



Welcome

As we celebrate 100 years of transformational impact at Villiers Park Educational Trust, we reflect on a century of empowering young people and breaking down barriers to opportunity. This milestone is not just about our history – it is about the thousands of futures we have helped to shape and the generations to come.

Since our last report, we have built on our achievements and supported more young people than ever - 86% more!

In just one of our 100 years, our programmes have reached 1000s of students from 32 schools and colleges across the country.

We are empowering and equipping young people with the skills and confidence to thrive. Through the Future Leaders Programme, Leadership Challenge and our Enrichment Partnerships Pilot, we continued to drive social mobility - ensuring that every young person has the chance to realise their full potential.

This year we championed the power of enrichment. The 2025 Centre for Young Lives report highlights the critical link between enrichment opportunities and tackling the school attendance crisis. At Villiers Park, we have seen first-hand how engagement in meaningful extracurricular activities fosters motivation, belonging and academic success. Our work is proving that when young people are given the opportunities to explore their passions and the pathways to achieving their future possible self, they are more likely to stay engaged in education and achieve their ambitions.

As we look ahead to the next 100 years, our purpose remains clear: to ensure that social and economic inequalities do not determine a young person's future. By expanding our partnerships with schools, universities and employers, we will continue to create pathways for success, innovation and social change.

To everyone who has supported our work - our students, partners, funders and volunteers - I extend a heartfelt and very grateful thank you. Your dedication is shaping a future where every young person, regardless of background, can flourish.

Together, we are building a more equitable and inspiring future.

Gaby Sumner

Gaby Sumner
Chief Executive



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2023-24 - Impact in Numbers

Since our last Impact Report

- 500+** completed the Future Leaders Programme
- 2,520** young people supported in 2024
- 268** Students attended a University Insight Day or residential
- 112** benefited from the Sopra Steria Opportunities Fund
- 45** students took part in an Insight Day at Sopra Steria



Achieved 100 years of transformative work.

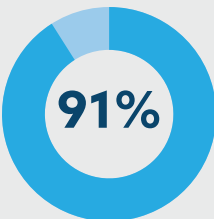


Four Future Leaders hubs in Hastings and Bexhill, Norwich, Swindon, Tyneside and developing a fifth hub in Cambridgeshire.

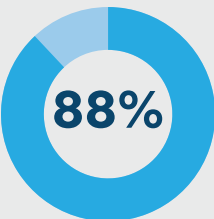
Impact on ambitions



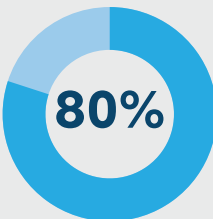
The Future Leaders Programme reduced uncertainty about future pathways among participants from 46% before the programme to just 2% afterward.



