

# Annual Review 2012/13

An Alumni Community for Every School and College





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## Introduction from our Managing Director

**More than 10 million people across the country would be willing to support young people at their old state school or college. Most of them are never asked. Future First is changing that.**

Over the last year, we've worked with over 450 schools and colleges nationwide to build and engage an alumni community – with well over 90% of these doing so for the first time. Many have kept no records of their former students and most never contact them again after they walk through the school gates after the last day of school. Over the last year alone, we've signed up over 50,000 people to stay part of their community after they leave and potentially support their old school and its students in the future.

As well as this on-going investment in building communities, over 12,000 young people have benefited directly from Future First's inspirational alumni workshops this year. Alongside such rapid expansion, we have successfully improved the quality of our interventions. We take the feedback of our teachers, alumni and students very seriously. We are incredibly proud that 98% of teachers said they would recommend our alumni-careers workshops to teachers in other schools.

Over 78% of students say that they want to work harder in school as a result of interacting with alumni. What's more, 83% of students leave our sessions saying that meeting former students shows that 'people like them' can be successful at a time when this sort of confidence building is crucial: currently, a quarter of students on free school meals nationwide believe that 'people like them' are fundamentally not successful in life.

Alumni feedback has been equally encouraging, with 100% of former students who volunteered saying that they enjoyed going back to their old school and that they would be likely to attend another event if asked.

We've also been successful in adding to the talent of our trustee board and will be excited to officially announce a number of fantastic new faces by the end of 2013.

But we're just getting started. Our vision is that every state school has a thriving, engaged alumni community. We aim to have achieved this in 75% of all schools by 2020. To achieve this, we'll need to make sure each of them has the infrastructure for community building within 5 years, by 2018.

We want to lead a cultural change in this country so that the potential of alumni support for state schools is never wasted again. Our services aim to make this simple and cost-effective, whilst helping schools get the greatest possible value from their alumni community. However, if schools are inspired by our example to make this change on their own, we will be proud to have played a small part in making this happen. With the quality and dedication of a young staff team and the loyalty of a few committed funders who share our vision, we are sure this is possible.

I hope you'll enjoy reading this review of our performance, learning and progress over the last year.



**Alex Shapland-Howes**  
Managing Director

**“Focus, that’s what [Future First] showed me. If you focus you can do anything. A lot of the youth today think school is rubbish, but [these events] show that you need school to give you the skills that you need for a good job.”**

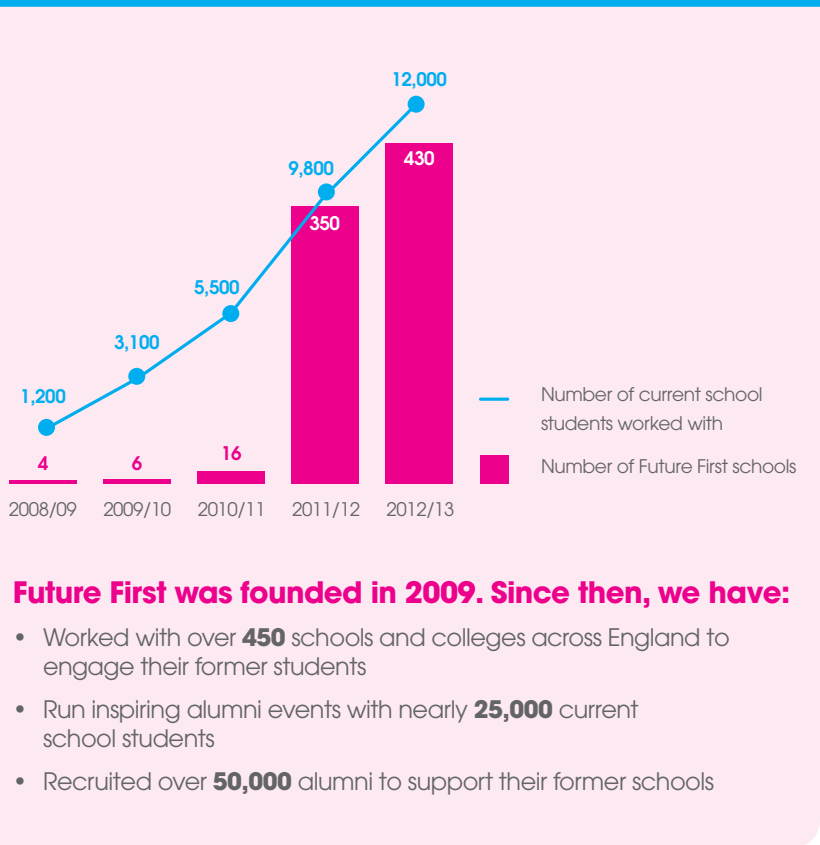
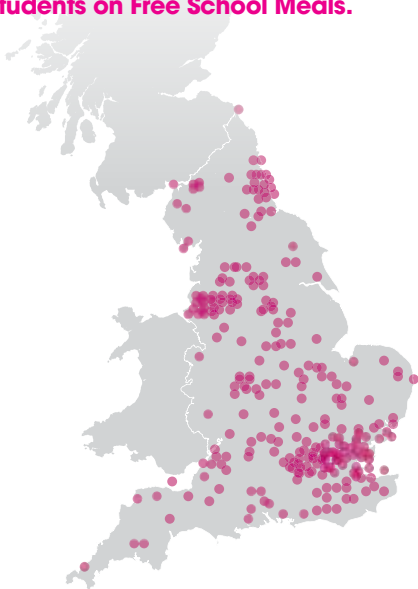
**Future First student, 16**

