

CyberFirst Social Value Report 2026

Cyber First

socialvalue BUSINESS

Report produced by Social Value Business



FOREWORD

In a world where technology shapes how we live, learn, work and connect, the importance of building a strong and inclusive cyber workforce has never been greater. Cyber security is no longer a specialist concern—it is fundamental to our national security, economic prosperity and the resilience of our communities. As the digital world continues to evolve, so too must the people and skills that protect it.

CyberFirst matters.

Since its launch in 2015, CyberFirst has opened doors for young people across the UK, helping them to discover opportunities they may never have imagined possible. It has inspired curiosity, built confidence and created pathways into cyber for students from all backgrounds. Through bursaries, competitions, educational partnerships and outreach activity, CyberFirst has done far more than develop technical capability—it has helped young people see a future for themselves in a sector that is vital to the nation's future.

At its heart, CyberFirst has always been about people: their potential, their ambition and the opportunities that can emerge when talent is recognised and supported early. It has shown what is possible when investment in skills is combined with a commitment to inclusion, aspiration and long-term impact.

This is why understanding the social value of CyberFirst is so important.

Social value asks us to look beyond outputs and numbers alone and instead consider the wider difference a programme makes to people, communities and society. In partnership with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Social Value Business (SVB) has undertaken this review to better understand the broader impact of CyberFirst. What emerges is a powerful picture of a programme that is not only strengthening the cyber sector, but also advancing social mobility, supporting diversity, widening participation and helping communities to thrive.

CyberFirst's vision of a diverse and highly capable cyber workforce aligns closely with the ambitions of the UK's National Cyber Strategy. By reaching young people early, breaking down barriers and creating meaningful opportunities, the programme is helping to ensure that the future of cyber security is both stronger and more representative of the society it serves.

Perhaps most importantly, CyberFirst has shown that when young people are given the opportunity to explore, participate and belong, the benefits reach far beyond the individual. They are felt in classrooms, in families, in communities, and ultimately across the wider economy and society.

As CyberFirst begins its transition into TechFirst, there is every reason to feel optimistic about what comes next. This next chapter presents an exciting opportunity to build on the programme's success, expand its reach and create even more pathways for young people to engage with cyber and the wider technology landscape. We are also proud to be on track to have engaged and trained one million students before the launch of TechFirst in the 2026–27 academic year—a significant milestone that speaks to the ambition, scale and enduring value of this work.

This report celebrates meaningful impact.

At SVB, we believe that measuring social value is not simply about accountability—it is about recognising what truly matters. It is about understanding the real and lasting difference programmes like CyberFirst make in people's lives, and ensuring that those outcomes are seen, valued and built upon.

This report is a celebration of that impact. It reflects the voices and experiences of those who have benefited from CyberFirst, and it highlights the many ways in which the programme has created positive change for students, schools, academia, local authorities and industry partners alike.

We are proud to have worked alongside NCSC on this important evaluation, and we hope this report not only captures the value CyberFirst has created to date, but also inspires continued investment in the people, partnerships and possibilities that will shape the future.

Because when we invest in young people, in inclusion and in opportunity, we are not only strengthening the cyber sector—we are helping to build a safer, fairer and more resilient future for everyone

National Cyber Security Centre
a part of GCHQ

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CyberFirst programme has delivered a transformative impact on cyber security education, skills development, and industry collaboration across the UK, creating clear and inclusive pathways into the cyber security sector.

2025–26 HEADLINE IMPACT

In 2025–26, CyberFirst generated ***£45.1 million in social value***, delivering a ***Social Return on Investment (SROI) of £6.94 for every £1 invested***. This impact reflects the programme's ability to combine education, industry engagement, and regional delivery to create measurable economic and social value at scale.

£45.1m

in social value (2025-26)

£6.94

Social Return on investment for every £1 invested

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Economic & Social Value: £45.1m generated, including ***£1.78m in regional and industry contributions*** and nearly £1m invested in local SME and VCFSE supply chains.

- ***Employment & Workforce Development: 89*** staff supported, ***82*** trained, ***266*** ambassadors engaged, ***11,040*** volunteer hours contributed, and ***203*** bursary graduates into employment since 2025.
- ***Education Reach: 683*** schools, colleges, and institutions reached; ***280*** CyberFirst schools and colleges recognised; over ***58,000*** students engaged with ***59%*** female participation.
- ***Attainment Improvement:*** GCSE attainment up ***10.98%*** and A-level attainment up ***24.47%*** since 2022.
- ***Partnerships: 280*** industry partners, nearly ***100*** HE/FE institutions, and ***16*** Academic Centres of Excellence supporting delivery.
- ***Regional Delivery: 521*** events across nine UK regions, delivered through ***318*** regional partners and ***89*** supporting organisations.

Programme Impact

CyberFirst has significantly increased cyber security awareness, expanded access to high-quality learning, and strengthened the UK's future cyber workforce. Through sustained engagement across education, industry, and government, the programme has developed critical digital and technical skills at scale. With integrated bespoke delivery models adopted and aligned with regional needs, it combines enrichment activities, school recognition, bursaries, competitions, mentoring, and extra-curricular engagement. This has enabled participants to progress from early interest through to education, training, and employment outcomes. For 5 years, CyberFirst's regional delivery approach has contributed to improved educational attainment, stronger workforce readiness, increased diversity in the talent pipeline, and sustained economic benefit to regional communities across the UK.

"CyberFirst continues to deliver exceptional social value across the UK by expanding access to high-quality cyber education, raising aspirations, and strengthening the future cyber workforce. With strong regional delivery, targeted national interventions and collaboration between education, industry, and government, CyberFirst is creating clear pathways into cyber careers while generating measurable economic and social impact at scale."

Richard Dickins - Managing Director, Social Value Business (SVB)

SCOPE

This report covers CyberFirst activity delivered during 2025–26, focusing on service users, delivery partners, and facilitators across the following core programme:

1 - Regional Ecosystems

2 - Bursary Programme

3 - Extra Curricular Activity

4 - Girls' Competition

Delivery during the year included a range of engagement and learning activities designed to inspire and develop cyber security skills. These included STEMFest, Cyber Horizons, Cyber Days, Empower, Cyber Pathways, Enigma Taster Sessions, Mega Hub events, Speakers for Schools, Student Leaders, Girl's competition, Trailblazers, Adventures, and Advanced Courses.

Together, these activities reflect the breadth of CyberFirst provision and its role in supporting progression into cyber security education and careers.

DATA REVIEW

This report is based on a comprehensive analysis of CyberFirst data and supporting evidence, including desktop research, stakeholder surveys, regional partner interviews, knowledge-sharing sessions, conference engagement, case studies, programme evaluations and financial and performance data. These sources have been used to assess programme outcomes, impact, and social value alignment.

Social Value Business (SVB) also conducted an independent **social value and impact survey at the Ecosystem conference**, receiving **49** stakeholder responses. Both quantitative results and qualitative feedback (positive and constructive) were analysed and used to strengthen the evidence base, improve trend identification, and support assessment of programme impact. This mixed-method, independent approach has informed the findings and conclusions presented in this report.

INPUTS

The combined resources, time, effort and investment in the delivery of the "in-scope" activities in the academic year 2025-26 have been calculated as **£6,495,721** of direct CyberFirst investment.

The share of investment has been apportioned as follows

Programme	Share Of Investment
Ecosystems	**28.5%**
Bursary	**66.7%**
Extra-Curricular Activity	**2.2%**
Girls' Competition	**2.7%**
	100.00%

STAKEHOLDERS

To understand the reach and impact of CyberFirst, stakeholders are categorised as direct, indirect, and wider beneficiaries based on their level of engagement and influence. Impact is shared across these groups and reflects the degree of change attributable to participation in CyberFirst activities.

The CyberFirst programme is delivered through a network of Regional Partners across the UK as outlined:

Region	Regional Partner
East Midlands	**2T Security**
North East	**RTC North, Cyber North & Kings Priory**
North West	**IN4 Group**
Northern Ireland	**Department for the Economy & Belfast Metropolitan College**
Scotland	**Education Scotland**
South West	**Raytheon, Techspark & Cynam**
Wales	**University of South Wales, Bangor University, Swansea University & NDEC**
West Midlands	**IN4 Group**
Yorkshire and Humber	**RTC North & Kings Priory**

Regional Partners work collaboratively with a wide range of direct, indirect, and wider stakeholders, including schools, colleges, universities, students, local authorities, government bodies, industry, social enterprises, charitable organisations and suppliers, to deliver the programme's objectives.

In addition, the NCSC directly oversees the Bursary Programme, working closely with academia, industry, and regional partners to support its wider mission of developing cyber security skills and strengthening the talent pipeline

CYBERFIRST STAKEHOLDER GROUPS IMPACTED

From a programme delivery perspective, stakeholders affected by CyberFirst are categorised as follows:

- Regional Partner organisation
- Regional Partner workforce
- Volunteers / ambassadors
- Learners / students
- Education providers (schools and colleges)
- Teachers / educators
- Industry partners
- Academia / higher education institutions
- Other partners (e.g. local authorities, suppliers, charities)
- Other individuals (e.g. friends, families, and wider communities)

KEY FINDINGS

Evaluation against which stakeholder groups are most impacted by the CyberFirst programme indicates that:

1. Learners/students are perceived to be the most significantly impacted group.

2. Education providers (schools and colleges) are the second most impacted group.

3. Teachers/educators are the third most impacted group.

The findings reinforce CyberFirst's strong influence across the education ecosystem, with impact most strongly concentrated at learner level and extending through to supporting educators and institutions.



KEY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

CyberFirst Ecosystem

The CyberFirst Ecosystem acts as a catalyst for regional and national change, connecting key stakeholders—including education providers, industry, and government—to drive coordinated progress in cyber security skills development. By fostering collaboration and enabling local delivery, the ecosystem expands access, raises aspirations, and strengthens the UK's cyber talent pipeline.

KEY OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- **Inspiring future cyber professionals:** Engages and motivates students to explore careers in cyber security, particularly those who may not have previously considered pathways into digital or IT-related roles.
- **Raising aspirations & access:** Provides clear, inclusive, and accessible routes into cyber security through locally delivered activities and programmes.
- **Industry engagement:** Mobilises a strong network of volunteers and ambassadors to support education and skills development.
- **Expanding educational reach:** Equips educators and institutions to deliver high-quality cyber security education at scale.
- **Strengthening partnerships:** Builds effective regional collaborations, enhancing reputation, capability, and opportunity across stakeholders.
- **Driving economic growth:** Supports job creation, local investment, and supply chain development through SME and VCFSE engagement.
- **Improving workforce diversity:** Contributes to increased participation from underrepresented groups, including strong female engagement.

PROGRAMME REACH AND DELIVERY

9 regional delivery partners coordinating activity across the UK

89 personnel employed and ***82*** workforce members trained

521 events delivered, reaching ***47,469*** children and young people (59% female participation)

280 CyberFirst-accredited schools (***74*** Gold, ***129*** Silver, ***77*** Bronze)

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

558 partners engaged (including ***280*** CyberFirst dedicated industry partners)

16 Academic Centres of Excellence (ACEs) and ***90*** additional education institutions

89 other business partners contributing to delivery and impact

VOLUNTEERING AND INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTION

1,895 volunteers engaged, including:

- ***266*** CyberFirst ambassadors
- ***145*** workforce volunteers
- ***1,324*** Industry and other volunteers

11,040 hours of CyberFirst supporter volunteer time donated

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUE CONTRIBUTION

£1.78 million in direct industry contributions (***+57%*** year-on-year)

£894,835 spent with SMEs (***90.38%*** local to regional deliverers) supporting ***208*** businesses

£83,381 spent with VCFSEs (***99%*** local to regional deliverers), supporting ***26*** organisations

SOCIAL VALUE & IMPACT SUMMARY STATEMENT

An investment of ***£1.8m*** delivered ***£24.1m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of ***£13.02*** for every £1 invested.

The CyberFirst Ecosystem has significantly expanded access to cyber security opportunities across the UK. It has raised aspirations among tens of thousands of young people, strengthened regional delivery capacity, and mobilised industry at scale. This approach not only supports a more diverse and work-ready talent pipeline but also delivers tangible economic benefits to local communities and supply chains."

Dave McGuinness – Social Value Specialist, Social Value Business (SVB)

CYBERFIRST BURSARY PROGRAMME

The CyberFirst Bursary Programme remains a cornerstone of the wider initiative, supporting students to overcome financial barriers while directly addressing the UK's cyber security skills shortage. By combining financial support with structured development opportunities, the programme enables sustained progression from education into employment.