91% of Future Leaders report improved confidence



88% feel more motivated in their academic and career paths



80% feel more resilient

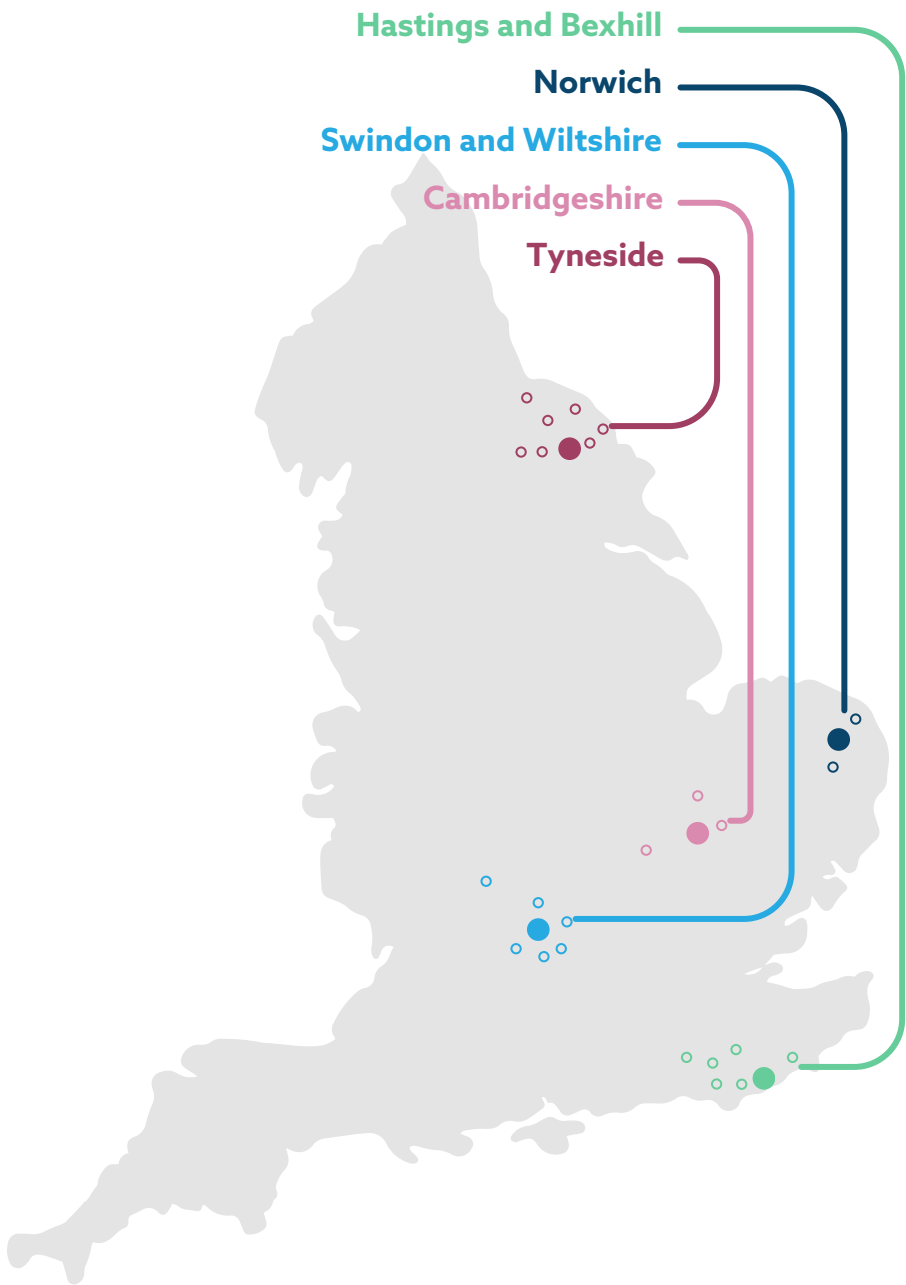


79% of Future Leaders felt confident or very confident in their vision of their future selves, more than doubling the 33% who felt that way before.



76% after a university residential felt more like applying to university.

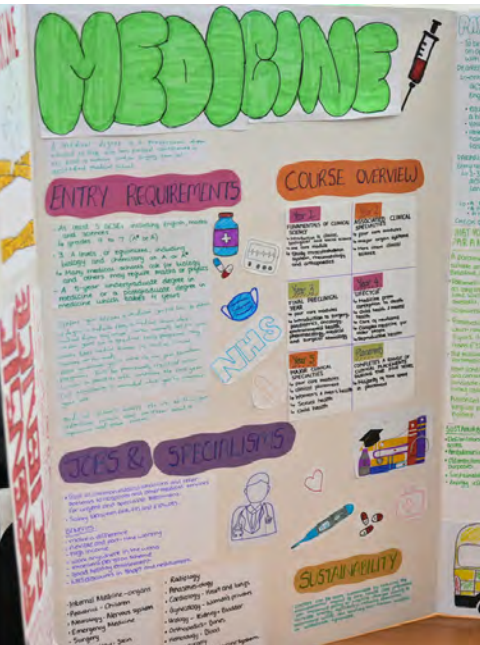
Our school and college partners



Impact on the wider world

- 92%** improved their knowledge of sustainability topics
- 86%** express interest in working in sustainability-related careers
- 71%** engaged in positive environmental action in their communities

*From Sustainable Futures, in partnership with WWF and Founders4Schools



Breaking Down Barriers

Through our impactful programmes, we break down barriers and create pathways for young people from under-represented backgrounds to succeed in higher education and employment.

