



Young
Enterprise

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- WORK READINESS



PROGRESSING POTENTIAL

Reflecting on five years of impact through
the National Grid Access Social Mobility
Programme with Young Enterprise,
2021-2025

national**grid**

Foreword



Sarah Porretta
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We are proud to partner with National Grid to support young people who face barriers to opportunity, helping them make the most of their education and better prepare for future careers. This includes learning essential skills, such as how to apply for a job — something many young people find challenging.

Over the past five years, Young Enterprise has worked with more than 4,500 young people across 90+ schools and colleges, as showcased in the inspiring case studies throughout this report. These experiences demonstrate how, with the right support, young people can overcome obstacles, build confidence, and succeed in professional and highly skilled roles.

The energy sector has bold plans for infrastructure and recruitment. This programme plays a vital role in ensuring those benefits reach all parts of society, advancing social inclusion in communities nationwide.

Young Enterprise continues to be a valued tactical partner, enabling targeted outreach to schools and FE colleges in underserved communities.

It's a privilege to witness the exceptional, often overlooked talent uncovered through this strand of the National Grid Access Social Mobility Programme — and to see how those individuals progress in their careers within our organisation and across our supply chain.

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About the UK Access Social Mobility Programme

National Grid's UK Access Social Mobility Programme was set up in 2020 to provide training, career coaching and work readiness for young people, aged 16-24, who face barriers linked to where they live and their socio-economic background.

The programme has been run by National Grid in collaboration with nine national charities and five energy industry partners, each with complementary specialisms to help young people reach their potential. The Young Enterprise strand (Access) helps young people to improve their employability and career prospects by providing an introduction to the energy sector and wider green economy.

National Grid set up the programme in recognition of the growth potential of the energy sector and the need to fill an estimated 400,000 jobs across the UK by 2050, along with a commitment to maximise opportunities for underserved young people in locations where the company operates.

Young Enterprise is ideally placed to support the co-development and delivery of the programme. We bring over 60 years of experience in helping young people to prepare for the world of work, including specialised support for young people who face barriers, and working alongside schools and colleges in more disadvantaged communities. Our social mobility impact is integral to our **Transforming Futures 2030 strategy**.

How the programme works

As part of National Grid's UK Access Social Mobility Programme, Young Enterprise delivers half-day masterclass sessions in schools and colleges with the aims of:

- **Improving essential skills**, such as teambuilding, problem solving and interview preparation
- **Increasing awareness and interest about the energy sector** and its importance to the UK.

National Grid employees have a vital role too, acting as volunteers to share their expertise and speaking with students about their own career progression stories.

Following participation in the masterclass sessions, learners are invited to take part in National Grid site visits and work experience placements with the aim of **deepening knowledge about what is required to study and prepare** for different careers, including opportunities in the energy sector.

For young people taking part in site visits, work experience and for those who apply

for apprenticeships with National Grid, Young Enterprise offers career coaching with the aim of **refining employability skills** so they are best prepared for applications, interviews and shortlisting for whichever education and employment routes they choose.

In 2024, National Grid won the **Personnel Today Early Careers Award** in recognition of its commitment to recruiting and developing young people, and for supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through the UK Social Mobility Programme.



Who takes part?

Between January 2021 and March 2025:



schools and colleges
have participated in
masterclass sessions



young people
have attended
masterclass sessions



young people
have taken part in work
placements or site visits



young people
have secured roles
at National Grid

Programme reach, 2021-2025

| | 2021-22* | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Total |
|---|----------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Participating schools / colleges | 27 | 57 | 28 | 29 | 93 |
| Masterclass sessions delivered | 119** | 27 | 32 | 44 | 222 |
| Young people attending masterclass sessions | 1,001** | 1,094 | 1,110 | 1,330 | 4,535 |
| Volunteers attending masterclass sessions | 144 | 90 | 116 | 177 | 527 |
| Young people on work placements / site visits | 7 | 5 | 39 | 69 | 120 |
| Young people receiving career coaching | 21 | 68 | 50 | 62 | 201 |

