



Cisco Pathways

Social Impact Report

2020



Foreword

Cisco made a commitment to improve the digital skills of 250,000 people in the UK by the end of our 2020 fiscal year. We want to **encourage more interest in IT and STEM careers** and **tackle the lack of diversity** in the technology sector.

For a number of years, we have been providing inspiring opportunities for young people across the country, giving them an insight into the industry and the chance to meet some of our amazing role models.

The one-day 'Kids in IT' programme evolved into the 'Pathway To Your Future' work experience scheme in 2014, and both made a tangible difference to the lives of the students who took part. Last year saw the launch of 'Pathways', the latest evolution of Cisco's digital skills offer, engaging students before they make GCSE subject choices and take on traditional work experience. We developed this in collaboration with early talent specialists MyKindaFuture.

Evolution is always key to our approach – if we are to make a real difference, we must be prepared to listen to young people and educators and grow our programmes accordingly. Pathways moves our engagement earlier in the school journey, starting at Year 7, and for the first time, includes an educator programme with mentoring for senior leaders.

Cisco also takes a leading role in ensuring that the future of technology is as diverse as possible, with a focus on finding female and BAME talent and ensuring students who most need experience and exposure to business get access through Cisco.

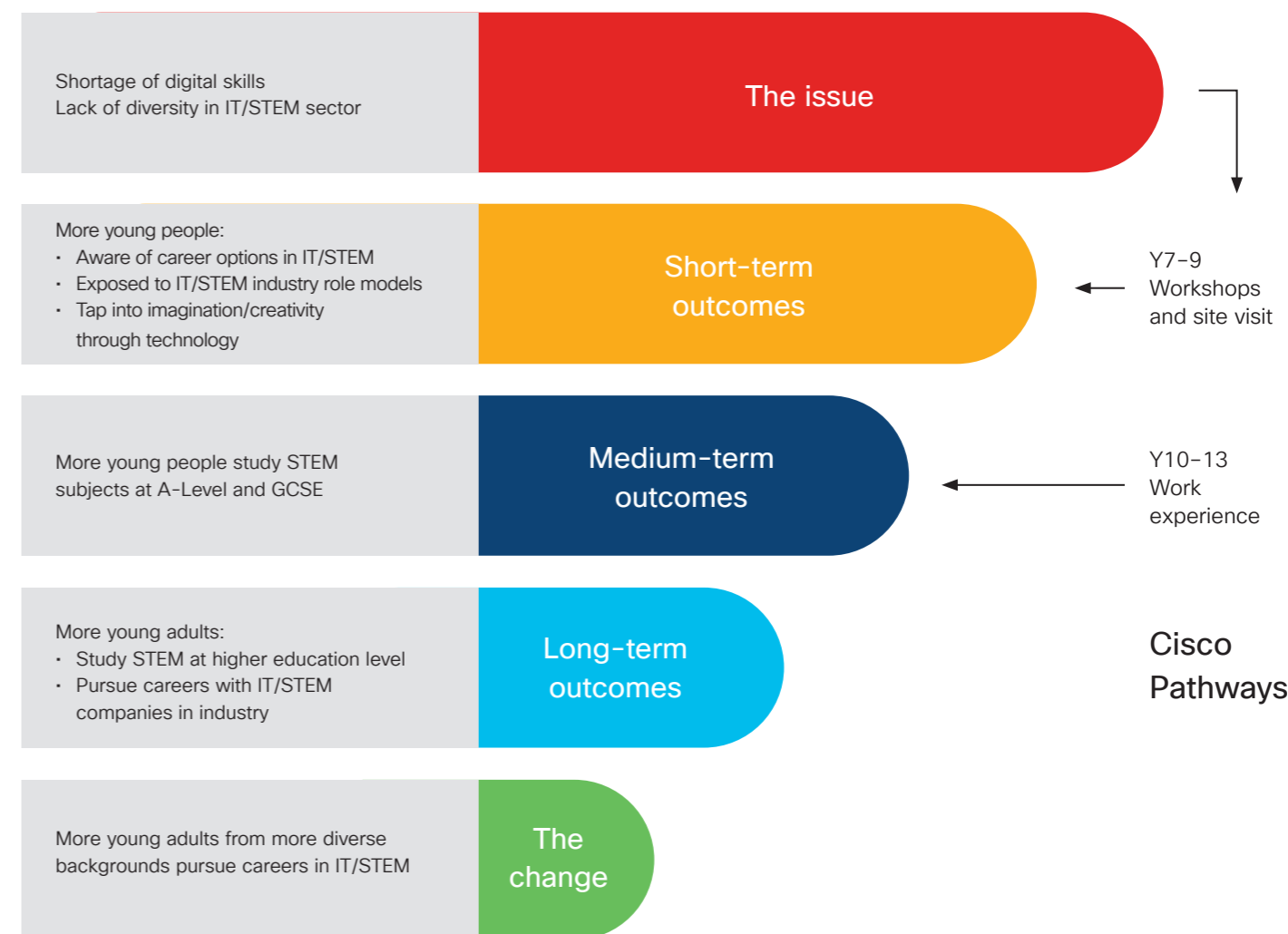
As this report shows, the results from the Pathways pilot were encouraging and build on the feedback we've received from our previous programmes. The impact Cisco has made represents five years of learning and listening, and of our commitment to change. As we move into 2020 and beyond, we'll continue to monitor our social impact through the students we partner with.

