

EDT & Industrial Cadets
Impact Report 2025/26

Industrial Cadets

Powered by EDT Pathways to Industry

Opening Doors to Opportunity
Talent is universal. Opportunity is not.

www.etrust.org.uk



Why opportunity matters

Talent is universal. Opportunity is not.

A young person's potential should not be determined by where they grow up, the school they attend or who they know.

Yet access to the experiences that can shape a future is not equal. Meeting an employer, visiting a workplace, working with a mentor or discovering a career they never knew existed can change what a young person believes is possible.

That is the opportunity EDT exists to create. Through EDT and Industrial Cadets, we connect young people, education and industry, creating experiences that build skills, confidence, connections and a clearer view of what could come next.

But our ambition goes beyond reaching more young people. It is about making opportunity more accessible, more connected and more meaningful — particularly for those who have fewer routes into industry.

This report looks beyond the numbers to explore the opportunities created, the difference they make and where they can lead. Because opening the door is only the beginning.

Opportunity, access and social mobility

Social mobility is not simply about aspiration. Young people need meaningful opportunities to discover what is possible before they can make informed choices about their future.

But opportunity is not evenly distributed. Background, geography, networks and resources can all shape who gets to meet employers, experience workplaces, discover careers and build professional connections.

These experiences can do more than raise awareness. They can build skills and confidence, broaden horizons and help young people make informed choices about education, training and employment.

This is where EDT can contribute. Our role is not to determine a young person's destination, but to widen the opportunities they can see and access, particularly where barriers such as cost, geography or limited networks stand in the way.

Because a young person's background should not determine the opportunities available to them, or the future they can imagine for themselves.

A message from our **Chief Executive**

Every young person has talent. What they do not all have is equal access to the experiences, people and opportunities that can help them discover where that talent might take them. That belief sits at the heart of EDT and Industrial Cadets.

For more than four decades, we have brought young people closer to STEM and the world of work, working alongside schools, educators, universities and industry. During 2025/26, that meant everything from first encounters with STEM to sustained projects, mentoring, university experiences and industry placements.

Behind every experience is a partnership. Employers, educators, universities, funders, volunteers and communities all play a part in creating opportunities for young people to explore, develop and connect.

And at the centre of it all are the young people themselves choosing to take part, challenge themselves and explore what might come next.

This report celebrates what that collective effort achieved. But more importantly, it asks what difference did those opportunities make?

We want to understand not just how many young people we reach, but who we reach, what changes for them and where their experiences lead.

The evidence in this report shows encouraging progress, while highlighting where we still need to learn more.

Our ambition is clear: to widen access to high-quality experiences, strengthen connections between education and industry, and help more young people navigate meaningful pathways into further study and employment.

Thank you to everyone who helped make those opportunities possible during 2025/26.



Julie Feest OBE
Chief Executive Officer
EDT & Industrial Cadets



A Year of **Opportunity**

Industrial Cadets enables high-quality STEM and employer experiences to be recognised through a common framework, extending the reach of our work beyond the programmes EDT delivers directly.

These awards span different Industrial Cadets levels and a wide range of experiences delivered by EDT and external partners.

2025/26

EDT *in action*

73,339
Industrial Cadets awards
Achieved during 2025/26

316
Schools and colleges engaged
Connecting education with real-world STEM experiences.

14
Universities engaged
Opening access to higher education environments, expertise and pathways.

317,814
Participant experience hours
From first encounters with STEM to sustained projects, courses and full-year industry placements.

13,738
EDT programme participants
From across the UK.

82
Companies engaged
Bringing employers and young people closer together.

31
Industry sectors represented
Giving young people insight into the breadth of opportunities available through STEM.

111
Full-year industry placements
Providing sustained experience of professional working environments.

550
Volunteers engaged
Including mentors, assessors, panellists, speakers, ambassadors and other volunteers supporting young people's experiences.

41
Grant makers
Supporting EDT's work and helping make opportunities accessible to young people.

Industrial Cadets: *extending our reach*



Alongside programmes delivered directly by EDT, Industrial Cadets enables employers and other organisations to have their own high-quality STEM experiences recognised through the Industrial Cadets framework.

These experiences were delivered by external organisations and accredited through Industrial Cadets. They are reported separately from EDT's directly delivered programme activity to provide a clearer picture of our reach and impact.

One shared purpose

Giving more young people meaningful opportunities to discover where their skills, interests and potential could take them.

From Reach **to Depth**

Different experiences.
Different levels of engagement.
One commitment to quality.

Reaching young people matters.
But numbers alone do not describe the experience a young person receives. Behind that overall reach sits considerable variation in the type, duration and depth of experience.

Industrial Cadets provides a framework for recognising these different levels of engagement. Challenger, Bronze, Silver and Gold experiences vary in their duration and intensity, enabling young people to engage with STEM and the world of work in different ways and at different stages.



Levels of engagement
not a sequential student journey.

Challenger

CHALLENGER
Discover and explore
Creating accessible first experiences of STEM through practical activities and challenges that spark curiosity, broaden horizons and build confidence. Challenger can be a young person's first connection with STEM, an employer or an industry.

Bronze

BRONZE
Experience and develop
Giving young people more time to explore STEM through structured experiences that build knowledge, skills and confidence. Bronze moves beyond awareness, giving young people the opportunity to apply their skills through practical STEM activity.

Silver

SILVER
Develop and connect
Providing sustained opportunities to develop skills, explore STEM pathways and connect learning with the world of work. Silver helps young people understand how their interests and abilities can connect to future study, training and careers.

