

# Lambeth case study

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# Lambeth case study

## 1. Local Context and strategic positioning

Lambeth Council has a strong strategic focus on supporting care-experienced young people (CEYP), particularly those who are NEET. Their Full Potential initiative aligns with broader borough initiatives such as Lambeth Made and Next Us, which support priority groups including CEYP, young carers, justice-experienced and homeless youth.

Since 2018, Lambeth has commissioned Drive Forward Foundation (DFF) to provide tailored EET support, with every CEYP entitled to IAG support. Full Potential builds on successful internship models and aims to fill gaps left by the closure of previous programmes that focused on those furthest from the labour market.

## 2. Overview of delivery model

Lambeth delivers Full Potential through the Care2Work programme, supporting up to CEYP via a mix of commissioned provision and in-house coordination, with delivery contracts directly awarded to trusted partners.

- **Intensive one-to-one employability support** delivered by DFF. Each young person is allocated a specialist career advisor providing tailored support including CV and application development, interview preparation, sector exploration and progression planning. Advisors continue supporting CEYP into and through EET outcomes.
- **Paid internships** at London Living Wage. Placements are hosted both within Lambeth Council and externally. DFF provide line manager training to employers that will be hosting CEYP for placements. Lambeth pays employers upfront, enabling straightforward PAYE arrangements and reducing administrative burden.
- **A two-week pre-employment bootcamp**, delivered by a local provider already embedded within Lambeth's Next Us programme. The bootcamp is tailored to the internship roles available and includes employability skills and sector insight. To incentivise engagement, young people receive £100 per full week completed.
- **Mentoring**, delivered by council staff and external partners. Initially designed for senior managers, the mentoring offer was expanded to include staff across the council, improving matching to young people's career interests. Mentors receive safeguarding and engagement training from DFF.
- **Mental health and wellbeing support, delivered by the Skills Spot from the care leavers hub.** This provides accessible emotional support for young people who may not meet thresholds for statutory mental health services, with referral pathways into more intensive support when required.

- **Functional Skills (Maths and English)**, delivered by The Skills Spot in informal, youth-friendly environments, allowing young people to progress at their own pace and reducing anxiety associated with formal education environments.
- **A practical support fund**, covering travel, food, work clothing, childcare, laptops and other essentials to remove barriers to participation.
- **Co-production:** CEYP have been involved in shaping the programme through engagement with the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Board.

### 3. Targeting, referral and early engagement

Young people are primarily referred via the leaving care service, with Personal Advisors (PAs) playing a central role in identifying and encouraging suitable participants. Borough staff described this as the most effective referral route, as it draws on trusted relationships and avoids indirect outreach that is less successful with CEYP furthest from the labour market. PAs and local authority staff are also based at Jobcentres to get care leaver referrals, meaning there is always a 'single point of contact' through a PA. Staff emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum between referral, assessment and getting young people started on an internship opportunity, noting that long delays can undermine motivation. Young people found the sign-up process straightforward, focused on tailoring the support to their needs.

### 4. Partnership model and roles

Delivery in Lambeth is underpinned by strong, clearly defined partnerships. Across partners, clear communication, warm handovers and shared understanding of CEYP needs were identified as enablers of effective delivery.

**DFF** plays a central role in frontline delivery and employer engagement, while borough staff provide strategic coordination, oversee referrals and integrate Full Potential delivery with wider council services. DFF has a network of existing employer partners. Employers value working through DFF as a trusted intermediary, particularly in providing high-quality referrals, acting as a safeguard where wellbeing or welfare concerns arise, and providing specialist support and training around CEYP needs.

**The Skills Spot** complements employability delivery by addressing wellbeing and educational barriers. Its open-access, informal model intentionally fills a gap between statutory mental health services and employability provision, particularly for young people disengaged from clinical or classroom-based settings.

### 5. Support during and after participation

Support is intensive, flexible and relationship-based, continuing throughout internships and beyond. DFF career advisors maintain regular contact, adapting frequency and delivery mode to young people's needs. Young people described trusting relationships with their advisors and valued the mix of practical employability support

and emotional reassurance, as well as ongoing support during transitions into work, including financial assistance with travel, food and work clothing.

## 6. What's working: early successes and emerging strengths

Early evidence suggests the programme is supporting progress across a range of outcomes. An external employer observed clear gains in confidence, time-keeping, communication and wellbeing, with some young people progressing into having more responsibility or mentoring roles. Two CEYP had already been recruited into permanent roles through the employer's wider youth programme.

Young people described feeling more motivated, less isolated and more optimistic about their future, contrasting their experience on the programme with previous periods of unsupported job search. Structured activity, peer interaction and consistent advisor support were seen as important in developing confidence and momentum.

Functional Skills provision has been in high demand, leading to more sessions being added. The Skills Spot noted improved attitudes to learning, steady attendance and measurable gains in confidence and self-esteem in baseline and review assessments.

## 7. Challenges and barriers

Two main challenges were identified in staff and stakeholder interviews:

- **Compliance requirements:** Repetitive and intrusive paperwork can undermine trust, divert time from frontline support and increase disengagement risk.
- **Engagement** remains difficult for some young people facing anxiety, caring responsibilities or unstable circumstances. Staff offer flexible support and maintain an open line of communication with CEYP to try to encourage engagement.

## 8. Innovations and promising practice

Innovative and successful practices have included:

- **Employability bootcamp and mentorship programme**, providing tailored guidance to support each young person find a career.
- **Collaborative relationships** between the local authority, PAs and DFF staff, and routing referrals via a visible single point of contact to support early engagement.

