

Be the Change: Analysis of feedback from participants in the 2021 programme

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Contents

1. Introduction	7
1.1 Aims and objectives of the <i>Be the Change</i> programme	7
1.2 How the programme works	7
1.3 The role of Business Guides	8
1.4 <i>Be the Change 2021</i>	8
1.5 Data used in this report	9
2. Student feedback	10
2.1 Overall impact of the programme	10
2.2 In their own words	11
2.3 Different impacts of the programme	14
2.4 Experience of being on the programme	15
3. Feedback from Business Guides and schools	16
3.1 Business Guide views on the programme	16
3.2 School views	23
4. Conclusions	26
Appendix: Detailed data tables	27

Executive Summary

Be the Change is an inspirational programme for Year 9 students

Be the Change is aimed at Year 9 students facing challenges in school or with school life. It focuses on promoting happiness, confidence, hope, positive relationships, and employability by encouraging participants to identify their personal barriers to success, before helping them find ways of overcoming these barriers.

The programme runs over one academic year. It involves three conference events that bring together students and representatives from a range of participating schools and volunteers representing local businesses.

Each of the participating business representatives works as a 'Business Guide' with a small cohort of students acting as positive role models and sharing their experiences and career journeys. Business Guides met individually with each student at least twice during the programme.

Before the onset of the pandemic, **Be the Change** was delivered entirely in person with participants from different schools and businesses coming together in a conference venue. Business Guides were also able to meet the young people in person at these events and 1:1 meetings with them. Normally, the programme also includes an opportunity for pupils to physically visit the workplace of their mentor.

Running the programme during a pandemic meant that the programme had to make some major adaptations. Business Guides were not able to meet their mentees in person or have them visit their workplaces. The events were held either remotely with online events or within individual schools with an inspirational speaker rather than bringing pupils from different schools together.

Be the Change 2021 involved four schools, 42 Business Guides from five sponsoring organisations and worked with 90 students. It ran from March to May 2021. All participating students attended three conference events, and three virtual 1:1 sessions with a Business Guide.

Be the Change ran successfully during the pandemic despite the adaptations necessary to operate the programme remotely

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, **Be the Change** was delivered entirely in person with participants from different schools and businesses coming together in conference venues. Business Guides meet the young people they are going to mentor at these events and students meet each other. Normally, the programme also includes an opportunity for pupils to physically visit the workplace of their mentor.

In 2021, **Be the Change** was delivered using a combination of online and in-school delivery. The initial launch event and Business Guide 1:1s were conducted remotely in the form of virtual conferences with the programme's motivational speaker (Jack the Lad) to attend individual schools in-person to work directly with students later in the programme as social distancing requirements eased. Workplace visits were not possible.

The programme team and schools were determined to run the programme during the pandemic, seeing the need amongst students to be greater than ever during this time. There was a lot of unknowns in moving, at pace, to a remotely delivered programme. Despite this, the programme was successfully adapted and delivered with meaningful impacts for the participants.

The programme made links between local employers and students, increased student understanding of these employers and helped students see a clearer path to their future.

The impact of **Be the Change** on students is assessed by measuring their responses to 12 attitude statements designed to measure their views on a series of attitudinal and behavioural measures key

to the programme's aims. Students are asked to complete the same survey at the start and end of the programme.

By the end of **Be the Change** 2021 students were more positive about 7 out of 12 items than they were at the start. The biggest changes were in the extent to which they felt able to remove barriers to their future success and their understanding of what employers are looking for.

By the end of the programme:

- 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were clear about the things they needed to work on to be happy in life (up from 82% at the start).
- 87% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of their own strengths that will appeal to future employers (up from 57% at the start)
- 79% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they knew what they needed to do to remove any barriers to their own success (up from 48% at the start)
- 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they understood what local employers were looking for when they recruit (up from 39% at the start).

Overall, therefore, **Be the Change** had a positive impact on participating student's views on their future, their understanding of the workplace and what employers want. Students also maintained their confidence and positivity whilst on the programme, against a backdrop of uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

"The program has really helped me develop my knowledge of myself and my skills"

"The programme has helped me be a more confident person"

"I now understand that certain decisions during school help my future"

Business Guides remain overwhelmingly positive about the experience of working with *Be the Change* even when their experiences were entirely virtual

The experience of being a Business Guide with **Be the Change** is normally centred around in-person interactions between adults and young people. These interactions, by necessity, all became virtual during 2021 as a response to the pandemic. This is a major shift in the Business Guide role, and it was not known how this would affect their experiences of taking part. In addition, everyone involved in the programme was learning new skills in terms of interacting with young people online. Difficulties which arose, such as working with young people when they switch off their cameras and microphones during interactions¹, were entirely new to the programme, and there has been a great deal of learning about how to manage these issues from the experiences of 2021.

It is therefore encouraging to observe that Business Guides still enjoyed taking part. By the end of the programme:

- 100% of Business Guides agree/strongly agree that they had enjoyed volunteering and felt good about being able to help others
- 95% of Business Guides felt that **Be the Change** was something that all young people would benefit from, regardless of their engagement or attainment levels
- 84% of Business Guides agree/strongly agree that they would consider taking part again

¹ This behaviour is common amongst young people worldwide and an issue across all educational settings not just **Be the Change**

- 89% of Business Guides agree/strongly agree that they were satisfied with their experience of taking part
- 74% of Business Guides agree/strongly agree that their contribution had been valued by the young people.

In addition, Business Guides also felt that they got a lot out of their participation:

- 95% agreed/strongly agreed that they felt more positive about their job and organisation as a result of volunteering
- 79% agreed/strongly agreed that the experience had improved their training/coaching skills
- 70% agreed/strongly agreed that the experience had improved their management skills.

Finally, Business Guides also saw a range of impacts on participating students:

- 84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students were now inspired to make positive changes in their lives
- 84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students had developed skills and qualities that employers were looking for
- 74% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students had improved their communication skills.

"Be the Change is an excellent programme allowing business to reach out to young adults"

"Getting to work alongside so many like-minded adults to try and encourage young people to be their best selves has been an absolute pleasure"

"The change in my students over such a short period of time really shows the power initiatives like this can have"

Schools observed improvements to student attainment, awareness, and behaviours

Schools have had an extremely difficult time during the pandemic, with two academic years affected, a great deal of adaptation to teaching delivery required and increasing emotional and wellbeing needs amongst students. The fact that four schools were prepared to work with **Be the Change** at a time of such uncertainty and high teacher workloads, is testament to their commitment to the programme. The feedback available from participating schools suggests that, from their perspective, participants got a great deal out of taking part and that this, in turn, affected their attendance, attainment, behaviours, and attitudes back in the classroom.

Be the Change 2021 achieved much given a difficult operating environment

Running **Be the Change** 2021 during the pandemic raised a range of unprecedented operational challenges for the programme team, participating schools and Business Guides and some elements could not be replicated (e.g. interactions between young people and business guides at inspirational deliveries and workplace visits). It is important to note that **the programme was different so we would not expect it to demonstrate the same impacts**.

Having said that, however, **the programme has been able to maintain its impacts** in three key areas:

1. Even when they were only able to meet remotely, Business Guides and young people have been able to connect with and learn from one another resulting in young people developing

a greater awareness of their local employers and a greater understanding of what they can offer these employers.

2. The programme was still able to generate a desire for change, and a greater awareness of how to do this, amongst participating young people.
3. Schools continued to see impacts on students which translated into improved outcomes and behaviour when back in school.

Reflecting on the whole programme, therefore, we conclude that:

- The programme ran successfully in 2021, despite the delivery mechanisms having to change completely. Just running the programme during the pandemic is a considerable achievement and is a testament to the commitment of everyone involved.
- The impacts of the programme are positive showing consistency with the outcomes of historic programmes despite the need to pivot into different delivery formats to evidence that young people and business guides have got a lot out of their involvement.

There may be elements of virtual delivery that can be maintained for future programmes and the team at the Love Local Jobs Foundation will be planning ways to utilise these opportunities to further support mentoring for future programmes.

1. Introduction

Be the Change is a groundbreaking, inspirational programme aimed at secondary school students who are facing challenges and difficulties in school or with school life. The programme focuses on promoting happiness, confidence, hope, positive relationships, and employability by encouraging participants to identify their personal barriers to success, before helping them find ways of overcoming these barriers. This report presents the results of an annual evaluation of the programme based on feedback from participants.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the *Be the Change* programme

The programme aims to help Year 9 and 10 students see their potential and recognise elements of their behaviour that prevent them from realising this potential. Students are asked to take responsibility for their lives by making changes so that they can achieve their aspirations.