Gold

GOLD
Apply and achieve
Providing a high level of Industrial Cadets engagement, giving young people meaningful opportunities to develop skills, explore STEM and connect with industry. Gold experiences can include extended projects and sustained engagement with employers, mentors and STEM professionals.

Platinum

Full-year industry placements

Experience the workplace

Full-year placements
Providing sustained experience in a professional workplace, with direct exposure to industry and the world of work. Platinum placements enable young people to apply their skills, understand workplace expectations and explore careers within their chosen sector.

From Education **to Opportunity**

Connecting learning, experience and what comes next
Young people make important decisions about subjects, qualifications and careers throughout their education. Those decisions are easier to make when they are informed by meaningful experiences of the world beyond the classroom.

EDT works between education and industry, bringing together schools, colleges, universities, employers, volunteers and funders to create opportunities for young people to explore where their interests and abilities could take them.

What matters is creating opportunities at different points in a young person's journey – from discovering a possibility for the first time to developing skills, demonstrating achievement and identifying a meaningful next step.



Discover

See what could be possible.
Hands-onactivities, career encounters and interactions with STEM professionals can introduce young people to industries, roles and possibilities they may not previously have encountered.

Experience

Turn awareness into real-world understanding.
Employer engagement, workplaceinsight, university experiences and practical challenges help connect what young people learn in education with how knowledge and skills are applied beyond it.

Develop

Build the skills to move forward.
Projects, courses,mentoring andother sustained experiences create opportunities to develop problem solving, teamwork, communication, confidence and work-readiness alongside STEM knowledge.

Achieve

Recognise what has been accomplished.
Industrial Cadets provides a framework through which young people's engagement and achievement can be recognised, giving value and visibility to experiences beyond formal qualifications.

Progress

Make an informed next step.
The destination will be different for every young person. It could mean choosing a subject, continuing STEM study, entering further or higher education, pursuing an apprenticeship, seeking another employer experience or moving towards employment.

The purpose is not to prescribe that destination. It is to help young people understand their options and be better equipped to choose what comes next.

Opportunity is built together

No single organisation can create this pathway alone.

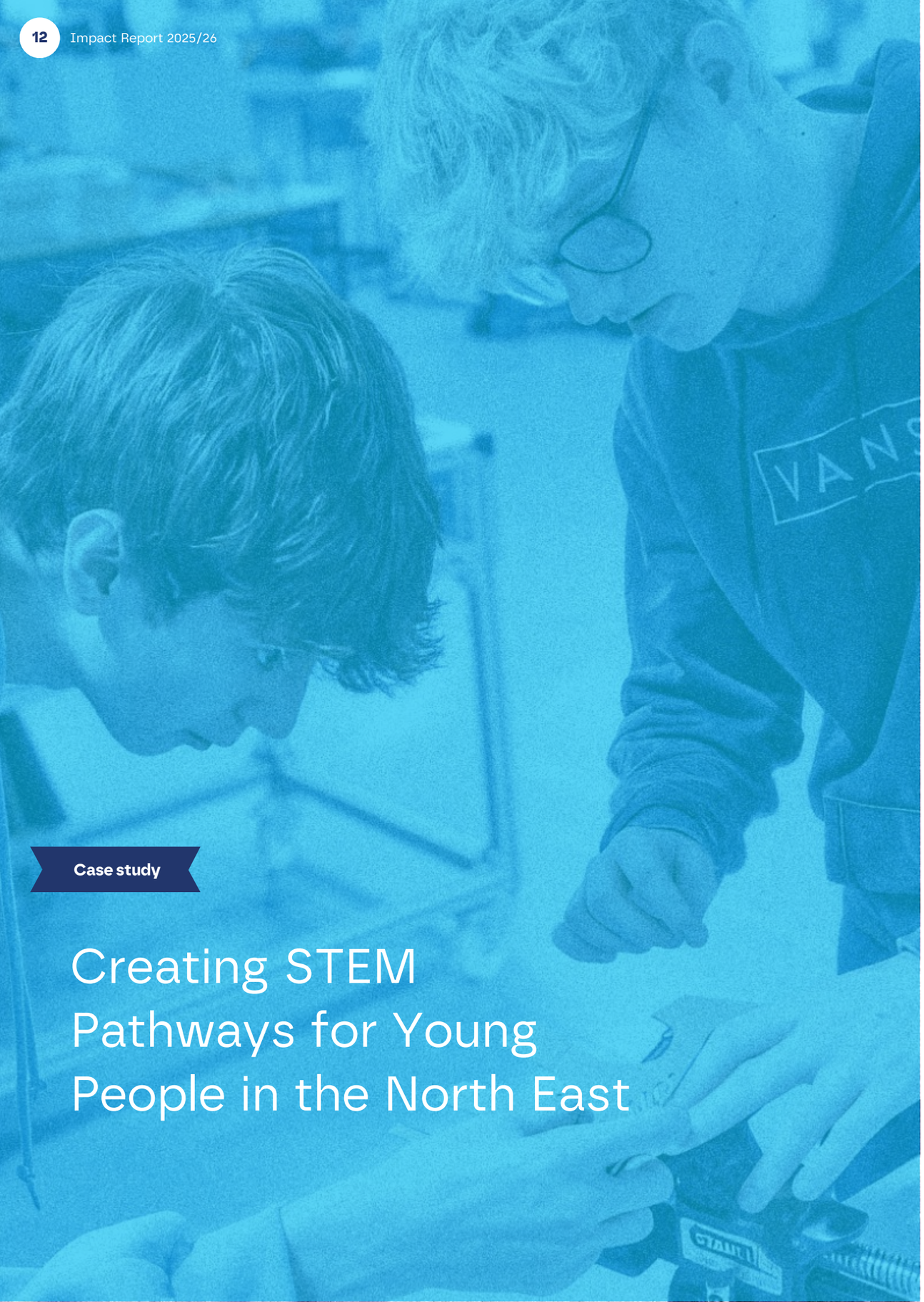
- **Schools and colleges** — connect young people to opportunities and help link experiences with their education.
- **Universities** — open access to environments, expertise and routes into further study.
- **Employers** — provide industry insight, workplace experiences, challenges, mentors and exposure to real careers.
- **Volunteers and mentors** — bring careers to life through their experience, knowledge and encouragement.
- **Funders and partners** — enable opportunities to reach young people and communities where they can make a difference.
- **Industrial Cadets** — provides a common framework for recognising high-quality experiences and young people's achievement.

