



Villiers Park
Educational Trust

Impact Report

2025





Foreword

We are delighted to share Villiers Park's 2025 Impact Report and the difference that Villiers Park is making to thousands of young people from under-represented backgrounds across the country. Young people's ambition, resilience and talent inspire our work every day.

Our commitment remains clear. To improve academic outcomes and develop the personal and employability skills of young people who face barriers to higher education or employment.

Too many young people feel less informed about their future pathways and less confident in the skills they need to realise their ambitions.

These challenges are compounded by the uneven distribution of opportunity across the country. This is why we deliberately focus our work in places such as Cramlington and Killingworth - one of the least socially mobile constituencies in the UK - ensuring we reach the young people who need our support the most.

Our achievements:

- ▶ We expanded our reach in Hastings, Bexhill, Tyneside, Swindon, Norwich and opened a Future Leaders hub in Cambridgeshire, supporting 611 young people in areas of low social mobility and high deprivation.
- ▶ Through strong partnerships with schools, employers, funders and charities, we reached over 2,500 young people.
- ▶ We grew our specialist programmes for competitive university applicants and completed a second year of our pre-apprenticeship programme, resulting in new qualifications and apprenticeship offers.
- ▶ We supported 100+ social-action and student-led projects, helping young people build confidence, leadership skills and broaden opportunities for their peers.
- ▶ We have developed our new five year strategy, Beyond Barriers, setting an ambitious goal to more than double our reach and support 5,000 young people each year.

We are deeply grateful to every supporter, partner, colleague, volunteer and trustee who helps to make this happen. Thank you for working with us to create a future where every young person can realise their potential.



Dr Desmond Bermingham
Chair of Trustees



Gaby Sumner
Chief Executive

611

young people supported on the Future Leaders programme

1,154

Hours of coaching delivered by our expert team

1,250+

young people reached through enrichment projects

92

Leadership Challenge Projects completed

291

students attended a University Insight Day or residential

Future Leaders

The Future Leaders Programme supports young people who face economic, social and personal barriers to achieving their potential and realising their 'possible selves'.

Success looks different for every Future Leader, so we tailor our support to each young person. Whether that's guiding a college application, accessing a vocational apprenticeship or preparing for early entry to a top university.

Our aim is to empower every participant with the knowledge, confidence and skills needed to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Selected and put forward by our 42 partner schools, this includes young people on free school meals or in receipt of pupil premium; with lived experience of care; refugees and asylum seekers; from black and ethnic minority communities; and from military families.

The programme combines one-to-one coaching, student-led projects, subject-specific courses and Employer and University Insight Days. Together, these elements broaden horizons, build confidence and resilience, and help young people see and pursue their full potential.



I volunteered for this position solely based on my observations of the benefits our students gain from the scheme. A massive factor is the increased confidence and self-esteem.

*Connie Wind-Avery
School Liaison for Norwich*



For leadership challenge, we were told to create something that could change our school for the better. This challenge has given me so many opportunities and greatly improved my confidence in how I see the world.

Lily, Hastings and Bexhill Future Leader

Returning to Villiers Park after my earlier role as Director of Education, I was drawn back by the mission with which I remain deeply aligned: ensuring fair access to education and opportunity for all young people.

The broadening of our entry criteria now enables us to reach a far more diverse audience at a time when the need for our work is greater than ever. Since 2019, the disadvantage gap has widened significantly, with less-advantaged young people up to 23 months behind by GCSE and nearly four grades behind by A Level (Education Policy Institute).

With over 100 years of experience, we bring deep expertise to our long-term programmes. Over two to four years on our Future Leaders Programme, we provide a trusted adult at critical points, supporting young people to develop skills, access opportunities and make fully informed decisions about their futures.



Sarah Chick
Head of Programmes

Possible Selves

Possible selves sits at the heart of our flagship Future Leaders programme. Developed by Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius in 1986, it describes the relationship between self-concept, imagined future selves, motivation and behaviour.

Possible Selves shows that what young people believe is possible is influenced by the environments they know, the experiences they have access to, and the people who guide them. When these influences are limited, their sense of future possibilities narrows too.

To turn aspirations into action, young people need structured opportunities to explore new environments, discover unfamiliar education and career pathways and understand the steps required to move from where they are now to where they hope to be. The clearer and more achievable their imagined future becomes, the more motivated they are to work towards it.

Possible Selves also recognises the role of social and cultural capital, helping young people understand how their experiences shape their personal journeys and future choices.

Social Action

In 2024 -25 we ran 208 Leadership Challenge sessions, providing targeted support to students as they developed social action projects that make a positive impact on their school community.

Working alone or in small groups, young people take their project ideas from conception to completion over the course of the year. This year projects have included a beach clean, a debating competition, languages club, a vaping awareness campaign and much more.

Through Leadership Challenge, students push themselves to develop key skills, including communication, critical thinking and problem solving.

AVEVA Challenge

We are delighted to announce a new partnership with innovative technology company AVEVA. We have offered Year 12 students in Cambridge and Bedford the unique opportunity to collaborate with AVEVA volunteers to identify sustainability issues in their local communities and co-create innovative, accessible solutions.



