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 widen their aspiration
- support their attainment and skill levels
- empower them with knowledge to make informed choices about their future

www.ablazebristol.org
Volunteering with Ablaze was a great benefit to our business because it gives one hundred of our employees the unique opportunity to help out in the local community during their lunchtimes, which they all really enjoy.

Eve Rodway, Airbus

I loved getting to know the pupils and seeing them get joy from the stories we read together. I really enjoyed being able to see the same kids each week and so having the opportunity to watch their progress, and how their vocabulary and understanding of the characters and stories developed.” Intellect Ltd Reading Buddies volunteer

Our Values

• Evaluation is vital for measuring our impact, reporting to our partners and ensuring our programmes remain relevant

• Collaboration is key – working with others for the mutual benefit of young people in the West of England is a priority

• Social mobility – promoting social mobility is a challenge we must tackle to ensure equality and inclusion

• Community engagement – supporting businesses to make the best use of their resources to support their community and make a difference to the lives of local people
Our Impact in 2018-19

- Our Primary School programmes impacted over 420 pupils during 2018-19, with 85% of the interventions successfully continuing into 2018-19.
- 95% of children who had a Reading Buddy are now reading with more confidence and 96% of the children taking part in Number Partners improved their maths.
- Our West of England Mentoring Secondary School programme delivered programmes for 261 students in 17 secondary schools this year.
- 91% of WEM students are more confident in themselves and their ability to make decisions; 86% feel they are now better at taking part in discussions, 95% have better knowledge of careers and 97% have improved skills needed for employment.
- Future Quest mentoring is supporting successful post-16 transition across the region. 94% of students who took part in Future Quest mentoring worked with their mentor to produce a post-16 plan.
- 82% of the 20 students from Bristol Metropolitan Academy who took part in this year’s Airbus Flying Challenge programme increased their engagement in learning, with 80% gaining a clearer view of their future vocation.
- Over 300 children entered this year’s poetry competition, in association with Intellect Ltd, writing on the theme of ‘Travel’.
- West of England Mentoring was a finalist in the 2019 National Mentoring Awards, and WEM Mentor (and new Ablaze Trustee) Ashley Daniels won Male Mentor of the Year at the Hargreaves Lansdown South West Mentoring Awards.
- Thanks to Rolls-Royce and National Friendly, 51 pupils from Ablaze schools were able to see a show at the Bristol Hippodrome.
- Ablaze collaborated with the Bristol city centre hospitals charity Above & Beyond to deliver over 2,500 free books to 63 local schools.

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

“It’s incredibly rewarding to watch the children grow and improve. It’s been something to look forward to every week.” OVO Energy Reading Buddies volunteer
Our Impact in 2018-19: Primary Programmes

Reading Buddies:

Our Reading Buddy primary school interventions aim to increase pupils’ confidence in reading, raise their attainment levels in literacy and nurture a hunger for discovering information through a love of books. 50% of schools completed evaluations for Reading Buddies in 2018/19. From that data, we are happy to report that 95% of supported pupils are reading with more confidence, 87% of pupils improved in their literacy levels and 97% of pupils say they will read more following their Reading Buddy volunteer support.

- 26% improved by 5 or more reading levels
- 20% improved by 4 reading levels
- 9% improved by 3 reading levels
- 11% improved by 2 reading levels
- 21% improved by 1 reading level
- 13% did not improve their reading level

47% of pupils who took part in Reading Buddies receive Pupil Premium Funding

Number Partners:

Our Number Partner primary school interventions aim to increase pupils’ speed, agility & confidence with simple mental maths calculations through playing targeted number games. 50% of schools completed evaluations for Number Partners in 2018/19. From that data, we are happy to report that over 2018/19, 78% say they are more confident with their mental maths and 96% of pupils improved their maths. All pupils enjoyed having a Number Partner and thought maths was an important skill to have.

- 14% improved by 5 or more levels
- 20% improved by 4 levels
- 33% improved by 3 levels
- 5% improved by 2 levels
- 24% improved by 1 level
- 4% did not improve their mathematics

60% of pupils who took part in Number Partners receive Pupil Premium Funding

“I’ve definitely improved my reading. Now I can read words I’ve never seen. My Reading Buddy reads to me and now I can read out loud!” Year 5 pupil, Cabot Primary School

“I like going to Number Partners because I like playing with maths games and working together.” Year 3 pupil, Badock’s Wood E-ACT Academy
Our Impact in 2018-19: Secondary Programmes

West of England Mentoring:

WEM is a partnership of four organisations, Ablaze, Mentoring Plus, Babbasa and Bath Bridge. At the end of our second year, WEM is proving its impact and growing its reach as more schools and businesses join us in our aim to create a positive change for young people in our region in confidence, engagement and aspiration.