EDT
connects these parts of the ecosystem – creating and delivering experiences, building partnerships and helping bring education and industry closer together.

From individual experiences to connected opportunity
A single experience can introduce a possibility, develop a skill or change how a young person sees their future.

Our direction of travel is to connect more of those experiences – across education, employers, sectors and places – so young people can see clearer routes from where they are today towards the opportunities available to them tomorrow.

A single intervention can make a difference.
A connected pathway can change a trajectory.



Case study

Creating STEM Pathways for Young People in the North East

The North East has significant opportunities across STEM and advanced industries, but continues to face skills gaps and unequal access to employment opportunities. In 2025, 7.3% of 16 and 17 year-olds in the region were not in education, employment or training, compared with 5.6% across England.

This highlights the need to engage young people early, connect them with industry and give them sustained opportunities to explore STEM pathways.

EDT is working with partners across the North East, including Digital Catapult, Platten Family Fund at the Community Foundation North East and the Reece Foundation, alongside 38 local schools, employers and organisations to create a sustained programme of STEM opportunities for young people from primary school through to the age of 16.

Over 850 young people have been supported through a range of EDT and Industrial Cadets experiences, including Challenger Experience Days, Bronze Mentored Projects, Routes into STEM and Gold Mentored Projects, each providing different levels of engagement and skills development.

The breadth of this activity is important. Rather than providing a single intervention the partnership is helping young people build their experience over time, progressing through the Industrial Cadets pathway.

The partnership also brings the world of industry closer to young people. Through mentors, project challenges, workshops and employer engagement, students are able to see how the STEM subjects they encounter in school connect to real careers and real-world challenges.

For employers and funders, the work also provides an opportunity to engage with the future workforce at an early stage, helping young people understand the opportunities available within the North East while contributing to the development of the skills and confidence that employers will need in the future.

By working together with partner organisations, EDT is helping to create a stronger and more connected STEM pathway for young people across the North East, from their first encounter with STEM through to more advanced project and industry experiences.

> It’s definitely opened my eyes to other opportunities when I’ve been thinking about career options. Today has really helped me to see just how many careers are out there and how many people are involved in the tech industry.”

Who Had Access to **Opportunity?**

Understanding who we reach matters

Creating opportunity at scale is important. But if opportunity is not reaching young people from different backgrounds and circumstances, scale alone is not enough.

During 2025/26, EDT collected demographic information across our programmes to help us understand who was participating and where we need to improve access.

Our data is not yet complete across every programme. We have therefore reported different participant groups separately rather than combining datasets that were collected in different ways.

What Challenger tells us

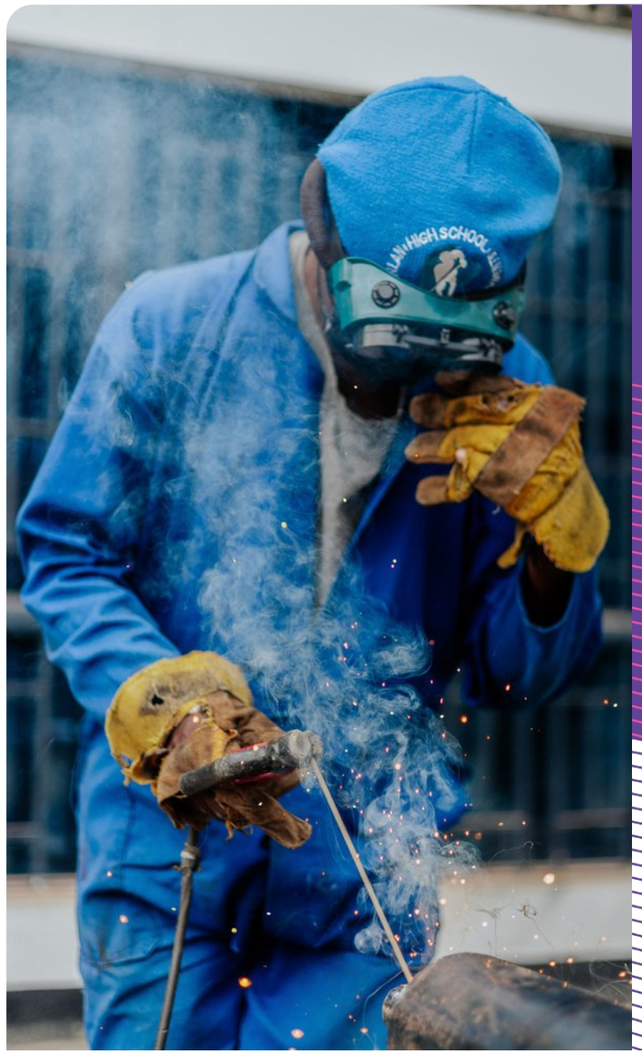
Challenger enables EDT to reach young people earlier and at significantly greater scale.

