



FASTFUTURES

Impact and Insights Report 2021



Fast
Futures

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FastFutures Employer Partners



Welcome

Built to bridge the gap between education and employment, the free **FastFutures programme increases the employability of young people from all backgrounds** by preparing them for the increasingly digital workplace.

Since its launch in the summer of 2020, **FastFutures has already trained 4,500 young people** from diverse backgrounds in the transferable, digital business skills that employers need today and into the future. Learners consistently report feeling more confident and more employable, most begin to secure more interviews within weeks and around half find work within six months of graduating.

FastFutures connects employers and young people in a multitude of ways, from live events to a bespoke mentoring programme. Learners expand their networks, gain exposure to employers, and develop their interest in working for those employers and within the industries they encounter along the way. As a result, employers engage, attract, and promote their job opportunities to a pool of motivated, work-ready talent.

The UK's digital skills gap continues to widen, with more than 60% of business leaders agreeing that events of recent years have widened the capabilities gaps in their businesses, as highlighted in Avado's *Beyond Skills* report. Diverse young people continue to be underrepresented across different organisations and industries and, simultaneously, employers continue to face obstacles when it comes to hiring, onboarding and training an early workforce.

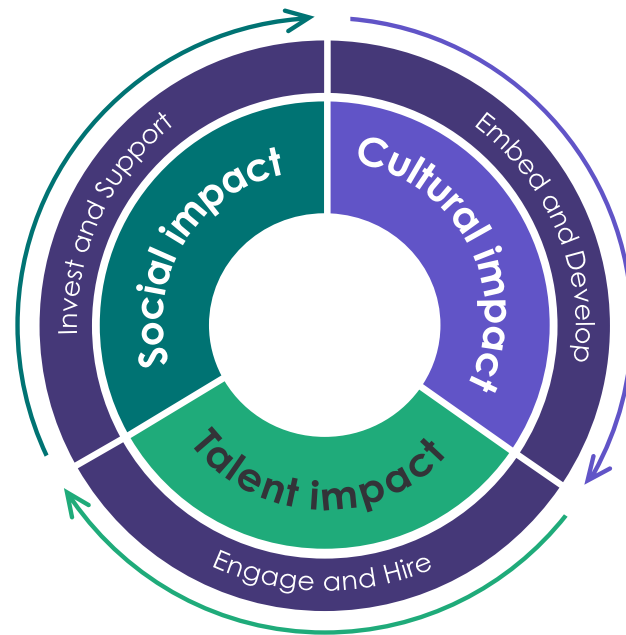
At FastFutures, we remain resolutely committed to addressing these issues through connecting employers and diverse young people, preparing them to work with one another, and enabling them to achieve their talent and career goals.

We are extremely grateful to our Employer Partners. It is thanks to their contributions and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and youth employment that FastFutures has been able to support so many young people in the last year.



What We Do

FastFutures delivers value in 3 key areas for employers



Social Impact

- Enable your D&I agenda
- Reduce the effect of educational and social inequality
- Contribute to youth employment
- Close the digital skills gap
- Support your local community

Cultural Impact

- Engage your teams
- Build a mentoring culture throughout the business
- Gain ideas and fresh insight from GenZ
- Embed a culture of inclusivity

Talent Impact

- Engage high-potential, diverse young people
- Promote your employer brand and opportunities
- Hire work-ready digital talent

Social Impact

Through active outreach into communities of underrepresented young people, we source candidates and assess them fairly and inclusively, and in doing so, give young people from underserved backgrounds a second chance by equipping them with the digital skills they need to thrive in the workplace.

Employer Partners sponsor between 50 and 500 learners per annum, improving lives, delivering social value, and fulfilling volunteerism targets through mentoring and time invested in the programme.

FastFutures provides organisations with opportunity to demonstrate a meaningful commitment to diversity and inclusion and youth employment, forming a key component of social value in contract bids and company reporting on CSR and organisational values.

Cultural Impact

FastFutures is a way for employers to engage their people and develop their culture – from early workforce to senior leadership.

Mentors are given the chance to develop their coaching skills, 'give back' to society, and learn more about D&I and how their next generation of colleagues behave, interact and think. Mentors report an improvement in empathy and people skills, with most feeling that their perspectives around inclusion and GenZ are challenged.

