



# Inspiring Futures

Annual Report  
2024/2025  
Year 1



funded by

youth  
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FOUNDATION

led by

HAMARA

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Leeds Partners

Bradford Partners



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# About Inspiring Futures

The Inspiring Futures (IF) programme launched in June 2024 with the aim of “system change” across both Leeds & Bradford to improve the employability of young people (YP) of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. Inspiring Futures is led by Hamara Healthy Living Centre, Leeds.

## IF works with:

- Employers to improve their capabilities to recruit and retain young people from these communities, and improve their cultural awareness and practice.
- Young people themselves to upskill them and develop their confidence to make them more employable, and introduce them to a range of job opportunities.
- Eight community organisations as local delivery partners across the two cities to develop them so they can continue the work after the programme is finished. This helps to ensure future cohorts of young are given the best chance possible to find employment.

All of our work is supported by national strategy and research partners.

The first year has been a year to mobilise the partners – share the vision, help them get established with youth employability provision, engage future employer partners and establish networks across both cities. A key part of this has been working with young people to shape the direction of the programme and identify their needs to improve employability.

It was also a year to introduce the strategic partners and harness their support, set up steering groups, the Young Person Voice and Influence Panel, and the Youth Consortium.

## About Inspiring Futures

The Inspiring Futures (IF) project is a four-year, nationally funded project aimed at improving the pathway to employment of young people (YP) aged 16-24 from a Pakistani/Bangladeshi heritage across Leeds & Bradford.

## Our Partners

**Youth Futures Foundation:** Providing strategic direction and £1.6m in funding, as part of their Connected Futures national programme of £16m funding for 11 local partnerships

**Hamara Healthy Living Centre:** Lead delivery partner based in Beeston, Leeds

**8 Local Partners:** Supporting young people across Leeds & Bradford

**Research & Strategic Support Network:** Action for Race Equality, IFF Research, IPSOS, Runnymede & Social Finance

## Our Aims

- ✓ Boost young people's employability skills
- ✓ Equip delivery partners to offer lasting support
- ✓ Help employers improve EDI and open up job pathways for young people

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# Our Progress to Date

Our first year has seen us mobilise our partnership, engage with and listen to young people, and also begin to work with the system partners and networks that will be most likely to enable true system change.

This system change is enabled by the Theory of Change we have developed with our partners, and is described by Connected Futures as the following phases:

Discovery and  
exploration



Development  
and testing



Implementation,  
delivery and  
evaluation of  
a systemic  
intervention



Our strategic work runs in parallel to delivery on the ground by our local partners.

## Year 1 Progress

| Governance                                                                                | Strategy                                                          | Delivery                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Formalised local partner arrangements                                                     | Steering Group established                                        | Employability sessions with local partners up and running                                     |
| IF lead partner team established                                                          | Youth Consortium established                                      | Cultural competency training being delivered (via Primrose Consultancy)                       |
| Reporting to Youth Futures Foundation and engagement in Connected Futures network ongoing | YP Voice & Influence Panel and mentorship established             | Youth leadership training up and running                                                      |
|                                                                                           | Employer Consortium established                                   | Employer Support Package being finalised                                                      |
|                                                                                           | Engagement with system leadership, employers & training providers | Youth Support Package in development                                                          |
|                                                                                           | Theory of Change developed                                        | Nurturing trusted relationships with the young people to support stronger, lasting engagement |
|                                                                                           |                                                                   | Conversations with parents/carers and community influencers to inform support needed          |

# Our Local Delivery Partners

Here's what two of our local delivery partners have to say about being part of Inspiring Futures, and what it has helped them to achieve so far.



*"At WomenZone in Bradford, our first year as part of the Inspiring Futures (IF) Consortium has been all about laying the groundwork for meaningful change. We've focused on how best to leverage our trusted role in the community, deepen our existing relationships, and share aspirational, culturally relevant opportunities with our young people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. The first year's funding has allowed us to think strategically, and focus our efforts on confidence-building, real-world exposure, and relationship-based engagement with our young people without having to deliver to a set number of young people."*

Over 65 Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people engaged through outreach, 1:1s, employer engagement, Higher Education visits and group sessions at WomenZone.