Demographic information was available for approximately 53% of 10,405 Challenger participants in 2025/26.

Within that sample:

48.9%	female or non-binary
32%	from ethnic minority backgrounds
43.7%	eligible for Free School Meals

The particularly high proportion of Free School Meal-eligible young people within the Challenger sample provides encouraging evidence that these experiences are reaching many young people from lower-income households.



Young people on our registered Bronze, Silver and Gold programmes

3,325 participants with completed registration and attendance records.

48.3%	female or non-binary
51.8%	from ethnic minority backgrounds
15.4%	eligible for Free School Meals
20.6%	first in their family to progress to higher education

Access is more than participation

Who takes part is only one part of the picture. Cost, travel, geography, confidence, additional needs and access to equipment can all affect whether a young person is able to take up an opportunity.

Our experience of providing bursary support demonstrates that these barriers are real. In 2025/26, demand for financial support exceeded the bursaries available on several programmes. For example, 78 young people applied for bursary support for our London Residential Insight into University programme, with four bursaries available. Across our national Future Skills Programme, 220 young people applied for bursary support and 130 received it.

We are using evidence like this to understand not only who participates, but who may be missing out – and what practical support could help remove those barriers.

Designing for inclusion

Access also means ensuringthat an opportunity works for the individual young person. EDT has experience of adapting activities for young people with additional needs, including adjusting project briefs, ways of participating, group structures and the support provided.

As our impact measurement develops, we want to build a more complete picture of disadvantage and access across our programmes – combining demographic information with what young people tell us about the barriers they experience.

Because widening opportunity means more than opening the door. It means understanding what might prevent a young person from walking through it.

Case study

Removing barriers to opportunity





Juhie joined Industrial Cadets at a time when the world of work felt unfamiliar and difficult to navigate. Today, she is a Senior Data Analyst at Ralph Lauren.

Year in Industry
Gained vital workplace experience through an Industrial Cadets placement in 2021

Platinum Leader
Recognised for her achievements with the Industrial Cadets Platinum Leader Award

Global impact
Selected as the UK's Environmental Sustainability and Climate youth delegate at the G7 in 2024

Career success
Now a Senior Data Analyst at Ralph Lauren

Juhie's family had migrated to the UK, and she was the first in her family to complete her education and pursue a corporate career. Without a family network to draw on for advice about applications, interviews and workplace expectations, she faced barriers that many of her peers did not.

She had the ambition and potential to succeed, but lacked access to the knowledge, networks and workplace experience that could help her turn that ambition into opportunity. This is where EDT and Industrial Cadets made a difference.

Through her Industrial Cadets Year in Industry placement in 2021, Juhie gained more than valuable workplace experience. EDT helped her understand how to navigate the world of work, providing guidance through the application process and helping her build the confidence, skills and professional understanding she needed to take her next steps.

For Juhie, this support helped remove some of the barriers she faced as she entered a world that was unfamiliar to her. The experience gave her the opportunity to prove herself in a professional environment, develop her work-readiness and, ultimately, secure her first job.

With that first opportunity behind her, Juhie continued to build on her experience and ambition. She went on to win the Industrial Cadets Platinum Leader Award and progress to become a Senior Data Analyst at Ralph Lauren.

Juhie's story demonstrates what can happen when talent is met with opportunity. By helping young people overcome barriers to entering the world of work, EDT and Industrial Cadets can open doors that might otherwise have remained out of reach.

Industry Makes It Possible



Young people cannot experience the world of work without the world of work taking part. Industry is fundamental to the EDT model.

Employers do much more than fund programmes. They open workplaces, provide real challenges, share expertise, mentor young people, offer placements and give participants direct contact with the people doing the jobs they may one day choose to pursue.

During 2025/26, that contribution connected young people with employers across a wide range of sectors and created experiences that education alone cannot provide.

82 **Companies engaged**

Supporting completed EDT activity, providing placements or helping create opportunities for young people.

31 **Industry sectors represented**

Giving young people exposure to the breadth of careers and industries in which STEM skills are needed.

550 **Volunteers engaged**

Including mentors, assessors, panellists, speakers, ambassadors and other volunteers sharing their experience with young people.

111 **Full-year industry placements**

Giving young people sustained experience within professional workplaces.

41 **Grant makers**

Investing in programmes, access and opportunities for young people across the UK.

More than volunteering

For a young person, meeting someone working in industry can make an unfamiliar career tangible.

A mentor can help a young person work through a real challenge. An engineer can explain how classroom learning is used in their job. An apprentice can show that there is more than one route into a career. A workplace visit can make an industry that once seemed distant feel accessible.

Across EDT programmes, industry professionals contribute as:

- Mentors
- Role models
- Speakers
- Assessors
- Panellists
- Ambassadors
- Placement Hosts

Together, these interactions help young people develop skills, understand workplaces and build a clearer picture of the opportunities available to them.

From participation to partnership

The strongest relationships go further than supporting an individual activity.

Employers can work alongside EDT and education partners to identify local and sector skills needs, create relevant experiences, engage employees as volunteers and mentors, and help young people understand routes into future employment.

Industrial Cadets extends that relationship further by providing a common framework through which employers can develop and recognise high-quality experiences for young people – including activity delivered beyond EDT's own programmes.

This creates the potential for something bigger than individual employer outreach: a connected ecosystem in which education and industry share responsibility for developing future talent.