“We're always striving towards a brighter digital future for the UK. Today and onwards, digital skills will play an increasingly important part in our working and daily lives. That's why we invest in digital skills, so we can help drive diversity and inclusion to prevent people from being left behind.”

– David Meads, Chief Executive, UK & Ireland

Cisco's Digital Skills Pledge*

Cisco's long-term pledge is to improve the digital skills of 250,000 people in the UK. They aim to achieve this change through a series of short, medium and long-term outcomes.



*https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/global/en_uk/assets/pdfs/cisco_skills_manifesto_uk.pdf



Why employer encounters matter

In 2013, the Gatsby Foundation published their Good Career Guidance Report. It included eight benchmarks for schools to meet, based on the belief that every young person needs high-quality career guidance to make informed decisions about their future.

The benchmarks are as follows:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Benchmarks 5 and 6 – ‘encounters with employers and employees’ and ‘experiences of workplaces’ – are among the most difficult for schools to meet. Real-world experiences, however, are essential to a well-rounded careers education programme.

Cisco’s work experience programme has therefore aimed to provide school students with such experiences. From immersing themselves in the working environment of a major tech company, to connecting with inspiring Cisco employees from a range of departments, Cisco gives young people the chance to further their knowledge of careers in IT and STEM through active participation.

In doing so, Cisco aims to help its partner schools meet the Gatsby benchmarks, and to provide young people from all backgrounds with the best possible platform from which to make their desired career steps in the future.



The evolution of Cisco school activity

Pre 2014: Kids in IT Days

Prior to 2014, Cisco worked closely with selected schools to run a series of insight days at Cisco offices. Kids in IT Days, as they were named, were the first step in Cisco's work experience evolution.

These events saw students aged between 12 and 14 invited to spend an activity-filled day at a Cisco site.

The carefully structured programme included:

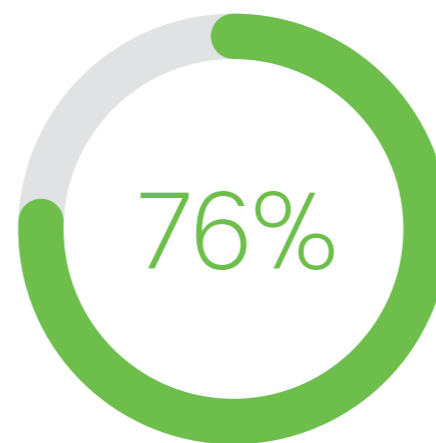
- An introduction to the company
- A coding exercise
- Exciting demonstrations of Cisco tech
- A Dragons' Den-style competition to design and pitch an app

Each day was run by Cisco staff, who volunteered their time to engage with students and offer them a valuable insight into the world of IT careers.



Kids in IT Days: Student feedback

At the end of each day, students filled in questionnaires* about the impact of their experience. In total, 1,700 students from 28 schools took part in either a Kids in IT Day or a Girls Power Tech day (the female-only version), and the overall result from their feedback was encouraging:



of students said they would consider a career in IT after their day with Cisco.

*A sample of 300 students were surveyed.