22 young people undertook fundraising projects, learning to identify and apply transferable skills relevant to employment.

Continuity of WomenZone's youth provision, securing future planning and delivery capacity.

University aspiration visits organised, encouraging higher education as a realistic and accessible goal.

Enabled 12 work placements for young people aged 16 – 25 years connecting them to real-world job experiences.

Employer encounters facilitated with companies like Scania and First Bus, opening up conversations about future work pathways.



15 young people engaged in team building activities fostering soft skills like communication, leadership, and collaboration.

Young people reporting increased confidence, particularly in expressing goals and engaging with professionals.

9 young people joined the Voice and Influence Panel, shaping future project design and championing peer representation.



Cardigan Community Centre

*"We've designed our MotiVibe project to support young people to build confidence, have fun, and get career-ready. MotiVibe is making meaningful strides in supporting local young people, with early successes in employment and education. Our next phase is focused on visibility and connection—embedding ourselves within the local community through families and schools. This layered engagement strategy is expected to significantly grow our reach while maintaining the integrity and purpose of the MotiVibe project."*

Participant growth has continued to increase.

MotiVibe sessions have been enhanced to empower participants to take leadership roles while still aligning with our programme's core blueprint.

One young person has already successfully gained employment aided by our support with CV development and job-readiness. Another participant has enrolled in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, progressing towards further education pathways.

We are actively working to expand our reach through stronger partnerships with local families, schools, and educational providers. This area remains a challenge, but we have begun to break through some barriers:

Conducted outreach at other local centres

Attended strategy meetings with Leeds Youth Service to align goals and share access pathways

Initiated conversations with local schools to explore opportunities to present directly to students during assemblies.

While street-level engagement remains part of our outreach, we've identified its limitations - interactions during young people's free time are fleeting and low-impact. The key to long-term engagement is continuous exposure across multiple touchpoints:

Home Influence:  
Engaging parents and families help reinforce interest and encourage attendance

Educational Exposure:  
Presenting in assemblies and having a presence in schools ensures repeated visibility and builds trust.

This multi-layered approach has the potential to dramatically increase participant numbers, especially when families and educators become advocates for the project.

# Our Work with Young People

## Young People's Voice & Influence Panel (VIP)

Our Young People's Voice & Influence Panel (VIP) steers our work. Not only do the young people have a real opportunity to inform Inspiring Futures strategically, but being part of the Panel provides them with leadership opportunities and experience.

### Why young people joined the Panel

"My reason to become a part of the panel was that it gave me a different kind of opportunity that I don't normally get and help contribute information and findings for jobs for South Asian people."

To make a change and be part of something positive

To give a voice for young South Asians, and speak up about the issues they face in the job market

To connect with others in a similar situation or from different backgrounds

Put ourselves out our comfort zone through a unique opportunity

For personal development, including gain team working skills, communication skills, confidence and other skills, to help with applying for jobs and other opportunities Explore different career paths and find direction

To access opportunities for jobs and apprenticeships

Explore different career paths and find direction

## Leadership development training for young people

Young people who have taken part had this to say about the training:

**100%**  
reported

I feel more confident that I can make a difference in my community

**60%**  
reported

I learnt something new about a culture of religion different to mine

**60%**  
reported

I had a conversation with someone of a different ethnicity or faith the I didn't already know

**93%**  
reported

I learnt a new skill

**40%**  
reported

I learnt I have something in common with someone from a different faith or ethnicity

## What young people have told us they need: skills & experience

Job-seeking skills

Visible role models

Confidence building skills

Help with CV writing/job applications

Examples of success

Demonstrable transferable skills

Writing skills

Meaningful work experience

Volunteering opportunities

The IF Team and our local delivery partners are working with supporters and partners to provide this support to our young people.

We will continue to seek more support opportunities from partners to provide this training and development, and to work with the young people to identify their other support needs.