"Having been part of the Villiers Park programme as a young person, I understand firsthand the impact it can have. It is a rewarding opportunity to now contribute to it, and I am passionate about supporting the next generation in achieving their potential."

Clara, Progression Coach



"In my role, I get the chance to give young people the keys to doors that they never knew existed. Seeing our Future Leaders walk through these doors independently is the best part of this job."

Ben, Progression Coach



Future Leaders Programme

The Future Leaders Programme is at the heart of Villiers Park's goal to support young people from under-represented backgrounds to achieve their ambitions. This holistic programme combines one-to-one coaching, student-led projects, subject-specific courses and Employer and University Insight Days, to build students' confidence, resilience and aspirations.

Since our last report over 550 Future Leaders have engaged with the programme, benefitting from tailored support that enhances their academic and professional trajectories. Highlights include the Year 10 Residential, where students explored university life and future career pathways, and the House of Commons visit, where Future Leaders engaged with policymakers to voice their opinions. The programme has delivered a measurable increase in young people's confidence and decision-making skills, with a growing number of students securing places at top universities and in competitive apprenticeships.

Leadership Challenge

A flagship component of the Future Leaders Programme, Leadership Challenge gives young people the opportunity to develop and lead social action projects, giving them valuable experience in leadership, teamwork and problem-solving.

Many projects this year focused on environmental sustainability, with initiatives such as 'Treezilla,' where students mapped local tree data to contribute to national research, and 'Future Flight,' where participants explored hydrogen-electric aircraft design. Students also revitalised outdoor learning spaces through projects like 'Pond Life'. These initiatives not only enhance personal and professional growth but also create lasting community impact, reinforcing Villiers Park's commitment to meaningful, student-led change.

Early Entry Support

Villiers Park's Early Entry Support programme equips high-achieving students from under-represented backgrounds with the knowledge and skills to apply to high tariff universities such as the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and competitive courses like Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry.

Through expert-led workshops, application guidance and academic challenges, students develop the tools and confidence to navigate the admissions process successfully. The programme is delivered in partnership with Trinity College Cambridge, with support from student ambassadors and volunteer mentors, many of them alumni of Villiers Park. This cycle of support, in which former students return to guide the next generation of applicant, is levelling the playing field for students facing systemic barriers to higher education.





OUR PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

Enrichment Partnerships Pilot

Collaborating with schools through The Enrichment Partnerships Pilot, funded by NCS Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, we have been developing extra-curricular activities tailored to students' interests and widening the opportunities available.

Working with 10 schools across the East of England, the pilot introduced initiatives such as LGBTQ+ support groups, career-based trips, arts and sports clubs, and hands-on STEM activities. By engaging students in enrichment beyond the classroom, such as a group of Year 9 students from Nene Park Academy in Peterborough, this initiative has increased participation in extracurricular learning and enhanced students' sense of belonging and personal development. Initial results indicate strong student engagement, with plans for expansion based on the pilot's success.



Sopra Steria Principal Partnership

We are thrilled to announce that Sopra Steria is Villiers Park's new Principal Partner. Sopra Steria is a leading European consulting, digital services and software development company, committed to supporting social mobility and creating meaningful opportunities for young people.

The Opportunities Fund has supported over 300 bursary requests in two years, removing financial barriers that can hinder young people's success. From funding university open day visits to providing essential learning materials, the fund empowers students to seize opportunities they might not otherwise have access to. With 112 young people receiving direct support this year alone, this initiative continues to create meaningful access to education and professional experiences, reinforcing Villiers Park's commitment to equity in education.

"Sopra Steria is committed to the education and development of young people. We value our work with both the Villiers Park leadership team and our time spent with students. Our primary goal with this partnership is to make a positive difference, not only through funding but also by engaging directly with students, supporting them with their future careers, and demonstrating through their engagement with our staff, that careers can be built from all types of education, experiences, and backgrounds."