Alongside these transformational aspects of the programme, it is also hoped that, because of the programme, students can expand their horizons about work options, begin to understand what is required to be successful in business and gain experience of the workplace in a more general sense.

The objectives of the Be the Change Programme are to:

- build the happiness, confidence, hope, relationships, and employability of participating students
- increase the life and employability skills of young people
- create sustainable networking opportunities for young people
- inspire young people to consider their route into employment whether that be through FE, HE or via an apprenticeship, traineeship, or work experience placement
- encourage business mentoring in schools
- develop stronger and more meaningful partnerships between local schools and businesses
- create more meaningful work experience opportunities for young people
- strengthen the profile of local employers and related career opportunities.

1.2 How the programme works

The programme works with schools that identify a cohort of Year 9 students who lack confidence, exhibit challenging behaviours at school, are underachieving academically and/or are disengaged from education. Once selected, students are released from teaching time during the school day to participate in the different elements of the programme.

Each programme includes a series of events hosted by a specialist motivational speaker that aim to engage and inspire students. There is also a programme of support provided by volunteer Business Guides that introduces them to the world of work. These events take place over several months during one academic year.

The events take the form of:

1. **Launch event** - hosted by an inspirational speaker, the launch focuses on introducing the programme journey, engaging students, and building their confidence.
2. **Online 1:1 sessions** - business guides and students met online to discuss the key messages from the launch
3. **'Stepping Up' event** - hosted by an inspirational speaker the students are encouraged to focus on their aspirations and stepping up and out of their comfort zones
4. **Online 1:1 sessions** - business guides and students met online to discuss the key messages from the Stepping Up event

5. **Awards event** - this celebrates the programme coming towards its conclusion and allows the students to reflect on the progress they have made ahead of their final mentoring interaction.
6. **Online 1:1 sessions** - business guides and students met online to discuss the key messages from the Awards event

1.3 The role of Business Guides

Volunteers from organisations local to participating schools volunteer as 'Business Guides' with each one assigned a small number of students with whom they work closely throughout the programme. Business Guides support students through the change process as well as expose them to the world of work. They act as positive role models for students and share their experiences and career journeys with them by working with students on a one-to-one basis and listening to their stories. This helps guides understand the day-to-day challenges students face as well as their strengths and aspirations.

For participating organisations, **Be the Change** provides an opportunity to engage with their future workforce and build awareness of their employer brand amongst young people in their local area. The programme is also an innovative way for employers to provide fulfilling and meaningful personal development opportunities for their employees.

1.4 Be the Change 2021

Be the Change 2021 involved four schools, 42 Business Guides from five sponsoring organisations and worked with 90 students. It ran from March to May 2021. Participating students attended three conference events and three 1:1 sessions with a Business Guide.

Based on the impact of the pandemic and the associated disruption to the development of young people the programme team decided to run the programme against the challenging backdrop of the pandemic and associated disruptions. They were required, however, to adapt certain elements to adhere to social distancing requirements in place at the time.

Before the onset of the pandemic, **Be the Change** was delivered entirely in person with participants from different schools and businesses coming together in a conference venue. Business Guides are also able to meet the young people they are going to mentor at these events. Normally, the programme also includes an opportunity for pupils to physically visit the workplace of their mentor.

In 2021, **Be the Change** was delivered using a combination of online and in-school delivery. The initial launch event and Business Guide 1:1s were conducted remotely in the form of virtual conferences, with everyone logging in from home onto an innovative event platform called Remo. This platform enabled inspirational delivery with a virtual stage and round table discussions for students and business guides. Additionally, students could communicate using a chat function. There was a noticeable journey of engagement that could be seen as the launch event progressed. After the launch event, the students were paired with a business guide from the sponsoring organisations.

As social distancing regulations began to ease, the programme's motivational speaker (Jack the Lad) could attend individual schools in person to work directly with students from that school. Business Guides, however, were not able to attend these events and pupils from different schools could not intermingle. Further details of the timing and delivery of the main programme events are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Be the Change* 2021, programme overview

Date (2021)	Activity	Location
3rd and 4th March	Launch Events	Online
WC 8th and 15th March School confirmed 2-3 dates to run the 1:1s	Online 1:1 Sessions	Online
WC 22nd & 29th March Jack visited each school on one of these dates A video of the session was sent to business guides	Stepping Up Events	In School
WC 26th April or WC 3rd May School confirmed 2-3 dates to run the 1:1s	Online 1:1 Sessions	Online
11th, 12th, 13th, 14th May Jack visited each school on one of these dates A video of the session was sent to business guides	Awards Celebration	In School
WC 17th or WC 24th May School confirmed 2-3 dates to run the 1:1s	Online 1:1 Sessions	Online

Running the programme in this way required a great deal of organisation particularly with schools, including testing the video conferencing platform. There was also a lot of preparatory work with young people to encourage their engagement, including specially shot videos of Jack the Lad being sent out to schools. After events, Jack the Lad also prepared videos for Business Guides to provide an overview of the content of the sessions.

Be the Change 2021 was therefore a year for the programme like no other. This is important to note when considering the impacts it achieved. The outcomes presented in the remainder of this report are therefore for an initiative that differs substantially, in delivery terms, from what has gone before, even though the essence of the programme was maintained.

1.5 Data used in this report

This report is based on feedback collected from students and Business Guides at the first and after the final programme event using an online survey. Staff from participating schools were also asked to provide their views on the programme once it had finished.

In total, 31 out of the 42 Business Guides provided feedback at either the launch or final event and two out of the participating four schools provided feedback after the programme. Amongst students, 57 out of the 90 attending the launch event and 52 out of the 85 who attended the final event completed a feedback form.

The analysis and commentary provided are that of Research Partners, a specialist social policy research and evaluation consultancy, who are independent of the programme.

2. Student feedback

Key points

By the end of *Be the Change* students were more positive than they were at the start on **7 out of the 12** indicators used to track the impact of the programme on students.

Some of the areas where pupil attitudes changed the most were the proportion of students who:

- were clear about the things they needed to work on to be happy in life (92% of students at the end of the programme agreed/strongly agreed up from 82% at the start).
- were aware of their own strengths that will appeal to future employers (87% of students at the end of the programme agreed/strongly agreed up from 57% at the start)
- know what they needed to do to remove any barriers to their own success (79% of students at the end of the programme agreed or strongly agreed up from 48% at the start)
- understood what local employers were looking for when they recruit (77% of students at the end of the programme agreed or strongly agreed up from 39% at the start).

In addition, 96% of students would recommend the programme to others and 67% had broadened their social circles by making friends that they would not normally speak to.

Be the Change has therefore been able to continue to demonstrate impacts on student's perceptions of themselves and their aspirations for the future, even when operating during a pandemic and without the in-person contact possible in previous years.

The positive changes to how much students feel they understand the needs of their local employers demonstrates the continued effects of Business Guides, even when they could not meet up with their mentees in person.

The primary aim of *Be the Change* is to make a positive impact on the lives of young people. Understanding what they think of the programme and what they get out of it is therefore crucial. Student feedback was obtained via online questionnaires which they were asked to complete before the launch event and at the end of the programme.

2.1 The overall impact of the programme

The first thing to note is that students were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences on the programme. At the end of the programme, students were asked whether they would recommend *Be the Change* to others and 96% said that they would.

Students were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with twelve statements about the possible impact of the programme on their outlook on, and awareness of, various areas. Responses were on a four-point scale: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'I'm not sure' or 'nope'. For all the questions, a 'strongly agree' response was the most positive outcome. By tracking student views across the two time points, it is possible to see what changes occurred during the programme.

It is interesting to note that the relative starting points of pupils in this year's programme were more positive than in other years, overall. This suggests that working with whole year groups, as would be expected, means that the programme worked with a broader range of students in 2021 than in previous years. Whilst the most disaffected students were still included, this was (in some cases) alongside pupils with higher engagement levels as well.

By the end of the programme, students gave more positive responses to 7 out of the 12 than they were at the start, particularly how much they understand what local employers were looking for, and how much they know what they need to do to remove barriers to their own success.

The impacts observed by this year's evaluation are smaller, on average, in relation to all the indicators than in previous years. This is likely to reflect the move to an online programme and changes to the way that students were selected to take part. Simply put we are not comparing like with like when comparing the results of previous years with those from this year and we would therefore expect there to be differences in the estimated impacts of the programme just as we have observed. The backdrop of the pandemic must also be taken into account. This has been a period of considerable change and challenge for schools, young people and employers.

2.1.1 Areas of greatest change

One way to determine the areas where students demonstrated the biggest changes in their attitudes, understanding and knowledge is to look at the mean score for each item. Each response is assigned a value from 1 ('nope') to 4 ('strongly agree') then the average score is calculated across all the students. This analysis is presented in Figure 2.1. Those items with the biggest difference between the mean score at the start of the programme and the end are presented on the right-hand side of the chart. A mean score of 3.0 or above indicates agreement with that statement.