Opportunity is a shared investment

Alongside industry, Trusts, Foundations and other funders make it possible to reach communities, remove barriers and develop programmes that might otherwise not happen.

Whether the contribution is funding, employee time, expertise, mentoring, workplace access or a placement, each partnership creates something EDT could not create alone:

a real connection between a young person and the world of opportunity beyond education.

Case study

From Chemistry Student to GSK Professional



Rocco knew he wanted a career in chemistry. His Industrial Cadets placement at GSK gave him the opportunity to apply his knowledge in the real world, build his confidence and take his first steps into the pharmaceutical industry.

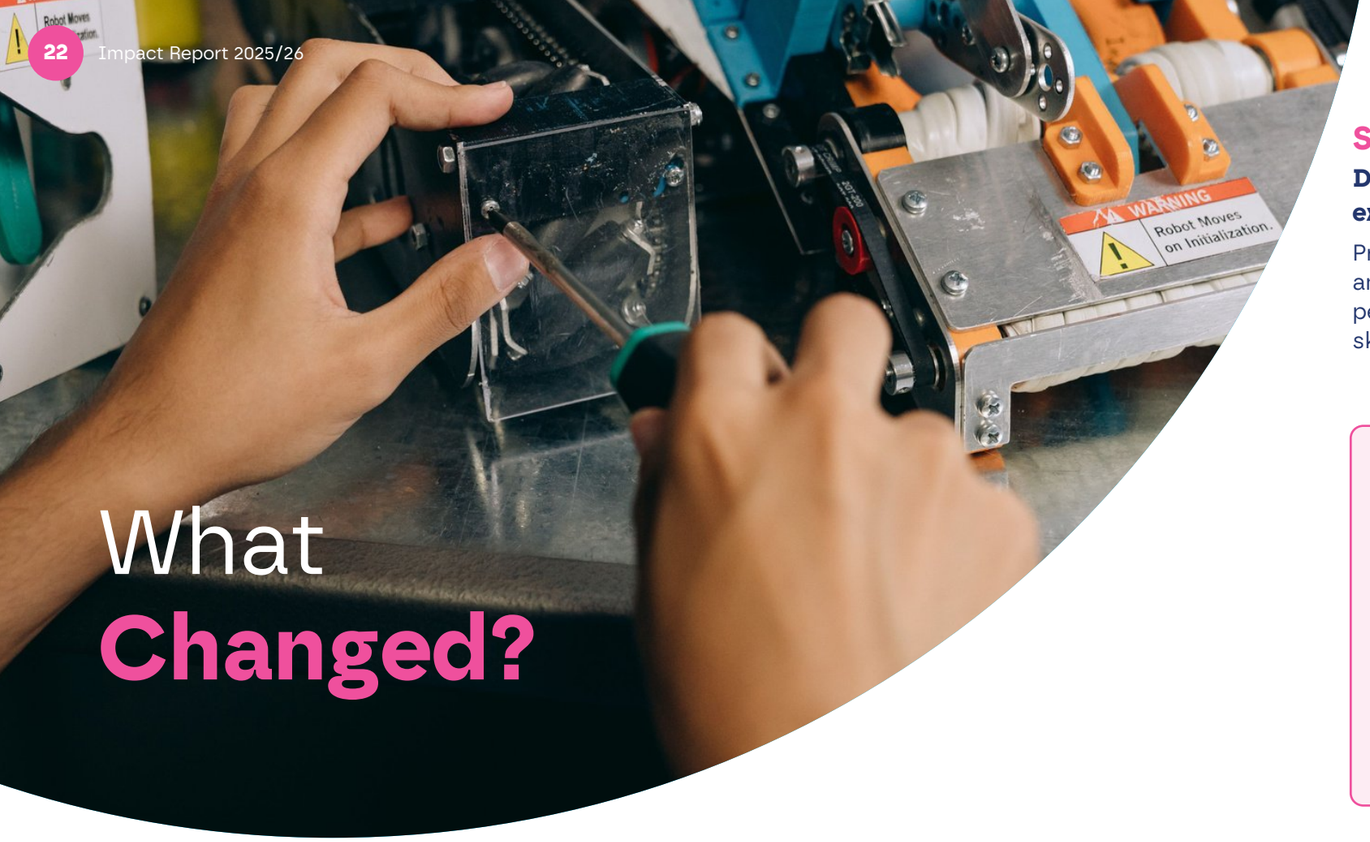
- **Real-world experience** Spent a year as a Quality Control Analyst at GSK
- **Making an impact:** Tested medicines for HIV, cancer and respiratory conditions
- **Building skills:** Took responsibility for chemical testing, pharmaceutical ingredients and project delivery
- **Career launched** Offered the opportunity to continue his career at GSK

For Rocco, his placement bridged the gap between studying chemistry and applying it in a professional environment. He was trusted with meaningful responsibilities, including testing medicines and leading a contamination project, while developing his communication, organisation and problem-solving skills.

For GSK, the placement provided an opportunity to invest in emerging STEM talent, giving Rocco genuine industry experience while allowing him to contribute to the work of a global pharmaceutical company.

Rocco's achievements were recognised when he became an Industrial Cadets Platinum Award finalist in 2024. At the end of his placement, GSK offered him the opportunity to stay on, turning a one-year placement into the start of his professional career.

Industrial Cadets gave Rocco the experience to turn his passion for chemistry into a career, while giving GSK the opportunity to help develop the next generation of STEM talent.



What Changed?

Participation tells us who took part. Impact asks what changed because they did.

Young people came to EDT programmes with different experiences, levels of confidence and ideas about their future.