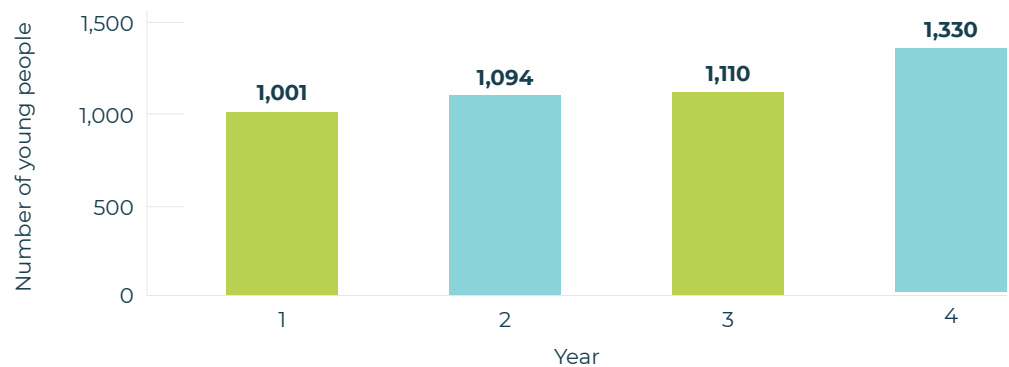
*Jan 2021 – March 2022 (five quarters)

**due to COVID-19, the masterclasses were delivered as three hour-long online sessions, rather than a half-day masterclass

The **programme's wider goals** are to positively impact **22,500 young people between 2020 and 2030**, supported by **125,000 volunteering hours**. The Young Enterprise strand of the programme has already contributed 21% of this 2030 reach target.

The programme has had a target of reaching 1,000 young people per year, a target that has been consistently surpassed, with reach increasing every year. This has also been catalysed through new developments such as the partnership with Baker Dearing, which has allowed the programme to reach University Technical Colleges (UTCs) at scale. Kate Ambrosi, CEO of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, shares her reflections on the partnership: “We were keen to see whether more of the 44 UTCs nationwide could benefit from the support and engagement the programme offers to help young people facing barriers of social mobility. The programme has not disappointed! In the academic year 2023/24, the programme engaged with 210 students from six UTCs, which resulted in five job offers (four for apprenticeships) and nine work placements.”

Number of young people taking part in the programme

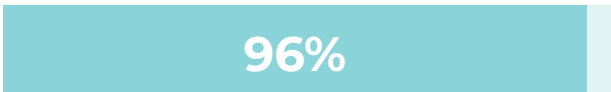


Learner experience and outcomes

Learners enjoy taking part in the Young Enterprise activities. When asked how likely they are to recommend the programme to a friend (on a scale of 0-10), **66% of all respondents from the most recent 2024-25 cohort would highly recommend the programme** (8/9/10 out of 10).



of learners agree that the information is clearly explained.



of learners agree that the Young Enterprise session lead is knowledgeable and engaging.



of learners agree that the information is useful and relevant.



of learners agree that the volunteers are inspiring.



of learners agree that the programme is enjoyable.



of learners can relate to the volunteer(s).

Social mobility impacts

The programme prioritises supporting young people who face barriers to opportunities and those who attend school or college in areas identified as more disadvantaged than average.

The programme improves social mobility prospects in several important ways:

- The masterclass sessions provide information to improve learners' understanding and demystify the hiring process, making recruitment opportunities accessible to a broader range of applicants.



of learners agree that they know more about the skills employers are looking for



of learners feel better able to make informed decisions about their futures

-
- The masterclass sessions and work placements provide young people with an introduction to networks and role models in the energy sector that they would not be aware of otherwise.



of learners agree they are more aware of a wide range of job and career opportunities within the energy sector

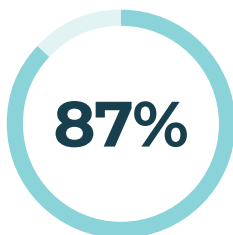


of learners feel more inspired about starting a career that motivates and interests them

-
- Recognising that some candidates struggle with recruitment processes, the tips given in masterclasses (such as using the STAR method), as well as the career coaching, help candidates to best represent their own abilities.