Senior leadership are given the opportunity to lead by example on their commitment to D&I and youth employment, often contributing as mentors, and joining other execs on leadership panels to share their experiences and answer questions from the learners.

Employers provide real business challenges to be worked on by FastFutures learners, receiving inspiring and innovative ideas back into their organisations via presentations, and culminating in a Dragon's Den style workshop with the top project teams.



Talent Impact

The majority of learners on FastFutures have not yet made up their mind about their first career step. Employer Partners therefore have the opportunity to present their employer brand and influence the mindset and ambitions of thousands of young, diverse people through participation in the programme.

Via virtual careers session, leadership panels, "Day in the Life" webinars, and one-on-one mentoring, Employers Partners are perfectly placed to communicate their values, their purpose, and their early workforce jobs and apprenticeship opportunities. This active involvement results in high numbers of applications from assessed, highly motivated, and newly trained young people.

Through focus groups and mentoring we facilitate learning on how to engage, attract and retain your next generation of talent. The FastFutures Community and jobs board then enables employers to promote unlimited jobs to learners and alumni.



Skills and Employability Impact

Given that **1 in 7 young people are now claiming unemployment benefits** and that 60% of leaders see a vast imbalance between required and current capabilities, **the country has never been more in need of digital skills training**. Additionally, those from minority groups continue to be disproportionately impacted, highlighting the ongoing need for support in this area.

[FastFutures] has opened up so many pathways for me that wouldn't have otherwise been there, as someone from a lower-income background with no industry connections. It has already given me the ability to cite existing skills in applications that, if I'm successful, will change my life. And that's crucial, because it makes you a valuable candidate to a company, instead of them just being valuable to you.

Phoebe, FastFutures Ambassador and Graduate



Skills Impact

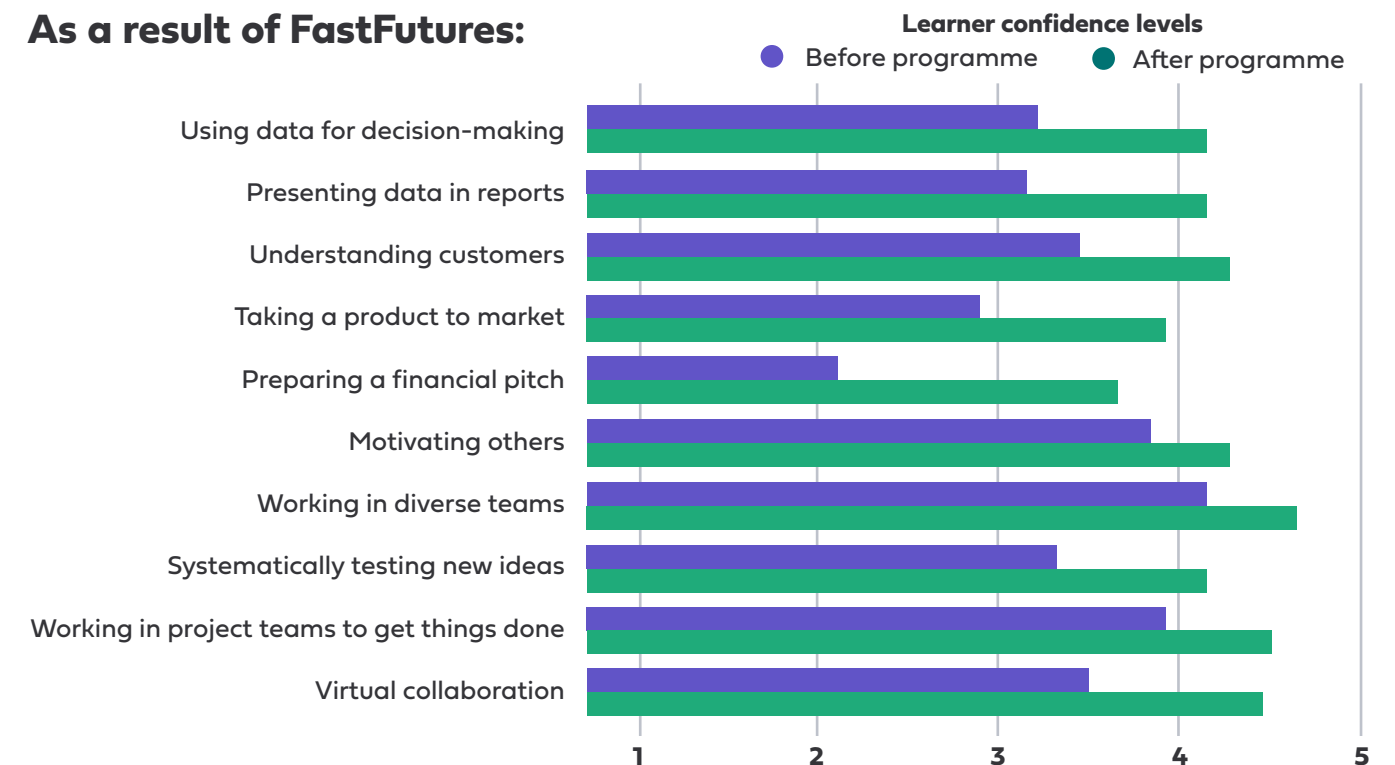
In the past year...