Developing the programme

Many young people expressed an interest in returning to Cisco if they got the chance. There were also lots of requests for more insight into how the business worked.

This prompted a question – how could Cisco evolve the Kids in IT Days and streamline ad-hoc work experience to provide a deeper immersion into careers in technology?

The appetite from both young people and Cisco to expand the programme was clear. And so, with this in mind, a wider programme was developed: Pathway To Your Future (PTYF).



2014-2018: Pathway To Your Future

Overview

Working from the core principles of the Kids in IT Days, the major step in building Cisco's work experience programme was to extend the duration from a single day to a week of activities. This would allow:

- A greater focus on practical skills
- More time for students to absorb Cisco's working environment
- More face-to-face engagement between students and employees

The new Pathway To Your Future programme was launched in November 2014, at two Cisco sites: Reading and Feltham.

The five-day schedule included a range of activities:

- Presentations from Cisco employees about their day-to-day work
- Mock job interviews
- The 'Dragons' Den' pitch challenge
- Groupwork activities with peers and Cisco staff
- Hands-on practical sessions with hardware and tech
- Walking tours of the Cisco site

The programme was also split into two streams: Technical and Business. This gave it an even sharper focus on the needs of students, allowing them to choose the stream most suited to them and spend the week learning from either Cisco's technical staff, or from those whose jobs related more to business and management.

The objectives, with both the Gatsby benchmarks and Cisco's Digital Skills Pledge in mind, remained constant:

- To help young people understand what a career in IT entails
- To give them real-world experience of a working environment
- To increase their confidence and boost their employability skills

Pathway To Your Future: Student feedback

Each year, MyKindaFuture gathered comprehensive survey results from PTYF participants, in order to monitor the social impact of the programme.

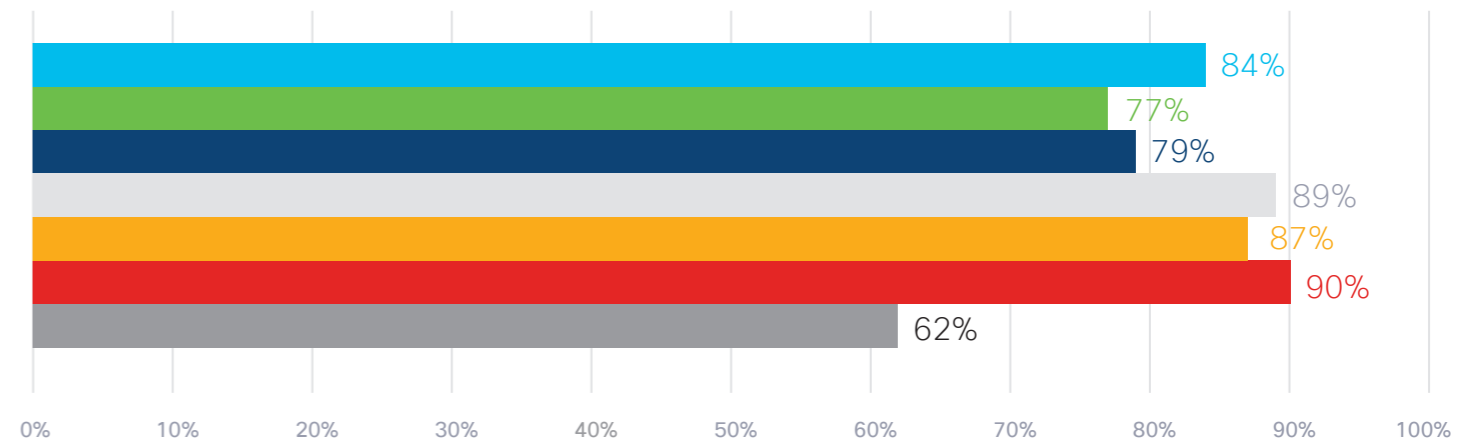
The results are split below into three sections: those from 2014-2017, those from 2018-2019, and those from the girls-only cohorts between 2017 and 2019. They all paint a positive picture of the ways in which the programme impacted the young people who took part.