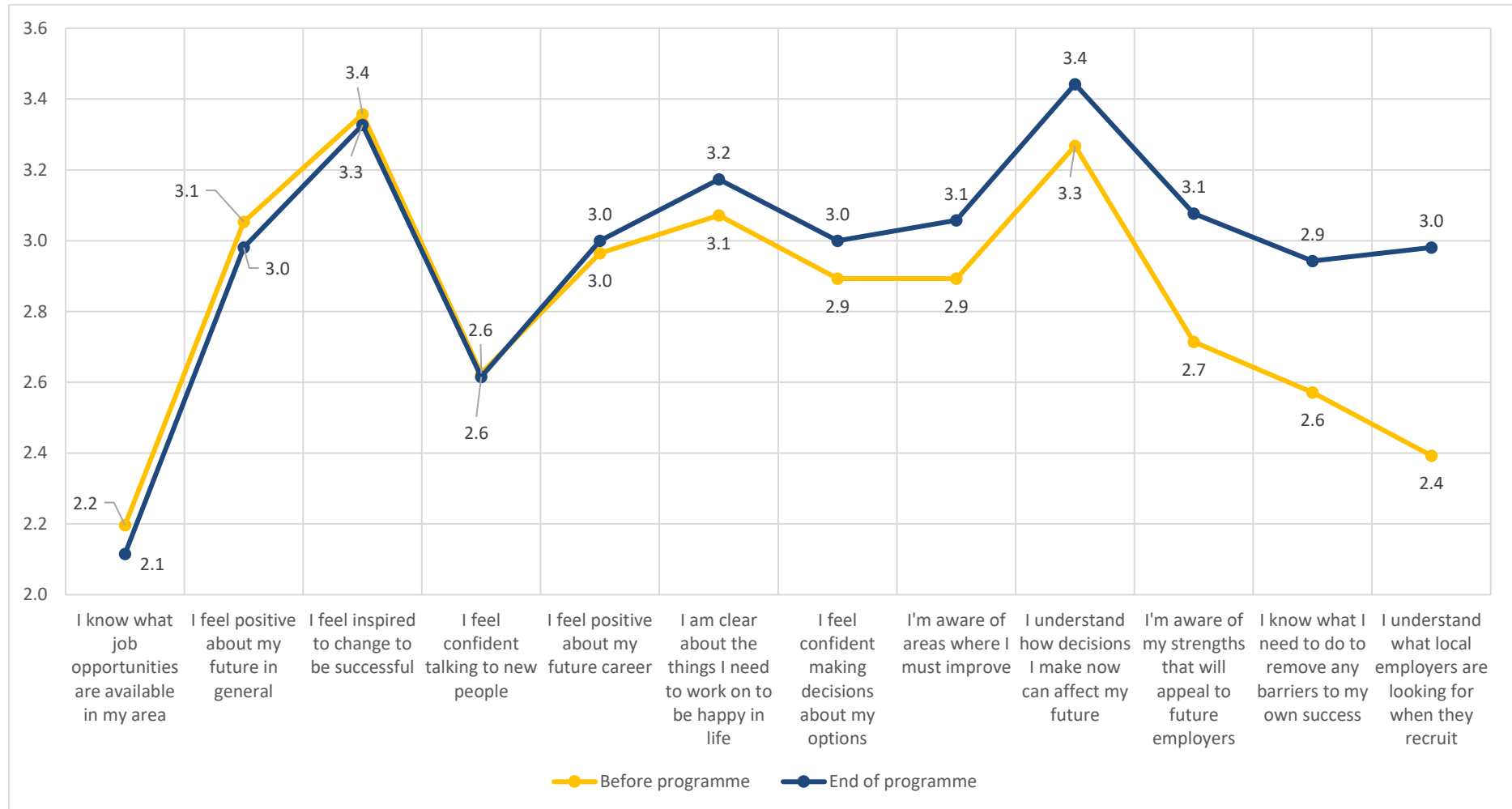
This shows that the biggest gains were made relating to:

- *I understand what local employers are looking for* - the mean score increased from 2.4 to 3.0.
- *I know what I need to do to remove any barriers to my own success* - the mean score increased from 2.6 to 2.9
- *I am aware of my strengths that will appeal to future employers* - the mean score increased from 2.7 to 3.1
- *I understand how decisions I make now can affect my future* - the mean score increased from 3.3 to 3.4.

2.2 In their own words

Students were given the opportunity to provide more in-depth feedback in their own words at the end of each of the questionnaires. Some examples of their comments are provided in Figure 2.2. All the responses provided were positive about the programme and students described enjoying the process and feeling that they had got something out of their involvement.

Figure 2.1: student attitudes before and after they participated in *Be the Change*



Based on 56 student responses prior to the launch event and 52 student responses after the final event

Source: *Be the Change* student questionnaire data (Mch 2021 to May 2021)

Figure 2.2: Student testimonials

Student feedback

“The program has really helped me develop my knowledge of myself and my skills. It has also improved my skills with talking to new people. I would definitely recommend this to others”

“It has helped me understand how to put myself out there and be more confident in my decisions”

“The programme has helped me be a more confident person. It’s also taught me to not be scared when I’m not in my comfort zone”

“It has definitely helped me”

“I loved it, I had a blast speaking to new people and sharing experiences”

“It was good talking to the people that had a bad time at a young stage in their life and then have turned it around to then be successful and not to give up in what they believe in”

“I now understand that certain decisions during school help my future”

Source: **Be the Change** post-programme questionnaire data - verbatim comments from students (May 2021)

2.3 Different impacts of the programme

This section provides further details on progress made by students on the 12 core outcome questions by breaking these down further into three categories in line with the overall aims of the programme, namely:

1. Increasing the happiness, confidence and hope of young people, and improving their relationships with others.
2. Inspiring young people to consider their route into employment.
3. Inspiring young people to change their own behaviour and circumstances.²

2.3.1 Happiness, confidence, hope and relationships

This section covers the three questions which relate to the happiness, confidence, and relationships of young people. By the time of the final event:

- 79% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt positive about their future careers (up from 73% before the launch - Figure A2.1)
- 83% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt positive about their future in general (similar to the 84% before the launch - Figure A2.2)
- 60% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident talking to new people (similar to the 61% before the launch - Figure A2.3)

Overall, therefore, over the course of the programme, students maintained their levels of happiness and confidence despite the ongoing pandemic. In interpreting this, it is important to note that there is a growing body of evidence that young people's mental health has been negatively affected by the pandemic. An analysis by the [Health Foundation](#), for example, concludes that: "What is being shown in survey after survey is that, compared to older age groups, young people's wellbeing is suffering." **Be the Change** may therefore have acted as a protective factor for participants, against a backdrop of school closures, anxiety and uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

2.3.2 Inspiring young people to consider their route into employment

This section covers six of the core questions each of which relates to young people's routes into employment.

By the time of the awards:

- 87% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of their own strengths that will appeal to future employers (up from 57% before the launch - Figure A2.4)
- 79% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident making decision about their options (up from 73% prior to the launch - Figure A2.6)
- 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they understood what local employers were looking for when they recruit (up from 39% prior to the launch - Figure A2.7).

This is the area where the programme has had the most impact on students. As with previous years the item with the biggest overall gains between the start and end of the programme³ was in relation

² The detailed results for this section are provided in accompanying figures in the Appendix as Figures A2.1 to A2.12.

³ In terms of the proportion of students who agreed and strongly agreed with the statement.

to knowing what local employers are looking for when they recruit. This demonstrates the continued impact that Business Guides have had on their mentees, even when working with them remotely.

2.3.3 Inspiring young people to change their own behaviour and circumstances

This section covers the final five core questions which relate to young people's desire to change their behaviour and circumstances. By the time of the awards:

- *87% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of areas where they must improve* (up from 80% before the launch - Figure A2.8)
- *98% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they understood how decisions they made now could affect their future* (up from 95% before the launch - Figure A2.10)
- *92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were clear about the things they needed to work on to be happy in life* (up from 82% before the launch - Figure A2.11)
- *79% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they knew what they needed to do to remove any barriers to their own success* (up from 48% before the launch - Figure A2.12).

The programme was able to continue to make a difference to student's desire and ability to make positive changes in their lives even when delivered remotely. The greatest gains made by students in this area are therefore in relation to the core ***Be the Change*** outcome of understanding the need and the means to make changes to their life to be successful.