of learners agree they know more about how to showcase their skills to employers



of learners agree they know more about how to prepare for an interview

In 2025, National Grid launched a **Social Mobility Advisory Board** to bring together former and current programme participants, as well as other stakeholders, to further improve opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Board also increases the visibility of social mobility within the organisation, and members have produced 'day in the life' videos to champion their backgrounds and to show the impact of social mobility. Leo, a programme alumnus who now works for National Grid and sits on the board, said:

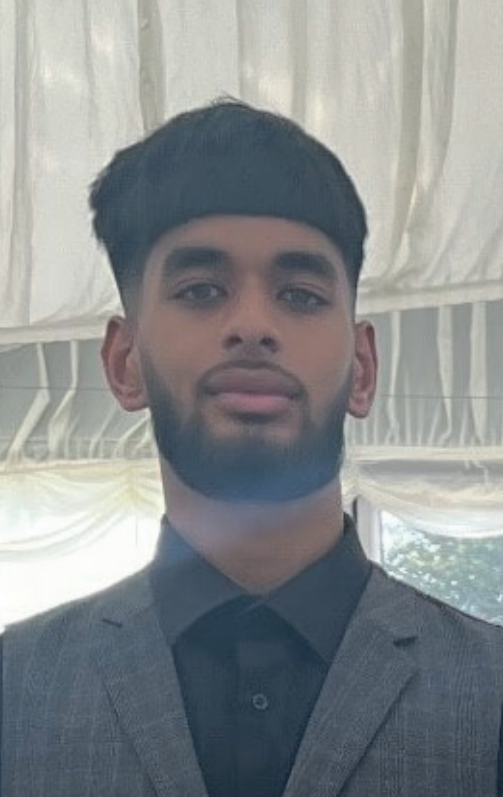


Social mobility is a passion close to my heart as I know the benefit from having organisations and programmes that actively support those from under or misrepresented groups. The Board to me is a chance to build on and improve the social mobility efforts already made in National Grid, as well as increase the visibility social mobility has in the company. I have often found coming from a social mobility background, that people can have the opinion that I got the role only due to my background, missing that I possess all the strengths that any colleague does.

Leo - Power System Engineer Higher Apprentice

Young Enterprise is also supporting programme alumni to attend masterclass sessions, so that they can share their stories and motivate other young people. The impact stories outlined in the remainder of this report feature inspiring young people, volunteers and representatives from organisations that have provided vital support to the programme.





Rizwan's story

the power of perseverance

Rizwan's story is a powerful example of how the right support, and some determination, can lead to career success. His perseverance in applying for roles at National Grid has led him to secure his dream apprenticeship.

Rizwan is a sixth form student from Aston University Engineering Academy (AUEA) in Birmingham, where he's studying a Level 3 BTEC Engineering course. His journey on the National Grid programme began in April 2024 when he took part in one of the Young Enterprise masterclass sessions. At this time, he had no knowledge of National Grid or apprenticeships, but the interactive masterclass captured his interest.

"The day included discussions about National Grid, its apprenticeship schemes, and various activities. At the end of the session, there was an opportunity to sign up for a site visit, which I took."

The site visit helped Rizwan to gain knowledge of operations, and he learned about the different roles available at National Grid. At the end of the session, participants were invited to apply for a two-week summer placement at National Grid as a Contracts Analyst. He was initially unsuccessful in getting a place, but with the help of Young Enterprise, Rizwan refined his CV and wrote an effective cover letter, and he was selected for the placement.

"It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I attended meetings, completed tasks, and networked with many professionals.

At the end of the placement, I presented in a large meeting alongside two peers and participated in the Young Enterprise graduation."

The two-week placement proved to be a great opportunity for Rizwan to develop his skills, and after impressing National Grid staff, he was offered a part-time role during his studies. He has been working for National Grid one day a week since then.

In November 2024, Rizwan applied for the Power Systems Engineer Higher Apprenticeship and was invited to an assessment centre. Young Enterprise supported him with one-to-one preparation, and he went into the assessment centre feeling 'confident and prepared'. He was successful with his application, which he describes as his dream role, and he is looking forward to starting in September 2025. Rizwan has also joined the National Grid Social Mobility Board, where he hopes to inspire and provide advice for other young people.

