Apps for Good

Our Impact Journey 2023/24

Empowering the next generation of changemakers

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Why we exist

As technology shapes our world, it's vital that young people have the skills to draw on their lived experience to shape their future through technology.

Our free computing courses spark imaginations and inspire brighter futures.

The challenge

77%

of jobs will require digital skills by 2030.[1]

37%

of young people are worried they "do not have the digital skills to get a good job."[2]

7%

of educators believe that there is "enough digital emphasis" in the education system to prepare learners for their futures."[3]

3%

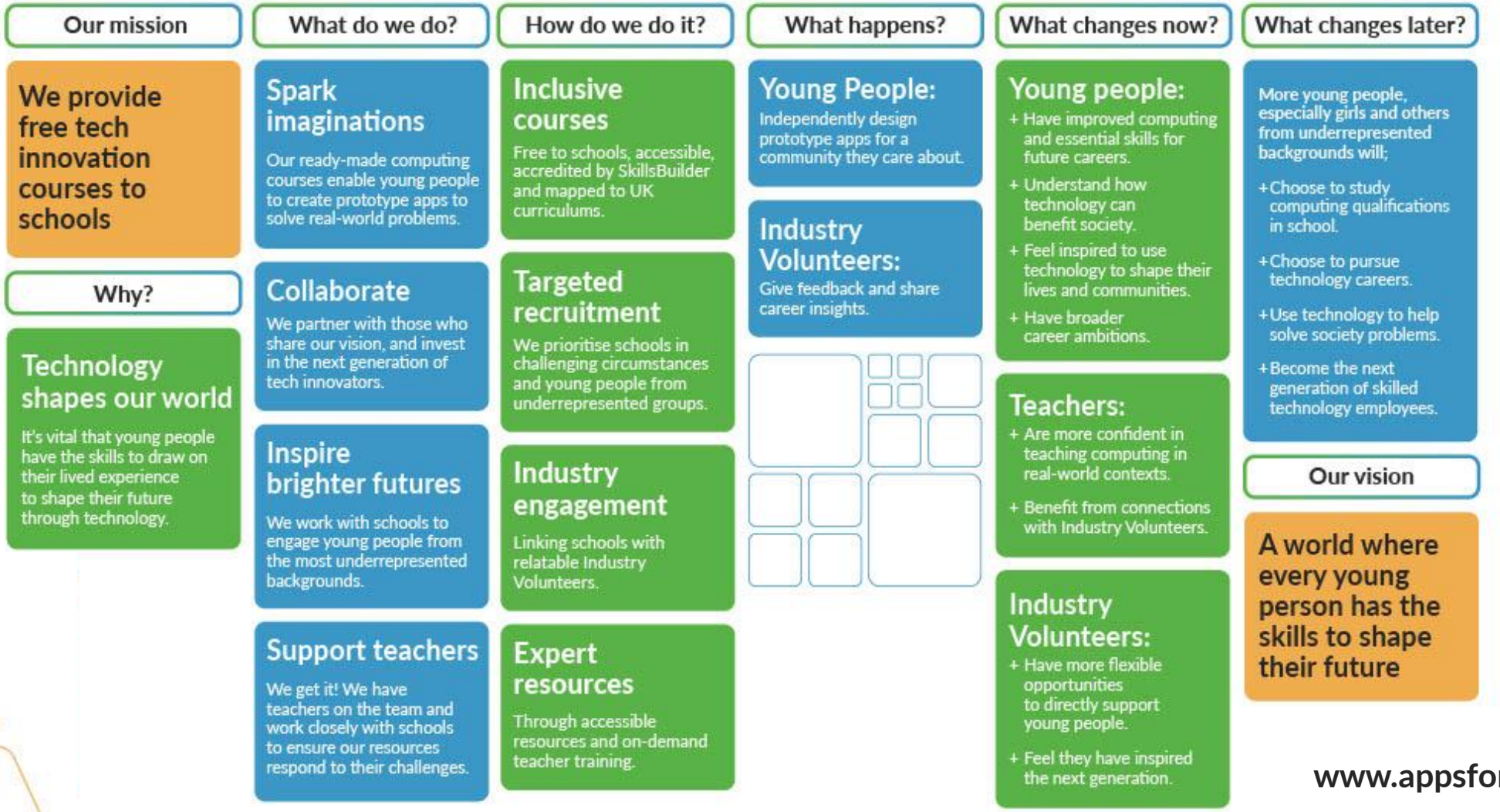
of teaching professionals agree strongly that essential skills are currently being taught sufficiently in education.[4]