FastFutures has received **over 20,000 applications** and has successfully **supported over 4,500 individuals** to develop both their personal and professional skills and transition from education to employment.

Learners develop a whole host of skills targeted through FastFutures – including virtual collaboration, working within diverse teams, motivating others, using data for decision-making, and systematically testing new ideas. Importantly, they consistently report an increase in confidence in each of these areas too.



As a result of FastFutures:



We are proud to see our learners consistently rating us **4.5/5 for learning experience** and providing an **'Excellent' Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 62** across the cohorts.



Employability Impact

Supporting the diverse young people who leave our programme into meaningful work is hugely important to us. We do this by connecting our learners and alumni with our Employer Partners via our alumni platform, FastLink.

This provides our partners with the opportunity to promote their vacancies, **enabling them to close their talent gap**, and **enables our learners to search and apply for new and exciting early-workforce vacancies** - with employers they know are committed to diversity and Gen Z - **moving them a step closer to launching their careers**.

FastFutures graduates have progressed into a range of roles, spanning the fields of data, tech, business analysis, marketing, finance, sales, and operations roles, with our Employer Partners:

Agilisys



CGI



octopusinvestments



Modulr



SALARY FINANCE

...and with other organisations too, including **Aon, Apple, BAE Systems, Bloomberg, Cap Gemini, Deloitte, EY, KPMG, McKinsey, Qualcomm, Siemens, Sky, TikTok, Verizon, Visa and Xerox.**



"I have really stepped into my confidence: accepting the fact that I have these skills, that I am capable of joining and being a valuable part of these companies, being someone they would want to hire. I think this is the most important thing that FastFutures has done for me."

FastFutures Graduate

As a result of FastFutures...

97%

feel they are now
more employable

89%

say their CVs are in a
stronger position

50%

found jobs within
6 months

100%

gained interview experience with
specialist D&I recruiters, Trinnovo

53%

secured interviews or jobs
within 6 weeks of graduating

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the programme and am so blown away by how helpful it has been to me, exceeding all my expectations ... Over the course of these 2/3 months, with the mentorship, inspiration by peers, learning materials online, and most importantly (personally) the experience to work with the team on the final business case, I have experienced huge amounts of growth, which is witnessed by my mentor as well as family and friends. ... I was still unemployed 3 weeks ago and now I am an employed person in London!"

FastFutures Graduate



Adapting and Innovating End of Programme Group Projects

Towards the end of their journey, learners collaborate within a virtual team and put their newfound knowledge into practice to tackle a real-world business problem. Shortlisted projects are picked out by our employers to present their pitch to a panel of experts at that organisation.

Across the cohorts, we have seen project briefs from a number of our employers:

Agilisys



octopusinvestments

From **Shell's challenge of developing the 'forecourt of the future'** for the increasingly renewable world of transport, to **Barclays' challenge of creating an accessible, inclusive banking experience** suitable for those with visible and non-visible disabilities – this offers an interesting opportunity for our learners to practise their skills and learn more about how companies adapt and innovate. For employers this is an opportunity to gain fresh ideas and insights on challenges that matter to their businesses.

Learner Demographics

We continue to put **D&I at the heart of everything we do** - from targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, to audited phone interviews with specialist D&I recruiters, Trinnovo.