95%
"I enjoyed my work experience at Cisco"

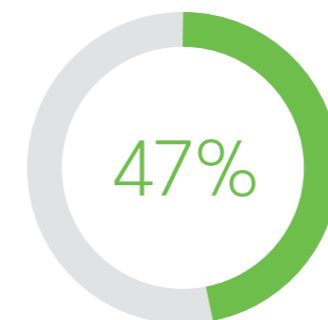
91% "I would recommend this work experience programme to other young people"

PTYF survey results: 2014-2017

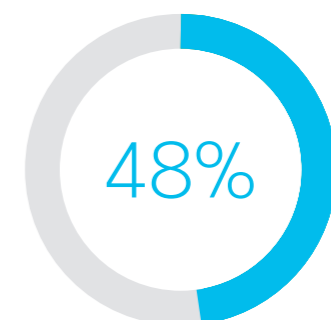
My work experience at Cisco...



- helped me feel more confident in my future career
- provided me with practical next steps for my career
- helped me learn new skills for success in the IT sector
- was something I used when applying for jobs, further study or work experience
- helped me feel better prepared for the world of work
- opened my eyes to the different careers available in IT
- inspired me to pursue a career in IT

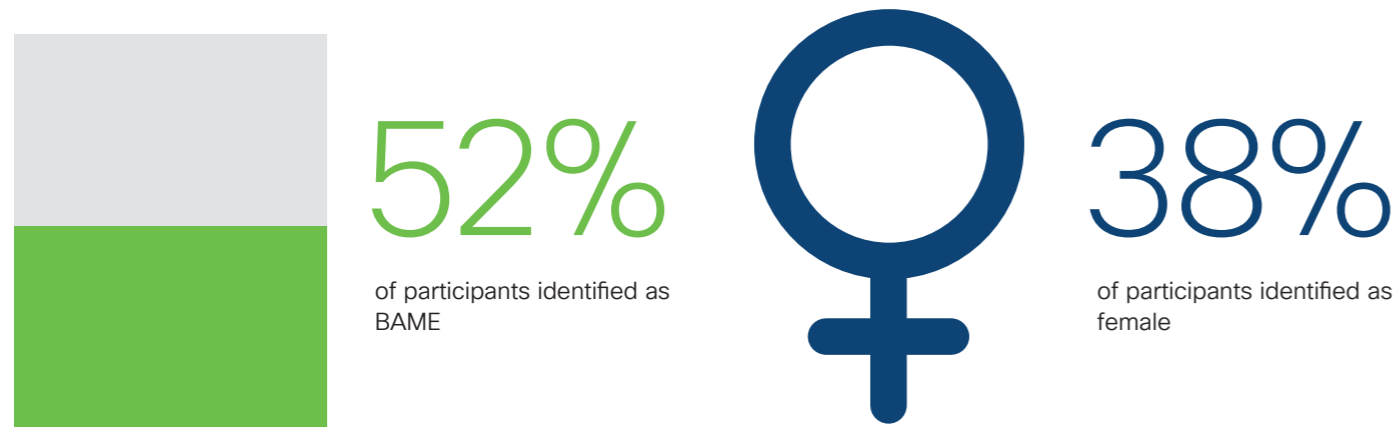
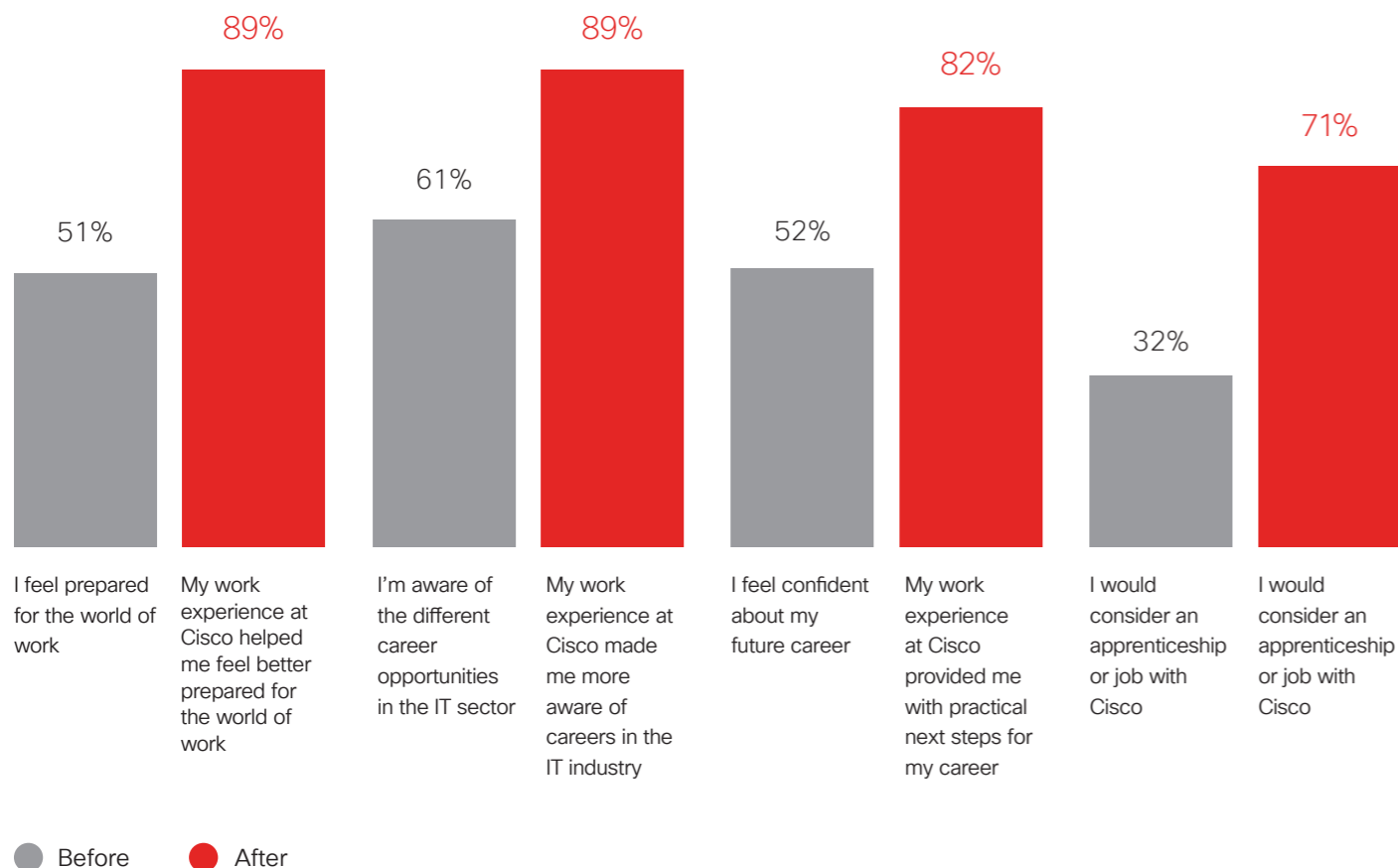