KEY OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- **Breaking financial barriers:** Financial support enables students to focus on their studies, reducing economic constraints that may otherwise limit participation and achievement.
- **Enhancing skills & employability:** Participants gain practical experience, technical expertise, and industry-relevant skills, improving their readiness for cyber security careers.
- **Fostering knowledge sharing:** The programme encourages mentoring, volunteering, and peer-to-peer learning, strengthening both individual capability and the wider CyberFirst community.
- **Strengthening industry networks:** Students benefit from direct engagement with employers and mentors, building professional networks and accessing career opportunities.
- **Driving economic impact:** Employers benefit from a pipeline of work-ready talent, reducing recruitment and onboarding costs.
- **Addressing the Cyber Skills gap:** Graduates are successfully progressing into critical cyber security roles, contributing to national workforce capability.
- **Supporting wellbeing & confidence:** Participation enhances confidence, motivation, and career clarity, supporting positive long-term outcomes.



PROGRAMME REACH AND OUTCOMES

1,509 students have accessed the bursary since programme inception

972 students have graduated to date

845 positive outcomes achieved (**87%**)

2025–26 HIGHLIGHTS:

120 students graduated

100 new bursary students joined the programme

343 participants currently in education

203 graduates progressed into employment since 2025

IMPACT EVIDENCE

2025 survey data indicates ***72% of respondents*** reported personal positive improvements (with over 50% attribution to CyberFirst)

Overall attribution to CyberFirst is estimated at ***67%*** among participating students

SOCIAL VALUE & IMPACT SUMMARY STATEMENT

An investment of ***£4.3M*** delivered ***£17m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £3.93*** for every £1 invested.

"The CyberFirst Bursary Programme has played an important role in supporting progression into cyber security careers by helping to reduce financial barriers and enabling structured development opportunities for students across the UK. It's helped to strengthen the pipeline of cyber talent by supporting learners from education through to employment. The programme also benefits employers through improved access to emerging talent, reducing recruitment costs and supporting efforts to address the UK's cyber skills needs."

Dave McGuinness – Social Value Specialist, Social Value Business (SVB)

CYBERFIRST EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

CyberFirst Extra-Curricular Activities provide accessible, hands-on learning experiences that bridge the gap between early interest and future careers in cyber security. Through immersive, real-world engagement with industry, academia, and government, the programme supports young people to develop practical cyber skills, increase awareness of career pathways, and build confidence in pursuing roles within the sector.

KEY OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- **Creating a pipeline of future cyber professionals:** Inspiring young people to explore and pursue cyber security careers through practical engagement and exposure to real-world environments.
- **Enhancing cyber knowledge and skills:** Developing technical, analytical, and problem-solving capabilities through industry-informed learning experiences.
- **Strengthening employability and confidence:** Improving learners' understanding of career pathways, skills requirements, and personal progression opportunities.
- **Expanding access and inclusion:** Providing opportunities for learners from diverse backgrounds, supporting wider participation in STEM and cyber pathways.
- **Strengthening collaboration:** Enabling meaningful engagement between students and employers, academia, and delivery partners.
- **Supporting national cyber resilience:** Contributing to the long-term development of a skilled and diverse cyber workforce.



PROGRAMME REACH AND OUTCOMES

460 students participated in total, including:

- **70 students** – Hub and Spoke (QinetiQ-led Advanced Course delivery)
- **50 students** – Cyber Horizons (Hg Foundation-supported pilot)
- **40 students** – Speakers for Schools work experience
- **300 students** – Step Into Cyber programme

High engagement and progression outcomes reported across programmes, including:

- ***95%*** of Hub and Spoke participants more interested or reaffirmed interest in cyber careers
- ***100%*** felt more informed about pathways into cyber security careers
- ***86%*** of Speakers for Schools participants confident in achieving career ambitions
- ***76%*** found the placement informative, with improved problem-solving and employability skills reported
- Cyber Horizons participants reported increased confidence, skills, and aspiration toward cyber and technology careers

SOCIAL VALUE & IMPACT SUMMARY STATEMENT

An investment of ***£142k*** delivered ***£2m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £14.36*** for every £1 invested.

"This year's CyberFirst Extra-Curricular Activities have strengthened early engagement in cyber security careers by providing high-quality, practical learning experiences that raise aspirations and build confidence. Connecting learners directly with industry and real-world cyber environments, these activities are helping to build a more diverse, skilled, and work-ready future cyber workforce. This contributes to the long-term resilience of the UK's cyber security capability."

Dave McGuinness – Social Value Specialist, Social Value Business (SVB)

CYBERFIRST GIRLS' COMPETITION

The CyberFirst Girls' Competition is a national initiative designed to inspire and encourage young women to explore careers in cyber security. Delivered annually by the NCSC since 2017, it provides an engaging and accessible introduction to cyber skills, challenging early perceptions that may deter girls from considering careers in the field. Viewed as more than a competition, it is widely recognised as a catalyst for change in addressing the gender imbalance in cyber security, with a lasting impact that extends into further CyberFirst programmes and career pathways.

KEY OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- **Raising aspirations among young women:** Inspiring participants to consider and pursue careers in cyber security.
- **Closing the gender gap:** Encouraging greater female participation in cyber-related education and careers.
- **Developing technical and digital skills:** Supporting early development of coding, problem-solving, and cyber awareness skills.
- **Strengthening the cyber talent pipeline:** Creating clear progression routes into CyberFirst courses, bursaries, and employment.
- **Building cyber communities:** Fostering engagement, confidence, and belonging within the wider cyber ecosystem.
- **Supporting long-term progression:** Many participants continue into further CyberFirst programmes and cyber careers in government and industry.

PROGRAMME REACH AND OUTCOMES

10,828 girls registered

4,306 teams registered

530 schools registered, including ***453*** state schools

GEOGRAPHICAL PARTICIPATION INCLUDED:

- South West (***69 schools***)
- Scotland (***64***)
- North West (***60***)
- South East (***60***)
- East of England (***44***)
- West Midlands (***44***)
- Wales (***41***)
- London (***36***)
- North East (***30***)
- Northern Ireland (***29***)
- Yorkshire and Humber (***26***)
- East Midlands (***23***)
- Greater London (***3***)
- Offshore schools (Japan) (***1***)

58% of ***CyberFirst accredited*** (Gold, Silver or Bronze) schools participated

SOCIAL VALUE & IMPACT SUMMARY STATEMENT

An investment of ***£173k*** delivered ***£1.95m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £11.23*** for every £1 invested.

"Over the years, the CyberFirst Girls' Competition has played an important role in inspiring and engaging young women in cyber security, acting as a key entry point into the wider CyberFirst ecosystem. It has helped raise aspirations at scale, strengthen early engagement with STEM and cyber pathways, and contribute to addressing long-standing gender imbalances within the sector. Its impact extends beyond the competition itself, with many participants going on to engage in further CyberFirst programmes and progressing into cyber security education and careers, and in some cases entrepreneurship. In this way, it continues to support the development of a more diverse and inclusive future workforce."

Dave McGuinness – Social Value Specialist, Social Value Business (SVB)

OUTPUTS

Outputs refer to the social value created within the changes identified by stakeholders of the programme, namely:

Programme	Source of Output	Key Stakeholder Results
Ecosystems	Programme user & delivery, activity & partnerships, local economic spend & donations received	9 Regional Partners, 89 personnel, 266 CF ambassadors, 11,040 volunteer hours, 280 schools / colleges, 47,469 students, 521 activities, £978k SME /VCFSE spend & £1.78m industry partner donations
Bursary	2025-26 bursary student, graduate & alumni activity	110 new bursary students, 120 graduated, 343 in education, 203 entering employment, 85% graduate positive outcomes
Extra-Curricular Activity	Skill development, promotion of sector, training activity provision	460 students participated in total, including: 70 students – Hub and Spoke 50 students – Cyber Horizons 40 students – Speakers for Schools work experience 300 students – Step Into Cyber programme
Girls' Competition	Partnerships, schools, colleges and student participation	10,828 students registered, 4,306 teams competed, 530 schools including 453 state schools, 58% of CyberFirst schools represented, plus industry partner and volunteering support

A total of ***62,352*** stakeholders were engaged during the review period, with an average investment of ***£104.18*** per stakeholder. This represents a reduction on the previous year.

It should be noted that this figure may include some duplication where individuals participated in multiple activities. In addition, the mean average is influenced by the higher level of investment per beneficiary within the Bursary Programme, which skews the overall cost per stakeholder.



OUTCOMES

The identified outcomes are derived from a comprehensive analysis of data and insights gathered from **CyberFirst, its Regional Partners, stakeholder surveys, interviews, case studies, and financial and performance data**. This assessment evaluates outcomes, impact, and alignment with social value objectives.

The Social Value measurement findings highlight the **significant value generated across all programme areas**, as outlined in the table below.

Programme	Total Value Created	%	SROI
Ecosystems	**£24,064,191.85**	**53.4%**	**£13.02**
Bursary	**£17,032,829.97**	**37.8%**	**£3.93**
Extra-Curricular Activity	**£2,039,214.05**	**4.5%**	**£14.36**
Girls' Competition	**£1,946,520.73**	**4.3%**	**£11.23**
Total	**£45,082,756.60**	**100.00%**	**£6.94**

REGIONAL PARTNER ANALYSIS

The CyberFirst programme has delivered a transformative impact on cyber security education, skills development, and industry collaboration across the UK. Central to this success is the role of Regional Partners, who lead local delivery, foster partnerships, and extend the programme's reach into communities, education settings, and industry networks.

Through their work, Regional Partners have enabled meaningful engagement at scale—supporting students, educators, and employers while creating accessible pathways into cyber security. Their delivery reflects not only strong performance against programme outcomes, but also the ability to respond to local needs, build sustainable relationships, and drive inclusive participation.

This section highlights the growth, achievements, and impact of the nine Regional Partners, drawing on examples of delivery, stakeholder feedback, and success stories. It showcases the positive change experienced by participants—from students discovering new career ambitions to professionals contributing as mentors and role models—demonstrating how regional delivery continues to strengthen the CyberFirst ecosystem.

The insights presented capture both quantitative outcomes and qualitative experiences, including testimonials, reflections, and examples of best practice. Together, they illustrate the depth of impact achieved through Regional Partner delivery and the vital role they play in building a confident, skilled, and diverse cyber security community.

Regional Partners	£ Social Value Created	SROI	Social Value (%)
East Midlands	£665,033	£22.17	2.76%
North East	£3,692,802	£14.89	15.35%
North West	£5,577,693	£25.12	23.18%
Northen Ireland	£5,109,153	£26.89	21.23%
Scotland	£2,035,003	£8.48	8.46%
South West	£2,441,019	£9.84	10.14%
Wales	£2,260,446	£12.75	9.39%
West Midlands	£853,454	£21.48	3.55%
Yorkshire and Humber	£1,429,590	£5.76	5.94%
Social Value Total	**£24,064,191.85**	**£13.02**	**100%**

The table above highlights the Social Value created by Regional Partners through the direct investment into CyberFirst Ecosystems

EAST MIDLANDS

Regional Delivery Partner: 2T Security

During 2025–26, 2T Security expanded its contribution to the CyberFirst programme by supporting students from school engagement through to early career employment within the cyber security sector.

A major focus of our delivery has been **building the CyberFirst ecosystem in the East Midlands**, a region that previously had limited CyberFirst Schools activity. During the year we began piloting the **CyberFirst Schools East Midlands Regional Hub**, supporting schools through the accreditation process and helping to establish sustainable cyber education pathways in the region. Through this work, **four schools were successfully assessed and supported through the CyberFirst Schools accreditation journey**, helping embed cyber security within their curriculum and enrichment activities.

We also supported **over 300 students through the Step Into Cyber programme**, introducing young people to cyber security concepts, career pathways and hands-on challenges. These activities help raise awareness of cyber careers at an early stage and encourage students from a wide range of backgrounds to consider cyber as a future profession.

Alongside school engagement, we hosted the **East Midlands' first CyberFirst Cluster event** at our offices, bringing together students, educators and industry professionals. Sessions included demonstrations of Security Operations Centres, digital forensics, and "day in the life" discussions with cyber professionals, helping demystify the industry and make cyber careers more tangible for students.

2T Security also continued to support **early career pathways into cyber** through recruitment and placements. During the year we:

- Recruited ***three CyberFirst summer students in 2025***, expanding to ***four placements for summer 2026*** (our largest cohort to date)
- Hired ***four CyberFirst graduates into permanent roles*** across SOC analysis, security architecture and cyber risk
- Opened ***four graduate roles for 2026***, with two ***already filled***
- Launched a ***Year in Industry placement for 2026/27***, which has already been successfully filled

Our engagement with the wider CyberFirst ecosystem included attending the **CyberFirst Careers Fair**, sponsoring and sending **four graduates to the CyberFirst Alumni Conference**, sponsoring the **CyberFirst Girls' Competition in the East Midlands**, and contributing to programme development through the **CyberFirst Industry Advisory Group**.