64%

are female

63%

are ethnically
diverse

60%

are from a low socio-
economic background

8%

tell us they have a learning
difficulty or disability

11%

are part of the
LGBTQ+ community



FastFutures supports young adults across the UK



Diversity and Inclusion and Mental Health

What It Means for Gen Z

As part of FastFutures, participants develop their awareness and knowledge of **mental health, personal growth, and D&I** through Hive Learning, who specialise in building behavioural skills that supports learners with actionable insights to adopt in their personal and professional lives.

The Hive allows learners to share with and support one another, helping them turn unconscious bias into conscious action. This ultimately helps them to become **well-informed individuals and well-equipped employees**.

*I love how **well structured** the course has been and the inclusion of the Hive learning pathways, **focused on mental health, diversity and inclusivity**, alongside the core modules. I feel it is key in helping us understand how to talk openly about mental health and learning about how workplaces can create a more **positive and inclusive culture**.*

Mental Health and Wellbeing

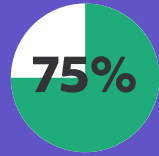
Exacerbated by the ongoing consequences of the pandemic, **the current mental health crisis** continues despite an increase in awareness, **the stigma remains** – particularly so in the workplace.

Although **78% of learners feel comfortable discussing a mental health challenge at work**, a mere **9% would be honest about needing to take a mental health day**, instead attributing sick leave to physical illness. This is a stark reminder of the work that is left to do, despite the progress already made.

Companies need to create more open environments. Sometimes you feel like you are less likely to be judged about skipping work for a day if you are physically ill. Also, for some reason, part of you feels like you might be fired if you tell your boss you can't come in because you are having a panic attack. It's weird!



Many people are becoming increasingly aware of their mental health and questioning their relationship with work along the way. Accepting and using this to consider which measures may help ensure our employees continue wanting to work at our companies in the future is paramount.



Around **75% of our learners feel a positive** starting point could simply be for employers to start talking more about it.



For instance, dedicating space for colleagues to share resources and explore challenges could be a positive way to continue reducing the stigma and normalizing the conversation about mental health at your workplace.

Personal Growth and Psychological Safety

Opening up can be challenging and some still see this as a weakness, especially in a work context. But **vulnerability is key to feeling connected to others.**

Equally important is psychological safety, and for individuals to feel comfortable sharing ideas. **When workplaces encourage employees to refrain from challenging the status quo** and instill fear around sharing a poorly received idea, for instance, **creativity and diversity of thought are inevitably impacted.**

Linked to vulnerability and psychological safety is the concept of shame. The fact that **77% of learners have personally experienced shame in the workplace**, despite many of our learners only having worked in part-time roles, highlights the scale of the problem.

Fostering a work environment where psychological safety is considered and protected is important for enabling personal growth, creativity, and diversity of thought among teams.

After developing their understanding of vulnerability and courage, our learners consistently tell us **the best way for employers to foster psychological safety is through encouraging employees to speak up and share ideas.**

*In my experience, the teams where I have **thrived the most and been productive** were the ones where I could **freely express my thoughts** and be myself without fear.*

With learners committed to putting their learning into action, and with 98% feeling the tools acquired from this pathway will positively impact their contributions in the workplace, the practical impact of FastFutures in this area is clear.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are, rightfully, becoming the norm for organisations, though many, including our FastFutures learners, believe much **more can be done to create and sustain a more diverse and inclusive work environment.**

Diversity and Inclusion shortfalls can often be observed from early in the hiring process. Of our learners:



63%

report having not applied for a role due to feeling that their background will hinder their success



42%

believe their background can negatively impact how accessible some roles are



30%

find sharing information about their sexual orientation or gender identity on application forms frustrating

Around **a third also shared concerns about joining an organisation if they don't feel represented**, with **an equal percentage being put off by the lack of D&I initiatives** stated on company websites.

When it comes to racism, or rather anti-racism, despite **80% of learners feeling comfortable speaking about issues concerning race in the workplace**, **73% believe businesses are not doing enough to be anti-racist.**

Hive's D&I pathways, focusing on micro-messages, bias, privilege, racism and allyship, have seen **93% of learners commit to putting their learning in these areas into action.**

I am proud of being a part of FastFutures, a diverse community that strives for knowledge and builds valuable connections.

