students took part in interactive preparation activities, one-to-one mock interviews and live feedback sessions with Barclays colleagues, gaining insight into employer expectations and how to approach future recruitment processes with confidence.



Volunteers
Supported



Students
Attended



Why it matters

Many young people have limited access to professional networks and recruitment insight. Barclays helped students understand employer expectations, strengthen interview skills and build confidence for future opportunities.

On average...

**The event received a
4.6 out of 5 rating!**



The Value of 1:1 Support



"I liked the interview experience, I have never had this before, it was fun!"



"The one-to-one feedback given to me was helpful."



"Very friendly, informative and engaging"

"What a wonderful session. I really enjoyed it – and so did everyone in the team. Thanks for all your efforts in putting it together."

-Volunteer



Impact where it truly matters

The session had the greatest impact where it was needed most. Before attending, 50% of students reported lacking confidence in their interview skills. Following the session, all of these students reported increased confidence and feeling better prepared to approach future interviews.

Following the workshop, participants reported...

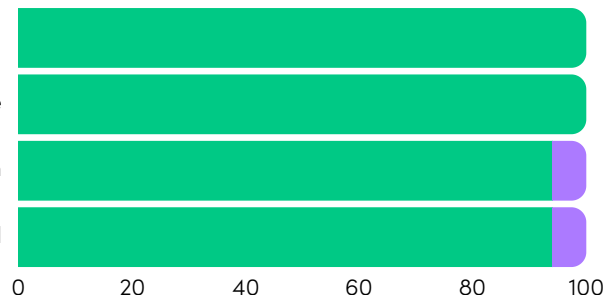
● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree

Improved understanding of recruitment process expectations

Had a positive experience

Increased confidence future interviews after today's session

Would recommend this workshop to a friend



Design Careers Insight Day

In partnership with Elmwood Design Studio

Young Talent partnered with Elmwood Design to deliver an immersive insight day introducing students from Stepney All Saints School to careers across the creative industry. Hosted at Elmwood's London studio, professionals from four creative agencies guided students through developing their own hot sauce brand. Through practical workshops, students gained first-hand insight into the creative process and creative careers.



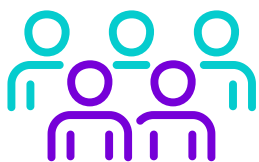
8

Volunteers



4

Employer
Hosts



16

Attendees



100%

Attendance



Why it matters

Many young people have little opportunity to experience the creative industry first-hand. By opening its doors and sharing real projects, Elmwood and its partners helped make creative careers more visible, accessible and inspiring.

"The students were all engaged with their own unique perspectives and ideas. All students were respectful and didn't hesitate to ask questions which makes things much easier as a presenter."

-Volunteer

"I really enjoyed the activities; they were engaging and gave me an insight into what a future career in this industry could look like. It was a fun, educational experience that I would recommend to others"

-Student



A word from Eleanor Soames on the importance of volunteering:

"I love volunteering and hosting insight days—it's my way of giving back and paying it forward. As studios and designers, we have a unique platform to open doors for aspiring creatives. Design can be tough to break into, so if I can help inspire, diversify, and expand the field, I'm all in."

Following the workshop, participants reported...

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree

Increased awareness about the different jobs in design



The day was well organised and ran smoothly



Activities were clear and engaging



Would recommend the workshop to a friend



More interested in exploring a career in design



0 20 40 60 80 100



Apprenticeship Workshop

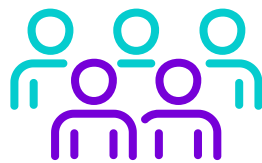
In partnership with OCS

Young Talent partnered with OCS to deliver an apprenticeship insight workshop, helping students explore opportunities available through alternative pathways. Through employee and apprentice insight, students discovered different roles at OCS, gained recruitment knowledge and took part in practical activities to strengthen their applications and interview skills.



3

Volunteers
Supported



24

Students
Attended

We asked students what they found most useful.

"Learning about interview skills and the constructive feedback."

"How applications work and what people look for"

"Learning what makes a strong CV"

Why it matters

Many young people are unaware of the opportunities available through apprenticeships and alternative pathways. OCS helped students understand these routes through real experiences, practical guidance and insight into the recruitment process.

On average...

Students rated the experience 4.2 out of 5.



Following the workshop, participants reported...

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree



Career Mentoring

In partnership with Barclays

Open to 18–25-year-olds from East London, our mentoring programme connects young people with experienced professionals from Barclays for personalised guidance, industry insight and support as they plan their next steps. Carefully matched mentoring pairs meet flexibly over six months, with ongoing support from Young Talent to build employer-valued skills, broaden professional networks and set meaningful goals for the future.