Our evaluation evidence shows that, across a range of programmes during 2025/26, young people reported changes in their confidence, skills, understanding of STEM careers and how they felt about what might come next.

Because programmes and evaluation methods differ, these results should not be treated as a single measure of impact across every EDT participant. Instead, they provide evidence of the changes young people experienced within individual programmes.

Confidence

Building belief in what young people can do across the Leonardo Bronze and Gold programmes, participants reported improved confidence across all eight skills measured, with overall confidence increasing by 64%.

Other programmes demonstrated substantial changes in specific areas of confidence:

35% → 90%
Presentation confidence

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

29% → 91%
Coding confidence

Digital Skills

For some young people, the change is not simply learning something new. It is becoming more confident that they can use that knowledge and participate successfully.

Skills

Developing capabilities through experience

Practical projects, employer challenges and skills-based activities give young people opportunities to develop and apply skills rather than simply hear about them.

On the Digital Confidence programme

38% → 94%
felt confident in digital problem solving

49% → 97%
felt confident presenting their ideas

21% → 87%
felt confident in professional networking

On the SYMCA programme

55% → 100%
knowledge and skills

Leonardo participants also reported substantial increases in **problem-solving confidence (+45%)** and **STEM knowledge and skills (+42%).**

Career Awareness

Making future possibilities more visible

Understanding the range of careers available – and how to reach them – is an important part of making informed choices.

Among participants completing the Leonardo Bronze programme:

100% reported knowing more about STEM careers and pathways.

And among participants in the SSEN programme:

75% said the experience had influenced their STEM career plans.

Employer encounters, mentors, workplace experiences and practical projects can help turn an abstract idea of a STEM career into something a young person can understand and explore.

Future Direction

Helping young peoplesee what might come next Impact is also reflected in how young people feel about their future.

96% of Leonardo Gold participants reported feeling hopeful or much more hopeful about their future.

94% of SSEN Bronze participants reported feeling **more hopeful about their future.**

These findings matter because EDT's purpose is not to prescribe a destination.

It is to help young people develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and understanding that enable them to make more informed decisions about their own future.

What the evidence is telling us

Across different programmes, a consistent picture is beginning to emerge.

Meaningful experiences with STEM and industry can help young people:

- **Build confidence**
- **Develop and apply skills**
- **Understand careers and pathways**
- **See future possibilities more clearly**

Our next challenge is to understand how those changes translate into what young people actually do next.

Because the most important measure of an opportunity is not simply that it happened – but what it enabled a young person to do afterwards.

Case study

More than a school project, it was an opportunity to see herself in STEM





Omotayo started her Gold Project believing engineering was out of reach. By the end, she had gained practical experience, confidence and a new belief that a future in STEM could be possible for her.

Real-world skills
Learned CAD, how to use a drill and produce a technical report

Growing confidence
Became more comfortable expressing her ideas

Changing perceptions
Went from seeing engineering as male-dominated to wanting to become an engineer

Building connections
Made friendships with other young women who shared her interests

New possibilities
Began to see that her background did not have to define what she could achieve

The Industrial Cadets Gold Project gave Omotayo more than another STEM activity. It gave her the opportunity to experience engineering first-hand, develop practical skills and work alongside other young women who shared her interests.

During a workshop, she learned to use CAD and a drill and produce a technical report and as the project progressed, she became more confident expressing herself and more aware of what she was capable of.

Most importantly, her perception of engineering changed.

> I used to think engineering was just for males.”

The Gold Project didn’t just introduce Omotayo to STEM. It helped her see herself in it, turning a career that once felt out of reach into a future she could imagine for herself.



What Happens Next?

The real value of an opportunity is where it can lead.

A positive experience matters. But for EDT, the longer-term question is whether that experience helps a young person make a meaningful next step. That next step will not look the same for everyone.

It might be choosing a STEM subject, applying for another programme, pursuing an apprenticeship, progressing into further or higher education, seeking another experience with an employer or moving towards employment.

Understanding those journeys is increasingly important to how we measure our impact.

From experience to action

During 2025/26, EDT began testing a more longitudinal approach to understanding what young people do after participating in our programmes.

In our initial pilot

92%

of respondents reported taking a concrete next step in STEM following their EDT experience.
Initial longitudinal pilot: n=38.

These next steps included continued engagement with STEM education, training and career opportunities.

The sample is small and should not be considered representative of all EDT participants. But the finding provides an encouraging early indication that the impact of an experience can continue beyond the programme itself.

Different young people. Different destinations.

Progression should not be defined by one destination.

For one young person, progress might mean selecting a STEM subject they had not previously considered. For another, it could be applying to university. For someone else, it might be pursuing an apprenticeship, undertaking further work experience or entering employment.

What matters is whether young people are better able to understand their options and make informed decisions about their future.

Staying connected

A young person's relationship with EDT does not have to end when a programme finishes. We are developing stronger ways for former participants to remain connected to opportunities, employers and each other.

Through **Industrial Cadets Nexus,** our emerging alumni and mentoring community, we want young people to be able to access further opportunities, mentoring, learning and connections as they continue through education and towards employment.

It will also give EDT a stronger foundation for understanding longer-term progression – helping us learn not only what young people thought immediately after an experience, but where they went next.

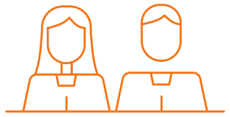
Measuring what matters

Our ambition isto follow more young people beyond individual programmes and understand their journeys over time. That means strengthening our ability to answer questions such as:

What did they do next?