Emilie, FastFutures Ambassador and Graduate



Recruiting and Retaining Gen Z Talent

Our Insights and Impact

An entire generation, eager to enter the workforce, have seen their options disrupted and reduced - leaving them with a feeling of uncertainty about their future prospects. This generation is also increasingly questioning how work should fit into their lives, meaning employers need to think carefully about their approach towards recruitment of Gen Z.

Instead of being the lost, COVID, lazy generation, we are the generation that is and should be referred to as driven, versatile and diligent. Ultimately, as young people, we cannot simply say. We must act, hence my desire to advertise the social mobility that can be achieved with FastFutures.

Ralph, FastFutures Graduate and Ambassador

How are Gen Z feeling about future career paths now?

There are some very real barriers for young people looking for jobs. Our learners report feeling that **lack of work experience and minimal networks are hindering them** from finding jobs and being successful in their applications.

Additionally, our research exploring how 18 to 24-year-olds are feeling about their career prospects suggests around a **third are feeling uncertain and lack confidence**.

The top five challenges our learners face when looking for work:

59%

Lack of work experience

54%

Lack of network

47%

Lack of confidence in applications and interviews

39%

Are unsure about the job or industry they want to work in

32%

Are unsure about what their skills or strengths are

When we asked 1000 17 to 18-year-olds waiting for their A-level results back in August how they were feeling about their career paths, **42% were planning to go to university**.



Reasons for people not wishing to go to university:

- **Debt burden**
- **Traditional university experience feeling irrelevant to them**
- **A preference towards developing skills 'on the job'**

Things started to look bleak once the pandemic hit. Career-wise, I began feeling lost and simply could not find alternative paths I would appreciate, and I began to feel hopeless. Coming across FastFutures has changed that for me. It provided valuable reflections and modern, real-life lessons and content that made me recognise possible new paths for my future career.

Alessia, FastFutures Graduate and Ambassador

Our learners **expand their networks and gain exposure to some of the UK's top employers**. Virtual **'day in the life' sessions** and **industry-exec Q&A panels** provide our learners with direct access to teams and senior leaders in different organisations. Through these webinars, they also learn about the careers and roles available, **helping them to make informed decisions about their future**.

At the end of the programme learners consistently tell us that **they are be more likely to consider careers with our Employer Partners** as a result of this exposure, and around **75% change their mind on the career they wish to pursue**.

Of our graduates:

97%

feel more employable because of FastFutures

92%

feel able to apply their learnings in the workplace

100%

gain the opportunity to participate in mentoring that helps shape their career



Recruiting and Retaining Gen Z Talent

What's Important?

When asked which factors are most important to them when considering which companies to apply to, **an understanding of Mental Health, D&I and Culture come out on top for Gen Z.**

Supporting data from our FastFutures learners suggests that **culture, work-life balance, professional development, ethics, and responsibility all came before pay.** This demonstrates that yes, you need to pay fairly, but there are other areas of higher value if you wish to recruit successfully, and then retain young talent in your business.

78%

said having a good culture is crucial

75%

said a good work-life balance is important

66%

said they care about business ethics and responsible practices

75%

highly value an organisation's commitment to professional development

41%

believe employers are not doing enough around ensuring inclusivity in recruitment

Employer Considerations

Be transparent about your culture, values and commitments to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

How do you ensure differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive?

How you value your employees' development is crucial.

Are there opportunities to get involved in mentoring initiatives? Are they encouraged to take a lifelong learning approach?

Take a deeper look at how inclusive your application processes are.

For instance, do your application forms reflect an inclusive approach to capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity?

How does your organisation support the physical & mental wellbeing of employees?

Does your workplace foster an environment where employees can speak openly about mental health?

What measures are you taking to address unconscious bias?

For instance, how are you assessing candidates and are you standardizing interviews?

Mentoring Stories and Successes

An integral part of FastFutures is one-to-one mentoring, where each learner is paired with a mentor from across our Employer Partners. Mentors support with **practical activities** such as CV building, development of LinkedIn profiles and job applications, as well as generally **enriching the learner's experience and bridging the gap between FastFutures and the world of work.**

As learners progress through FastFutures, we encourage them to reflect on what they are learning and take ownership of their development. We encourage focusing on how FastFutures is helping them with their goals, and what questions they might have about how a topic or concept might be implemented in business, which they can then bring to their mentoring sessions.