Leigh-Ann Weatherley
Digital Platform Services Business Unit
Director at Sopra Steria



Young Futures in Focus

We are proud of every single one of the young people we work with. Here are some highlights from their stories.

Lewis – Building independence and a STEM career Former Future Leader

Lewis’s participation in Villiers Park began in sixth form, where he developed the skills to transition into university life smoothly.



“The Villiers Park programme provided me with many new skills, which helped me transition from a young sixth form student into a mature student, with independence and responsibility. It allowed me to reflect upon myself during Covid, work with a group of people and understand leadership.

“It offered me the tools that helped me settle into university life quicker, something that many young students lack and struggle with. From the get-go I have felt confident with studying independently as a result of Villiers Park. Mentoring meetings on the programme were the most helpful thing for me. They allowed me to widen my career prospects and chose a path that I perhaps did not see.

“As a result of these meetings, I am sitting comfortably on a career path in STEM and applying for my first position as a professional engineer.”

Elana – Gaining confidence and career direction Future Leader

Elana’s journey with Villiers Park has been transformational. Initially hesitant about her future, she joined the programme in Year 9 and engaged in a variety of initiatives, including residential trips and Employer Insight Days.



“The opportunities that I have been given, as a result of Villiers Park’s programme, I believe, have helped to shape me as an individual. This may be a big statement, however, the residential trips and Employer Insight Days have encouraged me to talk to new people and ask questions; where I was very much out of my comfort zone, but this was purely by choice.

“In doing so, I am much more confident as an individual, adapting to challenges, unfamiliar situations and talking to others. The guidance and support I have received in coaching sessions is reassuring and highlights that there is no pressure on your future being mapped out as your interest and values change!

“Many of the trips have been insightful because it helps to rule careers in or out as there are many options (which can also be daunting when you are indecisive). Although talking through my interests during coaching sessions has led me to feel more decisive in my chosen career path, which resulted in choosing my A-Level options and looking at potential university courses, when I was previously apprehensive of the idea.”

Isma'il – From Scholar to Entrepreneur and Law Graduate Villiers Park Alum – Law Graduate & Entrepreneur, The AI Furnace

Isma'il’s time in the Scholars Programme between his GCSEs and A Levels had a profound impact on his self-confidence and belief in his abilities.



“I was part of the Villiers Park Scholars Programme for my duration between GCSEs and A Levels. The Scholars Programme had a huge impact on my self-confidence which, in turn, gave me the self-belief in raising my voice, airing my opinions and having self assurance with the paths I took in time. Those small nudges and changes in my belief and behaviour in turn enabled me to realise my dreams, succeed in studying law at university and, eventually, become a lawyer.

“Villiers Park had a monumental role in helping me discover and refine my own capabilities that, in turn, enabled me to succeed in my professional career. I can't think of any other thing that had such a monumental, outsized impact on my life, for which I am forever grateful.

“Have belief in your dreams and visions, even if they seem hazy at times. Don't worry too much about the end journey, just focus on the steps you need to take today to move closer towards them. Always keep an open mind about other people, different skills, different pathways, and different journeys; there is always something we can learn from others. Lastly, so long as you are learning, you are not failing. You will win.”

Fatema – A future leader with a global vision Brunel University London, Former Future Leader Programme Participant

Fatema’s time in the Future Leaders Programme was instrumental in shaping her into a confident and well-rounded individual.



“I enjoyed the Future Leaders Programme thoroughly and enjoyed all the trips, opportunities and coaching sessions that helped build my experience in so many different contexts. From public speaking, to work experience to simply talking about my plans for the future – I think everything helped me become a well-rounded individual.

“If I could hop in a time machine and give my 15-year-old self some advice, I would probably tell myself this quote: “You nice, keep going!” – Park Jimin. At 15-years-old I had GCSEs upcoming and COVID-19 happened at the same time. While I didn't think I would be someone prone to self-doubt, I remember not putting effort in some areas simply because I felt like it wouldn't matter even if I did. Yet, by 16, I was able to overcome it, and took that as a learning experience for my A-Levels at 18; so it all turned out well, alhamdulillah. That's why I'd tell myself, to just keep going.