2.4 Experience of being on the programme

At the end of the programme students were also asked whether they had befriended people during ***Be the Change*** that they would not normally. This recognises the importance and influence of peer relationships for young people. Over two-thirds of students (67%) agree/strongly agree that they made friends with people they would not normally speak to.

3. Feedback from Business Guides and schools

Key findings:

Most of the 2021 Business Guides were working with **Be the Change** for the first time and enjoyed the experience. All of those taking part would recommend the programme to colleagues and other businesses, nine out of ten were satisfied with their involvement in the programme and eight out of ten would consider taking part again. The vast majority of Business Guides (95%) felt that **Be the Change** is something that all young people would benefit from.

As a result of the programme, Business Guides believe that they now:

- feel more positive about their job and organisation (95% agreed/strongly agreed)
- believe they could create stronger relationships between their organisation and participating schools (84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed)
- have improved their training/coaching skills (79% agreed/strongly agreed)
- believe they have the potential to create stronger relationships between their organisation and other participating businesses (74% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed).

Business Guides also observed that as a result of **Be the Change** students:

- had become more positive about their future (90% agreed/strongly agreed)
- were now inspired to make positive changes in their lives (84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed)
- had developed skills and qualities that employers were looking for (84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed).

In addition, participating schools had seen impacts on their students and appreciated the programme and its potential to help these students make changes.

3.1 Business Guide views on the programme

Business Guides were asked to complete an online questionnaire after the launch event and at the end of the programme. No pre-launch baseline data is collected so the focus of the analysis is on how Business Guides felt by the end of the programme and how this changed from their initial impressions after the launch.

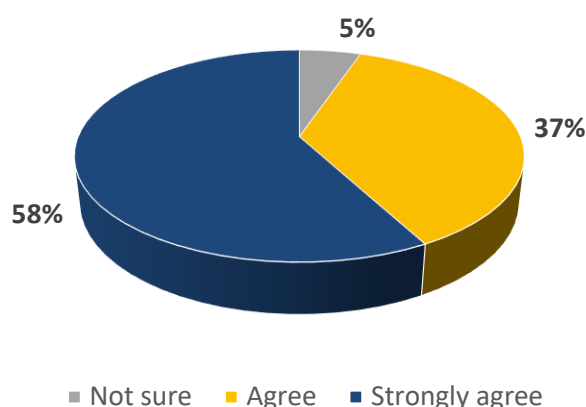
The areas covered by the questionnaires were Business Guide views on:

- the impact of the programme on participating students
- their experiences of taking part
- any wider benefits to their organisation.

3.1.1 Perceived impact on student participants

Business Guides were asked to reflect on the impact of the programme on participating students. Almost all (95%) of the Business Guides agreed or strongly agreed that the programme would benefit all young people (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: *Be the Change* is something that all young people would benefit from regardless of their engagement and attainment levels (% Business Guides at the end of the programme)



Number of participating Business Guides at the end of the programme: 19

Source: *Be the Change Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data (May 2021)*

Business Guides were also asked to comment on five specific student outcomes. The questions used a similar four-point scale to the one used in the student questionnaires.⁴ Figure 3.2 shows the results after the launch event and after the final programme event in terms of the average (mean) score given to each statement out of 4 by Business Guides. The higher the score, the more Business Guides agree that students have changed.

The results show that, after the launch event, Business Guides were, on average, either not sure or agreed that students were making each of the five changes. By the end of the programme, they were more positive, and their ratings had increased by around one rating point. They now tended to agree or strongly agree that students were making changes.

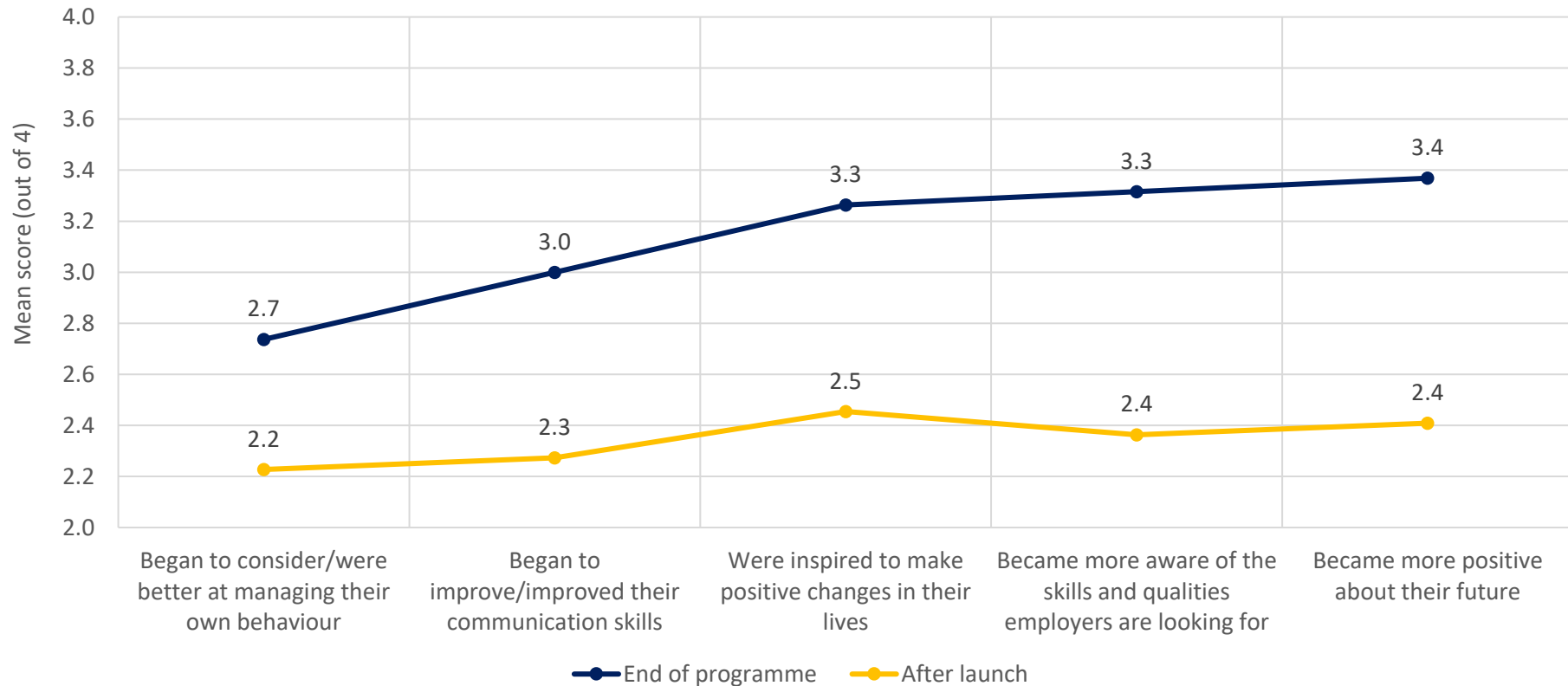
By the end of the programme:

- 90% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students had become more positive about their future
- 84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students had developed skills and qualities that employers were looking for
- 84% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students were now inspired to make positive changes in their lives
- 74% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that students had improved their communication skills
- 58% of Business Guides agreed/strongly agreed that the students were now better able to manage their own behaviour.

Given the challenges of running the programme during the pandemic, it is encouraging that such high proportions of Business Guides have observed impacts on the students they have worked with.

⁴ 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Not sure' or 'I don't agree'. For all the questions, a 'Strongly agree' response was the most positive outcome

Figure 3.2: Business Guide views on how participating students will benefit from *Be the Change* (comparison of mean scores after the launch event and at the end of the programme)



Number of participating Business: 22 after the launch event and 19 at the end of the programme

Scores are calculated based on a score of 1 = 'I don't agree', 2 = 'Not sure', 3 = 'Agree' and 4 = 'Strongly agree'

Source: *Be the Change Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data (Mch and May 2021)*

Business Guides with experience of working in previous years reflected that delivering the programme remotely in 2021 had been more challenging for everyone, but that it had still been meaningful and impactful for participating students:

The students started out with varying levels of confidence, but they have clearly grown in just a short space of time. I thoroughly enjoyed the first introductory session (where there was a main stage and individual tables), it proved to be a good way to break down barriers and build initial relationships with the mentees. The subsequent 1:1 sessions further allowed the mentees the space to be open and honest about how they are feeling, without judgement from other students. (Business Guide)

3.1.2 The experience of being a Business Guide

Business Guides were asked a series of questions about their experience of participating in **Be the Change** in terms of how they felt about their involvement in the programme, and how being involved had affected them.