# Our Growing Network

Future First works with over

# 450

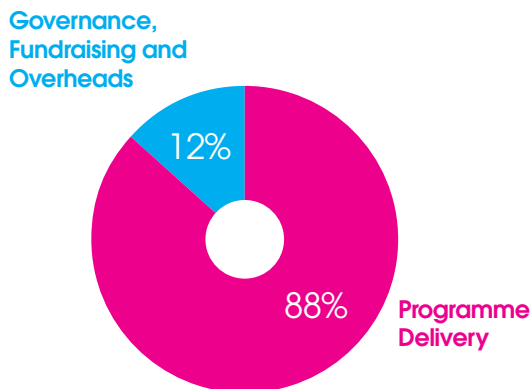
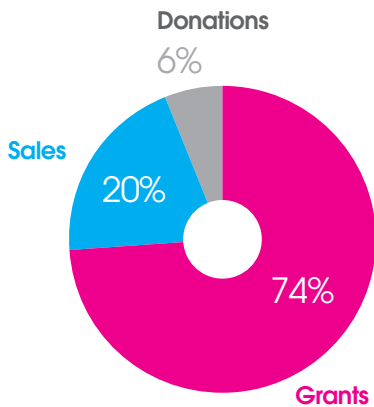
schools and colleges across the country. Schools where we ran alumni careers events last year had, on average, 40% of students on Free School Meals.



### Future First was founded in 2009. Since then, we have:

- Worked with over **450** schools and colleges across England to engage their former students
- Run inspiring alumni events with nearly **25,000** current school students
- Recruited over **50,000** alumni to support their former schools

## Our Income and Expenditure in 2012/13\*



**Total income**  
**£560,231**

**Total expenditure**  
**£486,181**

\*These are combined figures for two legal entities The Camden Future First Networks Limited and Future First Networks Limited. This structure is currently being simplified to leave one entity The Camden Future First Network (registered charity #1135638).





**“Programmes like Future First make a massive difference. If you’re in your last year or two of school, the world seems a pretty foreboding place. It really helps youngsters at a crucial moment in their life to decide for themselves what they want to do next.”**

**Nick Clegg,  
Deputy Prime Minister**



# Our Programmes in Schools

## What we do

Future First helps schools and colleges to build an engaged alumni community. Former students can have a transformative effect on the young people studying in their old schools today, returning to act as inspirational career role models, mentors or to offer invaluable work experience placements.