WEM continues to target schools from more deprived wards in the region. In addition, this year we have reached out to schools in more rural areas where contact with employers is harder to facilitate.

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 91% of students being more confident in themselves and 86% of students feeling they got better at taking part in discussions. 95% of students have better knowledge of careers, with 97% understanding and improving skills for employment. 60% of students who took part feel better about school. Schools report that behaviour and confidence dramatically increase for the majority of students that take part.

We were particularly pleased with the impact of our programme in Bridge Learning Campus, a school in one of the most deprived areas of Bristol. The school fed back on their Y9 cohort who took part in WEM:

- 91% students increased in confidence and 87% feel they got better at taking part in discussions
- 91% learned about careers & skills needed for work, with 59% sharing they had learnt a lot
- 74% of students said they felt better about school since taking part, with 21% saying they felt a lot better
- 74% of students said their plans had changed since doing the programme for post GCSE and they told us about their plans

In addition, we were delighted to be able to bring Herman Miller into rural school The John Bentley in Wiltshire. The impact of WEM was significant here.

- 100% of students told us they felt more confident having taken part in the programme
- 100% said they felt better about taking part in discussions (54% said they wanted to be better on the pre-survey)
- 79% of students said they learned how to make decisions for themselves
Our Impact in 2018-19: Secondary Programmes

Airbus Flying Challenge 2018-19:

We are proud to report on a third successful year of the Airbus Flying Challenge ‘Take off for a successful life’. This 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.

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 programme was great or good, 82% said great
• 100% of students improved in confidence and self-esteem
• 50% of students increased attendance at school
• 82% of students increased their engagement in learning and 70% improved their grades
• 100% of students have increased knowledge and experience of the world of work with 80% having a clearer view of their future vocation
• 100% of students felt they had got better in the following skills: communication; self-assessment; learning from more experienced people; setting and managing targets; and producing a product. 94% that they had improved teamwork and self-management
• The feedback on this year’s mentors was very positive again and 100% of students said they enjoyed working with the mentors a lot - “I have really enjoyed working with the mentors as they have helped me improve my skills.”
• 100% of mentors agreed that students were more confident by the end of the programme - “I have seen some individuals pushing themselves outside their comfort zones and they have said that they did that due to the support that everyone involved has given.”
• 100% of mentors felt the students’ engagement and concentration levels had increased
• 100% of mentors thought students had improved their soft skills, particularly communication and teamwork

“It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity that can help you in the future. You work on skills that you never thought you could.” Airbus Flying Challenge student
Our Impact in 2018-19: Secondary Programmes

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 applications 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.

25 schools participated in the Y11 mentoring this year. Data was received from 21 schools detailing delivery of mentoring to 302 students. Sessions covered a variety of topics, including revision techniques, resilience and visioning, careers guidance, post 16 planning and goal setting.

94% of students had set themselves goals and had a post 16 plan in place by the end of their mentoring sessions.

Schools are entering their third year of delivering the mentoring and we have, in many cases, supported them to create a delivery method which works for their school but also aligns with the aims of the programme. Learning from the first two years, across the whole programme, has fed into a new framework for Phase 2 of the project. Our recommendations for methodology and delivery of the mentoring is aligned with this.

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<th>Future Quest Phase Two Framework</th>
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<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
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<td>• Exploring your future</td>
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“The best outcome was that for many students it was the first time they had ever done any self-reflection, and by going ‘inwards’ they went away understanding themselves much better than before. They are now in a better position to make decisions that are good for them.”

Future Quest Mentor

“I feel very privileged and proud that my daughter has been chosen for Future Quest. It will benefit her in all areas for her future.” Parent of Future Quest student
Fourth Ablaze poetry competition a huge success

In 2018/19, Ablaze ran their poetry competition for a fourth year, in partnership with Intellect Books and Bristol Airport. The competition theme for this year was ‘Travel’, which really inspired the children to use their imaginations. Poems by over 70 children from Reception to Year 6 are featured in the latest edition of the poetry book.