of participants who completed the survey identified as BAME



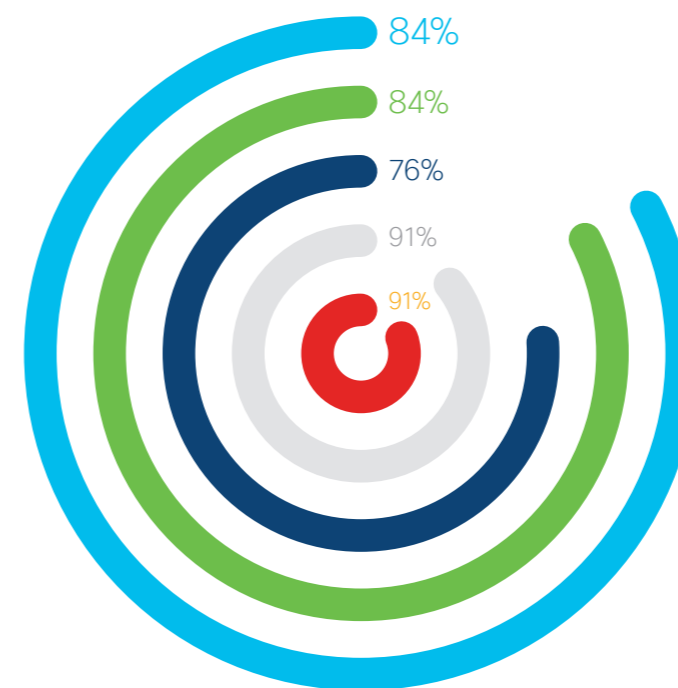
of participants who completed the survey identified as female

PTYF survey results: 2018-2019



Only 52% of students felt confident about their future before work experience with Cisco, but afterwards, 82% felt it had provided them with practical next steps for their career.