After two years **80% of Future Leaders were certain or very certain about their future pathway** – an increase of 51 percentage points

University Pathways

This academic year, our residentials, subject-specific events and university insight days gave 291 Future Leaders the opportunity to step onto campuses, meet current students and explore the pathways open to them. For many, these experiences demystify a world they may never have imagined accessible to them.

University Insight Days

In March 2025, 26 Future Leaders from Hastings visited The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) for the first time.

“I had a fun time and I’m now considering LSE as a university I may go to!”

Emma, Year 12 at Bexhill College

Through a Future Choices careers workshop, an engaging academic session on the power and ethics of AI, and a campus tour led by student ambassadors, young people were able to reflect on their aspirations and experience university-level thinking.

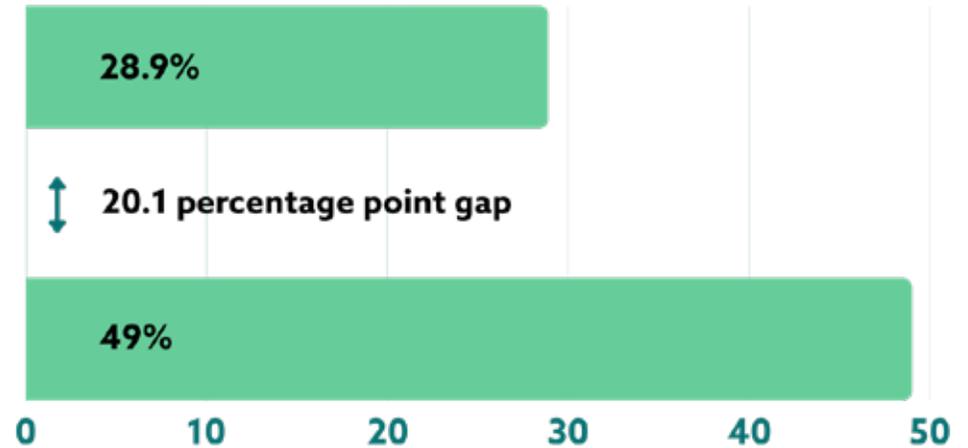
University of Bath Residential

This year marks our third University of Bath residential, continuing and building on our partnership.

Through academic tasters, employability workshops and collaborative projects, students grow in confidence, skills and ambition.

Crucially, students’ likelihood of applying to university rose by 43 percentage points, with **84% leaving the week seriously considering university** as a future destination.

University Progression Gap



Only 28.9% of students eligible for Free School Meals at age 15 progress to higher education by age 19, compared with 49% of their peers (DfE, 2024).

Following the University of Bath Residential 2025:



91%

Felt more outward-looking



85%

Felt more motivated



90%

Felt more resilient



89%

Felt more confident

LSE Insight Day, Hastings and Bexhill Hub



Early Entry

Our Early Entry programme, in partnership with Trinity College Cambridge, gives highly academic students the support they need to access the UK's most competitive universities and courses.

Tailored guidance from dedicated volunteers enables students to develop three core areas: Super-Curriculars, applications process and interview techniques.

Following the programme, students are now awaiting decisions from the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford and many more have progressed to high-tariff universities to study subjects ranging from Engineering and Law to Theology.

Arona, a recent participant now studying Neuroscience at King's College London, reflected on the difference the programme made:

“It was an amazing experience to be part of the Villiers Park coaching programme and having continuous support with my early entry applications.”

Anglia Ruskin Insight Day, Norwich and Cambridgeshire Hub



Through working directly in areas needing the most support, Villiers Park are able to understand the young people they work with and the barriers they face. We have been able to co-develop a programme which is really tailored to these students' future ambitions, answers their questions and gives them skills that will support strong applications.

Amber Silk, Outreach Partnerships Manager at Trinity College, Cambridge

Employability

Apprenticeships are a powerful driver of social mobility and they provide young people with a direct, paid route into skilled employment. This allows them to gain qualifications, earn a salary and build networks without some of the financial worries associated with traditional higher education.

Next Gen Pathways

We introduce students to apprenticeship options throughout the Future Leaders programme, from coaching sessions to dedicated workshops on our residentials.

Our specific Trade Insight project gave students hands-on experience in the construction sector. 17 students in Swindon gained meaningful construction skills and qualifications and four of those immediately secured places on apprenticeships and construction courses. Schools reported that the project opened up career routes many students had never previously considered possible.

During our University of Bath residential, a dedicated apprenticeship workshop significantly increased students' awareness and interest in alternative post-16 pathways.

“Villiers Park introduced me to the idea of a degree apprenticeship which sounds better suited to me as an individual.”

Elena, Tyneside Future Leader

The National Picture

- ▶ **Nearly 1 million** young people in the UK are NEET
- ▶ **Only 12%** of apprenticeship places are filled by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- ▶ **Just 10.7%** of degree apprentices (aged 18–24) are from disadvantaged backgrounds

Our Impact

- ▶ **17** students took part in the Trade Insight construction pilot
- ▶ **4** students achieved their CSCS certification
- ▶ **81** Year 10 students attended the apprenticeship workshop at the University of Bath residential
- ▶ **60%** said they would now consider an apprenticeship, **a 40% increase compared to before the residential**



Employer Insight Day at Sopra Steria in London



Trade Insight programme at New College Swindon

Sopra Steria Partnership

In 2023 Sopra Steria became our principal corporate partner. In 2025, their commitment has shaped and grown our programmes, ensuring young people gain the skills, confidence and networks they need to succeed.