10

Volunteers



10

Mentoring
Pairs



5

Mentees
secured their
next step*



80%

Completion
Rate



Why it matters

For many young people across East London, accessing professional networks, corporate career pathways and personalised employability support can be challenging. Through 1:1 mentoring, Barclays colleagues help build confidence, broaden aspirations and make corporate careers feel more accessible.

On average...

**The programme received a
4.9 out of 5 mentee rating!**



Mentee Feedback

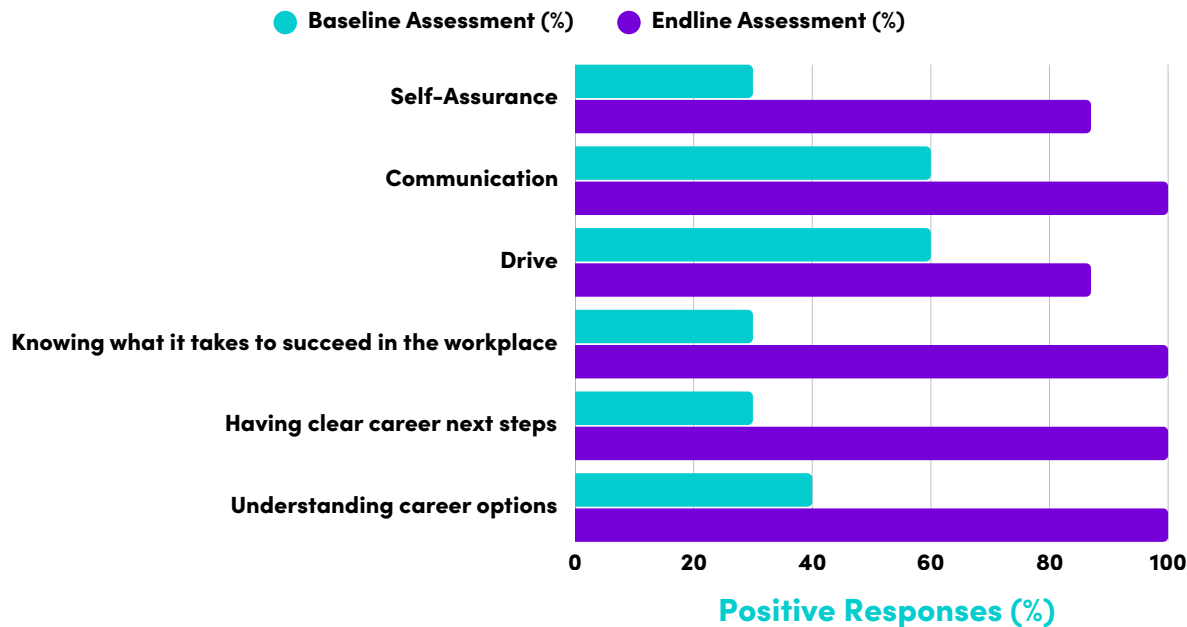


Anastasia Frunza, Mentee

"I really enjoyed being part of the mentoring programme and truly appreciate all the time and effort that went into supporting me. The programme gave me the confidence and motivation to take my next steps, and I'm very grateful for that."

Measuring Mentee Growth

To understand the impact of mentoring over time, mentees completed self-assessments before and after the programme. The results show positive movement across key areas of career readiness, workplace understanding and personal development, demonstrating the value of sustained 1:1 support.



Progression to the next step

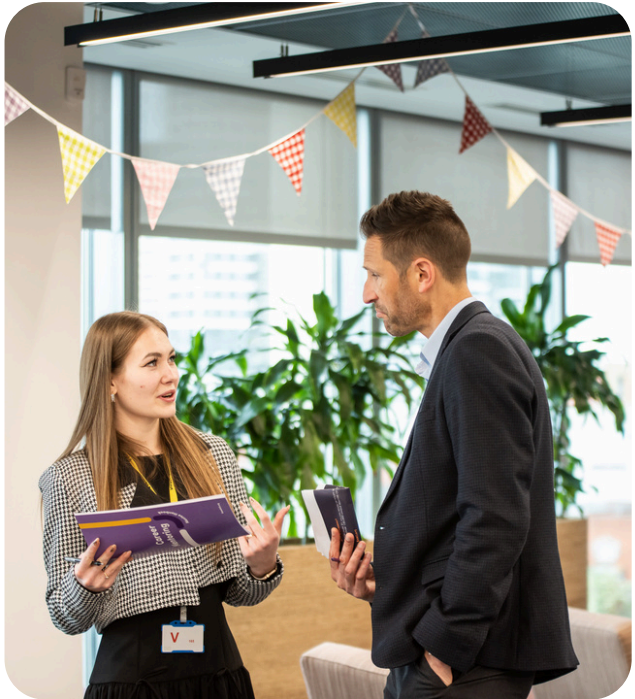
5 out of 8 mentees secured their next step during or following the programme. Mentees are at different stages of their journey, with some progressing into employment or further opportunities while others continue to study or seek employment. Mentoring provides the confidence, guidance and support to help young people navigate their next steps and make informed decisions about their future.