PTYF survey results: girls-only cohorts, 2017-2019

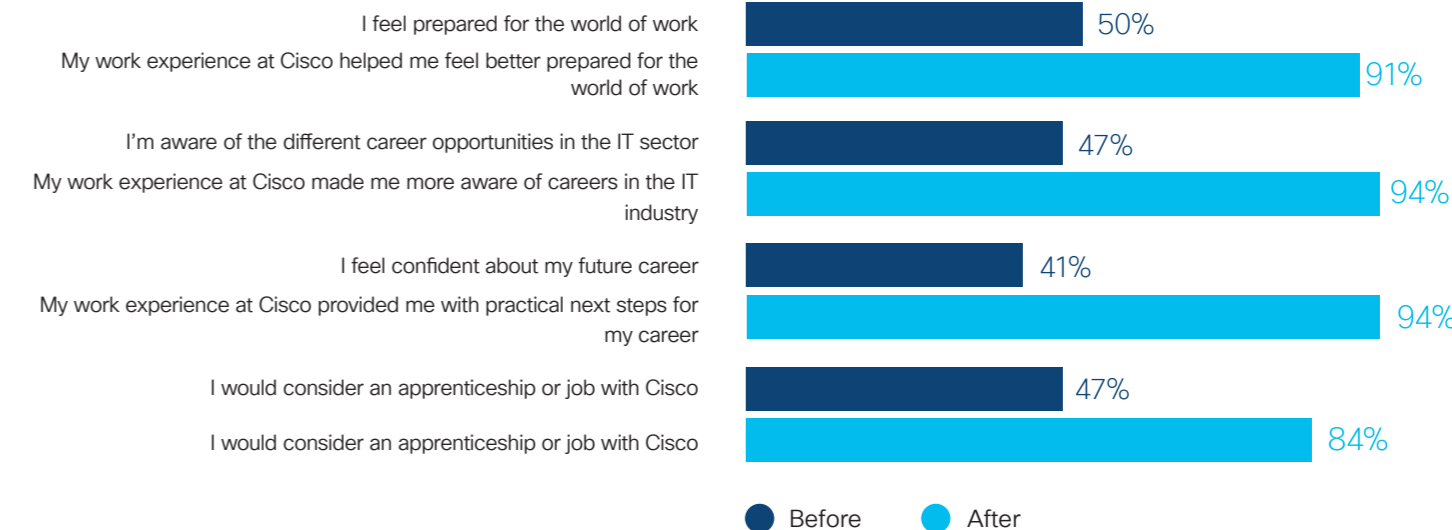


My work experience at Cisco...

- helped me feel more confident in my future career
- provided me with practical next steps for my career
- helped me learn new skills for success in the IT sector
- helped me feel better prepared for the world of work
- opened my eyes to the different careers available in IT

Participants who identified as BAME 53%

PTYF survey results: girls-only cohorts, 2019



Only 41% of students felt confident about their future before work experience with Cisco, but afterwards, 94% felt it had provided them with practical next steps for their career.

59% of participants identified as BAME

Experiences of Pathway To Your Future



“I was able to work on myself and improve”

Hasna Aydurus

Is your current job role, qualification or training linked to STEM?

Yes. I am an apprentice at Cisco in my first year, and I am completing a degree in Digital and Technology Solutions at QA Training. Doing an apprenticeship at Cisco means you partake in various technical roles.

Did your work experience with Cisco inspire what you are doing today, or your future career path?

Yes. The work experience truly showed me what Cisco was like. By being able to shadow various employees, I was able to see how the company operates, especially on a global scale. I was able to meet apprentices and see how they worked with managers and team members and it was clear how valued they were.

Have you used your work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, further study or work experience?

The skills I adopted and improved at Cisco during the work experience definitely helped. It was my first time presenting, especially with something that was to be delivered in a day! Then with the feedback I received I was able to work on myself and improve.

Did your work experience with Cisco increase your interest in STEM?

Yes. I think getting to meet so many women helped me see where I could have a place in the tech industry. I learnt about the Internet of Things and it really intrigued me. Being able to discuss that and learn more about it was a great opportunity.