Business Guides had a positive experience of being part of **Be the Change** (Figure 3.3). By the time of the final event:

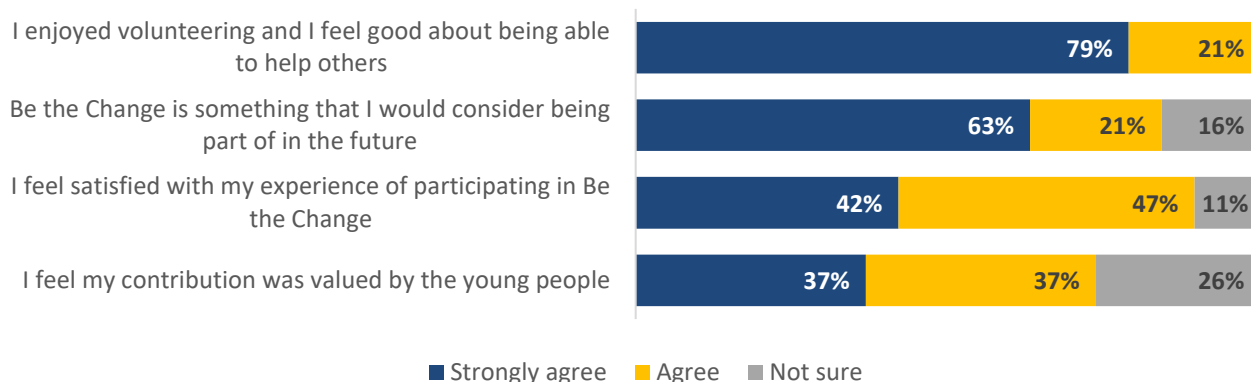
- 100% agree/strongly agree that they had enjoyed volunteering and felt good about being able to help others
- 84% agree/strongly agree that they would consider taking part again
- 89% agree/strongly agree that they were satisfied with their experience of taking part
- 74% agree/strongly agree that their contribution had been valued by the young people.

In addition, Business Guides, on average, grew more positive about their experiences from the launch to the end of the programme.

The majority of Business Guides felt that they had developed skills during their involvement with **Be the Change** (Figure 3.4). More specifically by the end of the programme:

- 95% agreed/strongly agreed that they felt more positive about their job and organisation as a result of volunteering
- 79% agreed/strongly agreed that the experience had improved their training/coaching skills
- 70% agreed/strongly agreed that the experience had improved their management skills.

Figure 3.3: Business Guide experiences of taking part in *Be the Change* (% at the end of the programme)



Number of participating Business Guides at the end of the programme: 19

Source: *Be the Change Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data (May 2021)*

Figure 3.4: Effect of being a Business Guide on their skills and views of work (% at the end of the programme)



Number of participating Business Guides at the end of the programme: 19

Source: *Be the Change Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data (May 2021)*

3.1.3 Wider benefits

Business Guides were also asked to reflect on a range of wider benefits and indicate whether they agreed that these had been established during the programme (Figure 3.5). Business Guides tended to be most positive about these items after the launch and awards events. Their responses at the end of the programme were that:

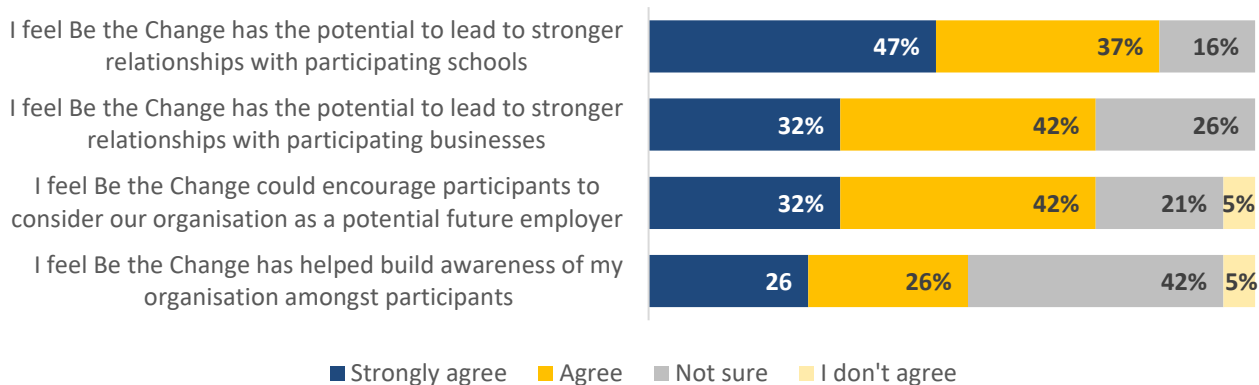
- 84% agree/strongly agree that *Be the Change* has the potential to lead to stronger relationships with participating schools
- 74% agree/strongly agree that *Be the Change* has the potential to lead to stronger relationships with participating businesses
- 74% of agree/strongly agree that *Be the Change* could encourage participants to consider their organisation as a potential future employer
- 52% of agree/strongly agree that *Be the Change* helped build awareness of my organisation.

These results are largely in line with those from previous programmes, although a lower proportion of guides had seen an increased awareness of their organisation than has previously been the case. This is likely

to be related to the fact that it was not possible to run physical visits to Business Guide's workplaces. As one Business Guide stated:

In previous years I found the office visit to be the real turning point for the students which we couldn't do this year and I felt the impact of this quite strongly. (Business Guide)

Figure 3.5: Business Guide views on the wider benefits of *Be the Change* (% at the end of the programme)



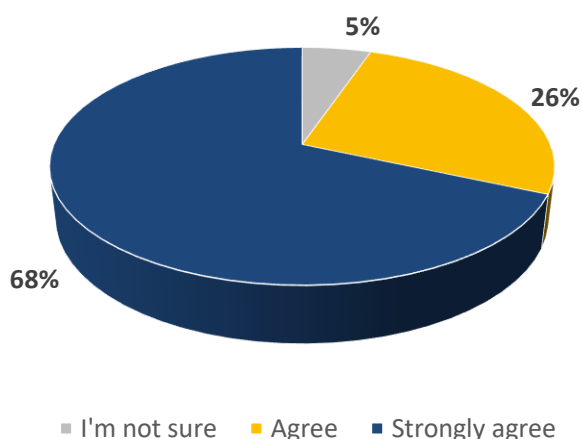
Number of participating Business Guides at the end of the programme: 19

Source: *Be the Change Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data (May 2021)*

3.1.4 Would Business Guides recommend the programme?

After the Launch, Stepping Up and Awards events, Business Guides were asked whether they agreed with the statement "*I would recommend taking part in **Be the Change** to colleagues and other businesses*". Almost all (95%) of the Business Guides either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the programme to others (see Figure 3.6), and this was the same after both the launch and the final event.

Figure 3.6: I would recommend the *Be the Change* to colleagues and other businesses (% Business Guides at the end of the programme)



Number of participating Business Guides = 22

Source: *Be the Change 2021 Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data, May 2019*

3.1.5 In their own words

The evaluation questionnaires gave the Business Guides the opportunity to provide feedback about the programme in their own words. Comments included ways to improve the programme as well as how Business Guides felt about being involved or their views about student progress. Some of the comments provided are presented verbatim in Figure 3. 7 and below:

It has been a privilege to take part in the programme which is expertly tailored and poses some of life's Big Questions. The clever itinerary includes some composed and compelling answers resulting in meaningful conversations and smiles along the way. By understanding student's needs and interests, the programme encourages self-belief, empathy and compassion. From a personal perspective, being a business mentor has been poignant and liberating at the same time. Taking part in the programme has transformed the 9-5 into something far more meaningful – I wish I'd had similar coaching at the same age! (Business Guide)

I think Be the Change could be beneficial to so many young people. I think it builds communication skills and is good to share experiences. I think it also provides a great opportunity to inspire and for me, boosting confidence and self-worth in young people is vital in ensuring a stronger and more resilient generation. Something I feel quite passionately about. In my current role I see so many kids lacking in these things that ultimately play a part in their decision making. They don't feel they are worth more so they are vulnerable to exploitation, if they had been empowered with the knowledge and belief that they are worth so much more and can achieve so much more they maybe wouldn't be so vulnerable to exploitation or less desirable paths. It is a complicated matter and not so simplistic to fix but for a lot of kids it just takes someone to believe in them. (Business Guide)

Overall, the programme was seen as well organised with excellent communications and an inspiring speaker. There were some initial technical difficulties as everyone adjusted to working remotely but guides acknowledged these were, to a degree, inevitable as the programme moved to a blend of online and face to face delivery from a fully face to face programme before the pandemic. Guides appreciated the fact that the programme had continued throughout the pandemic under difficult circumstances. The videos delivered by Jack the Lad in place of in-person events were also well received.