For generations, private schools and universities have seen the value in keeping former students engaged after they graduate. These alumni have an affinity

with the young people who follow in their footsteps – they have had some of the same teachers and are a part of the same lasting community. Now, thanks to Future First, state schools can systematically engage with their former students at an affordable cost.

Future First helps schools reconnect with their former students, re-engage them with the school community and harness their knowledge, skills and time to inspire, advise and motivate current students.

**“I didn’t have a role model when I was at school so I had to make decisions by myself. Looking back, I had no idea that I’d be able to make it to where I am today. Being able to share my experience and impart my advice to current students is amazing.”**

**Mohammed Awal, 26,  
Future First Alumni  
Volunteer**

## Why we do it

Social mobility in the UK is lower than in any other other OECD country, with the highest correlation between parents’ earnings and those of their children. This lack of social mobility prevents people from fulfilling their potential.

Nearly half of state school students don’t think they will be successful in the world of work and more than a quarter of young people from the poorest homes believe that “people like them” don’t succeed in life. Research into ‘stereotype threats’ shows that belief in such stereotypes can severely inhibit the ambitions of the young people

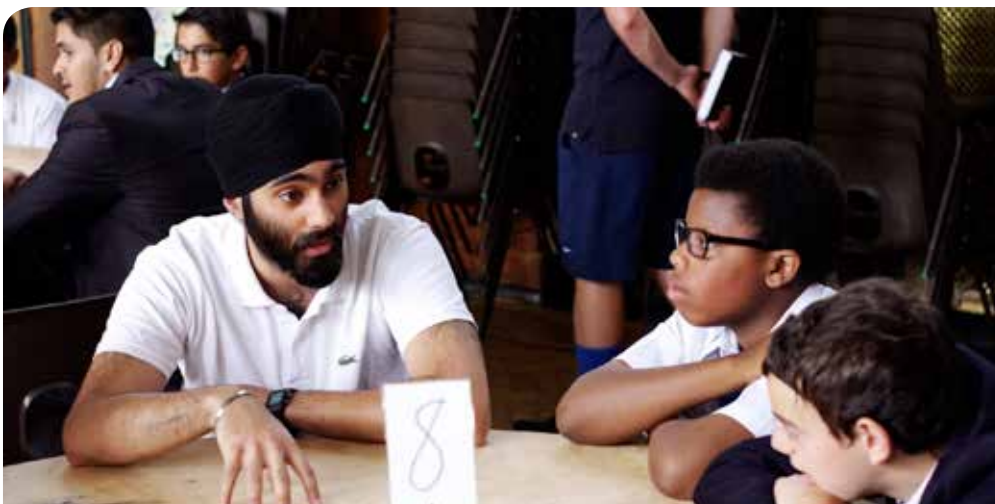
affected. They are much less likely to ‘take risks’ like applying to higher education or for a competitive job because they believe that failure is the likely outcome.

Relatable career role models from local communities can help change this.

In the year in which Careers England research found that 83.5% of schools are operating with reduced careers provision, it’s clear that now, more than ever, schools need the support of role models, volunteers and work experience opportunities.

**“Future First is one of the most powerful programmes I’ve seen around careers. You only had to look around the room and all the students were hanging on every word they heard. It helps them realise that there are opportunities out there in the big wide world, which are very attainable. It makes them believe that they can do it.”**