"My advice: Take every opportunity you can. Something as small as a masterclass can be the stepping stone to something much bigger. If I hadn't attended that session, none of this would have happened."



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Leo's story

a life-changing opportunity

Leo was first introduced to National Grid through a Young Enterprise event held at his university, CU Coventry. This began a journey that ultimately led to a fulfilling career and stability for his family.

Leo discovered the range of opportunities at National Grid at a masterclass, where he got to speak to current trainees and learn about the job application process. Inspired by this, Leo attended a business taster week offered by Young Enterprise. He said, "I found this week inspiring to see the wide range of opportunities available at Grid. Also, being able to hear how good the company treats its employees definitely made National Grid and an apprenticeship a goal for me."

After the taster week, Leo went on to complete a two-week placement at National Grid, where he was part of a strategy team. This solidified his interest in working for National Grid, and he was encouraged to apply for an apprenticeship. For the application, he used the guidance he had received in the taster week to prepare for his video interview. "I remembered the advice I was given during the first event I attended at my university and utilised the STAR technique to answer my video questions.", he said. Leo was successful in securing the role of Power System Engineer Higher Apprentice.

"I know if it was not for the support I received from Young Enterprise UK, I may not have even applied for an apprenticeship let alone secured one. Since starting my position, my wife and I welcomed our twin daughters three weeks into my apprenticeship. My role has enabled me to provide and support my young family." Leo now sits on National Grid's Social Mobility Advisory Board and is motivated to support other young people from different backgrounds in prospering in their careers. National Grid's UK Social Mobility Programme has given him a chance to develop new skills and showcase the talents he already had – talents that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

"I am a mixed British and Black Caribbean and came from a single parent household, where money was often tight. I am also the first generation to go to university in my family. This meant I had to deal with challenges without someone who had shared experience to guide me. Also, with having my twin daughters at a young age, my present could have been much more difficult if I had not secured my apprenticeship."



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Sahira's story

giving back to others

Sahira's story is a testament to how empowering young people can positively impact those around them. Not only has she forged a promising career path for herself, but she's also looking for ways to empower others in her community to take on new opportunities. Her story shows how supporting young people can help to build a more inclusive future.

Sahira, a bright and motivated student, started her journey at National Grid while she was studying at Nishkam High School in Birmingham. She attended a National Grid Masterclass in June 2023, and the following month, she took part in a two-day work experience opportunity in the Finance department at National Grid.

After this work experience piqued her interest in the industry, Sahira applied for a finance apprenticeship at National Grid, and she received 1:1 coaching from Young Enterprise to support her in achieving success. She attended an assessment centre and was awarded an apprenticeship in National Grid's finance department.

Sahira has been training at National Grid since September 2024, and she has now volunteered with Young Enterprise, attending masterclasses at her former school to share her experience with other students. This is a powerful reminder of how far Sahira has come, and she is keen to show students in her local area how they can achieve their goals.

"Returning to my school, Nishkam High School, to talk about the finance industry and National Grid was a meaningful experience for me. It felt like a full-circle moment, reminding me of the incredible journey I've taken since my sixth form days. Sharing my story and igniting a spark of possibility in others about the opportunities within this field was not just rewarding; it was a chance to inspire them to dream big and pursue their passions as well."

▀ ▀
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Joel's story putting theory into practice

Joel's experience reflects a common reality for many young people in National Grid's UK Access Social Mobility Programme: navigating the working world for the first time. For Joel, the masterclass and ensuing professional training helped him to develop the skills needed to thrive in the workplace.

Joel's first experience with National Grid was at a masterclass at his college, University College Birmingham. In the session, the group discussed leadership and extracurricular activities, and Joel was open about his desire to find an apprenticeship.

"I was really looking for an apprenticeship, but I didn't really know about National Grid beforehand, so I ended up just asking...How can I be on the programme?"

Soon after, he was invited to a work experience day at the National Grid Birmingham Depot, which was an insightful experience for him. "I was quite surprised because I wasn't expecting it... but when I got there, I was excited because it was really interesting. I never really thought how my electricity actually gets to my house... so it was nice to see and learn about that."