Together these activities demonstrate how industry participation can deliver tangible social value by:

- Creating ***clear pathways from education into cyber careers***
- Supporting schools to ***develop sustainable cyber education programmes***
- Introducing ***hundreds of students to cyber careers through outreach activities***
- Strengthening the ***regional cyber ecosystem in the East Midlands***

SUCCESS STORIES

"As the CyberFirst East Midlands pilot hub, 2T Security is proud to be helping build a strong regional cyber ecosystem. Over the past year, we have supported schools through the CyberFirst accreditation process, with four schools participating, while also delivering outreach activities such as TeenTech and Step Into Cyber to introduce young people to the opportunities in cyber security. By connecting schools, industry and community partners, the hub is helping to raise awareness of cyber careers and strengthen the pipeline of future cyber talent across the region."

Tony Beadle, Director - 2T Security

"Taking part in the CyberFirst Girls' Competition was the starting point for our cyber journey. With support from the East Midlands pilot hub, we were able to develop our cyber provision and achieve CyberFirst accreditation, giving our students even more opportunities to explore careers in technology."

Annabel Rowe, Computer Science teacher - South Wolds Academy

"We've been delighted to support CyberFirst delivery with schools in Leicester for many years. It's fantastic to see the East Midlands pilot creating a pathway to recognise schools that are investing in cyber education and inspiring the next generation of cyber professionals."

Sarah De'Ath, Digital Forensics Lecturer -De Montfort University

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£30k*** delivered ***£665k*** of social value, achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £22.17*** for every £1 invested.



NORTH EAST

STEMFest: Creating an immersive careers experience

Regional Delivery Partner: RTC North, Cyber North & Kings Priory

STEMFest Newcastle 2025 brought together 2,313 students from 81 schools across the North East for three days of immersive, hands-on STEM learning at Vertu Motors Arena. The event featured 52 employers and industry partners, more than 160 daily exhibitors, and 20 volunteers, making it one of the most significant STEM engagement events in the region. The three-day event welcomed 2,313 students from 81 schools, including primary, secondary and SEND schools from across the region, and featured hands-on exhibits, workshops, and employer encounters designed to inspire and inform.

Key Outcomes:

- ***47.5% of students were girls***, with high representation from Pupil Premium (60.3%), SEND (29.9%), and EAL (13.2%) groups.
- Students reported increased confidence, curiosity, and awareness of STEM careers.
- Teachers ***gained curriculum-linked ideas*** and ***developed new employer relationships.***
- ***100% of exhibitors want to return***, citing high-quality engagement and benefits to the talent pipeline.

Workshops such as the Mars Mapping session (led by former NASA Director Jim Christensen), CyberFirst Sprinters, Enigma, and the Immersive Planetarium were fully booked daily and frequently cited as highlights. The geography of participating schools spanned urban, rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas across the North East, highlighting the event's wide-reaching impact. which aims to inspire and encourage young people to consider a career in these sectors.



Cyber Horizons: Bridging critical skills gaps

CyberFirst Horizons was a pilot programme in the North East, fully funded by The Hg Foundation, conducted in Summer 2025. It successfully delivered a multi-phase experience for 50 Year 12 & 13 students. This initiative was designed to bridge critical skills and experience gaps for young people pursuing careers in Cyber Security and technology, with a deliberate focus on those facing significant barriers to access. Over four intensive weeks, students engaged in a dynamic curriculum comprising skills workshops, direct industry engagement, immersive site visits, and official NCSC Cyber Defenders/Advanced courses. The pilot brought together industry professionals from 33 local cyber and tech companies, demonstrating robust community and industry support. Early indications from comprehensive surveys and students reveal overwhelmingly positive outcomes: very strong learner engagement, tangible improvements in student confidence, knowledge, and self-efficacy regarding tech careers, and meaningful employer involvement. The pilot has clearly established a viable and impactful model, demonstrating a clear route to scale into a national pipeline.

SUCCESS STORIES

"We're really proud to be part of CyberFirst North East. For us at CyberNorth, it's about more than just filling jobs; it's about ensuring our region's digital future is secure. As a cluster, we see every day how much our local businesses need fresh talent, and CyberFirst is the perfect way to spark that interest in young people who might never have pictured themselves in tech. Working alongside RTC has been fantastic. It lets us bridge the gap between our industry network and top-tier programme delivery, ensuring what students learn matches what employers seek. Our members have loved getting involved, whether mentoring or sharing their own career stories. Seeing that "lightbulb moment" when a student realises they can actually do this for a living is exactly why we do what we do. It's a huge win for the North East ecosystem and for the kids themselves."

Helen Matthews, Delivery Manager – Skills, CyberNorth

"Cyber First has helped us bring real world concepts into the classroom, which has helped in my goal of transforming how Computer Science is viewed as a subject. We've seen an uptake in both GCSE and A-level uptake, and I feel our Cyber First school accreditation may have a role to play in this. We haven't done a huge amount with industry this year, but research roles in the local area have helped girls see themselves in this sector in the future. The Year 8 girls who are taught this are also taught by two non-specialists alongside me. Teachers have been much more confident in delivering these schemes of work than they would have been delivering something more technical."

Lee Willis Head of Computing, Newcastle High School for Girls

SUCCESS STORIES

“Accenture values and supports the CyberFirst programme because it helps develop a strong and diverse future cyber workforce while aligning closely with our priorities around skills, inclusion, and responsible business. The programme gives young people a clear and practical understanding of cyber security as a viable career and helps build core capabilities that are essential across the industry, including problem solving, ethical thinking, teamwork, and communication. It also plays an important role in supporting social mobility and regional talent development, including in the North East. Alongside the positive impact on participants, the programme strengthens professional development for our people and reinforces meaningful collaboration across industry and government. Our involvement has further strengthened our partnership with the NCSC and, looking ahead, TechFirst, positioning Accenture as a key partner in the UK Government’s ambition to encourage more people into technology and cyber careers.”

Laura Wood, Service Management & Security Specialist - Accenture

“Our child has grown and blossomed over his time on the cyber summer school. His independence, which as a young person with ASD and ADHD wasn’t meeting his age expectations has improved significantly; he got buses independently and moved around the city to different sites etc, which is something we are really proud of. The course has helped him decide what he wants to study at university and the career paths he wants to pursue. Thanks to your support and encouragement he is better prepared for year 13 and beyond.”

Parent of a CyberFirst Horizons student



SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£248k*** delivered ***£3.69m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £14.89*** for every £1 invested.





NORTH WEST

Getting ‘hands-on’ with emerging technologies

Regional Delivery Partner: IN4 Group

CyberFirst North West delivers cyber security and digital skills engagement activities designed to increase awareness of technology careers and support young people in exploring digital pathways. Engagement across Key Stages 3–5 supports early awareness and progression into cyber and wider technology careers.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the programme delivered **91 events** across the North West, engaging more than **4,800** students through MEGA Days, CyberFirst Days, and regional technology challenge events.

- **Female participation:** ***58%***
- **Ethnic minority representation:** ***26%***
- **Pupil premium participation:** ***30%***

These activities provide hands-on learning experiences, introducing students to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and cyber security, while building confidence and practical skills.

Delivery took place across schools and colleges throughout the North West in partnership with education providers, industry partners, and local authorities. The programme reached institutions across:

- **Lancashire**
- **Greater Manchester**
- **Cumbria**
- **Merseyside**
- **Cheshire & Warrington**

Regional delivery also included large-scale events such as MEGA Manchester, MEGA Liverpool, and Lancashire MEGA, alongside cluster-based engagement with schools in areas including Preston, Chorley, Blackburn, Blackpool, Oldham, and Lancaster.

SUCCESS STORIES

“At IN4 Group, we are immensely proud of what has been achieved in partnership with NCSC through the CyberFirst programme. CyberFirst has grown significantly in both scale and maturity across the North West, and that success has enabled us to design and deliver a complementary, region wide programme that provides sustained engagement, deeper outreach, and meaningful progression opportunities for young people. Through matched funding and local investment, this has led to substantial growth in our team, our impact, and our reach. In the West Midlands, we are equally proud to have delivered the programme for a second consecutive year without additional funding, while continuing to build momentum, strengthen our reputation, and establish a robust foundation for future growth.”

“CyberFirst has provided a strong and credible underpinning for this journey, grounded in high quality processes and delivery standards that are trusted by industry, academia, and local government alike. This foundation has given our partners and networks the confidence to invest, collaborate, and expand the offer well beyond the original scope of the contract. Additional investment has enabled us to remove barriers to participation and enhance the learner experience. We are deeply grateful to the CyberFirst team, Industry colleagues and the other Regional Partners for their support, collaboration, and unwavering passion, all of which has been fundamental to the programme’s continued success and growing impact.”

Lauren Monks, Director - CyberFirst & MEGA Hubs - IN4 Group

“Our partnership with IN4 Group continues to make a real difference in the North West. The impact on young people is clear, but what often goes unseen is the impact on our BT colleagues who volunteer their time. They come back energised, proud and more connected to the communities we serve. It’s been a powerful way to grow skills, confidence and a genuine sense of purpose on both sides.”

Laura Price, Cyber Outreach & Skills Partnerships Lead - BT



SUCCESS STORIES

“We have carried out almost four Cyber First Days with IN4, which have been invaluable in helping us achieve students on campus targets. The sessions run by IN4 have been outstanding—highly interactive, well-structured, and very well received—earning excellent feedback from both students and teachers.”

“Attending several IN4 organised events—including the Lancaster University Information Teams Session, the Greentech Games, and the Blackpool Scholarship Activation Event—has further strengthened student engagement and provided valuable opportunities to connect with other leading companies and academic institutions. These collaborations have allowed us to increase our impact, by interacting students we might not have reached otherwise and offering them informative and inspiring experiences.”

“We have also successfully recruited 12 Lancaster University MSc students for the AI Academy internship, providing them with an exceptional professional development opportunity.
The main outcomes, particularly from the Cyber First Days, have been outstanding levels of student enthusiasm, excitement, and engagement. One session was so impactful that a teacher requested an additional Cyber Day at Lancaster University for students who were unable to attend the first session, further extending the benefit to future attendees.”

We have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with IN4 and look forward to continuing and growing this partnership, exploring new opportunities, and delivering even greater impact for students and our institution.”

Kate Jenkinson, DCQ Skills and Talent Administrator, Lancaster University

“The collaboration with IN4 has been invaluable in supporting our customer work in the region. Their events are well planned and executed and are reaching large numbers of students in the communities that need it most. We have been delighted to see genuine engagement of students who have never thought of tech as a potential career option. These events are changing lives.
In addition to this, we are delighted that the school we have supported (Winstanley) has been upgraded to a Gold CyberFirst Accreditation which reflects the high quality of teaching and support given to the hundreds of students there.”

Diana Hawkins - QinetiQ

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£222k*** delivered ***£5.58m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment (***SROI) of £25.12*** for every £1 invested.





NORTHERN IRELAND

Empowering an inclusive future digital workforce

Regional Delivery Partner: Department for the Economy & Belfast Metropolitan College

CyberFirst Northern Ireland, supported by the Department for the Economy and the Northern Ireland Cyber Security Centre (NICSC), and led by the National Cyber Security Centre, plays a key role in inspiring young people and equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in cyber security and wider technology careers. The programme brings together education, industry, and government to create a coordinated approach to developing the region's future digital workforce. A central feature of delivery is the EmPower Girls event, which has become a flagship initiative in Northern Ireland. The event has continued to grow in scale and impact, increasing by 20% in 2026 to engage over 800 Year 8 girls from schools across the region. Sponsored by Aflac Northern Ireland and delivered in partnership with a wide range of industry, academic, and public sector organisations, the event provides an engaging and inclusive platform to inspire young women to consider careers in cyber security and technology.

The event offers a dynamic, hands-on learning experience, combining interactive demonstrations, inspirational talks, and immersive activities. Students participate in dedicated zones, including an Interactive Zone featuring technologies such as virtual reality and gaming, and a Demo Zone where industry professionals deliver small-group workshops and practical sessions. These experiences provide valuable insight into real-world applications of cyber and technology, while also showcasing the breadth of career opportunities available within the sector.

EmPower Girls is designed to address the gender imbalance in Northern Ireland's tech industry, where women currently represent around 23% of the workforce. By providing early exposure to role models, real-world experiences, and clear pathways into STEM, the initiative helps to challenge perceptions, raise aspirations, and build confidence among young participants.