## What young people have told us about their employability sessions

"Junior Sports Hub makes employability training exciting. doesn't feel like a class - it feels like a team working towards real goals"

"From CV writing to goal setting - this is the kind of stuff schools should be doing more of - practical, inspiring and fun"

"Every week, I learn something new from interview tips to teamwork skills. It's not just helpful, it's fun too"

"The sessions help you grow not just as a future employee, but as a person. They're full of support, energy and real-world advice"

"These sessions have boosted my confidence and helped me believe I can turn my passion for sport into a career"

"They helped me with interview prep for a job I applied for"

"Bangladeshi Youth Organisation is a great place for many young people because it provides opportunities, helps build friendships and motivates young people and is very helpful"

# Employers & Employability Partners

The IF partnership recognises that true system change involves active collaboration with employers. By working with forward-thinking employers and with networks that improve IF's reach to work at scale, we have begun to develop the key relationships that will enable this to happen sustainably. This also provides IF with a more manageable way to involve our young people to help employers understand how best to change employment practices and foster inclusive workplaces.



Some of the businesses, organisations and networks that we have begun this process with include:

## Networks

- Leeds Anchor Network
- Business in the Community
- Leeds Learning Alliance

## Employers – recruitment & employability support

- Bradford City FC Community Foundation
- First Bus
- Leeds & York Partnership NHS Trust
- Leeds United Foundation
- LNER
- McDonald's
- West Yorkshire Police

## Training and employability support

- Ahead Partnership
- Juniper Training
- King's Trust
- Leeds Wood Recycling CIC
- Maximus Training
- Realise Training
- Skillshouse Bradford
- Smart Works
- Street League

## Employers & employability partners – how we can help each other

Are you committed to creating equal opportunities for young people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds?

### **We're looking for employers who are:**

- ✓ Willing to share their recruitment experiences
- ✓ Open to honest conversations about the barriers young people face
- ✓ Ready to take action and help shape better pathways to employment

Join us in breaking down barriers and building better futures.

### **IF are Seeking Employers**

We offer a tailored Employer Support Package to help you build inclusive and effective recruitment pathways.

This includes:

- ✓ EDI training and practical support with inclusive practices
- ✓ Tailored guidance based on your organisation's needs
- ✓ Engagement with young people to gain feedback on recruitment
- ✓ Peer-to-peer support from other committed employers
- ✓ Strategic support from our expert team:
  - Data & learning analysis
  - Market insights
  - Long-term planning support

Join us in breaking down barriers and building better futures.



# Key Achievements in Numbers

71

- Different organisations/ networks that we have engaged with to date to affect system change

117

- Young people who completed questionnaires to help steer the direction of the Youth Consortium work

150

- Jobs and training opportunities identified and sent out to delivery partners

15

- YP attended leadership development

4

- Employer Partners formally collaborating with us

19

- Employers offered EDI Training

200+

- NEET YP across Leeds and Bradford from Pakistani/ Bangladeshi heritage that we are working with the Leeds & Bradford City Councils

26

- Young people recruited to IF's Voice & Influence Panel



# Looking Ahead

Now that the partnership is established, the main goals & priorities for 2025/2026 are:

- Expand the employer consortium and support their collaborative work with IF.
- Launch and test the Youth Support Package – a menu of existing resources so that young people can more easily find and use the support resources they need. It will contain information on a range of supporting materials to help young people demonstrate their skills/experience, produce CVs, map their skills against potential roles, support their employment journey and connect them to useful support.
- Launch and test the Employer Support Package – this brings together existing resources that the IF team can use in discussions with employers to select the most relevant resources, including access to our strategic partners to help with data analysis and any bespoke requirements for each employer.
- Bring together the employer and young people's VIP groups to examine the perceived barriers to employment and YP employability skills. This will be a key objective for 2025/2026.



Raise IF's profile across key social media platforms to reach more potential employers, training organisations, supporters, as well as young people and their parents/carers.

Support delivery partners with capacity building to increase their outreach work and grow participation by young people.

Continue to find opportunities to raise young people's voice.

Improve pathway to employment for NEET/SEND young people. The IF team is already working directly with schools in Leeds to take referrals for young people at risk of becoming NEET. This will widen to Bradford also once we have established the pathway.

Seek additional funding, outside of YFF funding, to support demand arising from NEET/SEND referrals. This earlier intervention becomes part of our IF system change.

Continue to forge relationships with system partners across both cities. Our chances of making system change will depend on us working collaboratively with as many players within the system as possible.





# HAMARA

Find out more at

<https://hamara.org.uk/projects/inspiring-futures>



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