**Jay Lockwood,  
Assistant Head of  
Sixth Form, Feltham  
Community College**





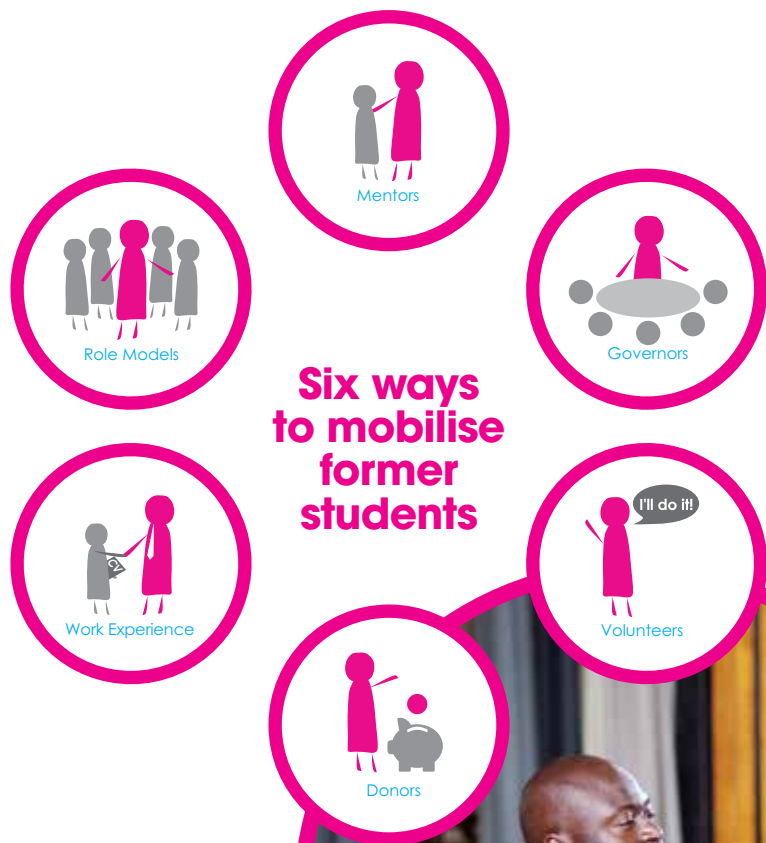
### How it makes a difference

Our 'enabling' approach means that schools can use Future First services in a variety of ways and to meet a range of needs, specific to their particular institutional context. There is a plethora of ways for alumni to get involved at their old school and the range of benefits to be gained is wider still. Future First works with schools to plan and deliver the most effective interventions to meet their students' needs.

Having grown up in the same area and perhaps having had some of the same teachers, former students can be ideal career role models as they are instantly relatable. They know and understand the local community and the school.

By changing young people's perception of what 'people like them' are capable of achieving, we help them to expect more from themselves. This reduces the impact of localised identities and stereotypes on educational attainment and self-perception, with the potential to increase both employability and life satisfaction.

Future First's definition of success is not limited to professional careers, but includes every former student who finds fulfilment in their jobs and further or higher education courses.



In the academic year 2012-13, we ran alumni assemblies and workshops for over

# 12,000

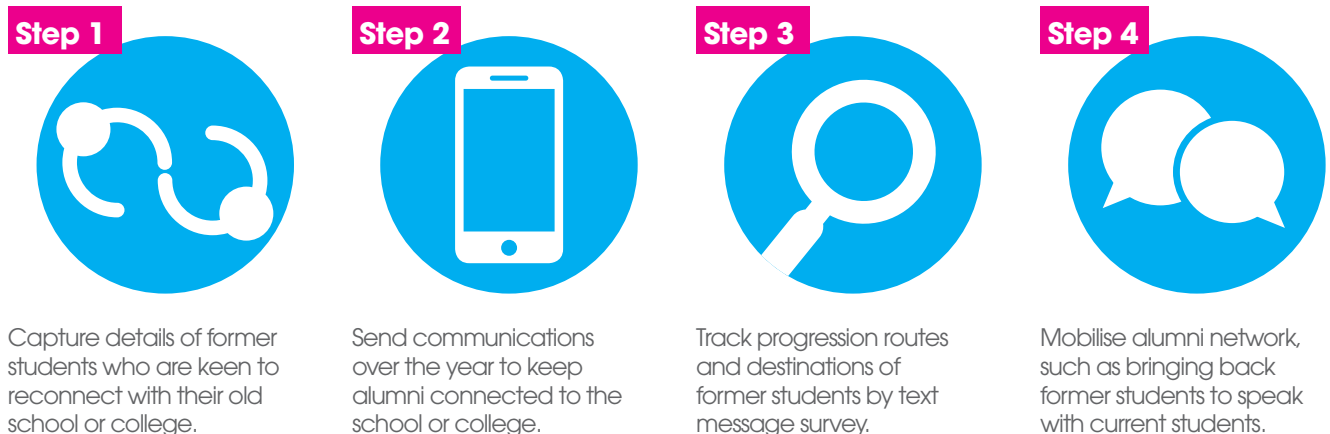
students in over **100** state schools and colleges across the country.