After his day of work experience, Joel applied for the 12-month Power Network Craft Assistant (PNCA) training course and was accepted. As part of the programme, National Grid offered Joel a mentor who provided guidance throughout. Regular check-ins with his mentor helped Joel to stay on track and feel

supported, and alongside this he also developed great friendships with other young people on the programme. "I developed my time management skills and being on the programme helped me improve my confidence. I was away from home and the people I knew, so I had to kind of start again and that was hard at the start... but it gave me the opportunity to speak to different people from all different backgrounds."

At first, Joel found the practical side of the training challenging. "I was finding it very difficult because in my college, I wasn't doing a lot of practical things. There were times when I felt overwhelmed, especially when others seemed to pick up tasks quicker than I did." However, with the support of his mentors and team, his confidence grew. "I improved a lot because I got support from everyone, and they really helped me out."

I developed my time management skills and being on the programme helped me improve my confidence.



Kirstie's story

volunteers making a meaningful impact

Kirstie Turner is Head of Short Term Funding and Investment and Risk Management at National Grid, as well as being a volunteer for the UK Access Social Mobility Programme with Young Enterprise.

A vital component of the programme is the contribution of dedicated volunteers like Kirstie. Volunteers support the delivery of National Grid masterclasses and share valuable insights with young people about their day-to-day lives working at National Grid, as well as their own recruitment journeys and career paths.

Volunteers help to give students a real understanding of what it is like to have a career in the energy sector, bringing the work of National Grid to life. They help to showcase the different pathways to a career, inspiring young people to see themselves in different roles and see their own potential.

▀▀
I have had the privilege of collaborating with the incredible teams at National Grid and Young Enterprise in some of London's underserved areas. Through this work, I've had the opportunity to inspire students of all ages about the exciting career possibilities at National Grid.

Kirstie reflects:

"Having worked in finance my entire career, I was always of the belief that my job was disconnected from the broader community. However, my experience at National Grid has transformed this perspective. I've discovered that my skills can indeed make a meaningful impact through the diverse volunteering initiatives available.

I have had the privilege of collaborating with the incredible teams at National Grid and Young Enterprise in some of London's underserved areas. Through this work, I've had the opportunity to inspire students of all ages about the exciting career possibilities at National Grid. I've shared insights about my role and provided guidance for assessment centre preparation. Additionally, I've helped create engaging, applied learning activities aligned with the National Curriculum, enabling students to grasp concepts like averages and frequency tables.

This experience has reinforced my commitment to empowering the next generation and making a lasting impact in our community."



WMG Academy, Solihull

nothing short of transformative

Rebecca Archer is Business Engagement & Student Destinations Manager at WMG Academy for Young Engineers in Solihull. She explains below how young people at the school have benefitted from taking part.

“The impact the National Grid Social Mobility Programme has had for the students has been nothing short of transformative. The opportunities our sixth form students have had through the industry masterclass means they are more confident in recruitment processes for a group assessment and presentation scenario, as well as being able to deliver STAR interview responses. I am proud to announce that through the National Grid UK Access Social Mobility programme, WMG Academy students had immersive work placements, giving them first-hand knowledge of the workings of National Grid.”

After taking part in the programme, two students from WMG Academy went on to secure apprenticeship and employment opportunities at National Grid, and recently, a group of Year 12 students was taken to a local National Grid site to learn more about careers in the energy sector.

“Our students have experienced core soft skill development in teamwork, communication, leadership and problem solving; skills that National Grid and other leading companies truly value.”

▀ ▀
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GET IN TOUCH

Interested to learn more about how Young Enterprise helps inspire careers among the next generation? Get in touch with the Young Enterprise team, we have a wide range of resources, training and support for schools: info@y-e.org.uk

ABOUT YOUNG ENTERPRISE

Young Enterprise is a national charity that specialises in Enterprise Education and Financial Education and is a trusted and valued provider of knowledge, resources and training. Young Enterprise works directly with young people, teachers, and volunteers, with the support of corporate partners, to build a successful and sustainable future for all young people. Young Enterprise's vision is to ensure that every young person is provided with the opportunities to learn the vital skills needed to earn and look after their money.

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