Through strong partnership working and high-impact delivery, CyberFirst Northern Ireland continues to expand access to cyber education, inspire the next generation, and support the development of a more diverse and inclusive cyber security talent pipeline.



SUCCESS STORIES

"We feel very privileged to be leading CyberFirst in Northern Ireland. The growth of the programme has been nothing short of astounding not only in scale, but in the depth of engagement and the strength of our partnerships. The collaboration between academia, industry, and government, combined with the remarkable sense of community here in Northern Ireland, has been central to that success. As a result of this collective effort, we were shortlisted in the Social Value category of the prestigious Belfast Chamber Business Awards, a recognition that reflects the shared commitment and impact of everyone involved."

Sara Lyons, CyberFirst NI Project Manager, Belfast Met

"Being a CyberFirst Ambassador has been a rewarding experience for me. Firstly, as an individual contributing Software Engineer it can be hard to find social opportunities outside of the day to day. Talking about tech and cyber to different expertise levels is a skill in itself and being an ambassador supports this."

"I enjoy visiting schools to explain my work, especially to young girls as we still see the imbalance in diversity - it hasn't improved in my 8 years working in tech. I am a great believer in "you can't be what you can't see," so I am hopeful that showing these girls people like you in these jobs can encourage them to consider qualifications that open doors to careers in tech/cyber security."

CyberFirst Ambassador

"I have just been reflecting on the number of pupils choosing to study ICT / Digital Technology in our school. In the years prior to us becoming a CyberFirst school we were averaging 15 pupils per year opting to complete GCSE Digital Technology or OCN ICT. This year, I have 35 pupils studying GCSE Digital Technology or OCN ICT. This is an amazing increase and my only explanation is the input that being part of the CyberFirst programme has had on our pupils."

"Thank you so much for organising today's cyber first day- the pupils thoroughly enjoyed each session!"

"The day was fantastic. All the students really enjoyed it, and staff were very impressed as well"

Teachers, CyberFirst Schools

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£190k*** delivered ***£5.1m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £26.89*** for every £1 invested.



SCOTLAND

Driving student uptake of Computing

Regional Delivery Partner: Education Scotland

In Scotland we are proud of the impact of CyberFirst Programme on Computing Science Uptake which has been validated by University of Glasgow School of Education through the evaluation by Dr Yvonne Skipper, Hannah Weatherly and Dr Christopher Hands.

The school currently offers Computing Science (CS) subjects ranging from National 3 (N3) to Higher (H), supported by 2 dedicated CS teachers. In addition to core subjects, the school offers National Progression Awards (NPAs) including Cyber Security Levels 4-6, PC Passport Levels 4-6, and Digital Media Levels 4 and 5.

Before Programme Involvement (Baseline Data):

The school's uptake prior to involvement was concentrated in the early secondary years and restricted in the senior phase:

Stage	Class Provision	Maximum Pupil Numbers
S1	All pupils, 1 period in term 2 only	N/A
S2	All pupils, 1 period per week	N/A
S3	2 classes of 20 pupils each	40 pupils
S4	2 classes of 20 pupils each	40 pupils
S5/6 (Academic)	1 class Higher/N5	15 pupils max (mixed with NPAs)

Programme Involvement and Journey - The school integrated CyberFirst programme offerings across the early secondary stages. In S1, students participated in the Trailblazers course, which took place in some classes in place of Computing during Term 2, though it was left unfinished in the 2023-24 academic year due to time constraints. The majority of S2 pupils, approximately 200-210 students, were involved in the Adventurers course.

Following participation in the CyberFirst programme, the school saw a significant increase in pupil uptake for Computing Science, particularly in S3.

Impact Data:

- ***S3 uptake doubled:*** Uptake in S3 more than doubled, increasing from 40 pupils to 80 pupils. This resulted in an increase from 2 classes to 4 classes of 20 pupils each.
- ***S4 uptake increased:*** The provision in S4 increased to 3 classes of 20 pupils each, up from 2 classes.
- ***Senior phase restructuring:*** S5/6 provision was separated. One class of Higher/N5 now caters to 20 pupils maximum, with no NPAs mixed into this group. A separate S5/6 class dedicated to PC Passport was established, accommodating 20 pupils maximum.

The programme also demonstrated an initial positive influence on gender balance, noting a small increase of uptake by female students moving into S3. Additionally, girls in S2 are participating in the CyberFirst competition.

Related Activities and Achievements

Due to the increased Cyber offerings in the school, the institution was better prepared to engage in related external events. The school was invited to and attended a North Ayrshire council Cyber Explorers' Day, focusing on Cyber Security and other technology areas. Their enhanced capacity allowed participants to fully immerse themselves in the workshops, successfully answer questions in the quiz, and ultimately win the event.

Future Plans

The school plans to build on the momentum generated by the programme. Future plans include adding new NPAs to expand opportunities for pupils while also ensuring opportunities remain available for achieving qualifications in the baseline subject. The school is also considering using the Defenders and Advanced courses, in conjunction with NPAs, to introduce students to Cyber concepts. This strategy aims to boost students' point totals for future college and university applications.

SUCCESS STORIES

"CyberFirst in Scotland continues to be a shining example of what's possible when ambition, innovation, and young talent come together. Its success is not just measured in awards or recognition, but in the confident, skilled futures it's helping to build across the nation."

Kirsty McFaul, Education Scotland

"CyberFirst in Scotland has become a powerful catalyst for developing the cyber skills our nation needs—strengthening pathways for young people, supporting our educators, and creating a resilient talent pipeline for the future. Its success is already making a clear contribution to Scotland's National Cyber Action Plan, helping us build a digitally confident, secure and innovative nation."

Clare El Azebbi, Scottish Government

"Working with CyberFirst in Scotland has been the most impactful education programme I've ever been involved in. The opportunities it creates for students, the support it offers to educators, and the genuine industry connections it builds are transforming how we prepare young people for the future. I've never seen anything make such a real and lasting difference."

Paul McLaughlin, West Scotland College

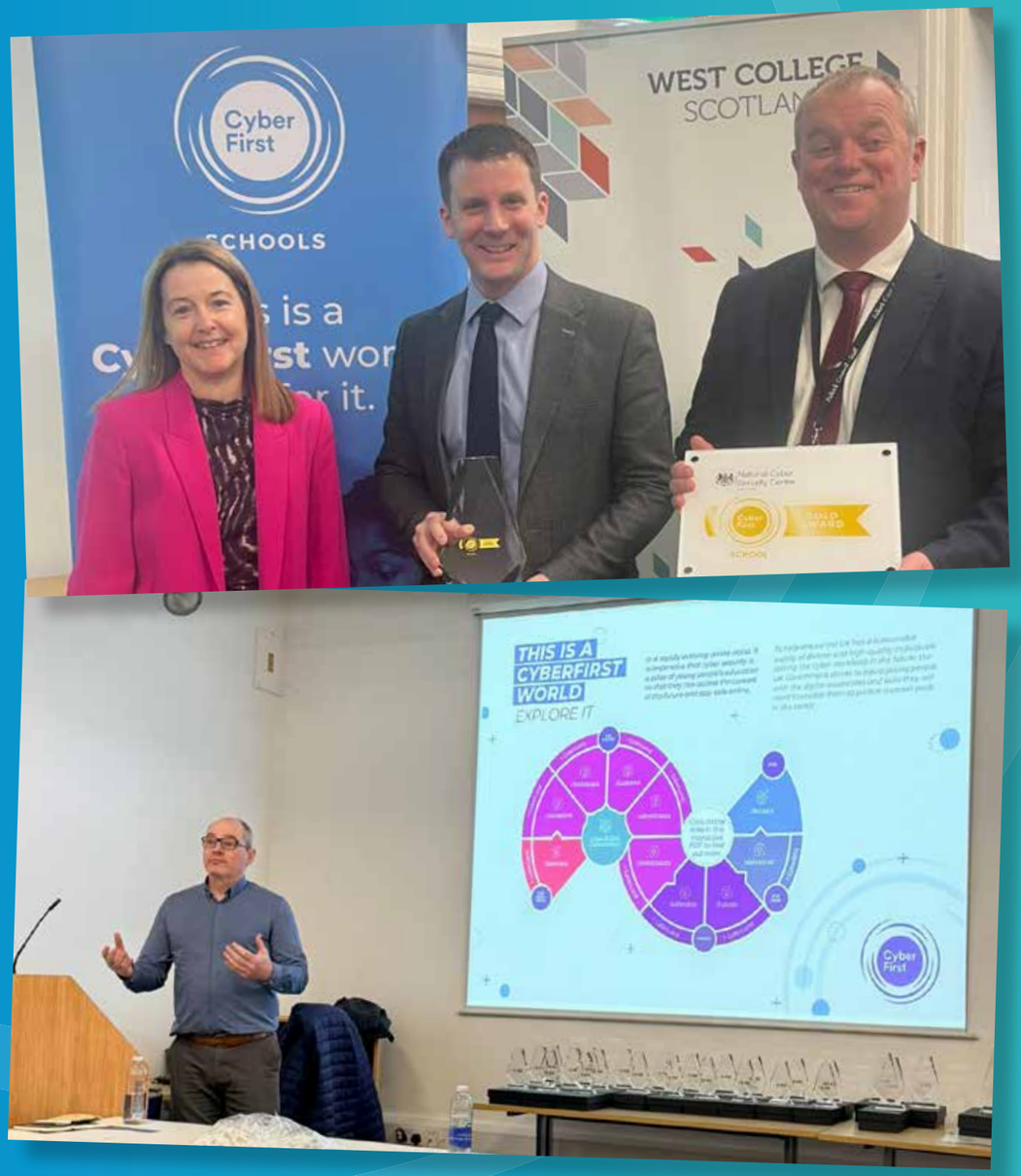
"I've had nothing but positive feedback from teachers who are really, really, enthusiastic about what we've been doing to support them. We've got a national team that's there to help people as well. from a national perspective it's well supported, and I think again because it's supported by peers, but also, it's got the backing of an organisation ultimately; for want of a better word, good kudos. And because it's the National Cyber Centre, industry folk take it seriously."

George Mullin, Teacher Glasgow City Council



SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£240k*** delivered ***£2.03m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £8.48*** for every £1 invested.



SOUTH WEST

Trailblazing impact in partnership

Regional Delivery Partner: Raytheon, Techspark & Cynam

Over the past 12 months, CyberFirst has delivered a wide range of impactful activities across the South West region, engaging students, educators, and industry partners. A key highlight has been the development of a strategic partnership with Iress, which supported the successful delivery of the South West EmPower 2025 event and the Colyton Cyber Day. Additional activity across the region has included school and college engagement, Adventurers and Trailblazers workshops, Cyber Horizons events, and participation in the CyberFirst Girls' Competition. The programme has also piloted virtual work experience and delivered a range of high-profile and locally impactful events, including the Bristol Cathedral CyberFirst Christmas Lecture, South Devon College Safer Internet Day, Parkstone CyberFirst Student Leaders initiative, Henley Bank Cyber Day, and the King Alfred Cyber Day in Somerset. Further highlights include collaboration with Bristol Cathedral and Somerset Careers Hub, the Hartpury University Centre "Hack a Tractor" AgriTech event, the CyberFirst South West Educator Conference 2025, an AI Symposium, a Deepfake awareness event, and the GCHQ CyberFirst Christmas Card initiative.

EmPower 2025

Following the launch of a strategic partnership with Iress, CyNam secured additional funding to enhance delivery of the EmPower Cyber 2025 event, aimed at inspiring young people to pursue careers in cyber and technology.

This support enabled 250 students to attend through funded transport, helping to remove access barriers, and provided dedicated accessibility support for 50 students with special educational needs. Beyond the event, the partnership will also support workplace encounters and work experience opportunities for at least 75 students, extending impact beyond initial engagement into longer-term career pathways.

The collaboration reflects a shared commitment between CyNam and Iress to promote inclusion, raise aspirations, and create sustainable opportunities for young people to access careers in technology across the South West.



Colyton Cyber Day: Future Cyber Defenders in Action

“On 29th January 2026 we held our fourth annual Year 8 Cyber Day. The day gives all of Year 8 the opportunity to learn about the importance of cyber security, how to stay safe and legal and about the wealth of careers available in cyber security. The Cyber Day forms part of our commitment as a CyberFirst Gold school.”