# 322

alumni volunteered at one or more of these events, **99%** of whom would recommend getting involved with Future First to a friend.



### How we do it



# Our Programmes with Employers

## What we do

Through our Employers Programme, we link staff from leading firms with students from our schools. Our employer events provide inspiring opportunities for young people to develop employability skills while offering engaging volunteering opportunities for staff and a talent pipeline for apprenticeships and entry level jobs. Our partner employers include the law firms Taylor Wessing and Osborne Clarke, the global health research charity the Wellcome Trust and banks Barclays and Citi.

## Why we do it

There were over one million young people classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the UK in 2013.

Furthermore, there are 2 million young people living in jobless households who have the lowest chance of access to work experience but would benefit from it the most.

Opportunities to be gained through personal networks such as work experience placements organised by school alumni and family contacts are traditionally less accessible for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are addressing these barriers directly through our employer programmes by expanding their networks of contacts in the world of work.

“We rate Future First as one of the UK’s leaders in tackling social mobility rather than just talking about it, which is essential to make sure that, together, we’re making a real difference rather than just ticking boxes. Those who have engaged with the programme speak about it from the heart – they’re proud to be part of something so professionally put together by Future First.”

Simon Marshall,  
Osborne Clarke

Over **760** students from **42** schools attended our employer events in 2013, working with over **320** volunteers, **100%** of whom would take part in a Future First event again. **92%** of students said the events developed skills that would help them get a job.

## How it makes a difference

By providing young people with up-to-date information about employment through alumni networks, mentoring schemes and local employers, as well as offering opportunities for skills development, they are better placed to make decisions about and apply for further and higher education courses and future employment options. Research by Dr Anthony Mann of the Education and Employment Taskforce showed that young adults who have four or more interactions with employers whilst at school are five times less likely to be NEET than those who had no involvement.

Not only do our employer programmes offer essential support and insight to young people, our volunteers report improved self-confidence, team-building, and communication skills as a result of their involvement. Better still, over 95% say it improved their empathy with young people and awareness of the challenges that face them.







# Our Impact on Young People

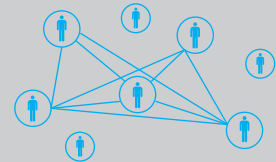
## 1 in 4

One in four young people from poor homes feel that "people like them don't succeed in life".<sup>2</sup>



**82%** of students agree or strongly agree that meeting former students at Future First events shows that people like them can be successful

After our career insight days, **89%** of students felt more confident that they could work at the place they visited.



Young adults who have 'four or more employer contacts' are five times less likely to be NEET than those who have no involvement.<sup>5</sup>

The Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning states that explaining the relevance of learning can increase student motivation.<sup>3</sup>



## 71%

of students attending a Future First session now want to work harder or much harder in their school work, which increases to **82%** for those attending workshop sessions.

Over

## 12,000

young people benefited from employer contacts thanks to Future First over the last year.

## 3x

Young people who do not have clear career goals before leaving compulsory education are three times more likely to fall into the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) category compared to those who do.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation many young people are not short of high aspirations, but they often don't know how to realise their goals.

## Realise their goals<sup>6</sup>

**99%** of teachers thought our sessions were very useful for their students, and

**96%** believe the sessions motivate their students to work harder or much harder.

## 77%

of students said that our sessions improved their knowledge of courses and jobs that they could do in the future.

## 34%

of teachers lack confidence in the current careers services provided by the schools in which they teach.<sup>7</sup>

## 77%

of teachers thought our session was more or much more useful than other external providers. (The other **23%** said they were 'about the same').