So far:

3,250

learners have participated in mentoring and consistently rate their experience of the process **4.6/5**

2,336

mentors from across our Employer Partners, consistently rate their experience **4.5/5**

65%

of mentors agreed that mentoring has challenged them and taught them something

77%

of mentors said the experience provided an opportunity to develop their skills/competencies

Mentoring stories

Meet Ayswarya, mentored by Alex, Partner at Syncona

Ayswarya

*"My FastFutures mentor was Alex from Syncona. From our meetings, I received great interview practice, especially with brain teaser questions. On top of that, Alex was able to guide me through a market sizing question, which was aligned to my consulting interests and that really allowed me to improve my problem-solving skills. Throughout the mentoring experience, **Alex has been very supportive and encouraging and has provided me with constructive feedback and advice**, which I have been able to take forward with me."*

Alex

"When Aysh said in our first mentoring session that she really wanted to work on her interview success rates, I felt well-positioned to help. We quickly established that Aysh's feedback from her interviews to date centred on her ability to be spontaneous while under pressure: dealing with brain teasers and other 'left-field' questions and conveying enthusiasm and curiosity in response to new information."



"In subsequent sessions, we focused on changing her attitude towards interviews. A common problem that young people face with interviews is their academic training teaches them to show off their knowledge. But an interview is not so much a test of knowledge but of attitude, not so much one of confidence (which is over-rated) but engagement and dialogue with the interviewer."

"Hopefully this has positively impacted the way she prepares for interviews, and she will make the progress that she is clearly capable of."

Meet Gemma, mentored by Preneeta, Project Manager, Salesforce

Gemma

"Preneeta was an amazing mentor. Overall, throughout the whole of the 12 weeks on the programme, she was always there when I needed her. With FastFutures in general, it's been an amazing experience. It's helped me get to where I am today. **I've used the skills that I learned on FastFutures and applied that in gaining my new job.**"



"We got to know each other more and found out more about ourselves, as well as what I wanted to get out of the mentorship. She first helped by listening to what I wanted and then provided what I needed. That was mostly job prospects, but because I didn't have a really good CV, she gave me a whole list of links to help and went through it to help me to improve."

"She arranged a mock interview with me and gave me feedback, then sent me interview questions with example answers."

Preneeta

"I found the mentoring experience to be very rewarding and mutually beneficial. It was great to work with Gemma and listen intently to her aspirations and goals. We were able to work on giving structure to Gemma's journey and work on areas she felt needed assistance and further polish areas she was confident in."



"I personally have learnt from Gemma's journey and it's a great reinforcement in my belief that both working hard and working smart pays off. **I feel humbled and very thankful to Avado for enabling me to be part of Gemma's journey.** My best wishes to all current and future participants of FastFutures."

Meet Mohammed, mentored by Phillipa, Director of UK Corporate Social Responsibility

Mohammed

"[Pip] is high up in what she does and obviously well respected. But she was saying that she still sometimes has these worries and [impostor syndrome]. That is really powerful because sometimes you put people on these pedestals and think that once you get to that stage, you won't have any more fears or any more insecurities about anything. But, if someone of that calibre who is that well respected can go through some of the same worries as you, it reaffirms that you're not alone in that."



"There are a lot of young people who are going through a very dynamic time. The job market is quite difficult, so **having that relationship with someone who's been there and done it, who can really guide you through the process and act as a role model, it gives you hope and inspiration.**"

"I think it's a good experience for [mentors], because there can be a disconnect between different generations. Bridging that gap through things like mentorship schemes is vitally important."

Phillippa

"This was my first formal mentoring experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed it! I was well matched with my mentee, Mohammed, as he was looking for a role in an area I work in: sustainability. So, we had lots to discuss in relation to his degree and potential job opportunities."



"I was really impressed by his enthusiasm and ambition and really enjoyed supporting him with his search for work such as introducing him to a colleague for interview preparation and reviewing his CV."

"From the time I spent with him, **I knew Mohammed would be a really good fit for our organisation and so was able secure an interview for him to see if he could join CGI.** He impressed my colleagues as much as me, so I'm really excited he will be joining us soon and we'll be working together!"





How to get involved

solutions@avadolearning.com
www.fastfutures.co.uk

FastFutures Employer Partners

