Ablaze is an independent charity that exists to tackle inequality of opportunity for young people in the West of England region.

We do this by utilising the skills and commitment of business volunteers.

We aim to

- raise young people’s confidence and aspiration
- support their attainment and skill levels
- empower them with knowledge to make informed choices about their future

www.ablazebristol.org
Many of the children that read with Reading Buddies are attaining just below national average. Many of them do not read at home or struggle to read. The Reading Buddies really encourage these children to enjoy reading by spending good 1:1 time with them focusing on reading skills, praising them and discussing books. Their confidence and motivation increases, as well as their attainment.” Claire Banham, Glenfrome Primary School

“I really enjoyed the weekly visits and it was great being able to do something so worthwhile which was relatively easy to fit into your schedule.” Volunteer Reading Buddy from TLT LLP
Our Impact in 2017-18

- We have extended our reach to the wider West of England region and delivered programmes for 1,000 students in 41 secondary schools this year.
- Our primary programmes impacted over 435 pupils during 2017-18, with 93% of the interventions successfully continuing into 2018-19.
- 95% of children who had a Reading Buddy are now reading with more confidence and 93% of the children taking part in Number Partners feel they are now better at mental maths.
- Of the 264 secondary students who took part in our WEM business mentoring programme 97% are more confident in themselves and their ability to make decisions; 100% have better knowledge of careers and 98% have improved skills needed for employment.
- Future Quest mentoring is supporting successful post-16 transition across the region. 77% of students who received the mentoring in Y11 now have a set of SMART goals to aim for.
- 20 students from Bristol Metropolitan Academy took part in the second Airbus Flying Challenge at Airbus Filton site. 85% agreed the programme helped them to engage more at school.
- We trained 290 volunteers to support over 435 primary pupils with reading and maths skills.
- 15 students from Bridge Learning Campus took part in a ‘Bookworms’ reading programme held by Clarke Willmott and organised by Ablaze. 86% of students who took part feel more confident about themselves and their abilities having taken part in the programme and 71% say they enjoy reading more now.
- We ran a third poetry competition in schools across Bristol and South Gloucestershire with the theme ‘My Planet’. Our book contained 60 wonderful poems and eight beautiful pictures. This years competition is running now!
- Thanks to Rolls-Royce, a number of pupils from Ablaze schools got the opportunity to visit the Bristol Hippodrome. For many this was their first visit to the theatre, widening their cultural horizons at an early age.

Find more news from Ablaze at https://ablazebristol.org/news/

“Being a Number Partner took me out of my comfort zone which boosted my general confidence and helped me improve my communication skills.” Volunteer Number Partner, Airbus
The link with Intellect Books has been fantastic this year. The children benefitted hugely from a fantastic visit to their offices and got to find out all about publishing. The Reading Buddies have been very committed all year, coming in weekly to hear children read and this has made a huge difference in children’s understanding and enjoyment of texts.” Emma Cutmore, Whitehall Primary School
Our Impact in 2017-18: West of England Mentoring

West of England Mentoring:

WEM is a partnership of four organisations, Ablaze, Mentoring Plus, Babbasa and Bath Bridge. WEM aims to create a positive change for young people in our region in confidence, engagement and aspiration.

Evaluation data collected to date on our WEM mentoring programme shows that it is having a tangible, positive impact on young people who take part with 97% of students being more confident in themselves and their ability to make decisions. 100% of students have better knowledge of careers, with 98% understanding and improving skills for employment. Schools report that behaviour and confidence dramatically increase for a majority of students that take part.

We were particularly pleased with the impact in schools we targeted from the more deprived wards in the region. For example Oasis Brislington, which has major issues with low aspiration and successful post16 progression, fed back on the Y9 cohort that did WEM to say:

- 100% students increased in confidence & taking part in discussions
- 100% learned about careers & skills needed for work.
- 92% felt better about school
- 92% had a plan for post GCSE progression

City Academy, one of the schools we targeted with a high percentage of BAME students, were thrilled with the impact the programme had on their students. They reported that of their Y9 WEM cohort:

- 90% students increased in confidence & taking part in discussions
- 100% learned about careers & skills needed for work
- 90% felt better about school
- 90% had a plan for post GCSE progression

“We see a clear difference in students’ effort and attainment” Secondary School teacher

“I think work will be way more interesting than school” WEM Mentee
Our Impact in 2017-18: Secondary Programmes

**Airbus Flying Challenge 2017-18:**

The Airbus Flying Challenge ‘Take off for a successful life’ is the Airbus Foundation flagship youth development programme. It aims to inspire young people to continue their education, find their professional vocation and realise their dreams. Ablaze is a lead partner on delivery of the Flying Challenge.