Through employer insight days, skills workshops and targeted financial support, Sopra Steria is helping young people picture themselves in professional environments and take meaningful steps towards those futures.

Villiers Park Alum Joanna, now a Consulting Manager at Sopra Steria, has also given back by co-delivering an inclusivity workshop and presenting the Diana Hiles Celebration of Progress Award at our Tyneside Celebration event.



Villiers Park supported me when I needed it most, and now I have the privilege of helping to make those same opportunities available to others.

Joanna Finlay



In Year 13, visiting the Sopra Steria London office gave me my first real insight into careers in technology and consulting, and it played a big role in shaping my early interest in data, digital transformation, and engineering.

The technology fund I received was extremely helpful, it allowed me to purchase essential equipment such as an iPad, which I use daily for notetaking and managing my engineering projects. This has made my studies far more efficient and accessible.

Future Leader

In 2025 the partnership included:

- ▶ Enrichment talks delivered to **300+** young people aged 12-14
- ▶ **24** Future Leaders attended insight days in London and Edinburgh
- ▶ **94** students took part in a SPRINT workshop supported by Sopra Steria volunteers
- ▶ **62** young people received individualised support through the Opportunities Fund
- ▶ **35** students gained new oracy qualifications



Beyond Barriers

Villiers Park's trustees and staff have worked together to develop a new five-year strategic framework. Drawing on focus groups with Future Leaders, analysis of areas of highest need, evaluation data and a refreshed fundraising strategy, this work has shaped our new organisational strategy.

Our strategy sets an ambitious goal: to more than double our reach and support 5,000 young people annually by 2030. The 2025/26 financial year is a bridging year, establishing the foundations for long-term growth.

Our work over the next five years will focus on three goals:



Deepen Impact: Strengthen delivery in our existing hubs, Hastings and Bexhill, Swindon, Tyneside, Norwich and Cambridgeshire, with a continued focus on the Future Leaders programme.



Enhance Reach: Expand into new communities with high unmet need and provide specialist guidance for competitive university and apprenticeship pathways.



Influence Systems: Use evidence and young people's lived experiences to shape local and national policy and practice.

These aims are enabled by three commitments:

- Evidence-driven practice and investment in evaluation
- Stronger partnerships across schools, colleges, universities and employers
- Sustainable resources, including a bold fundraising campaign, a People and Culture strategy and a commitment to environmental sustainability

Together, these priorities mark a new chapter for Villiers Park—one focused on deeper impact, wider reach and lasting change for young people and their communities.

“I believe that education is important, but more importantly I believe everyone should have the equal opportunity to choose their own future.”

Benita Udegbe, Trustee and Alum



From Future Leaders to Progression Coaches

We are thrilled that the young people who once benefited from Villiers Park's support are now helping the next generation to realise their own potential. In 2024-25, we welcomed two new Progression Coaches to the Villiers Park team. Clara and Josie, both of whom began their journeys with us as students, reflect on the long-term impact of our programmes.



I gained the confidence to go to university — meaning I was able to achieve my First Class Human Biology BSc.

Josie Crisp
Progression Coach



Josie first connected with Villiers Park on the 2018 Inspiring Excellence Biology residential. Facing uncertainties about university - from academic pressures to financial concerns - the programme helped her build the confidence she needed to take the next step.

She went on to achieve a First Class BSc in Human Biology and a Distinction in Molecular Biology MSc. Now a Progression Coach in our Cambridgeshire hub, Josie supports young people navigating the same decisions she once faced.



Having been part of the Villiers Park programme as a young person, I understand first-hand the impact it can have. It is a rewarding opportunity to now contribute to it.

Clara Smith
Progression Coach



Clara first joined Villiers Park through the Scholars Programme in 2014, later attending an Inspiring Excellence residential on Law in 2017. These experiences broadened her world-view and strengthened her confidence and communication skills.

Today, as a Progression Coach, she brings that lived experience directly to the young people she now supports.

Thank you

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals, organisations and partners who have supported Villiers Park. From funders who generously contribute financially towards our work, to staff in our partner schools and colleges and all those who volunteer their time. Thank you to everyone who supported us, including those who gave anonymously.

Trusts and Foundations

- The Britford Bridge Trust
- CHK Foundation
- Chalk Cliff Trust
- Community Foundation North East
- The Corti Charitable Trust
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- Kings College London RAG
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- Oxford University Careers Service – Crankstart
- Trinity College, Cambridge
- UniConnect Study Higher
- University of Bath
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Portsmouth

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- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
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- English Speaking Board
- Fair Education Alliance
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- Diana Hiles Memorial Fund
- Keith Sykes
- Kit and Clare Beazley
- Mike Baker Memorial Fund
- Mike Salter

Learn more about ways to support us:

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