"There continues to be a massive shortage of tech skills and significant blockages in the talent pipeline for those from under-resourced backgrounds. To address these interwoven challenges, we need to ensure young people are inspired and enthused by the possibilities of tech early on, seeing it as relevant, engaging and a pathway they could pursue."

James Turner, CEO, The Hg Foundation

[1]According to estimates from the World Economic Forum, [2]The Prince's Trust: Decoding the Digital Skills Gap, [3]Pearson Schools Report 2024, [4]Skills Builder Partnership, Essential Skills Tracker 2024

Addressing the challenge: our Theory of Change



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Our courses

There are three course themes to choose from, which all give young people the independence and skills to design and code an app prototype that solves a real-world problem, important to them.

Ready-made resources are provided, and all courses can be delivered by both specialist computing and non-specialist teachers. Course content is mapped to KS3/S1-3 computing curriculums in the UK's four regions.

Each course contains multiple opportunities to engage with Industry Volunteers and receive their feedback, and each year students' achievements are celebrated through our online national Showcase.

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Our courses

Innovate for Climate Change

Young people work in pairs and teams to design and create an app prototype that supports climate action, focused on one or more of the five Sustainable Development Goals related to climate action.

App for Social Action

Young people work in pairs and teams to design and create an app prototype that supports social action, focused on one or more of the 12 Sustainable Development Goals related to social action.

AI for Good

Young people are empowered to harness AI to do good in society, through working with others to create a community-focused, AI prototype app.

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In 2023/24, our courses reached...

701
Schools

30,143
Young people

841
Teachers

The skills that matter

Digital literacy is the foundation of Apps for Good - students use technology to participate and communicate with each other. They're also introduced to more sophisticated digital skills, including computer programming.

But it's not all about 'digital'. Integral to our approach is a dual skills set of digital and essential skills, that will have the greatest impact on young people and their future career prospects.

The eight essential skills from Skills Builder's Universal Framework are embedded in our courses, which are accredited by the Skills Builder Partnership. The development of essential skills provides a solid foundation to enable students to bring their digital skills to life.

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The skills that matter

Our impact on computing skills

81% of survey respondents reported improvement in their computer programming skills.

71% said they felt more determined to learn in computing lessons following the course.

"It's definitely developed my coding. I used to be all right at it - I wasn't the best, I wasn't the worst, I was around the middle. But after doing [Innovate for Climate Change], it's got even better. I feel confident doing it now."

Elizabeth, Y7 at Linslade School

"We all learned a lot about how to code as none of us knew before and afterwards we had a fully working app."