I believe that the programme was managed in the best way possible, taking into account the current Covid restrictions. I felt fully supported by receiving the videos of Jack and the booklets were a great help in advance of taking part in the 1:1's with the students. Communications from the Event Manager were precise, detailed and informative. (Business Guide)

The BTC team are incredible and this programme is so beneficial to young people. I am so proud to have been a part of it, even if it was virtual this year due to Covid19. I think this has all been handled very well and the format of the joint sessions worked really well, being able to move around the virtual tables and meet/network with new people etc. (Business Guide)

Jack's videos were great, demonstrates his enthusiastic approach which I'm sure the students have enjoyed. (Business Guide)

There were some difficulties associated with the move to online and remote delivery. Some students, for example, chose to turn off their cameras and mics during the launch event and first 1:1 session with their mentor which made it difficult for guides to interact with them⁵. This is a common experience amongst educators trying to teach and work with young people remotely during the pandemic. Research in the US has explored why students keep their cameras off and found that it is common for students to worry about their appearance and people and their location being seen behind them. The same study also found that for many students it is the cultural 'norm' not to turn cameras on. The issues faced by **Be the Change** are therefore common across remote educational provision and a larger problem that needs to be overcome

⁵ <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2021/01/appearance-social-norms-keep-students-zoom-cameras>

more generally. However, as **Be the Change** often works with less engaged young people, the issues faced by the programme in working online are likely to be greater than some other programmes.

Some guides provided constructive feedback about elements of the programme which they had found most challenging online. These comments included that:

- some of the interactions between the Business Guides and their mentees felt too short or a little rushed. This is likely to reflect the programme's desire to keep students engaged, and concerns about their ability to do so virtually for longer periods.
- one guide had struggled with the internet connectivity (although they still felt that they had managed to cover the whole programme). These issues can affect any online event, even when just working with adults, and are largely beyond the control of the programme.
- arrangements for the remote one to ones could be difficult in terms of scheduling meetings and the punctuality of students. **Be the Change** was reliant on schools and individual pupils for this.
- it was more difficult to feel connected to the programme when working remotely. Some guides would appreciate more frequent communication with other mentors and more opportunities for them to meet up virtually. This is something which could be addressed in future programmes.
- because running sessions online with students was more difficult for guides, they would have appreciated guidance and tips on how best to do this. There is considerable learning from running the 2021 programme which could be used to create a document like this in future.

Due to the pandemic, it was challenging speaking with the students online rather than face to face. I felt the communication with the business guides could have been more frequent. I enjoyed the Launch, being able to chat with other business guides and students in groups. I felt this could have been done more over the course of the programme. (Business Guide)

Overall, therefore, the programme has worked well despite having to be adapted for remote delivery. Most of the difficulties encountered were largely beyond the control of the programme team, but there are also some valuable learning points about what Business Guides need in future to feel connected and supported whilst working virtually.

3.2 School views

Following the programme, representatives of two of the four participating schools provided their views on the impact of the programme on their students.

Both respondents felt that the programme had helped students:

- Improve their attainment
- Improve their attendance
- Become more positive about their futures
- Develop skills and qualities that employers are looking for
- Be inspired to make positive changes in their lives
- Was something that all young people would benefit from regardless of their engagement or attainment level.

More detailed comments from these teachers are presented in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.7: Business Guide testimonials

Business Guide feedback

The time I have spent on the Be The Change Programme has been enlightening and inspiring! Getting to work alongside so many like-minded adults to try and encourage young people to be their best selves has been an absolute pleasure and a definite highlight that I will always remember

Be The Change is an excellent programme allowing businesses to reach out to young adults finding their way and encouraging them to follow their dreams

I feel really privileged to have been part of this programme. The team at LoveLocalJobs do an amazing job at supporting the students and business guides alike. The whole process has been inspirational and the change in my students over such a short period of time really shows the power initiatives like this can have

I can honestly admit to feeling a connection I hadn't expected at the beginning

Be The Change programme was genuinely inspiring and I hope will better the lives of the students who took part, helping them to become the best version of themselves by facing their fears and stepping forwards in their lives

I think BTC is a fantastic programme, the essence of bringing people together creates a lovely, nurturing, inspiring, motivational environment for all. I hope the young people get out of it as much as I have as a mentor

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to have met some incredibly inspirational young people as part of the initiative. I really enjoyed getting to know my mentees and having the opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life

Source: *Be the Change 2021 Business Guide evaluation questionnaire data, May 2019*

Figure 3.8: Teacher testimonials

“This year has been challenging, but the engagement that the students have had with the brilliant business guides has been superb. Students that have struggled with attendance issues have been mostly in school and we have had very few missed sessions. The retention rate throughout the programme has been phenomenal. There have been a couple of students who struggle with confidence, and I have seen this improve over the time that they have been involved in the sessions. To have someone that is not a teacher or parent take an interest in you and your life when you are 14 is a powerful message.”

“Be the Change” has been an excellent programme and really helped in supporting our students. Despite it being run very differently this year due to the pandemic students were still able to gain a lot from the work they put in. The sessions with “Jack the Lad” were brilliant and students really responded well to his enthusiasm and the one to one mentor sessions with industry professionals helped support the messages that he gave and helped to the students to see his words in a real life setting. The best thing of all though is seeing the change in our students. It was wonderful to see students who often don’t engage as much having very thoughtful and open conversations with their mentors and seeing the improvement already in their confidence and resilience in lessons.”

Feedback from schools

Source: **Be the Change** post-programme questionnaire data - verbatim comments from teachers (May 2021)

4. Conclusions

The pandemic has been a challenging time for all and in particular has impacted on the wellbeing of young people. Alongside this for adults, different challenges have been experienced, as employees have become to feel more disconnected from the workplace. Over the years the Love Local Jobs Foundation have helped to bridge the gap between education and the world of work and to provide much needed support during such a difficult period. Running ***Be the Change*** 2021 during the pandemic raised a range of operational challenges for the programme team, participating schools and Business Guides. These were overcome by adapting the programme to a mix of in-person and remote delivery.

The programme has been able to maintain its impacts in three key areas:

1. Business Guides and young people have been able to connect with and learn from one another resulting in young people developing a greater awareness of their local employers and a greater understanding of what they can offer these employers.
2. The programme was still able to generate a desire for change, and a greater awareness of how to do this, amongst participating young people.
3. Schools continued to see impacts on students which translated into improved outcomes and behaviour when back in school.

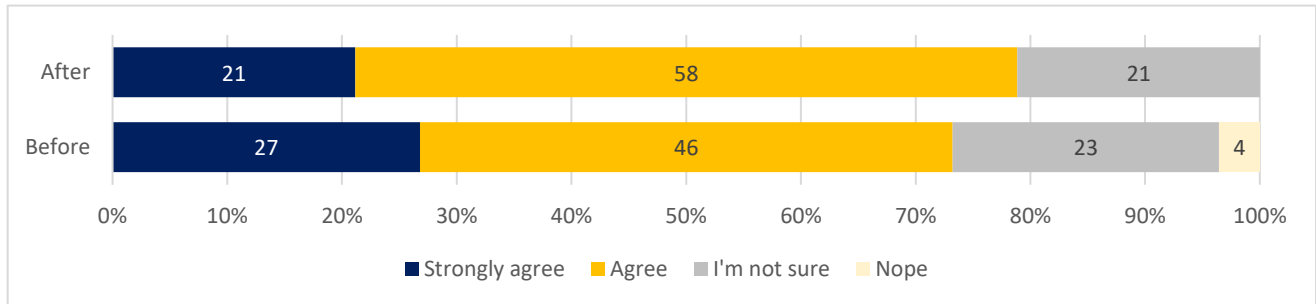
Reflecting on the whole programme therefore we conclude that:

- The programme ran successfully in 2021. The delivery mechanisms had to change completely, by using a multitude of formats, students were able to participate in a variety of interactions during the pandemic. Just running the programme during the pandemic is a considerable achievement and is testament to the commitment of everyone involved.
- The impacts of the programme are positive, with evidence that young people and business guides have got a lot out of their involvement
- There may be elements of virtual delivery that can be maintained for future programmes. To support any future virtual interactions, it would be useful to:
 - Provide Business Guides with tips and tricks to help them overcome some of the difficulties they faced managing the behaviour of students online (e.g. when microphones and cameras were switched off)
 - Think of ways to allow mentors to interact with one another and other ways to enhance their feeling of 'connectedness' to the programme.

Appendix: Detailed data tables

When interpreting the following figures, the most positive responses are presented on the left-hand side of the figure (in dark blue if you are reading a colour version). If the programme made a positive difference to student views/feelings, *the length of the dark blue and dark yellow bars combined should be shortest at the bottom*. This is the case for seven out of the 12 core student outcomes.