“I’m currently studying Psychology at Brunel University London – planning to take two placements (six months each), in Clinical and Occupational Psychology. I’m also part of the READY Programme, a charity project where we design products and present our own business proposals to investors, to help create sustainable resources for a refugee settlement in Zambia. I am currently the leader and project manager of my team.”

Our Partnerships in Action

Partnerships with philanthropists, universities and companies enable us to create life-changing opportunities for young people from under-represented backgrounds. Thanks to these incredible collaborations, we expand young people's horizons and empower them to flourish.

University Support Scheme delivered in partnership with Sopra Steria

The Sopra Steria University Support Scheme provides targeted financial assistance to students transitioning into higher education. Currently supporting 10 Villiers Park alumni, the scheme offers up to £1,000 per year for essential study resources, including laptops and software. Participants on the programme, pursuing degrees in subjects like engineering, biochemistry and physics, have reported a significant positive impact on their academic performance and confidence. By alleviating some financial barriers, this initiative ensures that students can fully engage in their studies and future career aspirations.

Tech Career Pathways with Roku

A new partnership with Roku is opening up skills and employment routes into STEM. This collaboration is equipping young people with digital skills, increasing exposure to the tech industry and building confidence about STEM pathways. With plans to develop further engagement opportunities between their team and students on Villiers Park's programmes, Roku's support is breaking down barriers and inspiring the next generation of innovators.

Bridge to Your Future with the UPP Foundation

Thanks to support from the UPP Foundation, we developed a new initiative, Bridge to Your Future, to prepare young people from under-represented backgrounds for the transition into higher education. The programme, which addressed critical concerns such as belonging, academic skills and student finance, began with a discovery phase in 2023 and included focus groups with Future Leader alumni and students at the Universities of Kent, West of England and Northumbria. We are embedding learnings from the pilot into the Year 13 coaching for Future Leaders.

Empowering students through residential with the University of Bath

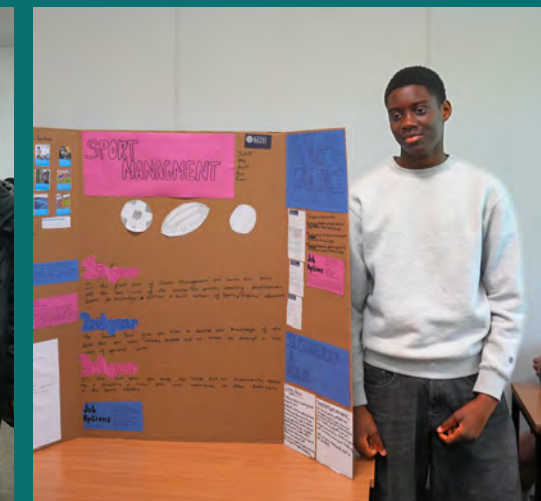
Our ongoing partnership with the University of Bath has seen remarkable success. In 2024, 81 Year 10 Future Leaders participated in a residential at Bath, where they were introduced to university life through four days on campus and developed valuable academic and employability skills. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: 75% of students told us that the residential made them seriously consider university as a future pathway as well as reporting a significant improvement in confidence, resilience and motivation.

Unlocking Potential: Our partnership with Trinity College Cambridge

In 2024, we deepened our collaboration with Trinity College Cambridge, which continued their support for both the Future Leaders Programme in Hastings and Bexhill, and the Early Entry Programme. Together, these initiatives reached nearly 200 young people, providing them with coaching, insight days and tailored guidance for competitive university applications that expanded horizons and unlocked new opportunities.

Amplifying social mobility with the Fair Access Coalition

We are a proud member of the Fair Access Coalition, a group of 11 widening participation charities and not-for-profit organisations working to increase access into and progression through higher education, for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through this coalition, we advocate for systemic change and a higher education system where access is not limited by socio-economic status, but rather determined by everyone's desire to learn and ability to succeed.