Finn, Y7 at John Beddoes Campus - Newtown High School

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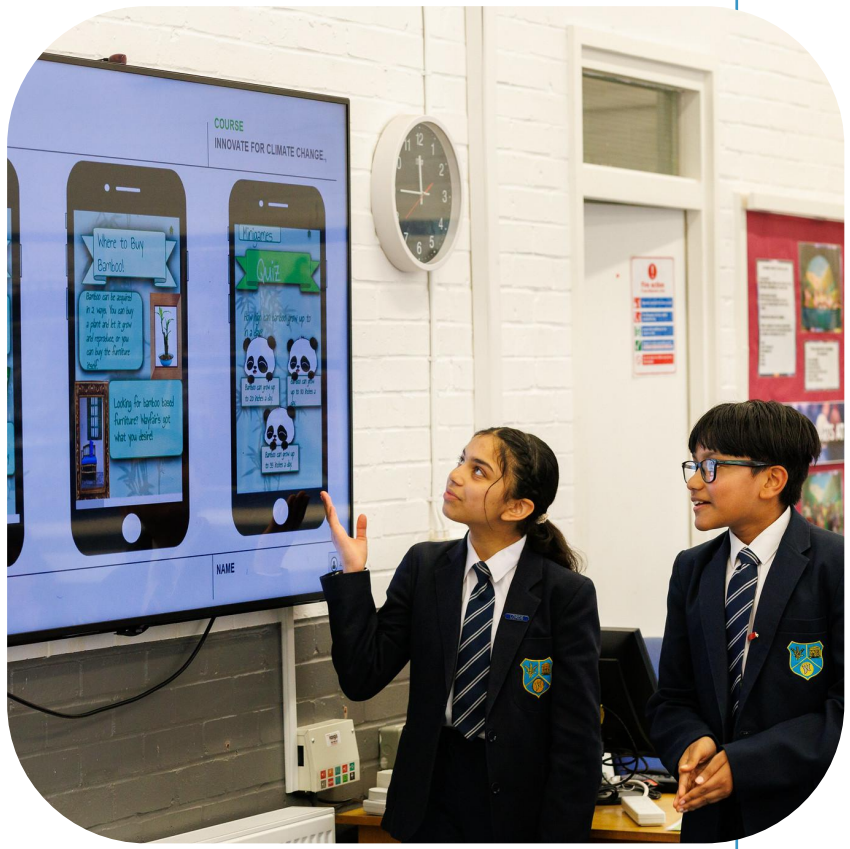
The skills that matter

Our impact on essential skills

Our survey data shows significant improvements in all eight Skills Builder skills. We asked students to reflect on each skill in turn, and whether it had improved as a result of the Apps for Good course.

For each essential skill, at least 62% of respondents reported improvement.



93%
reported improvements in more than one essential skill

86%
reported improvements in at least four essential skills

83% reported improvement in teamwork

"I'm always working alone, I don't like working in groups, but this made it really enjoyable to be in groups."

Olivia, S1 at Dunoon Grammar School

"It's interesting to see the findings obtained by Apps for Good on young people's perceptions of their essential skills. They provide insight into the fantastic provision on offer that truly brings the essential skills to life for students in the world of STEM, where these skills for success are often overlooked."

Connor Llewellyn, Senior Associate, Skills Builder Partnership

80% reported improvement in their creativity

"I enjoyed that I was able to let my creativity run wild [...] It was a really fun experience."

Manar, Y8 at The St Marylebone CE School

Inspired by industry

For many young people, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the plethora of career opportunities are unknown.

Our Industry Engagement sessions and annual Showcase celebration connect young people with role models from our pool of amazing Industry Volunteers, and help schools to meet their career targets and Gatsby Benchmarks 4 & 5.

Ensuring that our volunteers come from a diverse set of backgrounds, pathways and tech roles can encourage more girls and those from underrepresented groups to see themselves in the Industry Volunteers they meet, inspiring them to be part of a new generation of skilled tech employees.

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Inspired by industry

Industry Engagement in 2023/24

315 volunteers from 46 companies provided feedback and support to Apps for Good students.

193 teams and 661 young people entered our Showcase.

There were **4,291 reviews** of students' app ideas (almost double last year's total!) thanks to our **232 amazing shortlisters**.

100%

of teacher respondents rated their session as 'excellent' or 'very good'.

"[Industry Engagement] was a confidence boost… it made us feel a lot more competent."

Maria, Y12 at Bradford Grammar School

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Inspired by industry

Spotlight on Chiltern Learning Trust

Industry Engagement is a core part of this multi-academy trust's approach to delivering our Innovate for Climate Change course. In 2023/24, students took part in ideation sessions with volunteers, entered Showcase, and enjoyed the second Climate Change and Digital Innovation Summit (CCADIS).

CCADIS brought together students from 16 schools, industry partners and volunteers working in the digital economy. Students presented their climate app ideas, and gained an insight into tech careers through a panel discussion with Industry Volunteers.