“The students took part in a range of activities. They learnt about cyber related laws and crimes from the SW Regional Cyber Crime Unit, getting the opportunity to do some investigative work to crack a PIN and break into a safe. Students also learnt about network security from Fortinet, a network security provider; having the opportunity to compete in teams to attack a system. NHS England explained how organisations respond to cyber-attacks, with a session simulating a ransomware attack on a hospital. Students learnt about the importance of the physical security aspect of cyber security from the University of Exeter Cyber Security Society, having the opportunity to try their hand at lock picking. Finally, year 8 learnt about how our own Alumnus, Chris Farmer, works to keep customer and restaurant data secure in his role as Senior Software Developer at Just Eat, before putting their problem-solving skills to the test programming Sphero robots.”

“The day also gave the opportunity for Charlotte Smith, our CyberFirst Regional Delivery Partner, to present Emily T and Aurela N with Cyber First hoodies, badges and certificates in recognition of their roles as Cyber First Student Leaders.”

Finally, colleagues from Blundell’s School and Dorset Digital Futures joined us for the morning to gain an understanding of how to plan and deliver a cyber day.”

Mrs Jenny Benettar, Assistant Head of Computing - Colyton Grammar School Devon

SUCCESS STORIES

“The Cyber First programme is a fantastic opportunity for the regional cyber ecosystem to unite behind a shared mission to encourage more young people from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue careers in cyber security. The benefits it brings to anyone involved from local industry partners, schools, colleges, and even Cynam itself are invaluable, and it leaves all participants with a magic feeling of accomplishment for a very important cause.”

Hollie Wakefield, General Manager, Cynam

“It was an extremely positive experience for all students involved. The initiative was particularly valuable in helping students understand how AI operates in everyday contexts and real-world scenarios. The presentations and workshops provided a safe environment in which students could explore practical situations and reflect on how AI is likely to influence their future working lives.”

Sophia Elliott, Head of Digital Specialism, SGS Berkeley Green UTC Gloucs

“CyberFirst have given our schools some amazing opportunities that we would otherwise not have had. Our students take part in the many competitions ranging from the CyberFirst Girls and Cyber Explorers competitions in Year 8 through to CTF flag competitions in sixth form. Some of our sixth form students have recently returned from Brussels having represented the UK in the Girls-GoSTEM Cyber Security competition. Our students have taken the opportunity to complete virtual work experience and several sixth form students have applied for bursaries for university. Without CyberFirst none of the above would have been possible.”

Mark Mortell, Head of Computing, Parkstone Girls’ High School Poole Dorset

“I am still BUZZING from this morning’s session with 500 girls at EmpowerCyber organised by CyNam to inspire children to pursue careers in tech and cyber! Bruce Gregory and I couldn’t help to document how excited we were to be there! Amazing to see such an industry representation from IBM, Microsoft, QA and QinetiQ (to name just a few that I managed to speak to with my group of girls).”

Monika, Plexal



SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£248k*** delivered ***£2.44m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £9.84*** for every £1 invested.





WALES

Embedding cyber education and supporting disadvantaged learners

Regional Delivery Partner: University of South Wales, Bangor University, Swansea University & NDEC

Across Wales, CyberFirst has delivered a wide range of impactful activities, supported by strong industry partnerships and a sustained engagement model that is driving long-term change within schools. This approach is enabling strategic improvements in curriculum delivery, senior leadership support, and increasing diversity within computing cohorts—demonstrating clear progress in embedding cyber education across the region.

Targeted investment has expanded access for disadvantaged learners, with initiatives such as EmPower enabling greater participation and supporting local career pathways. Notably, female uptake in Computing A-levels has reached 24%, almost double the national average. Delivery in areas of high deprivation, such as Newport, has further improved equitable access and raised student aspirations.



COMMENTARY FROM CARL WYATT, ST JOSEPH'S RC HIGH SCHOOL

At CyberFirst Wales, we're always talking about the benefits of our programme — and to be fair, we think they're pretty great. But rather than just hearing it from us, we thought it was time to hand the mic over to someone on the front line. Meet Carl Wyatt, a passionate computing teacher at St. Joseph's RC High School and proud CyberFirst Gold Award lead. In this interview, Carl shares how CyberFirst has transformed computing at his school, inspired students, and opened doors to cyber careers and real-world opportunities — all from a teacher's point of view. Becoming a CyberFirst Gold School has transformed our computing curriculum and student engagement. One of the most valuable outcomes has been the partnership with Airbus, which has delivered unforgettable, real-world learning experiences. From masterclasses in digital forensics to immersive site visits, students are now making genuine connections between classroom learning and industry careers.

"For many of our students, these events are the first time they see the real-world application of their computing studies — and it's transformational."

The CyberFirst Engagement Framework has been central to our strategy. It offers structured, age-appropriate interventions that align perfectly with our goal to boost uptake and diversity in Computing. We've used initiatives like the Trailblazers and Adventurers courses as targeted recruitment tools — especially effective for those undecided about choosing Computer Science at GCSE.

The CyberFirst Girls' Competition, in particular, has created a real buzz. We've reached the national finals three times and won in 2023. These events not only boost participation but also significantly increase female representation — our current Year 10 cohort includes 40% girls. CyberFirst goes beyond competitions. Events like the Pathways programme expose students to the full spectrum of cyber careers and routes into them, including apprenticeships, university, and direct employment. We've also embedded cyber security themes into our KS3 curriculum — from OSINT investigations to response simulations — giving learners both technical and critical thinking skills.



"Becoming a CyberFirst school has changed the way our students view their futures."

Our relationship with Airbus brings the Curriculum for Wales to life by delivering meaningful CWRE (Careers and Work-Related Experience). Recent visits to their Newport site gave students hands-on exposure to AI labs, cryptology activities, and direct engagement with interns. Some students left determined to pursue careers in the cyber sector.

The benefits extend beyond student outcomes. As a department, we've built a sustainable framework that integrates cyber education into the curriculum, school culture, and community outreach — including transition work with primary schools.

For schools considering the award, start by gathering evidence of all your cyber-related activities, and engage your leadership team early. The process is manageable with a proactive approach, and the reward is well worth the effort.

"The award is more than a badge — it's a catalyst for change."

CyberFirst addresses a critical national skills gap while offering local students — particularly in disadvantaged areas — real pathways to high-value careers. With South Wales emerging as a cyber industry hub, this programme provides timely, tangible opportunities to inspire the next generation of cyber professionals.

SUCCESS STORIES

“CyberFirst Wales is delivering meaningful social value by starting early, reaching learners from primary through to post-16, and using our structured engagement framework to provide sustained, consistent support in every awarded school. By connecting education with industry in this way, and widening access to high-quality tech experiences, we help young people, particularly those from underrepresented and economically disadvantaged communities, to see computing and cyber as tools for future opportunity. This long-term, equity-focused approach builds confidence, raises aspirations and creates real, accessible pathways into tech careers.”

Holly Lidbury, CyberFirst Wales

“I’ve seen first-hand the social value that CyberFirst Wales brings to young people across the country. It does more than teach technical skills; it builds confidence, curiosity and a sense of belonging in an industry that can often feel closed off. From an Ambassador perspective, the programme creates real pathways. Students who may never have considered cyber security as an option begin to see themselves in it. They gain practical knowledge, meet relatable role models and understand that a future in technology is genuinely within reach. The long-term value is not just in developing skills, but in widening access and strengthening the talent pipeline in Wales in an inclusive, sustainable way, with a touch of heart, and a sprinkle of possibility.”

Joe Wells, CyberFirst Ambassador

“CF Wales provides excellent scaffolding to help industry engage with the next generation of cyber security specialists. By providing well defined and supported mechanisms, CF facilitates a simple and accessible way for industry to support skills development, role models and awareness raising through structured engagement activities and events. In short, CFW takes the obstacles out of working with schools and young people – something that is clear by the number of industry partners that are happy to be involved.”

Clare Johnson, Itsus Consulting, CyberFirst Wales Industry Partner

“From an educator’s perspective, CyberFirst provides exceptional opportunities for learners to develop their computational thinking, problem-solving, and wider digital skills in a meaningful and engaging way. It exposes them to clear careers pathways within cyber security and the wider technology sector, helping them to understand how their learning connects to real world industries and future employment. The programme opens doors to new experiences, builds confidence, and gives learners access to role models they may not otherwise encounter. It genuinely adds social value by raising aspirations and broadening participation, and I would strongly advocate for all schools to take part.”

Rachael Lloyd-Davies, Computing Teacher, Pencoed Comprehensive School (Gold awarded CyberFirst school)

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£177k*** delivered ***£2.26m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £12.75*** for every £1 invested.



WEST MIDLANDS

Driving innovation in marginalised communities

Regional Delivery Partner: IN4 Group

CyberFirst West Midlands has continued to expand its reach and impact through strong in-kind support from IN4 Group, leveraging its skilled workforce, industry partnerships, and experience in delivering innovative digital programmes to diverse and hard-to-reach communities. This has enabled the programme to strengthen delivery, increase student engagement, and drive the cyber skills agenda across the region.

Additional support has been secured through key partnerships, including events with KPMG and BT, further enhancing local delivery. CyberFirst Days have been a particular highlight, receiving highly positive feedback with an average rating of 4.54 out of 5, reflecting strong engagement and quality of experience.

The MEGA event delivered in partnership with BT also demonstrated strong impact, with 100% of participating girls reporting increased confidence and improved digital skills. Feedback consistently highlighted the value of interactive learning and exposure to real-world technology and business concepts.

College outreach activity has also performed strongly, achieving an average rating of 4.20 out of 5, with students noting increased motivation, improved understanding of career pathways, and the value of direct engagement with industry professionals.

Overall, CyberFirst West Midlands demonstrates a high-quality, partnership-led approach that is effectively engaging learners, building skills, and supporting progression into cyber and technology careers.

"The Sphero orbs was my favourite activity, because I managed to finally program a JavaScript program that takes a route input string and gets the ball to visit all of the waypoints on the football field."

"I learnt many new things and information at today's event. It has motivated me to keep moving forward on study to achieve well and to get into cyber tech"

"I think this is a very informative useful event which has definitely helped me out with my future career choices"

SUCCESS STORIES

"Delivering the CyberFirst contract in the West Midlands has created strong momentum in engaging and strengthening the region's cyber and technology ecosystem. Exceptional uptake has been demonstrated through a growing network of 12 CyberFirst schools and colleges, as well as key initiatives including MEGA events hosted at BT, college outreach with Aston University and Accenture, and CyberFirst Days at STEAMhouse and GBSIoT."

Suzie Renshaw, IN4 Group

"BMet College has greatly valued our partnership with IN4 Group through the CyberFirst programme. As part of our journey to achieving CyberFirst Gold Recognition, our staff and students have participated in several CyberFirst Days and outreach events that have been both engaging and impactful. Throughout all interactions, the IN4 Group team has demonstrated professionalism, responsiveness, and a genuine commitment to supporting Further Education providers in developing the next generation of digital and cyber talent. Their approach has helped strengthen our students' understanding of technology careers and broadened our college's industry connections. We look forward to seeing how the transition to TechFirst will continue this important work."

Lola Rose Freer, BMet



SUCCESS STORIES

““Working with the IN4 Group team on the CyberFirst programme has been an absolute pleasure! Our first event together was in March 2025, when Aston Centre for Cyber Security Innovation (CSI) welcomed around 80 Year 12 students from local Sixth Forms and colleges. The students got stuck into four fantastic activities—coding, VR, OSINT and industry speed networking—all brilliantly supported and organised by the IN4 Group team.”

“From the very beginning, everything was so easy. Communication was clear, quick and incredibly efficient; we finalised dates, logistics and activity plans after only a few emails! On the day, the team arrived fully prepared, with all equipment ready to go. They even arranged an excellent keynote speaker and delivered an inspiring talk on local cyber futures, including the growth of GCHQ/NCF and the wider tech ecosystem.”

“Our next collaboration was the CyberFirst MEGA Event at BT’s Snow Hill office on November 2025, where Aston CSI delivered a Capture the Flag game for over 180 Year 8 girls. IN4 Group’s organisation was once again top-notch—thoughtful, detailed, and with great care taken to ensure everything was suitable and safe for younger participants. The atmosphere throughout was amazing: supportive, energetic and full of excitement. It genuinely felt like being part of a brilliant community of educators, industry partners and young people.”

“Not only did we deliver fun and inspiring activities together, but we also had a great time exchanging ideas with teachers and other partners. I truly hope the IN4 Group team will invite us to take part in future activities—they are fantastic to work with, and I’m already looking forward to what we can create together next.”