Judges selected the best poems in three categories: pupils under seven years; those aged between seven and nine; and a nine to eleven-year-old category. Winners and runners-up in each category were selected and an overall ‘best poem’ was chosen, with the talented winners being invited to a prize-giving event in June 2019.

At the celebration event, the young poets recited their work in front of an invited audience which included proud teachers and parents, as well as the Lord Mayor of Bristol, before receiving their prizes from Bristol’s well-renowned street poet and last year’s poet laureate for Bristol, Miles Chambers. The prizes were kindly donated by local businesses including Airbus, Rolls-Royce, National Friendly, Bristol Water, Clip ‘n Climb Bristol, The Bristol Hippodrome, Bristol Packet Tours and Beese’s Tea Rooms.

The overall winner was Ruby Jenkinson, a Year 4 pupil from St Werburgh’s Primary School. Ruby recited her poem ‘Travel Through My Day With Me’ confidently in front of the invited guests, complete with actions!

Roger Opie MBE, one of the judges of the Poetry Competition, said of Ruby’s poem “Ruby’s clever and exciting words show great insight and imagination.” Jane Sawyer, SENCO at Henbury Court Primary School and also a competition judge, commented, “The poem engaged my attention and pulled me in with its rhyming and bouncy lines!”

The event was kindly hosted by Clarke Willmott, one of Bristol’s leading law firms. Staff at Clarke Willmott have been volunteering for Ablaze in local primary schools for many years and were thrilled to host this exciting event again this year.

“I used my skills in a different way – being creative, encouraging, and supportive and listening.”
Herman Miller WEM volunteer
Ablaze teams up with Above & Beyond to offer free books to schools

Ablaze teamed up with Above & Beyond, the local charity raising funds for Bristol city centre hospitals, to offer free books to local primary and secondary schools.

The partnership saw the two charities offer copies of ‘Don’t Be Scared’, a wonderful anthology of poems and short stories by well-known authors and artists, to schools across Bristol and South Gloucestershire. The beautiful hardback book includes stories and illustrations by Julia Donaldson, Jacqueline Wilson, Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake. Over 2,500 books were delivered to the 63 local schools that requested copies of the book.

One of the schools that received a delivery of books was Christ Church Junior School in Downend, who lost thousands of pounds worth of books after their library was destroyed in a storm. The Bristol Post were there to see Ablaze and Above & Beyond deliver the books to Christ Church Junior School.

Volunteers from Airbus, OVO Energy and Public Health England were all delighted to be able to present the books to their Ablaze Reading Buddies and Number Partners.

“Very pleased to receive these amazing copies of ‘Don’t Be Scared’ today. Thank you to @AblazeBristol. The children will love them! #readingforpleasure ” Westbury Park Primary School on Twitter
Collaborations and Partnerships 2018-19

**Partnership with Speed Communications:**

Ablaze were delighted to be selected as the charity of the year by local PR and communications consultancy firm Speed.

With a 14-year heritage in PR and communications, Speed is dedicated to championing the importance of effective communication skills and believes this starts right from childhood when children are learning basic literacy skills and the confidence to communicate. The partnership has seen Speed support Ablaze in its mission to deliver opportunity and accessibility for local children by providing PR and communications to drive awareness of Ablaze, volunteering for our schools programme and fundraising activity throughout the year.

Volunteers from Speed have become Reading Buddies at a local school. Harriet Batten-Foster, the Business Coordinator at Speed Communications, commented “Speed Communications is committed to being more than a PR agency; we want to actively be involved in and help the community around us. The opportunity to partner with Ablaze in an initiative which prioritises the power of communication through writing and discussion was, for us, a perfect match.”

In May 2019, a group of eleven staff members from Speed ran the Bristol 10K, raising nearly £700 for Ablaze!

**Alex Bruce Turtle Straws presentations**

As single-use plastics are having a huge impact on the planet and have been a big topic in the news over the last year, Ablaze were keen to promote awareness of the issue across our primary schools. We brokered some fantastic talks about alternative & sustainable drinking straws by Alex Bruce, a young traveller who has witnessed the massive increase of plastic waste in the oceans first-hand. Alex gave an inspiring talk about why he invented Turtle Straws (a plastic-free, sustainable straw) to pupils ranging from Year 2 to Year 6 at Woodlands Academy, Whitehall Primary School, Holy Family Primary School, St Werburgh’s Primary School, School of Christ the King, Cabot Primary School. His talks were to a mix of KS2 classes and assemblies and over 600 pupils were inspired to think about their own plastic use and how they, too, could be the young entrepreneurs of the future.

