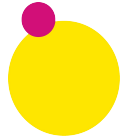


# FROM BARRIERS TO BREAKTHROUGHS



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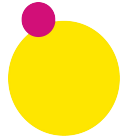
# ABOUT BRIGHTSPARKS

Brightsparks is a research, learning and development organisation that specialises in behaviour change for social good.

We work with organisations across the UK in Education, Health and Social care - from charities and local authorities and to NHS and Government departments- to tackle challenges and demonstrate a measurable impact.

All of our work is trauma informed and rooted in lived experience, ensuring that the voices of those most affected are at the heart of everything we do.



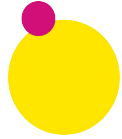


# OUR WORK

Brightsparks works with people who face barriers to education and employment, including refugees, return-to-learners, and those with limited access to careers guidance or confidence-building opportunities.

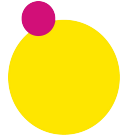
Our work combines practical employability support, emotional resilience development, and research-informed practice to help learners progress into post-16, post-18 education and meaningful employment and training.

**Changing  
behaviour for  
social good.**



# WHO WE WORK WITH





# NAVIGATING POST-16 AND POST-18 PATHWAYS

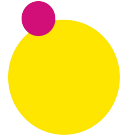
Many of the learners we work with are capable and motivated but lack:

- Confidence in their ability to succeed
- Experience of application processes
- May have had negative experiences

Brightsparks supports learners by:

- Explaining post-16 and post-18 options in clear, accessible language
- Providing hands-on guidance with applications, CVs, work placements, interviews and enrolment
- Supporting learners to make informed choices and consider all options

This approach is particularly important for those who have faced multiple barriers



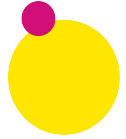
# CASE STUDY - REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

Our work with young refugees highlights the complex barriers many face when accessing education and employment, including:

- Limited knowledge of the UK education and employment system
- Language and cultural barriers
- Interrupted or unrecognised prior education
- Low confidence following trauma or displacement

We support learners to:

- Understand UK education, training and employment pathways (and qualification equivalencies)
- Explore realistic next steps into ESOL, FE, HE, volunteering, training or work
- Develop employability skills alongside confidence and communication



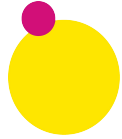
# BRIGHTSPARKS ACADEMY AND RETURN TO LEARNERS

Many participants arrive with:

- Outdated skills or qualifications
- Low confidence and imposter syndrome
- Anxiety about re-entering learning or employment

The Academy combines:

- Digital and employability skills training
- One-to-one and group employability support
- Practical guidance on CVs, applications and career pathways



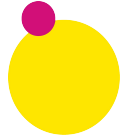
# EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE - A FOUNDATION FOR PROGRESSION

Social and emotional resilience is often a hidden barrier to achievement. Many learners face:

- Fear of failure
- Low self-belief
- Anxiety around applications, interviews or returning to education
- Previous negative experiences of learning

Brightsparks embeds emotional resilience into all programmes by:

- Creating safe, supportive learning environments
- Encouraging reflection, peer support and confidence-building
- Helping learners recognise and articulate their strengths



# RESEARCH INFORMED PRACTICE

Brightsparks undertakes ongoing research into:

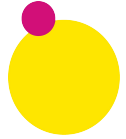
- Learner experiences of education and employability programmes (for example our recent work with Action for Children on care leavers experiences of apprenticeships)
- Barriers to progression for disadvantaged groups
- What effective, inclusive support looks like in practice

This research:

- Informs programme design and delivery
- Helps us adapt provision to real learner needs
- Strengthens the impact and credibility of our work

By combining lived experience, practitioner insight and research, we ensure our approach is evidence-based rather than assumption-led. The experts are the young people themselves.

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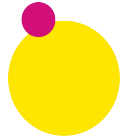
# RAISING ASPIRATIONS

Across all programmes, we focus on raising aspiration by increasing understanding.

Learners are supported to:

- Explore a range of education and employment pathways
- Understand what different roles and routes involve in practice
- See progression as achievable and relevant to them

Early exposure helps learners build confidence, challenge limiting beliefs, and make choices based on knowledge rather than fear or lack of information.



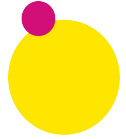
# JOINED UP PROGRESSION ROUTES

Working together for better outcomes

Our work shows that disadvantaged learners benefit most when:

- Schools, colleges, community organisations and employers collaborate
- Support continues across transition points
- Practical guidance, emotional support and aspiration-raising are aligned
- Individual needs are met and supported

Brightsparks often acts as a connector, helping learners navigate systems and ensuring progression routes are clearer and more joined-up.



# DRIVING FORWARD CHANGE

Brightsparks experience demonstrates that effective support for disadvantaged learners requires:

- Practical, step-by-step guidance
- Emotional resilience as a core element, not an add-on
- Early exposure to education and employment options
- Strong collaboration between professionals
- Strong role models and effective case studies
- A clear evidence base informed by research and lived experience

**QUESTIONS?**

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Thank you!

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