"Google delivered a session at the start of the course, and talked about how you come up with innovative ideas. That sort of direct, relevant, purposeful industry engagement is so important. It makes the children feel so important as well. It gives them such a sense of self-belief about what's possible."

Emma Darcy, Director of Technology for Learning at Denbigh High School

"I'm 100% sure I'm choosing Computer Science after the experience I had today."

Samirah, student at Denbigh High School

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Inspired by industry

Impact on Industry Volunteers

We're delighted that our volunteers develop personally and professionally through supporting Apps for Good students. The top three benefits cited by this year's shortlisters were:

- Being inspired by young people
- Increased engagement in volunteering
- Increased experience supporting young people

"[Volunteering] has made me love what I do even more."

Fabiana, Head of Creative and Production at Novakid

Apps for Good 2024 Volunteer of the Year

"Over the years, I've been able to improve the way that I give feedback so that it is constructive... and that actually helps me in my work."

"If even one person from that classroom of 30 ends up doing something great afterwards, that's a success."

Miles, Software Engineer at LEGO

The importance of independent learning

Learning to learn independently is a pathway to becoming a high-level problem solver and informed decision maker - skills which will serve young people well when they enter the digital economy.

Passive learning does not lend itself well to computing. Instead, Apps for Good courses promote a dynamic classroom filled with active (often noisy!) learners, which is more reflective of working life. They work in pairs and teams to support each other's learning. Our eWorkbook and other course materials provide structured, yet flexible sessions, and students and teachers work through them together. Teachers often tell us this means they are able to circulate around the classroom and support students, rather than 'teach from the front'.

Independent learning is linked to a student's motivation to learn computing because it puts computing in a context. Our courses are student-driven. They build an app prototype to tackle a social challenge that they care about - something impacting their own life or community. This means they are motivated and engaged, while learning and practising digital and essential skills in a real-world context.

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Empowering girls through independent learning

The digital economy faces challenges beyond skills shortages - diversity remains a significant issue. According to The Tech Talent Charter's Diversity in Tech Report 2024:

- Just 29% of UK tech employees are women or non-binary.
- 25% of UK tech employees are from ethnic minorities and just 5% are black.
- 6% of UK tech employees are disabled, compared to 23% of the wider working age population.

Dr. Claire Thorne, co-CEO of Tech She Can, recently highlighted two major career drivers for girls - one is for doing social good and the other is to be creative, but they don't associate those two things with tech roles. There is also a general lack of confidence in STEM subjects and a lack of access to relatable role models.

Joysy John MBE believes the answer lies in "making the subject come alive and making it more project-based", and linking it to the interests of young people. That's what we do at Apps for Good.

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The impact of independent learning

Encouraging independent learning

70% of respondents agreed that they learn independently in computing lessons after doing the course

"When you've got the freedom to do something, it makes it a lot more enjoyable. If you don't have freedom, it feels forced, repetitive, boring, you won't enjoy it as much."

Sarvesh, Y9 at The Judd School

"When students work on projects that matter to them, they show remarkable enthusiasm and dedication. They are motivated by the opportunity to make a positive impact, and this often sparks a lasting interest in social change."

Sathish Sivasubramanian, Head of Computing and ICT, St Marylebone CE School

73% of respondents agreed that they work on issues that are important to them after doing the course

"[Working on something that matters to me] makes me feel like I'm a part of something important."

Bam Bam, Y10 at Chiltern Academy

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Encouraging independent learning

Spotlight on St Paul's RC Academy

Engaging more female students in computing is a priority for Fraser Christie, a teacher at St Paul's RC Academy in Dundee. He told us that the social action angle of Apps for Good courses, and the emphasis on essential skills, means that the content really resonates with the girls he teaches.

As well as delivering App for Social Action, Fraser piloted our new AI for Good course in 2023/24. He said that all the courses suit the agenda around getting more girls into tech "because the teams that seemed to be successful were the teams of girls with better 'soft skills' [...] it's a good opportunity for them to shine."

Ania, S4 at St Paul's Academy, has chosen to study computing further and said that the AI for Good course influenced the decision by "putting technology in a more positive light."