- → Did they remain engaged with STEM?
- → Did their experience influence education or career choices?
- → Did they progress into further education, higher education, an apprenticeship or employment?
- → What further opportunities helped them along the way?

This is an important next step in EDT's own impact journey. Because ultimately, the measure of our work is not simply the opportunity a young person receives today. **It is where that opportunity helps them go tomorrow.**



Education
Subject choices and continued STEM learning.

Further & Higher Education
Progression into college, university and other forms of advanced study.

Apprenticeships & Training
Connecting skills and interests with vocational and technical pathways.

Further Experience
Mentoring, employer engagement, projects and additional opportunities to develop skills and networks.

Employment
Supporting the longer-term journey towards careers in STEM and related sectors.

Case study

From a 14-Year-Old STEM Explorer to Chemical Engineer



At 14, Zenisha had never met anyone working in STEM. Today, she is a Chemical Engineer and she can trace her journey back to her first Industrial Cadets experience with EDT.

- **Age 14** Routes into STEM introduced her to engineering for the first time
- **2017** A residential at Durham University gave her hands-on engineering experience
- **2018** A second residential at the University of Warwick broadened her understanding of engineering
- **Year in Industry** A paid placement at Babcock gave her real-world workplace experience
- **Today:** A Chemical Engineer who now volunteers with EDT to inspire the next generation

Before EDT, Zenisha enjoyed physics, chemistry and maths, but engineering was an abstract idea. She had never met anyone working in STEM and had little understanding of what an engineering career could look like.

Routes into STEM changed that. At 14, Zenisha had her first opportunity to experience engineering for herself. That initial experience opened the door to a series of opportunities that would shape her future.

She progressed through the Industrial Cadets pathway, attending residential summer schools at Durham University and the University of Warwick. She built structures, tested engineering concepts, created circuits and worked alongside other young women interested in STEM. Each experience built her technical skills, confidence and understanding of where engineering could take her.

The next step was her Year in Industry placement with Babcock, where she gained first-hand experience of the workplace, spoke to engineers about their careers and received support from Babcock's Early Careers team and an EDT mentor.

These experiences helped turn an interest in engineering into a clear career ambition. With greater confidence and a better understanding of the industry, Zenisha secured a place at her first-choice university and went on to become a Chemical Engineer.

> Before going on EDT courses, I just thought an engineer was a man that wears a helmet who fixes things."

From a 14-year-old discovering engineering for the first time to a Chemical Engineer inspiring the next generation, Zenisha's story shows the power of the Industrial Cadets pathway where one opportunity leads to another, building the experience, confidence and connections young people need to turn potential into a career.



Learning & **Improving**

Better evidence helps us create better opportunities. Understanding impact requires more than counting activity.

During 2025/26, we strengthened our focus on understanding not only how many young people participated in EDT programmes, but who they were, the experiences they received, what changed and what happened next.

That work has also highlighted where our evidence needs to become stronger.

Different programmes have historically collected information in different ways. Demographic information is more complete for some participant groups than others, outcome measures vary between programmes, and our ability to follow young people after an experience is still developing.

Rather than fill those gaps through assumptions or extrapolation, we want to improve the evidence itself.

Six questions will increasingly shape how we measure impact

Who?
Who are we reaching?
Understanding participants' backgrounds and circumstances, and whether opportunities are reaching young people who have historically had less access to STEM experiences and networks.

Barrier?
What might prevent them from accessing opportunity?
Building a better understanding of financial, geographic, social and other barriers – and the support that can help overcome them.

Experience?
What opportunity did they actually receive?
Looking beyond participation numbers to understand the duration, depth and quality of young people's experiences.

Change?
What changed because they took part?
Measuring changes in confidence, skills, knowledge, career awareness and understanding of future possibilities.

Next?
What happened afterwards?
Developing stronger longitudinal evidence about education choices, further experiences, apprenticeships, higher education, employment and continued engagement with STEM.

Employer?
How did industry contribute?
Understanding not only the number of employers involved, but the contribution of mentors, volunteers, workplaces, placements, expertise and investment to young people's experiences.

Our priorities for stronger impact evidence

The learning from 2025/26 is informing how we develop our approach to impact measurement.

Our priorities include:

More consistent demographic information
to understand who has access to different opportunities and identify where gaps remain.

Common outcome measures
to measure changes in young people's confidence, skills, career awareness and future aspirations more consistently across programmes.

Stronger progression evidence
to understand what young people do after participating

Longer-term tracking
to understand the relationship between experiences today and education, training and employment decisions later.

Better understanding of barriers
so that bursaries, programme design and other forms of support can respond to the practical challenges young people experience.

Connecting programme and employer evidence
to better understand how different forms of industry engagement contribute to young people's outcomes.

From reporting impact to learning from it
Better measurementisnot simply about producing better reports, it should help us make better decisions.

Evidence can show where opportunity is reaching young people, where gaps remain and which experiences create the greatest change.

It can help EDT, partners and funders focus time, expertise and investment where it can make the greatest difference.

2025/26 gives us a stronger foundation to build on. Our next step is to make our evidence more connected and focused on what happens beyond the programme.