“It’s lovely to be able to support the children in a city where I live and help them enjoy the world of reading - something I love very much” Speed Communications volunteer Reading Buddy
Rolls-Royce employees support the Ablaze Reading Buddy primary school intervention by volunteering in a local school, to help children who are struggling with their literacy. This has been a fantastic partnership, bringing three organisations together to give something back to the local community.” Charlotte Kelly, Community Investment Officer at Rolls-Royce
Cabot Primary pupils visit Mshed thanks to National Friendly

Year 2 pupils from Cabot Primary School were lucky enough to pay a visit to the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at MShed, thanks to National Friendly, Bristol Museums and Ablaze.

The children enjoyed a fantastic morning exploring the MShed museum (the big bus was very popular!) and getting a guided tour of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition. For many of the children, this was their first visit to MShed. National Friendly CEO Jonathan Long was there to meet the children and their teacher Sarah Quinton.

Karen MacDonald, Engagement Officer at Bristol Museums, lead the pupils’ tour of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition and said, “the class are a lovely group, full of interesting questions and it was great to see them enjoying M Shed”.

Staff from National Friendly volunteer at Cabot Primary School through Ablaze’s Reading Buddy scheme, which partners business volunteers with pupils for one-to-one reading sessions. The trip was organised by Kurtis Reece from National Friendly with help from Sally Ridley at Ablaze, and National Friendly were kind enough to pay for the coach travel for the pupils to ensure that the whole class would be able to attend. Kurtis, a Marketing Executive at National Friendly, said, “It’s important that we create new experiences for children where they can continue to learn and be inspired. With our support, these children can express themselves freely and gain more confidence in their overall learning abilities”.

National Friendly funds school trip to see Matilda the Musical at The Bristol Hippodrome

National Friendly funded a trip for 30 children from Cabot Primary School to see Matilda the Musical at The Bristol Hippodrome.

The pupils, some of whom were in the midst of preparing for their SATs exams, were accompanied by Year 6 teacher Amy Tupman, who commented on the school trip, “We are incredibly grateful to National Friendly for providing our children with the opportunity to see Matilda at The Bristol Hippodrome; for many of our children this was their first experience of both watching a musical and visiting The Hippodrome. When we got back to school after the show, I asked a few children for their favourite part of the show. Every child said the same thing: “All of it!” Thank you so much for your generosity, National Friendly! This was an experience we’ll never forget.”

“The National Friendly volunteers have enjoyed getting involved in this initiative”
Richard Carroll, National Friendly
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](#)
How we are 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.

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

“I think Reading Buddies is a great scheme and very rewarding. This is the end of my third year taking part and I am looking forward to meeting a new Reading Buddy in September.”

BBC Reading Buddies volunteer
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.

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“Volunteering has helped build my confidence and take me out of my comfort zone. I love supporting the pupils with reading and it’s been a great experience.”

Speed Communications Reading Buddy volunteer
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 2018-19:

- Airbus
- BBC Bristol
- Burges Salmon
- Civil Service Local (Highways Agency)
- CMS
- Clarke Willmott
- Computershare
- DAS Legal Expenses
- Intellect Books
- Lloyds Banking Group
- National Friendly
- Office for Students
- OVO Energy
- PwC
- Public Health England
- Rolls-Royce
- Speed Communications
- Teleperformance
- The Environment Agency
- Thrings LLP
- TLT LLP
- UWE

Businesses who made donations to Ablaze in 2018-19:

- Airbus
- Burges Salmon
- CMS
- Intellect Books (pro-bono support of our poetry competition)
- OVO Energy
- Rolls Royce
- TLT (pro-bono office space)
- UWE

Businesses that supported WEM in 2018-19:

- CMS
- Computershare
- Ecosurety
- Herman Miller
- Just Eat
- Mayden
- Nationwide Building Society
- Novia Financial plc
- OVO Energy
- RPC
- TLT
- UWE
- Wessex Water

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