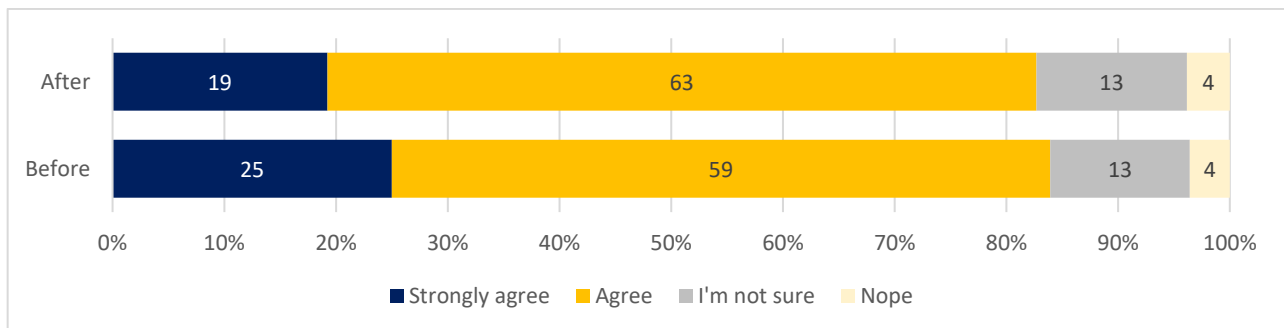
Figure A2.1: I feel positive about my future career (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

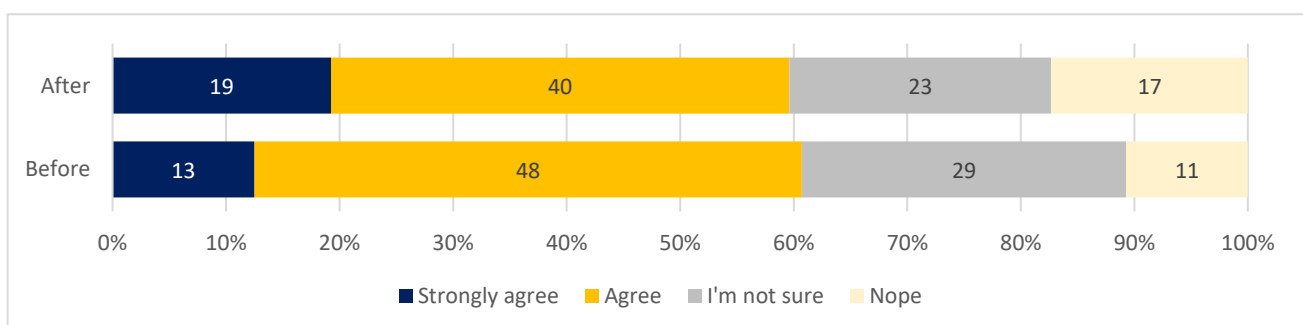
Figure A2.2: I feel positive about my future in general (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

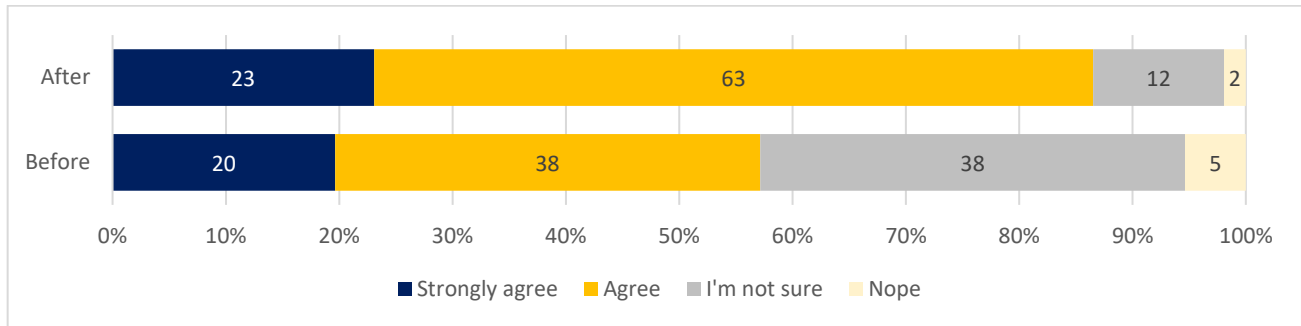
Figure A2.3: I feel confident talking to new people (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

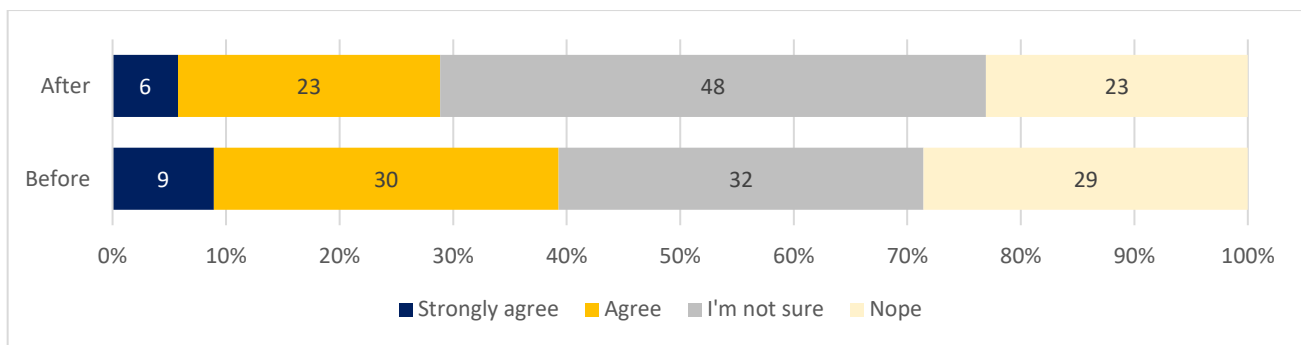
Figure A2.4: I am aware of my own strengths that will appeal to future employers (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

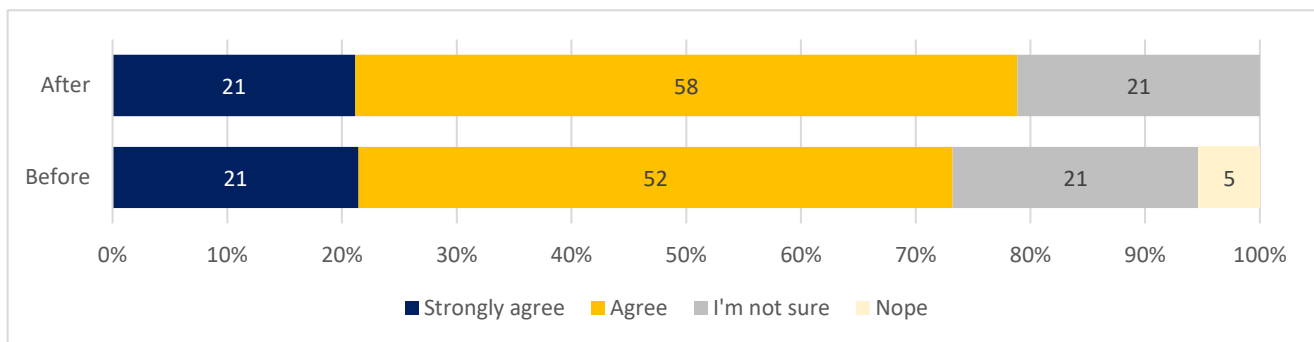
Figure A2.5: I know what job opportunities are available in my area (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

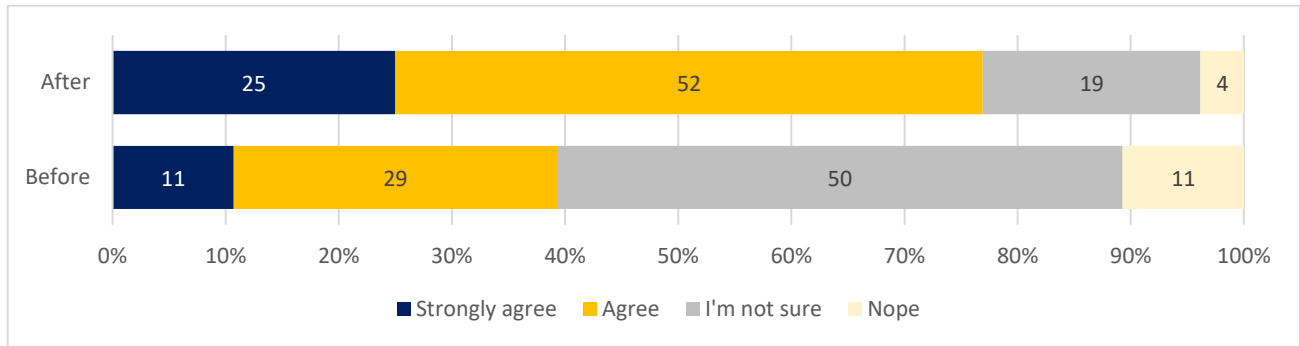
Figure A2.6: I feel confident making decisions about my options (e.g. what to study, whether to go on to college or uni, getting work experience etc) (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