The key aims of the programme are to:

- inspire students to continue in education and achieve better grades
- provide students with positive role models through Airbus employee and under-graduate mentors
- engage students in STEM subjects through hands-on flight and engineering related activity
- develop key employability and soft skills
- show students the breadth of careers in the aviation industry
- increase student confidence, self-esteem and motivation

**Evaluation highlights:**

- 100% of students thought the Flying Challenge programme was great or good, 85% said great
- 85% of students feel more confident in themselves and their abilities since participating on the programme
- 85% of students agreed the programme helped them to engage more with school
- The feedback on this year’s mentors was extremely positive and 100% of students said they enjoyed working with the mentors a lot: ‘They helped us a lot. They also made the whole experience much more fun.’
- 100% of mentors saw a change/improvement in student behaviour: ‘One student in particular posed us a bit of a challenge at the start, as they were very disengaged and often came across as not wanting to be at the session. Towards the end of the programme, this student is unrecognisable compared with their former self. They are engaged, chatty, willing to help and above all, they seem genuinely happy to be there.’
- 100% of mentors felt engagement and concentration levels had increased
- 100% of students agreed they had improved the following skills: self-management; leadership; communication; teamwork; and producing a product
- 100% of mentors thought students had improved the following skills; self-management, self-assessment, communication, learning with others, teamwork
- 74% of students had reached or exceeded 96% attendance by the end of the programme

“You can meet so many new, awesome people and learn things you never thought you would understand.” Airbus Flying Challenge student
Our Impact in 2017-18: Secondary Programmes

**Bookworms:**
15 students from Bridge Learning Campus took part in this year’s Bookworms programme, a collaborative reading experience, devised by Ablaze, for year 7 and 8 students who are behind the expected reading level or who demonstrate a reluctance to engage at school. Of the students who completed our evaluations:

- 100% feel more confident about themselves and their abilities having taken part in the programme
- 100% feel they improved their ability to take part in discussions
- 86% feel their reading and comprehension skills improved
- 71% enjoy reading more

All the volunteers who completed our evaluations felt that the students had improved their ability to take part in discussions and improved their reading and comprehension skills.

**Future Quest:**
Future Quest is part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme funded by the Office for Students (formally HEFCE) Future Quest aims to tackle the low percentage of university application and uptake of places in the region. Students from target wards across the region, where university uptake is as low as 8%, have taken part in a specially designed programme. The mentoring aimed to increase students confidence and motivation; encourage informed post 16 planning and increase positive continuation through to the end of KS5. Ablaze is contracted to manage student mentoring for the Future Quest programme.

27 secondary schools in Bristol and the surrounding area were offered support, teacher training and resources to deliver mentoring to Y11 Future Quest students. 22 schools participated, delivering mentoring to 282 students. Sessions covered a variety of topics, including revision techniques, resilience and visioning, careers guidance, post 16 planning and goal setting.

77% of students had set themselves goals and had a post 16 plan in place by the end of their mentoring sessions. Analysis of evaluation data showed that 75% of students felt their confidence and motivation in achieving their desired career had increased; 70% were more confident and motivated to try their best in their GCSEs.

“It is extremely rewarding for employees to be able to take part. The volunteers gain new skills and can feel a sense of achievement which all contribute to overall job satisfaction.”

Bookworms Volunteer

“Spending time with individuals and listening to them was invaluable for the Future Quest students, helping them come up with solutions of how best to help themselves.”

Oasis Brightstowe Careers Manager
Why we do what we do

Ablaze believes we have a duty to address the inequality and inclusion problems our young people are facing. Research by the Office for Students shows a significant number of our young people are getting reasonable or good GCSE results, but this is not translating into successful progression.

Data also suggests a young person’s postcode can directly affect their Post16 progression choices. There is a danger that as the region’s economy grows that these young people will continue to be left behind or be unable to benefit from this growth.

As well as the programmes highlighted in this report, we can arrange bespoke interventions in schools. For further details, please see our website or contact us.

West of England Secondary Mentoring Programme (WEM)

WEM is a unique group mentoring model where a minimum of six sessions take place for targeted student groups. Students work with a team of trained business mentors. Mentors impart knowledge of workplace skills, employability opportunities and pathways. WEM inspires and motivates students to raise their aspirations. The activities encourage students to build confidence and communication skills, set goals and work out pathways to achieving them.