Gosia Dzierdzikowska, Aston University

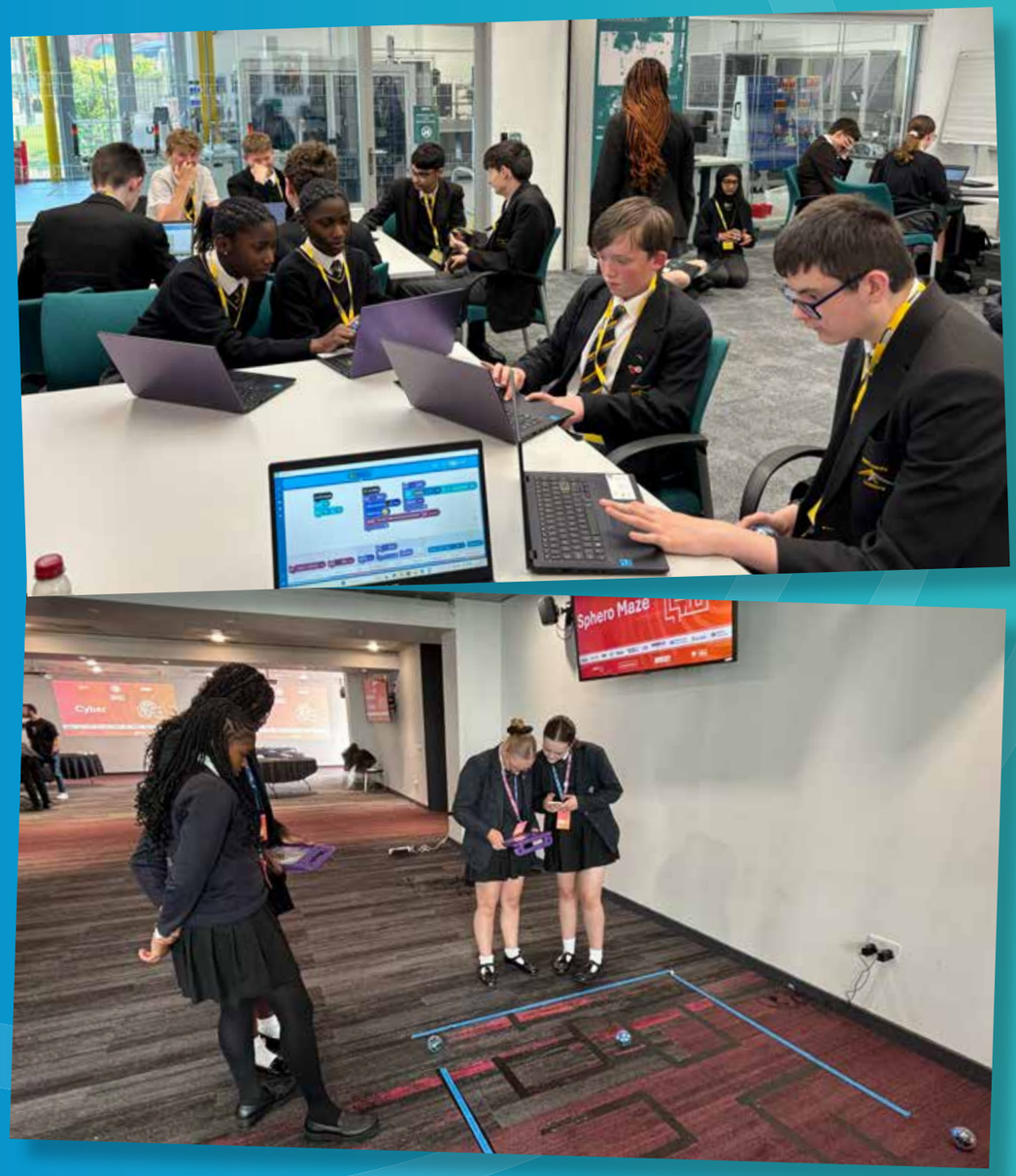
“The support you and your team have given us has been first-rate and I very much hope this continues! Not only have you helped us quickly and painlessly achieve CyberFirst Gold status, but your support for our Sixth Form Cyber days and help with industry / academic links has been very valuable.”

“The West Midlands Cyber eco system in schools has benefitted greatly from your work, and it is particularly pleasing to see your engagement with existing networks in the region, such as Computing at Schools, which has led to new opportunities and a vibrant expansion of connections between Computing Leads in West Midlands and beyond.”

Johnny Palmer, Bromsgrove School

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An in-kind Investment from IN4 Group of circa ***£40k*** delivered ***£853k*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £21.48*** for every £1 invested.





YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER

Expanding reach, relevance and awareness

Regional Delivery Partner: RTC North & Kings Priory

CyberFirst Yorkshire and Humber has delivered a diverse and forward-thinking programme of activity, focused on strengthening cyber career pathways, supporting educators, and responding to emerging technological trends such as artificial intelligence. Through strong regional partnerships, the programme continues to expand its reach and relevance across schools, colleges, and industry.

A key area of focus has been enhancing **career pathway awareness**, helping students understand the breadth of opportunities within cyber security and the steps required to access them. This has been supported through targeted events and employer engagement, enabling young people to make more informed decisions about their future education and careers.

The region has also demonstrated leadership in **educator engagement and innovation**, with conferences and knowledge-sharing events supporting teachers to embed cyber and digital skills into the curriculum. Notably, collaboration with academy trusts around the integration of **AI in education** highlights a proactive approach to emerging technologies and their role in shaping future learning and workforce needs.

Events such as **Cyber Switch Up 2025** further showcase the region's commitment to engaging students through interactive and relevant content, combining cyber security with broader digital skills development in an accessible and engaging format.

Drawing upon its skilled workforce, innovative delivery and industry links of RTC and Kings Priory CyberFirst Yorkshire and Humber is delivering a responsive and collaborative programme that strengthens local capability, supports educators, and equips young people with the knowledge and skills needed to progress into cyber and technology careers.

SUCCESS STORIES

"The CyberFirst programme has really raised the profile of digital skills and opportunities available not only in cyber security but in wider tech. Through this programme we are reaching schools and young people early enabling them to see what they can be. Meeting the individuals and companies that work in these industries is really shining a light on the opportunities that are out there. From an industry perspective, I see real value to industries and their employees in engaging with young people."

Claire Willis, STEM Programme Manager, RTC North

"Having the CyberFirst Yorkshire team in school for the Trailblazers event was a real boost for our students. The Year 8 group were totally immersed in the digital detective challenge, which got them thinking beyond how to stay safe online, and also how these kinds of skills apply in the real world. The Cyber Ambassador who joined us struck the perfect balance: knowledgeable, relatable, and full of stories that brought cyber security careers to life. As a CyberFirst school, we value the way these resources align with our existing curriculum and the clear connections they establish to careers in tech and cyber, all of which help shape our students' perspective on computing and its potential outcomes."

Craig Walton, Head of Computing and Business, Dixons Trinity Chapeltown Academy in Leeds

"Being involved in CyberFirst changed how I think about my role as a student. It's not just about technical skills; it's about developing as a person."

Student from Sheffield Hallam who delivered the CyberPathways event



SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY

An investment of ***£248k*** delivered ***£1.43m*** of social value achieving a Social Return on Investment ***(SROI) of £5.76*** for every £1 invested.



CYBERFIRST STAKEHOLDER VOICES

CyberFirst Ambassadors

CyberFirst Ambassadors play a vital role in delivering the programme's mission to inspire and engage the next generation of cyber security professionals. Drawn from industry, academia, and the wider cyber community, they bring real-world insight, credibility, and enthusiasm to CyberFirst activities across the UK.

All CyberFirst Ambassadors are registered STEM Ambassadors and complete the necessary safeguarding requirements, including DBS checks (or equivalent), before joining the programme. They work closely with CyberFirst Regional and Home Nation Partners, who coordinate their involvement to maximise impact across events and activities.

Ambassadors regularly engage with young people in schools, colleges, and regional events, helping to raise awareness of cyber security careers and pathways. Many also contribute to steering groups, conferences, school assessment panels, and teacher CPD, further strengthening programme delivery and educational impact.

The Ambassador network currently includes over **266 members**, with continued growth across regions, including increasing participation from CyberFirst alumni.

SUCCESS STORIES

"Being a CyberFirst Ambassador has given me the opportunity to attend headline events... and run hands-on activities to spark students' interest in cyber security. A highlight for me was organising and helping to deliver the CyberFirst Advanced course to more than 70 students across the UK. It was this course that originally inspired me to pursue a career in cyber... and I'm proud to now help pass that same inspiration on to the next generation."

Ross, QinetiQ, South West Ambassador.

"I am a great believer in "you can't be what you can't see," so I am hopeful that showing these girls people like you in these jobs exist, can encourage them to consider careers in tech."

Ciara, Rapid7, Northern Ireland Ambassador.

"Talk about more than computing, there are other roles needed within tech. Talk about those roles more, get people interested: they can always learn later."

CyberFirst Ambassador (Volunteer)



STUDENT LEADERS

The CyberFirst Student Leaders initiative was launched as part of the wider CyberFirst Schools and Colleges programme to recognise and support inspiring students across the UK. Aimed at learners aged 13–18, the initiative celebrates those who actively promote cyber security and computing within their school, college, or wider community.

Student Leaders play an important role in strengthening digital awareness and resilience by inspiring their peers and contributing to a culture of curiosity and engagement with technology. Nominated by teachers, these students demonstrate leadership through activities such as supporting or running cyber and STEM clubs, providing guidance to peers and educators, promoting cyber security best practice, and proactively developing their own skills and career interests.

Recognised students receive a formal letter and certificate from the NCSC and are encouraged to include their role as a CyberFirst Student Leader in applications for further education and career opportunities. The initiative not only rewards individual achievement but also supports progression into programmes such as the CyberFirst Bursary and wider pathways into the cyber security profession.

We have recognised over **80 Student Leaders** so far.

SUCCESS STORIES

“Maddie stands out for her genuine passion and initiative in cyber security. Despite not studying computing or ICT, she has actively sought out opportunities to develop her knowledge, pursuing cyber-related learning independently and motivating others to take part in cyber activities. She demonstrates that cyber security is accessible to all students, not just those studying technical subjects.”

Winstanley College, North West.

“Nihal highlighted that there is a place for everyone in Computer Science, highlighting how different interests can lead into the field. He values this recognition because it validates his contribution and supports future university and employment applications. Nihal said he is grateful for the opportunity provided by the school and CyberFirst, and he hopes to meet and surpass expectations this year.”

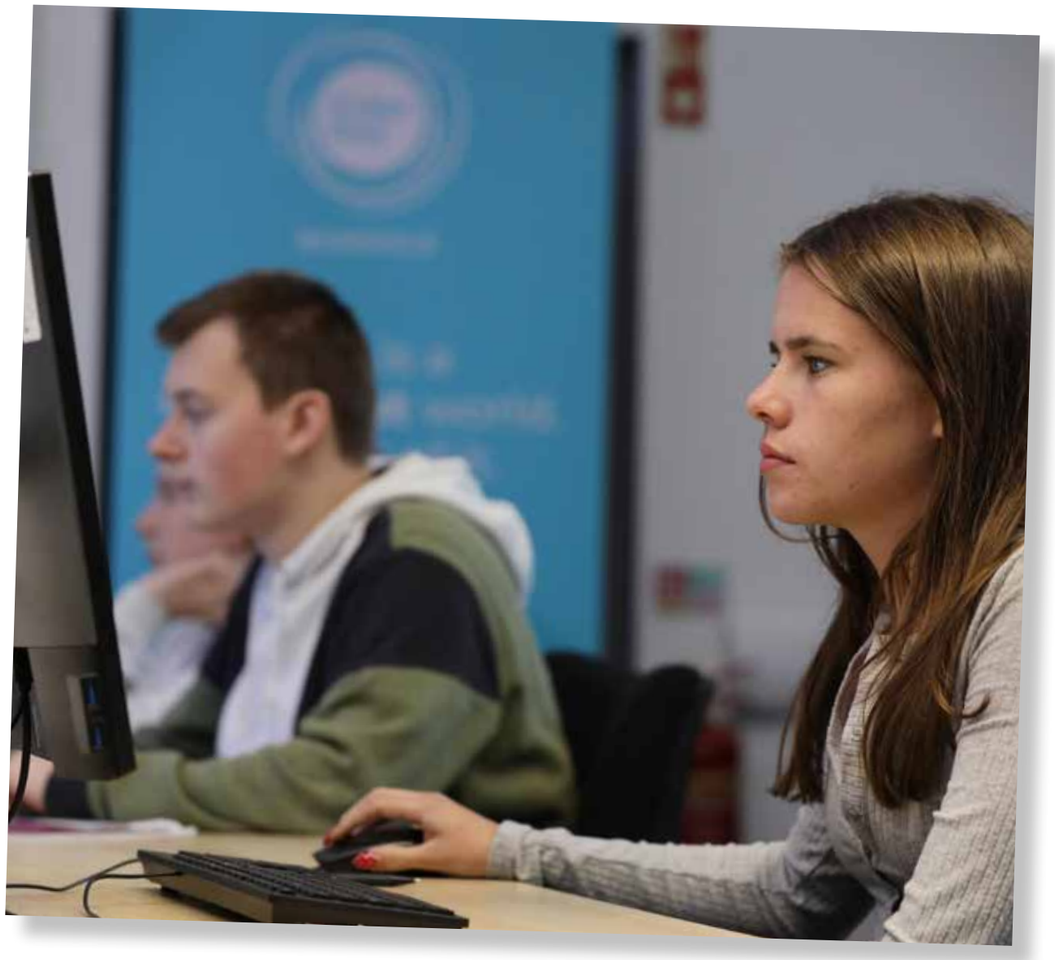
King Edward VI Handsworth Grammar School for Boys, West Midlands.