1. National Careers Council (2013), "An Aspirational Nation: Creating a Culture Change in Careers Provision",  
 2. The Prince's Trust (2011 a), "Broke, not Broken: Tackling Youth Poverty and the Aspiration Gap",  
 3. Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (2013), "It's about work... Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning",

4/5. Mann, A (2012) "It's who you meet: why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults" Education and employment workforce

6. Yates, S., Harris, A. Sebates, R. Staff, J. (2010) Early Occupational Aspirations and Fractured Transitions: A Study of Entry into 'NEET' Status in the UK - need new careers advice and guidance

7. Paton, G (2013) "Pupils Forced to Turn to TV and Internet for Careers Advice", The Telegraph

# Student Stories

## Serkan's Story:

Serkan was an A-Level student at Kingsmead School when Future First started working with the school. Kingsmead is a coeducational Academy in Enfield, North London, where 33% of students claim free school meals (double the national average). After attending multiple alumni events, including a series of after school workshops aimed particularly at those interested in the scientific professions and including an engineer, a physiotherapist, a renal doctor and a psychiatrist, his interest in the medical profession became a passion, and Serkan decided to apply to study Medicine.

During these workshops, Serkan participated in group discussions about different medical careers, and 'careers carousels' where he got to think about the finer details of each job, including day-to-day realities, academic requirements and essential soft skills. He also had the opportunity to speak with those alumni who had medical

degrees in a one-to-one setting, allowing him to ask them questions specific to his own experiences and aspirations.

Serkan's exposure to successful former students, as well as close interaction with them during the workshops, not only helped to raise his confidence in his own abilities but also gave him practical steps towards achieving his future ambitions.



**"I became confident in discussing my future ambitions and had a very clear structure of my course and what will follow after.**

**It helped motivate me further to study as hard as I could to achieve my ambitions."**

## Aminur's Story:

Aminur was an A-Level student at Dunraven School, an inner-city Academy in London. After attending Careers Insight Days at Citi and Accenture with Future First, where he heard from staff about the wide range of jobs on offer in the City and took part in CV, mock interview and work-based challenge workshops, he became inspired to pursue a career in the banking sector. His exposure to employees at Citi and an introduction to the work that they do, helped him to have a clear goal of where he wanted to be in the future, and he became committed to aiming high.

As a result, he researched opportunities to gain experience and secured a 10 week summer paid internship with UBS. Further still, he has started training to become a Special Constable within the MET and secured the grades to study Banking and Finance at university from September 2013.



**"I cannot stress enough how much you have inspired me and have led me to the right path."**



# What we've Learnt



**We're proud of our progress, but we haven't got everything right first time. Below are some of the key things we've learnt over the last year and how we'll apply these lessons over the next year.**

1. We missed our original, ambitious target for volunteers signed up per school, which was a big disappointment. We've realised it's going to be longer and harder than we thought, but we now have more data to make realistic projections and have started to build national partnerships and campaigns to ensure we exceed these targets.
2. We missed our original mobilisation targets. Despite immediate successes and big ambitions for the short-term, this is a project that will only reach its full value after 5-10 years, not 1-2 years as some of our original projections implied. Whilst working to help embed the culture of alumni volunteering as quickly as possible by delivering and sharing best practice across the country, we will need to manage school and funder expectations.
3. We have had a number of schools drop out from our programme or we've removed them for lack of responsiveness. While our paying school retention rate is still over 90%, our non-paying school rate is only around 70%. Although this seems counterintuitive there have been a number of schools and colleges that have not been engaged despite having access to the service. We have increased our staff to school ratios so as to be able to better support teachers and showcase the value of the programme whilst also managing expectations that this will be a long term process with only modest 'quick wins'.
4. We haven't found space yet to actively pursue alumni for work experience placements or school governor placements. Work experience, in particular, is a priority for schools and colleges and we haven't yet run an aggressive recruitment drive for places – we will this year.
5. Some schools are definitely harder to recruit alumni for than others. We've also worked with schools who have thought we've had too many 'elite' alumni (all Russell Group educated, etc.) and not enough who followed other pathways, but at other times it's been the reverse. This isn't an easily solved challenge, although it will become easier as each of the alumni communities grows and we will continue to listen to teachers who know the needs of their students best.
6. Financial planning – the programme delivery has cost us more than we expected when we launched it. This has put real strain on staff and finances and means that this year we will miss our target for traded revenue as a percentage of overall budget for the first time since we launched. We are confident in our model now and have learned a lot but are disappointed to have faced this challenge which, with better modelling, we could have mitigated.
7. We've been criticised for being too school focused and not catering for colleges. We accept this and want to launch a college focused and college branded product and we've already held roundtables with college leaders to develop it. It may take us 6 to 12 months, but we'll get there.