"It does feel good, knowing that you're able to address what you actually care about. It feels like you're actually able to change something in the world."

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2023/24 in focus: inspiring careers in tech

Encounters with industry are a strategic focus at Apps for Good. They are a key way in which we can inspire more young people, especially girls and others from underrepresented groups, to study computing and pursue tech careers.

In addition to our Industry Engagement sessions and Showcase, in 2023/24 we also delivered bespoke activities to provide even more opportunities for students to gain career insights.

We convened a webinar to mark Girls In ICT Day. Female students from Lea Manor High School and Putteridge High School hosted a panel discussion with teachers and industry professionals about their own early experiences with technology, and how they think we can encourage more girls and young women to pursue digital careers.

We are grateful to our funding partners who provide and facilitate additional opportunities for students, including the Summer Skills Day with BNY, the EmPower Cyber event run by Sage, and student visits to Spotify and BNY.

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Inspiring careers in tech

Evidence of impact on future aspirations

Students tell us regularly that their Apps for Good experience influences their aspirations and increases their interest in a tech career.

For many, the social action focus is a key driver. For others, the practical nature of the courses - the fact that they came away with an actual prototype app they'd built themselves - developed their confidence in computing and made the pathway feel more realistic.

"When I first started computing I was like, "oh my gosh, I'm never picking this subject" because it was super hard. But now, learning about App Lab, and wireframes and designing [...] I found that I have a talent for it and I'm good at it."

Arfa, Y8 at Challney High School for Girls

"[Since doing the course] I'm more interested in how technology can really, really change the way things work."

"[The entrepreneurial side of the course] made me realise that I want to do computer science or coding to help others."

Maria and Priya, students at Bradford Grammar School

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Inspiring careers in tech

The challenges of measuring long-term impact

While we have a wealth of qualitative data showing how our courses influence students' future plans, it's harder to measure this quantitatively and at scale.

We know that take-up of Industry Engagement sessions and entry into Showcase aren't always easy for schools and teachers with so many demands on their time and resources.

We also recognise that impact on decisions is a complex picture. Many other factors influence students' subject choices - not least the structure of options available to them and how optional subjects interact with compulsory ones - and not studying Computing doesn't preclude young people from pursuing a tech career.

That's why we're excited about continuing to develop our impact understanding in 2024/25:

- With support from The Hg Foundation, we're working with the Institute for Employment Studies on an independent evaluation of our App for Social Action course.
- We will engage even more with Apps for Good alumni, to learn more about their trajectory and influences since school.
- We've updated our student surveys, to gain a more nuanced insight into how far our courses influence their intentions and aspirations.
- We're broadening our career insights offer, providing more opportunities for schools and students to hear from and engage with our inspiring pool of Industry Volunteers.

"We are confident that our partnership with Apps for Good will leave a lasting impact on the world, empowering a generation of young minds to shape a brighter digital future."

Kate Pretkel, VP, Global Head of Sustainability, EPAM

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Looking ahead to 2024/25

After a thorough review and consultation with educators, we have gradually retired our older courses, replacing them over the past three years with three new courses - Innovate for Climate Change, App for Social Action and AI for Good.

Our focus now turns to making sure we reach even more schools, specifically those in challenging circumstances. We're exploring new ways to reach educators, which are sympathetic to the busy schedules of school leaders and classroom teachers.

We're on a continuous learning journey, so we are implementing new processes to gather more feedback from schools and students, and piloting providing personalised impact data to schools. As we celebrate 15 years of Apps for Good in 2025, we're excited to hear from previous Apps for Good students about what they're doing now!

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Thank you to our community

Without our partners, we would not be able to offer our courses free of charge to schools and teachers, which is fundamental to our mission.

BALANCED IMPACT · BNY · DeepMind · epam · Garfield Weston FOUNDATION

Google · The Hg Foundation · NORTHERN CONSORTIUM · OVO FOUNDATION

PA Foundation · sage · SAP · spectris FOUNDATION · Spotify

And thank you to our volunteers and teachers who make Apps for Good course delivery possible, and continue to inspire our students every day.

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