CYBERFIRST PROGRAMME DELIVERY PARTNERS

The CyberFirst programme is delivered through a network of regional partners across the UK, each playing a vital role in translating national objectives into impactful local delivery. These partners bring together expertise from education, industry, and the public sector to design and deliver activities that are responsive to regional needs and opportunities.

Through strong collaboration, innovation, and local engagement, delivery partners support a wide range of stakeholders—including students, educators, and employers—helping to raise awareness, build skills, and create clear pathways into cyber security careers. Their collective efforts ensure that CyberFirst activity is accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the evolving demands of the cyber workforce.

The CyberFirst Programme directly supported a **workforce of 89** across the UK in 2025-26



SUCCESS STORIES

“From an NCSC’s perspective, it’s great to see so many young people interact with the CyberFirst programme and then move through the CyberFirst Bursary programme into a career in cyber.”

Operative, Cyberfirst - NCSC

“It has been a huge privilege to work delivering the south west programme to schools and colleges and collaborating with industry and education partners. We know we have made a huge difference in the space with not only our industry partners who enjoy the outreach delivery but also the teachers who have found partners they can trust and come to for support and advice. The learners engage 100% and we have seen students apply for vacancies and speak and build their confidence which prior to this, wouldn’t have happened This is down to the relationships we have built in the south west, our approach, our integrity and the trust we have with all of our stakeholders We started this at the beginning because it was the right thing to do. It still is the right thing to do and we want to continue doing what we have done so well starting conversations, speaking to new people and welcoming them into the sector.”

Regional Delivery Partner

“I’ve devoted the last 10yrs of my career to help build the CyberFirst programme. It’s transition to DSIT brings huge opportunities and I’m truly excited what happens over the next few years. I think one of the strongest legacy of CyberFirst will have been the creation of CyberFirst regional delivery partners and the communities that they have worked so hard to build.”

Operative, CyberFirst - NCSC

“The whole programme has ramped up engagement with schools and colleges and enabled them to think strategically about themselves as an organisation along with the futures of their students and gain a wider understanding of the cross-curricular impact of tech. We have seen continued and increased engagement and embedding from an initial conversation or activity, to teacher CPD Trailblazers and bursary applications and competitions, along with apprentices and work experience opportunities also. More schools require face-to-face engagement and want that business industry relationship for curriculum content and career pathways as well as Teacher CPD.”

Regional Delivery Partner

EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA

Education providers and academic institutions play a central role in the success of the CyberFirst programme. Schools, colleges, and universities are key beneficiaries, supported through a range of activities designed to enhance curriculum delivery, build capability, and strengthen pathways into cyber security and technology careers.

Through engagement with CyberFirst, schools and colleges benefit from enriched learning experiences, access to industry expertise, and opportunities to embed cyber and digital skills within teaching. This support helps educators increase confidence, improve student outcomes, and raise aspirations—particularly among underrepresented groups.

Higher education institutions and academic partners also play a critical role, contributing to research, talent development, and progression pathways. Through collaboration with CyberFirst, they are better positioned to attract, develop, and retain students with cyber security skills, aligning education provision with industry demand.

Together, education and academia form a vital part of the CyberFirst ecosystem, enabling sustained impact by supporting learners at every stage of their journey—from early engagement through to higher education and into the workforce.

There are **280 CyberFirst recognised schools** along with **16 ACE accredited institutions**, plus a host of other educational establishments engaging with the programme.



SUCCESS STORIES

"I have been extremely impressed with the work of Cyber First do in school and hope that a merger with the TechFirst programme does not dilute the excellent work they are fostering on the high-level skills required for our future national safety. From what I read and see, the pace of change amongst other state actors is already incredibly impressive in developing these skills. Culturally, we operate differently and have other challenges in schools, so I think to achieve future targets and expertise, there is a need for assertive initiatives from the state and that nothing gained so far is watered down or lost, only built upon."

Education Provider (School / College)

"CyberFirst has created a fantastic opportunity for our company members to support the next gen of cyber professionals. We are now beginning to see CyberFirst grads come into the workforce and the impact of the programme has created professionals ready to work to build a strong and secure cyber future."

Academia (University / HE Institution)

"Our students gained valuable experience presenting at the event and sharing their experiences at the target audience that many stakeholders at the event are ultimately trying to target and encourage into the area of cyber security and technology. They gained many contacts for their future careers and ideas of what areas they could progress into. One student commented that she 'didn't know all the jobs that existed in this field'. Our students have further realised their potential as Ambassadors to inspire their peers and mentor those younger down the school. My colleague, Mark was also extremely inspired by the presentations. He also would be a fabulous Ambassador across schools or to bridge the divide with central government and stakeholders on practical initiatives to reach the ambitious goal on encouraging more students into the cyber/tech field. The networking opportunities with others across this field was extremely beneficial and I do hope our students brought another viewpoint to those working in this field."

Education Provider (School / College)

"CyberFirst has been fantastic. A true success story. When I see how much benefit that programme has brought to the UK, I finally feel like my taxes are being put to good use. I wish I could be as optimistic about the TechFirst programme."

Academia (University / HE Institution)

INDUSTRY

Industry partners are integral to the success of the CyberFirst programme, providing essential expertise, real-world insight, and direct engagement opportunities that strengthen its impact. Through collaboration with employers across the cyber and technology sectors, the programme ensures that activities remain relevant, practical, and aligned with workforce needs.

Employers contribute in a variety of ways, including supporting events, offering mentoring, delivering workshops, and providing work experience opportunities. This engagement enables students to gain exposure to real-world applications of cyber security, better understand career pathways, and develop skills that are valued by industry.

For industry partners, involvement in CyberFirst supports talent pipeline development, helping to identify and nurture future cyber professionals while reducing recruitment challenges. It also offers opportunities to contribute to social value objectives, support diversity and inclusion, and strengthen links with education and local communities.

Through these partnerships, CyberFirst creates a collaborative ecosystem where industry plays a key role in shaping, inspiring, and developing the next generation of cyber talent.

CyberFirst have direct relationships with **240 industry partners** which is complimented by regional partner networks and suppliers.



COMMENTS AND QUOTES

"If the UK wants to compete in cyber and emerging technology, talent is our most important infrastructure. CyberFirst - and now TechFirst - are helping build that infrastructure by showing young people that these careers are within reach."

CyberFirst Industry Partner

"The largest impact for us as a business is bringing in very talented early careers into our business, either as summer placements to help on innovation style tasks or as graduates after completing university and training through CyberFirst bursary programme. We have a great internal network of CyberFirst alumni that still reach into the wider community and get valuable contacts, opportunities and experience from this larger network."

CyberFirst Industry Partner

"The programme helps us to leverage the power of the cyber ecosystem for the benefit of young people. In other worlds industry are competitors, but with CyberFirst we work together to help others. It is also good for employee engagement - all our colleagues like to feel they can 'give back' to the wider community."

CyberFirst Industry Partner

"CyberFirst has had an immense impact to Microsoft and our alumni community, running this programme has helped us facilitate hundreds of hours of volunteering and has supported many lives via the Bursary programme."

CyberFirst Industry Partner



SOCIAL VALUE METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

For this analysis SVB has adopted the UK widely recognised social accounting methodology, **Social Return on Investment (SROI) to account for value. The Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM)** wheel being adopted to identify value in one or more of its themed areas, the evaluation being aligned with the principles, standards and levels set out by **SVQM's Silver Award criteria**.

SOCIAL VALUE SUMMARY STATEMENT

The evaluation of CyberFirst programmes, undertaken in line with Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) standards and Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, demonstrates the generation of substantial and measurable social value. Applying 57 distinct impact measures, drawn from 14 verified proxy value sources across 6 SVQM value areas, the assessment has been conducted with a robust approach ensuring no duplication or double counting.

From a total investment of £6.5 million, CyberFirst generated £45.1 million in social value during 2025–26, equating to a strong Social Return on Investment of £6.94 for every £1 invested.

This value reflects the programme's wide-ranging impact, including improved educational outcomes, increased employability, enhanced wellbeing, stronger industry collaboration, and meaningful contributions to local economies. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate CyberFirst's effectiveness in delivering long-term benefits for individuals, communities, and the UK's cyber security capability.

The evaluation of CyberFirst programmes, conducted in alignment with Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) standards and Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, demonstrates significant social value creation.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is based on Social Return on Investment (SROI) principles. This was chosen as the most appropriate methodology to monetise the impact of CyberFirst activities and convert them into value. Social Return on Investment is measured through eight key principles of Social Value measurement.



Principle 1: Involve Stakeholders

Principle 2: Understand What Changes

Principle 3: Value the Things That Matter

Principle 4: Only Include What Is Material

Principle 5: Do Not Overclaim

Principle 6: Be Transparent

Principle 7: Verify the Result

Principle 8: Be Responsive



SOCIAL VALUE QUALITY MARK – SVQM ANALYSIS

The impact achieved is both qualitative and quantitative, and where quantitative impacts are evident, they are associated with a financial value, outcomes have been identified during the evaluation of activities delivered, in line with **Principle 3: Value the things that matter**, the leading outcomes had proxy indicators applied with the additional outcomes being considered but not necessarily creating value, this helps keep the analysis in line with **Principle 5: Do not overclaim**.

Social Value created has been identified and attributed within SVQM themed areas of Health & Wellbeing, Social & Community, Crime & Justice, Education & Skills, Employment & Volunteering and Economic.

SVQM Theme	£ Social Value	Social Value (%)
Health and Wellbeing	£8,458,739.33	**18.8%**
Social and Community	£4,682,648.14	**10.4%**
Crime and Justice	£3,195,961.61	**7.1%**
Education and Skills	£18,322,937.12	**40.6%**
Employment and Volunteering	£1,352,888.04	**3.0%**
Economic	£9,069,582.36	**20.1%**
Social Value Total	**£45,082,756.60**	**100%**
Social Return on Investment (SROI)	£6.94	

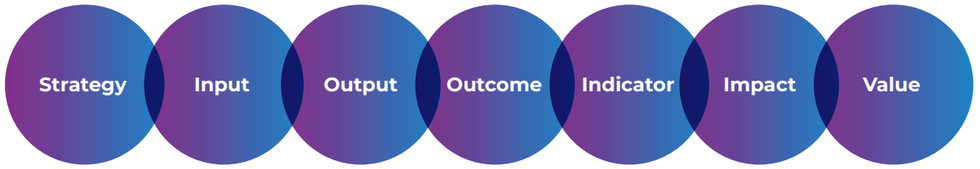
The results are verified to ensure that the principles of Social Value are followed throughout the analysis.

WHAT IS SOCIAL VALUE?

‘Social Value is a broader understanding of value. It moves beyond using money as the main indicator of value, instead putting the emphasis on engaging people to understand the impact of decisions on their lives. The people’s perspective is critical. Organisations will always create good and bad experiences, but on balance should aim to create a net positive impact in the present and for a sustainable future. They should measure their impacts and use this understanding to make better decisions for people’. **Social Value International**.

THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

In the SROI framework, understanding what has changed is fundamental. The process systematically converts outputs into outcomes and ultimately into impact—which is then monetised by assigning a cost equivalent. Each step is essential; omitting any would compromise the integrity of the findings.



A Theory of Change has been developed, alongside a Social Value Map, which clearly illustrates the journey from strategy to social value, ensuring transparency and accountability in impact measurement.

WHAT IS SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)?

Social Return on Investment (or SROI) is a specific methodology and framework used to quantitatively measure and account for the social value created by an organisation or project. SROI is a financial approach to understanding the impact of a programme, initiative, or investment, expressed in monetary terms. It involves a systematic process sometimes captured and demonstrated through a **Social Value Map** to assign a financial value to the social, environmental, and economic outcomes generated by an activity. The SROI ratio is often represented in monetary terms as a return on investment (like financial ROI), where the benefits are compared to the costs involved.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL VALUE MAP?