FUTURE GOALS

Looking Forward to a Bright Future

While we are celebrating our 100th anniversary, we remain committed to looking forward, adapting and innovating to meet the needs of young people. We are future-focused as we continue to strive towards achieving our vision of a world in which everyone can realise their potential.

Building an equitable future

We are determined to achieve a more equitable future, one in which young people have the tools, skills and opportunities they need to fulfil their ambitions.

Success looks different for every young person, and it's vital that there is access to a full range of pathways - whether that's university, apprenticeships, vocational training or employment.

Our new strategic framework for 2025-2030 embraces this broader definition of success, placing equal value on diverse routes. By doing so, we will continue to support young people in developing the personal, academic, and employability skills they need to thrive, empowering them to unlock their potential and become agents of positive change.

Bridging gaps in opportunity

One area of focus for growth is our work in Cambridgeshire. Here, there is a particular challenge around the widening inequality gap, with the chasm between the wealthier and more deprived districts getting broader every year.

Cambridgeshire Community Foundation's research has highlighted that in education and learning specifically, engagement levels are below the national average. Poor outcomes for children eligible for free school meals reflect the impact of deprivation on education and future prospects. We are building partnerships with philanthropists, companies and universities to bring the Future Leaders Programme to Cambridge schools and in 2024 began working with students at North Cambridge Academy, The Ferrers School and Swavesey Village College.

Strengthening connections and building capacity

In 2023, Villiers Park was delighted to receive a Fair Education Alliance Scaling Award, enabling us to grow our organisational capacity and extend our reach to more young people nationwide. This support has included staff and leadership development, investment in evaluation and peer-coaching, laying the foundations for sustainable growth and deeper impact.

Apprenticeship pathways

The latest Social Mobility Commission research (2025) reveals that just 12% of apprenticeship places are taken up by individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet apprenticeships are a powerful driver of social mobility and offer a proven pathway to qualifications, skills development and career opportunities.

This year we piloted a new pre-apprenticeship programme called Trade Insight, offering hands-on experience, information and guidance about apprenticeships in the construction industry. 17 students from New College and Crowdy's Hill School, both in Swindon, gained meaningful construction skills and experience through this unique programme and we are thrilled that four students have gained new qualifications and two have successfully secured places on construction courses and apprenticeships.

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
- Cambridge Community Foundation
- CHK Foundation
- Chalk Cliff Trust
- The Corti Charitable Trust
- Essex Community Foundation
- Evolution Education Trust
- Fonthill Foundation
- The Geoffrey Watling Charity
- The Isabel Blackman Foundation
- The John and Charlotte Chambers Charitable Trust
- The Lujenna Educational Trust
- Magdalen and Lasher Charity
- Maud Elkington Trust
- The OpenWork Foundation
- Paul Bassham Charitable Trust
- PF Charitable Trust
- The Reece Foundation
- Royal Society of Chemistry
- The Shears Foundation
- The Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
- Sir James Knott Charitable Trust
- Sussex Community Foundation
- UPP Foundation
- Van Neste Foundation
- The Wellesley Fund – Tyne and Wear Community Foundation
- William Wates Memorial Trust

Corporate Partners

- AM
- Aveva
- MathWorks
- Orbis: Buchanan Programme & Daniel Would
- Sopra Steria
- Roku

Individual Supporters

- Anne Hyde Villiers
- Sir David Verey
- Diana Hiles Memorial Fund
- Keith Sykes
- Kit and Clare Beazley
- Mike Baker Memorial Fund
- Mike Salter

Project Partners

- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- English Speaking Board
- Fair Education Alliance
- Founders4Schools
- House of Commons Social Mobility Scheme
- National Citizen's Trust
- World Wildlife Fund

Universities

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Canterbury Christchurch University
- Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
- HeppSY
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- Oxford University Careers Service – Crankstart
- Sheffield Hallam University
- Trinity College, Cambridge
- UniConnect Study Higher
- University of Bath
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Portsmouth

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