# Our Plans for the Future

## We have five key ambitions for 2013/14 and beyond:

01

**Growth:** We aim to grow our network of schools by 50% in 2013/14, and expand our offering to schools in Wales and Scotland. We aim to have helped 1,000 schools to build alumni networks by 2016 and see alumni networks established in 75% of all schools and colleges by September 2018.

02

**Culture change:** Before Future First was founded, almost all state school pupils walked out of school after their last exam and never heard from their school again. Future First aims to inspire schools to change this and will measure success not just by growth in those schools it supports to do so directly, but by the increasing numbers of others who choose to do so without us. We will also seek to create a culture change in former students – making them more likely to want to volunteer at their old schools and to actually do so.

03

**Embedding alumni engagement in school life:** We will work closely with each of our schools to ensure that teachers have the support and tools they need to bring alumni in to subject-specific lessons as well as more general assemblies, and workshops throughout the year.

04

**Send the country Back to School:** October 2013 will see our inaugural Back to School Week campaign, which will encourage the nation to sign up to support their old school. This will support our work to recruit a total of 75,000 former students by August 2014. As the campaign grows, we will partner with other organisations working with schools in the UK, to create opportunities for as many people as possible to donate time and money to support our young people.

05

**Sustainability:** We have greatly benefited from grants from government, trusts and foundations and the private sector. However, our aim is to move to a subscription model that delivers our service at an affordable price for schools, but ensures that we are financially sustainable in the long-term. We will reach 60%+ trading income by 2014/15 and complete sustainability by 2016.

## Living our values

### Investing in our people

We want to make sure our staff get the most out of their time in Future First. As such, we work with each member of staff to understand their development needs, and as part of their personal development, they are offered external mentors based on their needs, interests and aspirations. We regularly invest in both internal and external training, from Excel Skills to Public Speaking, and encourage staff to be proactive in finding training courses that will support their career and skills development.

### Career Insight Evenings

We know that it can be difficult for many trying to understand more about careers in the charity and education sectors. In recognition of this, we run Insight Evenings once every half term for those interested in hearing more about routes into the sector. We have run 6 events so far, with over 100 people attending.

### Work Experience Placements

We have provided 86 days of work experience and insight days within Future First for current students and recent school leavers, to help build their experience, develop their skills and give them essential insight into the work environment. 11 young people have benefited from the experience to date. We have had extremely positive feedback from those taking part.

### Apprenticeships

In supporting young people into full time employment, we have recently taken on an apprentice to join the team as an Office Assistant. She has already proven a great asset to the team and we look forward to providing her support and the opportunity to develop her skills and experience with our team.

# Our Supporters

We would like to thank all of our schools and colleges, our alumni volunteers, our employer partners and volunteers and our many supporters and advocates. We would also like to make particular thanks to the following organisations and individuals.



- Ashurst
- Citi
- Ironmongers Company
- Kettle Foods
- Rayne Foundation
- RBS
- Rothschild
- The Funding Network
- The Social Investment Consultancy
- The Wellcome Trust
- Trusthouse Charitable Foundation
- Howard Kennedy FSI

## Advisory Council

**Baroness Estelle Morris**  
Former Secretary of State for Education

**Fiona Millar**  
Education Campaigner and Journalist

**Sarabajaya Kumar**  
Teaching Fellow at LSE

**Eric Ollerenshaw MP**  
Former Head of Cities and Diversity at the Conservative Party

**James Turner**  
Projects and Policy Director  
the Sutton Trust

**Stephen Williams MP**  
Liberal Democrat MP for Bristol West

**Vanessa Wiseman CBE**  
Education Advisor and Former  
Headteacher





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