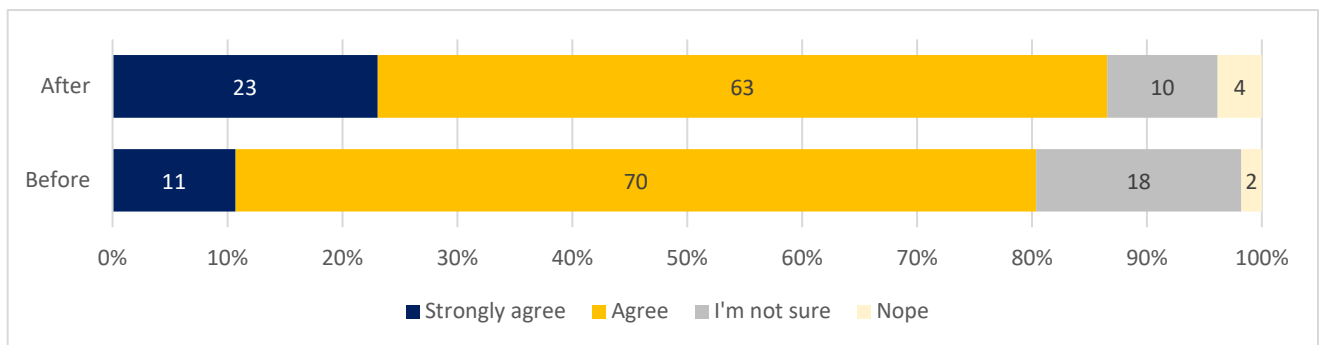
Figure A2.7: I understand what local employers are looking for when they recruit (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

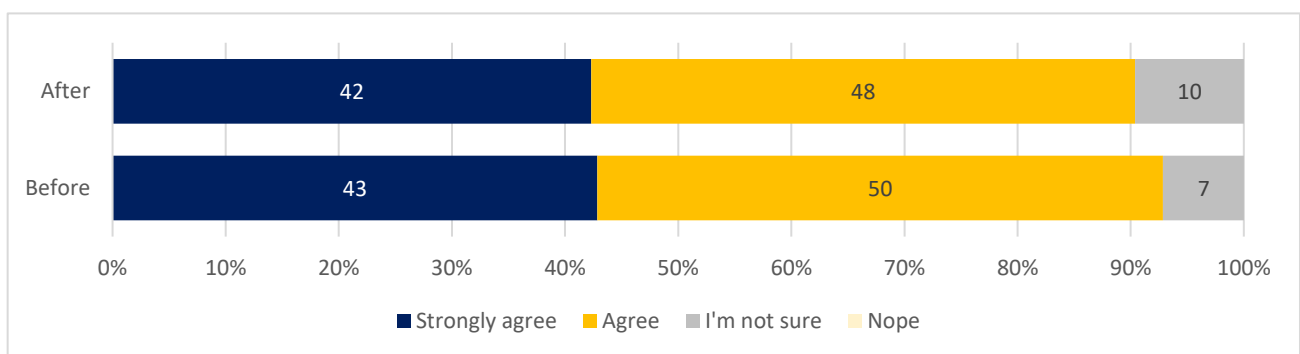
Figure A2.8: I am aware of areas where I must improve (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

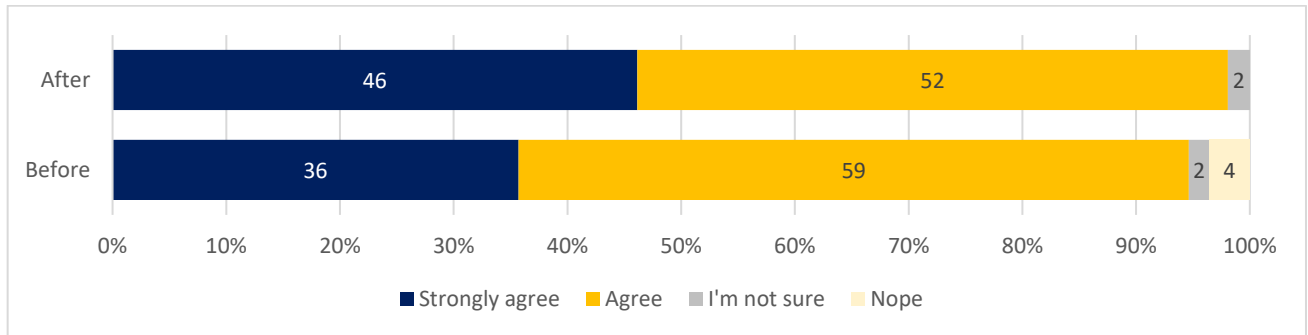
Figure A2.9: I feel inspired to change to be successful (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change** Brighton student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

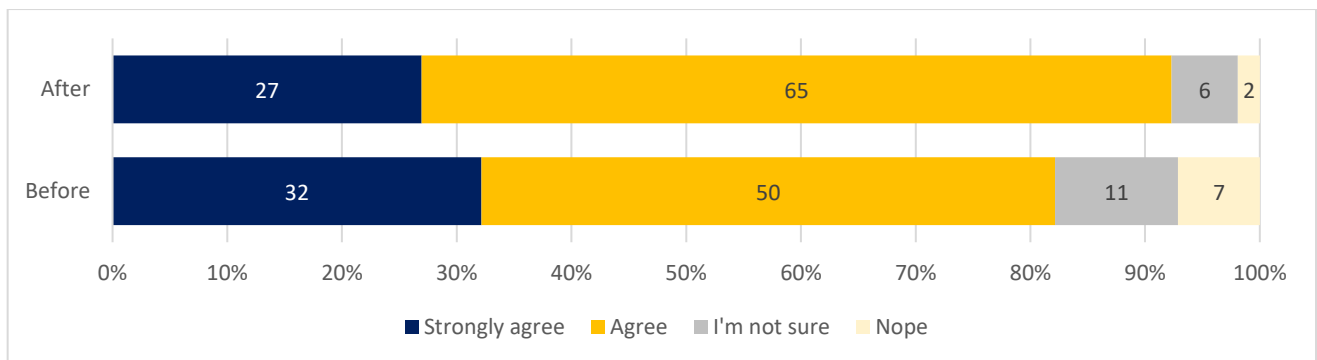
Figure A2.10: I understand how decisions I make now can affect my future options (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

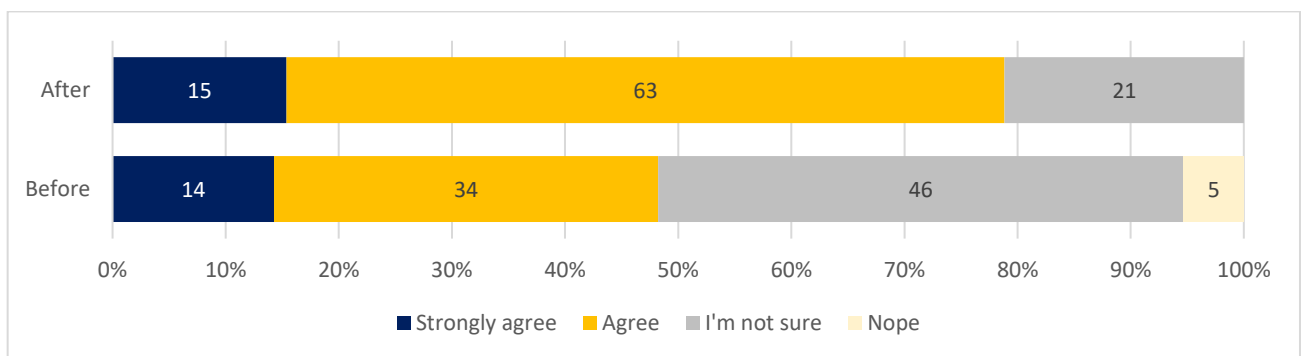
Figure A2.11: I am clear about the things I need to work on to be happy in life (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021

Figure A2.12: I know what I need to do to remove any barriers to my own success (%)



Number of participating students: pre-launch = 56, post-awards = 52

Source: **Be the Change Brighton** student evaluation questionnaire data, Mch to May 2021