We actively target disengaged students, those with challenging backgrounds and schools with high percentage pupil premium students. Among these groups aspirations are typically low and WEM helps these young people make sense of school and widen their future horizons.

Click here for more information about WEM

“I gained a lot of knowledge and great experience from taking part in this mentoring scheme. To be able to see the students grow in confidence and share some personal experience and life goals was very rewarding” WEM Volunteer Mentor, Novia Financial Group
**Reading Buddies**

Extensive research has strongly highlighted the importance for young people to master literacy before heading into secondary school. Ablaze particularly seeks to address this in the most disadvantaged areas of the city which have high levels of deprivation.

We target our Reading Buddy business support on schools with a high percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language, a high percentage of BME pupils and on pupils who receive PPF and Free School Meals.

With an estimated 1.5 million children currently destined to leave primary school without the ability to read well by 2025, Ablaze believes it is our duty to tackle this inequality in literacy by helping primary pupils rise above the lives they were born into.

[Click here for more information about Reading Buddies](#)

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**Number Partners**

A staggering 20% of 11 year old pupils in England currently leave primary school without the expected level of maths. This figure inevitably contributes to approximately 80% of adults having a low level of numeracy, with almost 50% of the population believing it’s socially acceptable to be bad at maths.

Ablaze seeks to address this trend in the most disadvantaged areas of the city by targeting our support on the young people who need it most. As with our Reading Buddy interventions, we target our Number Partner business support on schools with a high percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language, a high percentage of BME pupils and on pupils who receive PPF and Free School Meals.

[Click here for more information about Number Partners](#)

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“I really enjoyed seeing my reading buddy go from a level 2 to a level 10. He could hardly read when we started, and now he can really do it!” Volunteer Reading Buddy, OVO Energy
How we were funded

Ablaze is an independent charity. We receive no government or local council grants or commissions. We rely on revenue charged for our services and donations from supporters for our income.

2017/18 Income by source

- Funding for specific contract work undertaken: 64%
- Donations from business partners: 22%
- Programme charges to schools and businesses: 12%
- Grants from trusts and foundations: 1%
- Other (including poetry book sales, bank interest and personal donations): 1%

If you would like to donate towards our work, please visit our website.

“Pupils who took part in Number Partners have been more excited about their maths and willing to ‘give it a go’! Being able to talk about their mathematics learning with an additional adult enabled them to find and plug gaps. It raised their expectations about potential careers for themselves in the future.”  ” Julie Barlow, Blaise Primary School
How we spent our funds

100% of the money we raise goes towards supporting the programmes we run to impact on social mobility for young people in the West of England region.

We are very grateful to TLT LLP for providing pro-bono office space, which helps us keep our costs as low as possible.

“Thanks for running the programme - it is a fantastic initiative!”
Volunteer Reading Buddy, Airbus
Our supporters
Ablaze would like to send out a huge thank you to all our supporters. Without you, we would not be able to continue our work. Your gifts of time and money support our mission to tackle inequality of opportunity in the West of England region.

Businesses who volunteered in Primary Schools in 2017-18:
- Airbus
- Allianz Insurance
- BBC Bristol
- Burges Salmon
- Civil Service Local (Highways Agency)
- CMS
- Computershare
- DAS Legal Expenses
- DWP Brislington
- Foot Anstey
- HEFEC (now Office for Students)
- Intellect Books
- Lloyds Banking Group
- National Friendly
- OVO Energy
- PwC
- Rolls-Royce
- Teleperformance
- The Environment Agency
- Thrings LLP
- TLT LLP
- UWE

Businesses who made donations to Ablaze in 2017-18:
- Airbus
- Burges Salmon
- CMS
- Intellect Books (pro-bono support of our poetry competition)
- KPMG
- OVO Energy
- Rolls Royce
- TLT (pro-bono office space)
- UWE

Businesses that volunteered on and paid a fee to WEM in 2017-18:
- OVO
- RPC
- CMS Solicitors
- TLT
- Wessex Water
- Foot Anstey
- Novia
- GKN
- Science Park
- UWE
- Rolls Royce
- True Speed
- Stone King
- Actual Experience
- Computershare

“My Reading Buddy has helped me with tricky words. Thank you!” Year 3 pupil, Evergreen Primary Academy