An excel spreadsheet that tracks the financial social, environmental, and economic outcomes generated by an activity. Using SROI methodology to track the Social Value journey from strategy to value (see TOC), It uses open-source data from credible sources, predominately government datasets and/or nationally recognised cost avoidance statistics. It then applies a level of **discounting** as CyberFirst may not be solely responsible for all the social impact created, change or improvement, but can legitimately claim the Social Value once discounted. This is then allocated a reasonable proportion of the impact and generates a Social Return on Investment.

DISCOUNTING

In the context of Social Return on Investment (SROI), **discounting** is the process of adjusting the financial value of an organisation’s reported or measured impact to account for external factors that influence social value creation. This ensures transparency and legitimacy by recognising that no single organisation operates in isolation.

For CyberFirst, discounting helps acknowledge the contributions of other organisations in facilitating or being involved within the programme. The discounting process consists of four key elements:

1. Deadweight – The extent to which outcomes would have occurred without CyberFirst intervention.

2. Displacement – Whether CyberFirst’s efforts have simply shifted an issue rather than creating additional value.

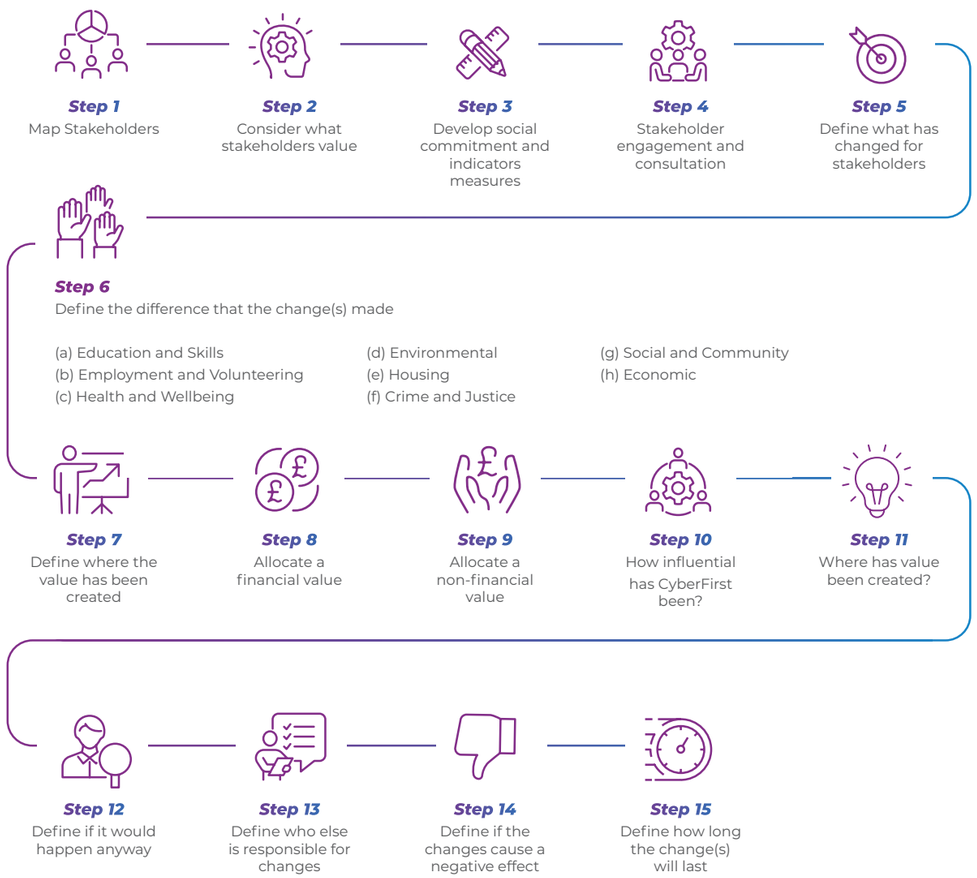
3. Attribution – The proportion of value that can be credited to CyberFirst versus other contributing factors or organisations.

4. Drop-off – The rate at which the impact of CyberFirst’s efforts diminish over time.

By applying discounting, the total value created is adjusted to reflect only the unique contribution of CyberFirst programme and activities, ensuring an accurate and fair assessment of its financial and social impact.



ROUTEWAY



LEGITIMISING CLAIMS

There is a recognised range of external influences on the depth and causality of Social Value being delivered.

These influences have been considered and were required to remove value that may not be contributed to CyberFirst but counted as they have been achieved through the delivery of its programmes.

Deadweight - considers what would have happened without participants having access to CyberFirst provision. Therefore, in creating this report, local, regional, and national initiatives and Government policies and strategies have been considered, with an average **deadweight of 20%** (Ecosystems 15% , Bursary 29% , Extra Curricular activity 20%, Girls Competition 14%) being assigned within forecasted value.

Level of Displacement - A nominal displacement percentage has been allocated across all activities. This report has been defined as 1% displacement (Ecosystems 1% , Bursary 1% , Extra Curricular activity 1%, Girls Competition 1%) as there was no negligible effect elsewhere.

Level of Attribution - this relates to how much of the unweighted (pre discounting) value can be claimed by CyberFirst. the following formula has been used. Forecasted strength of partnerships + Forecasted trust level + Forecasted influence Minus 100 = Attribution

Using this approach, a **70% attribution** figure has been assigned

LEVEL OF DROP OFF

Value is spread over four years, with an initial peak in year one with beneficiaries gaining support, guidance, valuable skills when they begin to access support with a steady reduction in years two, three and four, as the initial change will have become part of daily life.

Drop off levels

Year	Drop off (%)
One	100%
Two	80%
Three	60%
Four	40%
Five	20%

National Cyber Security Centre
a part of GCHQ

CyberFirst Social Value Report 2026

Report produced by Social Value Business

www.socialvaluebusiness.com

ANNEX A

Stakeholder lessons learned, challenges and response priorities

Supporting the CyberFirst Social Value Report 2026

Purpose

This annex supplements the main report by presenting the constructive and negative attributes identified through the 2026 Kenilworth stakeholder surveys. It records what was learned, why the issues matter, and the response priorities that can strengthen future delivery.

The evidence does not indicate that CyberFirst has an overall negative impact. Rather, stakeholders identified limitations and potential unintended effects that may restrict accessibility, consistency, progression or sustainability. Findings represent stakeholder observations and perceptions; further evidence may be required to establish scale, attribution and longer-term effects.

How this annex supports the report

- Demonstrates responsiveness to stakeholder voice and a balanced account of positive and adverse experience.
- Makes limitations visible rather than relying only on positive outputs and monetised value.
- Translates feedback into practical improvement priorities and proposed evidence measures.

1. Headline lessons learned

Six connected lessons emerge from the stakeholder analysis. Together they show that future success depends not only on reach, but on whether access is understood as fair, delivery is engaging and consistent, communication is dependable, progression opportunities are locally relevant, and outcomes can be evidenced over time.

1

Targeted inclusion needs a clear whole-programme narrative

Support for increasing female participation was strong, but some stakeholders perceived a gap in equivalent opportunities for boys. The lesson is to explain the rationale for targeted interventions while making the wider inclusive offer easy to understand.

2

Skills activity is strongest when linked to realistic local progression

Participants may develop skills without finding suitable regional employment, apprenticeships or employers. Local labour-market links are therefore an important part of programme impact.

3

Relationships need predictable communication and ownership

Irregular updates and uncertainty about points of contact can reduce participation and make joint planning harder. Defined contacts and a regular engagement rhythm are core delivery infrastructure.

4

Flexible and engaging resources improve access

Scheduled live calls can exclude learners who cannot attend, while some Explorers and Adventurers materials were considered insufficiently engaging. Blended delivery and refreshed interactive content can widen participation.

5

Regional flexibility needs common outcomes

Different delivery approaches can respond to local need, but stakeholders require clarity about curriculum content, expected learning and progression standards.

6

Sustainability depends on longitudinal evidence

Immediate indicators such as attendance, confidence and engagement are useful but do not establish sustained progression. Follow-up evidence is needed to support learning, funding and investment decisions.

2. Challenges and negative attributes

The following matrix sets out the specific limitations identified in stakeholder feedback and the potential negative effect if they are not addressed.

Theme	Negative attribute or limitation	Potential effect
Inclusive access	Perceived imbalance in the availability of opportunities across student groups.	Misunderstanding of inclusion objectives, reduced stakeholder confidence or lower engagement.
Local progression	Limited local employment and apprenticeship opportunities, especially where specialist roles are geographically concentrated.	Skills and qualifications may not translate into local employment; regions may not retain developed talent.
Communication	Engagement with Ambassadors and delivery partners was not always regular; updates and points of contact could be unclear.	Missed collaboration, reduced participation and difficulty coordinating education and industry activity.
Learning access	Live calls can be difficult to attend at fixed times.	Some learners and educators may be unable to participate fully.
Learning quality	Some Explorers and Adventurers material was viewed as insufficiently engaging.	Reduced motivation, participation and learning quality.
Delivery consistency	Regional approaches and expected learning outcomes were not always clear.	Confusion for providers and employers, inconsistent expectations and difficulty assessing progression.
Long-term evidence	Follow-up data on progression into education, apprenticeships and employment is limited.	Sustained impact is harder to demonstrate and improve.
Financial sustainability	Sponsorship and funding availability were identified as barriers to maintaining or expanding activity.	Continuity, development and scale may be constrained.

Interpretation: These issues should not be treated as proof of programme-wide harm. They identify where stakeholder experience, programme design or the available evidence may limit the realisation and demonstration of social value.

3. Improvement and learning plan

The actions below convert stakeholder feedback into a proportionate learning cycle. Measures are suggested for future monitoring; they are not presented as completed commitments or existing performance data.

Priority	Proposed response	Suggested evidence of progress
Inclusive offer	Map opportunities by age group and participant cohort; explain why targeted interventions are used and how they sit within the wider offer.	Published inclusion narrative; participation profile; feedback on perceived fairness and accessibility.
Local pathways	Strengthen links with regional employers and identify apprenticeships, work experience and recruitment routes.	Employer and pathway map; referrals or introductions; participant progression records.
Stakeholder coordination	Set named contacts, clear responsibilities and a regular schedule of regional updates.	Contact map; update log; stakeholder response and satisfaction feedback.
Flexible learning	Blend live sessions with recorded or reusable resources where appropriate.	Resource access data; attendance across formats; learner and teacher accessibility feedback.
Engaging materials	Review Explorers and Adventurers content with learners and educators; increase interactive material and consider resources such as Hacktivate.io.	Review record; refreshed materials; engagement and completion feedback.
Consistent outcomes	Define common curriculum content, objectives and expected outcomes while retaining justified regional flexibility.	Shared outcome framework; delivery mapping; educator and employer understanding.
Longitudinal impact	Introduce proportionate follow-up with participants and partners covering education, apprenticeships and employment.	Follow-up rate; progression evidence; documented limitations and attribution.
Sustainability	Develop a clearer evidence base for funding, sponsorship and future investment decisions.	Funding case; partnership contributions; documented continuity and scale assumptions.

4. Governance, evidence and review

To support continuous improvement, the annex should be treated as a live learning record rather than a one-off statement. The following approach would demonstrate that feedback is considered, acted upon and revisited.

Recommended review cycle

- **Record:** maintain a consolidated log of stakeholder feedback, including positive outcomes, challenges and unintended effects.
- **Assess:** identify whether each issue is isolated, regional or systemic, and what additional evidence is needed.
- **Respond:** assign an action owner, intended response and review point within programme governance.
- **Test:** seek feedback from affected stakeholder groups on whether the response improved their experience.
- **Report:** include progress, unresolved limitations and any new adverse effects in the next social value update.

Evidence safeguards

- Separate reported perception from verified outcome and avoid overclaiming causality.
- Where participant progression is tracked, apply proportionate data protection, retention and consent arrangements.
- Disaggregate evidence where appropriate so that aggregate reach does not conceal differences in access or experience.
- Record where evidence is incomplete, including the limits of sample size, follow-up and attribution.

Link to the main report

This annex complements the report methodology, particularly the commitments to involve stakeholders, understand what changes, avoid overclaiming, be transparent, verify results and be responsive. It also adds a clearer account of potential adverse effects alongside the positive social value presented elsewhere in the report.

Source and status

Source: *CyberFirst Programme - Stakeholder Impact Analysis: Kenilworth Stakeholder Surveys, 2026*. This annex summarises stakeholder-reported lessons, challenges and improvement opportunities. Proposed responses and monitoring measures are forward-looking recommendations and should be incorporated into formal delivery plans only where agreed by the relevant programme governance.