## 9. Learning and implications for broader rollout

Lambeth's experience highlights several lessons for wider Youth Guarantee delivery:

- **Longer, more certain funding periods** are crucial to support CEYP into outcomes.
- **Outcomes frameworks should measure confidence and progression into training**, as distance travelled is as important as work and education outcomes.

- **Compliance processes should be streamlined and trauma-informed**, avoiding intrusive language that undermines engagement.

# Young Person: Maria

## 1. Background and referral pathway

Maria is a 24-year-old care-experienced young person (CEYP) who is about to begin a two-year civil service internship that she secured with the support of Drive Forward Foundation (DFF) through the Full Potential programme in Lambeth. Prior to joining Full Potential, she had completed a BSc in Psychology and was working in shift-based hospitality roles. Despite being in work, she was looking to transition into an office-based role and develop a more stable, long-term career.

Maria was receiving ongoing support from a Personal Advisor (PA). Her PA identified an upcoming civil service internship specifically for care leavers and referred Maria to DFF to receive specialist application support. Knowing that tailored support would be available was a key factor in her decision to engage:

## 2. Goals and expectations

Maria's primary goal was clear from the beginning: she wanted to move into a stable career aligned with her interests, particularly admin or Human Resources (HR), and was hoping to get help to apply for a specific civil service internship. She wanted support that would give her a realistic chance of success in a highly competitive recruitment process.

Maria was hoping to get support with application and interview practice, particularly for the civil service. She was also hoping to network with people in the industry, as DFF offered to connect her with a mentor with 20 years' experience in the civil service to get advice and application help.

"They could help me a lot with my interview practice. And with also real-world professionals and some people who are still in the industry, some people who have just recently changed industry. So it's quite recent, it's not like outdated type of information. So that really appeals to me." *(Maria)*

## 3. Experience of support

Support began immediately after registration and focused first on the civil service internship application. Maria received one-to-one application support, interview preparation and mock interviews tailored to civil service requirements, both from her DFF advisor and through consultancy sessions with DFF corporate partners, which she found very helpful.

"I'm 24 now. But the last mock interview I did must have been school, when I was probably, like, 17 or 16. (...) So she refreshed those and it was really helpful." *(Maria)*

She also attended employability workshops and networking events with DFF corporate partners, including a Financial Times event which she particularly enjoyed. The clarity around her career goals meant her DFF advisor was able to share events that were relevant and tailored to her interests.

Maria reflected that she felt positively supported by everyone on the Full Potential programme. When she could not attend face-to-face consultancy sessions with partner organisations due to her shift work patterns, the DFF advisor helped arrange online sessions to accommodate her. DFF also provided funding for travel and lunch expenses through their Closing the Gap fund, which helped her when she went to in-person networking events.

#### 4. Types of support received

- **Practical support:** Civil service internship application support (with DFF advisor and with specialist consultancy), mock interviews and interview technique development, career guidance focused on admin and HR roles, and networking and employability events with DFF partner organisations.

**Social/emotional support:** Confidence-building and motivation through regular encouragement and reassurance. Open communication and scheduling flexibility with her DFF advisor. The DFF advisor also made her aware of mental health support available, such as 12 free counselling sessions from DFF, as well as mentoring support, but she said she was fine at the moment and will think about it.

- **Financial support:** Financial assistance: travel and lunch costs to attend events. Once she starts her permanent role, she will also receive weekly payments through DFF's Closing the Gap fund to cover travel and food before her first paycheque. She found the financial support unexpected and appreciated that it was available.

#### 5. What worked well and why

The most significant factor in Maria's journey was the personalised, trusting relationship with her DFF career specialist. Open and honest communication was established early, making the career specialist aware of any challenges or barriers so they can reschedule or make adjustments if needed. Having flexibility around her schedule and being able to send the career specialist things to check outside of meetings if she was unable to make meetings due to her work schedule was helpful.

Maria found attending networking events and having the opportunity to network and connect with professionals in sectors she was interested in was very useful, and she even reached out to someone she met about available roles at their company. She also found the interview preparation particularly helpful, as it strengthened her confidence and changed how she approached interviews.

## 6. Outcomes and changes

The most significant outcome for Maria was securing the civil service internship, as well as the emotional outcomes built through the Full Potential programme. While she was already quite confident and positive to begin with, she grew even more confident and optimistic for the future.

"It's like she's looking forward for the future, and you know, and actually is being even more positive. She has always been positive, but I think this just gave her the push that she needed and to feel like everything's going to be even better." (*DFF career specialist*)

Maria reflected very positively on the programme, describing the support as a "safety net" which gave her the confidence and reassurance to pursue her goals and succeed in her internship application. The support was fundamentally different from her previous experiences, particularly as a care leaver.

"I'm very grateful for their work, because I think if it wasn't for them, I don't think I would have done nearly as well or felt even close to as comfortable as I have been so far. Yeah, it's **knowing that someone's there with a safety net to catch you, basically, and especially for care leavers, we don't really have that**, you know, It's good knowing that someone's there to help you out and they'll understand because they're working with so many young people, probably in similar situations." (*Maria*)

## 7. Suggestions for improvement

Maria did not identify changes she would make to the support she personally received. From her advisor's perspective, one area for improvement relates to how programme information is communicated to young people, and simplifying and streamlining compliance processes was identified as a potential solution.

## 8. Future ambitions and next steps

Maria's immediate focus is on succeeding in her civil service internship and understanding how she can progress within or beyond the organisation. Longer-term, she has expressed interest in trying out working in the private sector if she finds that the public sector isn't for her. She feels equipped to continue moving forward, particularly as she knows she will gain valuable experience through her internship.