Mentor Feedback

“What advice would you give to a colleague who is thinking about signing up?”

**Ben McInahan,
Barclays Mentor**

“DO IT. It's a real privilege, to try to help a bright young person at such a critical moment in their lives. You will develop much deeper insights into the challenges facing this cohort. And you may well end up taking away some of the very useful lessons on providing feedback ("specific, kind, actionable ...") and applying them more broadly in your life”



On average...

**Mentors rated the programme
4.4 out of 5.**



Following the workshop



100%

Agreed the following:



My mentor was approachable and supportive



The topics discussed were relevant to my goals and professional journey.



My mentoring experience has helped me develop key employability skills.



Satisfied with the overall structure and flexibility of the programme.



Increased confidence talking to professionals



Case Study

Murtadha Karim, Barclays Mentee 2025/2026



When Murtadha joined the Young Talent Network Mentoring Programme, he was passionate about pursuing a career in cybersecurity but was unsure what steps he needed to take to achieve this goal. Through mentoring, he gained a clearer understanding of industry expectations and the skills employers look for. This encouraged him to upskill, explore university as his next step and build a stronger foundation for his future career.

"Through the support I received from my mentor, I started studying for the CompTIA Security+ certificate, which is a globally recognised certification that proves you have the foundational knowledge and hands-on skills required to work in cybersecurity.

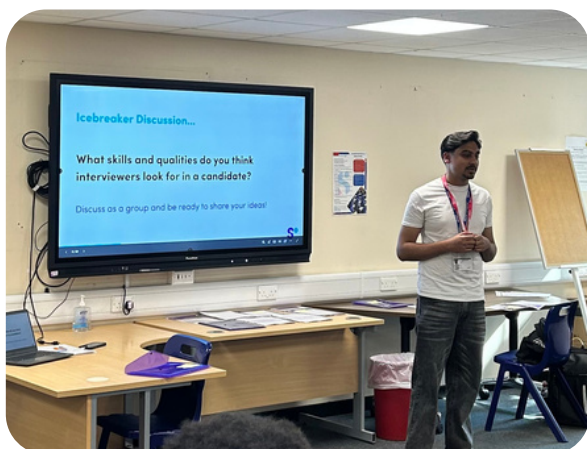
As a result, I've started to build a stronger understanding of core cybersecurity concepts, improved the quality of my CV, and become more confident in interview settings. The mentoring programme gave me the support I needed to better understand my next steps and what changes were needed.

It also played a key part in my decision to pursue my studies further, and I have now secured a place at the University of West London studying BSc (Hons) Cyber Security."



Next Steps

The Young Talent journey doesn't end with one opportunity. As our members grow, they continue to build confidence, gain experience and progress through internships, volunteering, further education and opportunities to give back and inspire the next generation.



This academic year...



6

Volunteer Engagements



2

Young Talent Interns
joined The Switch Team



2

Case Studies Created



"I really enjoyed helping out at the session and sharing my experience with applications and CVs. The students were really engaging and asked lots of questions. It was great to hear about their ambitions and share my journey to Queen Mary, along with advice on A-Levels, university life and achieving the grades and places they're aiming for."

Kate Yarushinskaya,
Barclays

Young Talent was created to bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring more young people have access to the opportunities, networks and experiences they need to build successful futures.

Over the past year, we've strengthened our foundations, grown our employer and community partnerships, and created meaningful opportunities that are already changing the direction of young people's lives. From first conversations with employers to mentoring relationships, workplace experiences and progression into employment, education and training, we've seen the impact that access, encouragement and opportunity can have.

As we look ahead, our ambition is clear. We will continue to grow our reach, deepen our partnerships and create even stronger pathways that help more young people move confidently towards their next step. Together with employers, volunteers, youth organisations and our wider community, we can ensure that talent is recognised, potential is unlocked and opportunity is within reach for every young person.

Because talent is everywhere, we strongly believe that opportunity should be too.

Want to help make that opportunity a reality? Get in touch.

Nicky Sahota - Young Talent Project Manager - nicky.sahota@theswitch.org





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All data in this report reflects the information available at the time of reporting. Figures are based on students who provided information or whose outcomes were recorded, and may not represent the full cohort in all cases.