Did you meet anyone at Cisco who inspired you, or who changed your career path direction?

Every person who I interacted with at Cisco had an influence on my career decision. Not only did they teach me new things, but they also helped me understand the world of technology and what Cisco could offer me. This showed me the type of business Cisco is. I felt they would be able to facilitate my learning in the best way possible.



“It taught me how to thrive in a male-dominated space”

Aman Manku

Are you currently in employment, education or training?

I work full-time for Cisco as an apprentice whilst studying towards a degree qualification and gaining on-the-job experience. I'm currently in commercial sales, supporting the north region, and hope to remain in sales in the future.

Is your current job role, qualification or training linked to STEM?

Somewhat. I'm constantly in the loop with new technology in the networking industry. Cisco is always creating new projects, so we are constantly learning about what's up and coming in the sector, so we can sell these new portfolios.

Did your work experience with Cisco inspire what you are doing today, or your future career path?

Taking part in the work experience and seeing what goes on behind the scenes of our day-to-day life (technology-wise), and how Cisco plays a huge role in it, really inspired me. Seeing the lack of women in tech really made me want to push for it even more!

Have you used your work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, further study or work experience?

Yes, my work experience with Cisco inspired me to apply to their apprenticeship programme.

Did your work experience with Cisco increase your interest in STEM?

It opened my eyes to a world of technology that I did not even know existed. Through this, I went on to complete certifications with Cisco.

Did your work experience with Cisco improve your digital skills?

Somewhat. I learnt the importance of my digital footprint – what we leave on the global net and its safety implications. I am more conscious now of how I protect myself on the internet thanks to the digital skills I have learnt whilst being at Cisco.

Did you meet anyone at Cisco who inspired you, or who changed your career path direction?

Yes. I was put in a group during my work experience, which was led by Hannah Duffet, a sales account manager. Being one of the few women in sales, she inspired me and was the main reason for me joining Cisco. Another incredible woman, Chloe Taghavi (account manager), inspired me to carry on working regardless of my environmental pressures and taught me how to thrive in a male-dominated space.

Would you consider a job with Cisco in the future?

Cisco has a great culture that supports you and your development as a person, without directly asking you to be their employee. I would 100% consider a job at Cisco after my apprenticeship.



“It introduced me to the idea of a career in cybersecurity”

Abu Bakr Ghulam Quadir

Is your current job role, qualification or training linked to STEM?

I am an apprentice on the Cisco Degree Apprenticeship programme. I joined after completing my A-levels and about three years after completing my work experience at Cisco. I work in cybersecurity, within Cisco's Security Sales Organisation.

Did your work experience with Cisco inspire what you are doing today, or your future career path?

I was exposed to the apprenticeship programme during my work experience, and since then I've had my eye on the apprenticeship because of what it offers and the great culture at Cisco, which I saw first-hand.

Have you used your work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, further study or work experience?

Yes, the Cisco work experience featured on my CV because of the skills I learnt and the enjoyable experience I had when I was here.

Did your work experience with Cisco increase your interest in STEM?

Speaking to Paul King, one of the cybersecurity speakers during my work experience, got me interested in security. That conversation introduced me to the idea of a career in cybersecurity, and doing an apprenticeship.

Did you meet anyone at Cisco who inspired you, or who changed your career path direction?

My main inspiration was Paul King. He talked about his personal experiences in security, and we had a one-to-one conversation afterwards about how I could pursue a career in security and what I had to do.



“The work experience made me want to apply for the apprenticeship”

Melissa Robinson

Is your current job role, qualification or training linked to STEM?

I'm doing a three-year degree apprenticeship in Digital and Technology Solutions with the University of Roehampton. My degree is composed of many different modules. Last term we did systems development and this term we are doing maths and algorithms.

Did your work experience with Cisco inspire what you are doing today, or your future career path?

If I didn't do the work experience, I wouldn't have known what to do after I left sixth form. It gave me a great insight into Cisco's corporate world and the jobs available in the business. The work experience made me want to apply for the apprenticeship.

Have you used your work experience with Cisco when applying for jobs, apprenticeships, further study or work experience?

Yes, I was able to use it as an advantage during interviews, and it's a good topic to discuss when people ask how I found out about Cisco. I've also used it to encourage others to apply.