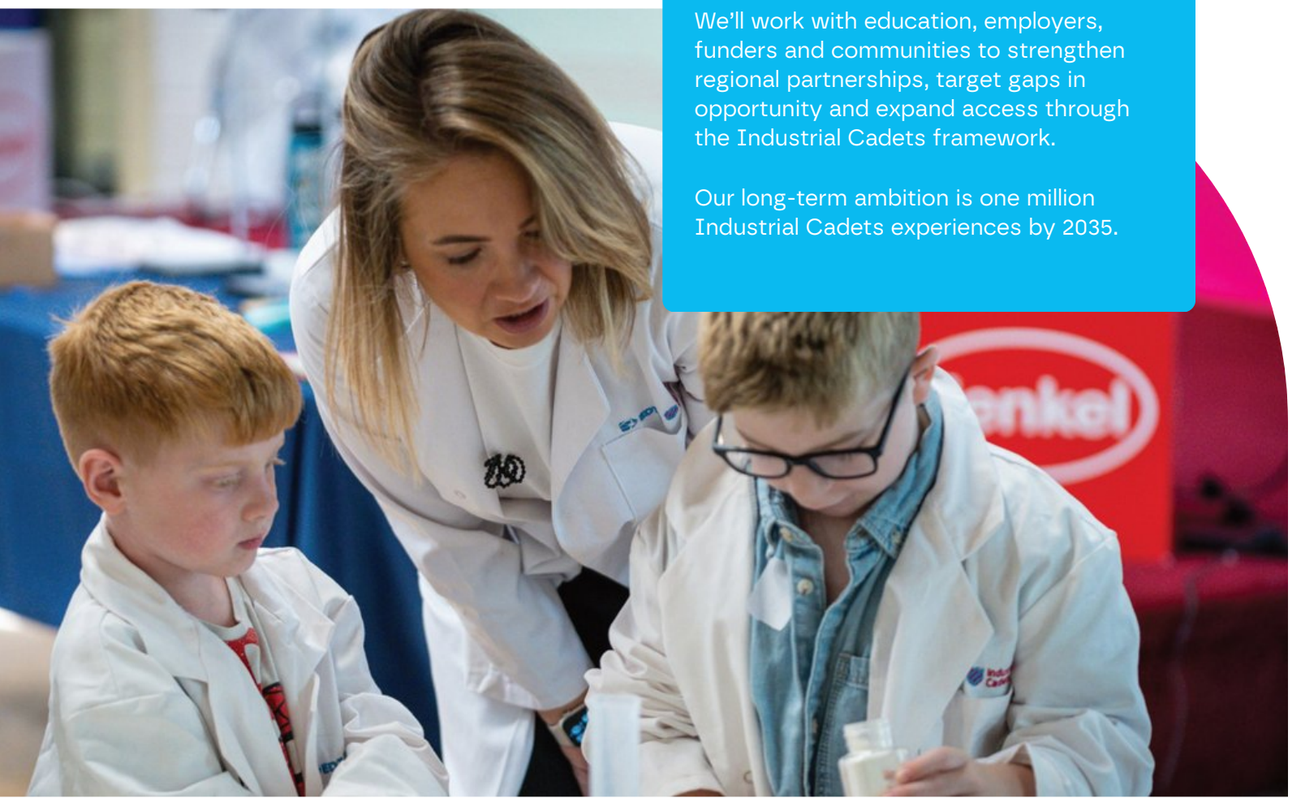
Because better evidence should lead to better opportunities.

The **Opportunity** Ahead

Opening more doors. Creating deeper experiences. Understanding where opportunity leads.

This report shows what's possible when young people, education and industry connect and points to what comes next.

Our ambition is to build on EDT and Industrial Cadets' reach while creating deeper opportunities for young people, particularly where access to employers, networks and experiences is limited. **Three priorities will shape this direction.**



01

Reach

Widen access to opportunity
We want more young people to access meaningful STEM, employer and workplace experiences, regardless of background or location.

We'll work with education, employers, funders and communities to strengthen regional partnerships, target gaps in opportunity and expand access through the Industrial Cadets framework.

Our long-term ambition is one million Industrial Cadets experiences by 2035.

02

Depth

Create experiences that build skills, confidence and connections
Reach matters, but so does the quality and depth of opportunity.

We want young people to access experiences that match their journey — from early encounters to sustained projects, mentoring, workplace experiences and placements.

We'll strengthen employer connections so young people can build skills, meet industry professionals and see how their interests connect to real opportunities, particularly across engineering and advanced manufacturing, digital and AI, net zero, and health and life sciences.

03

Progression

Connect today's experience with tomorrow's opportunity
Our ambition does not end when a programme finishes.

We want to better connect experiences with further learning, mentoring, apprenticeships, higher education and employment, while understanding where young people go next.

Our Industrial Cadets Nexus community will help former participants stay connected to opportunities, employers and learning, while strengthening our understanding of long- term progression.

Better longitudinal evidence will show which experiences create lasting change and how partner investment supports young people's journeys.

Building Connected Opportunity

No organisation can do this alone. Creating opportunity requires employers, educators, universities, government, funders, communities and young people to work together.

EDT's role is to connect them — bringing education and industry together around local opportunities, skills needs and growth sectors to create stronger pathways for young people.

That means using what we have learned to strengthen the pathways between:



Opening Doors to Opportunity

The destination will be different for every young person. Our role is not to choose it for them, but to help ensure they have the experiences, skills, information and connections to choose it for themselves.

Behind every number in this report is a young person who tried something new, met someone in an industry they hadn't considered, developed a skill, solved a problem, visited a workplace or began to see a different future. Those moments matter.

But our ambition is bigger than creating moments. It is about connecting education and industry so more young people can turn opportunity into possibility — and possibility into a future of their choosing.

Talent is universal. Opportunity is not.
Our job is to help change that. Because the true measure of our impact isn't simply how many young people we reach. It's where opportunity takes them.

Building Skills for Brighter Futures.

Industrial Cadets

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