Did your work experience with Cisco improve your digital skills?

Yes, we did some coding during the work experience, which helped me improve my skills.

Did you meet anyone at Cisco who inspired you, or who changed your career path direction?

Everyone at Cisco inspired me. The culture at Cisco is amazing and so welcoming. You could see that people genuinely enjoy their jobs, and that made me want to work there.

2019 onwards: Pathways

Introduction

Cisco has always strived to ensure their work experience meets the evolving needs of the schools taking part, among a changing educational landscape.

Having built strong relationships with partner schools over a number of years, Cisco and MyKindaFuture were able to carefully monitor the feedback of teachers who had experienced the scheme. Pathway To Your Future, it was clear, was providing valuable experience to students aged between 14 and 18. But a theme emerged from the teacher feedback: there was a need to widen the programme to reach students at a younger age, before they came to choose their GCSE subjects.

The challenge for Cisco and MyKindaFuture was to retain the approach that had made PTYF a success but evolve the offer to meet the needs of students from Year 7 right through to Year 13.

As a result, the next step in Cisco's work experience evolution was taken in 2019, with a pilot scheme featuring eight partner schools close to Cisco offices in Feltham, Reading and Manchester, the new Pathways programme was born.



Delivering long term impact: A teacher's perspective



How has the evolution of Cisco's school programme supported your students over the past five years?

The programme has always provided great support to our students, but the new structure now allows events with Cisco to be more than one-offs. Students will follow up workshops with visits to a Cisco site, so they can see things in action and speak to employees. They will then have the opportunity to apply for work experience further down the line.

Overall, it is a much more holistic approach, which helps to spread the knowledge of what Cisco do and the potential career opportunities there.

Since partnering with Cisco, have you seen an increase in participating students going on to pursue STEM pathways?

Though I don't have any data to hand, there is more knowledge about STEM-based careers and opportunities, and more students talk about STEM subjects or careers.

What have the long-term impacts of partnering with Cisco been for Rivers Academy?

One of the three main things that industry wants from students leaving school is work experience. The impact on those that have completed work experience with Cisco is therefore massive, as it gives them one of these things for their CVs.

The impacts of the workshops and visit are also important. It's really beneficial to academic performance if students have a career goal in mind, and I have many students who come back from the visit or workshop telling me they want to work for Cisco. Equally, there are some who return knowing that this is not the job for them - this is also important, as it could steer them towards a career that's better for them.

What role does Cisco play in inspiring or upskilling young people in STEM?

The programme makes them realise how vital Cisco is to connecting their world, and they're inspired by the things that Cisco create - the magic mirror for trying on clothes, or watching a living room wall become a massive television. Cisco give students a tangible experience, and it inspires them to think about the technology of the future, and how they can play a part in creating it.

What future developments would you like to see in Cisco's school programme?

It would be great if we could do a Cisco day for a whole year group, with a range of Cisco staff running the sessions and a final pitch of an idea. That would ensure that all students are aware of the great opportunities at Cisco. They could round it off with a Year 11 assembly, looking at how to get into tech and the different options they have if they leave school in the summer.

“Overall, it is a much more holistic approach...the impact is massive.”

Will Berryman
Rivers Academy West London

Overview of Pathways

The Pathways programme aims to bring together all the successful elements of Cisco's work experience from the past few years – including Kids in IT Days and PTYF – and streamline them into a single, consistent scheme, covering the full secondary school age range.

The aim, as ever, is to raise the aspirations of young people from all backgrounds and give them valuable experience of what a career in technology entails. Pathways does this by introducing students to people outside their current network, who work in technology and delivering age-appropriate activities, that help them learn about careers in IT and develop skills and confidence at the same time.

How it works

Years 7-9

For younger students aged 11-14, Pathways consists of three elements:

- Two interactive in-school workshops, on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computer networking
- Kids in IT Day at a Cisco office
- Opportunity for a senior school leader to partner with a Cisco leader, to share expertise

Years 10-13

For students aged 14 to 18, the focus is on work experience:

- Years 10-11: week-long work experience at a Cisco site, retaining approach of PTYF
- Years 12-13: four day girls only scheme, hosted at Cisco with the chance to shadow Cisco staff, for students to learn more about careers in tech

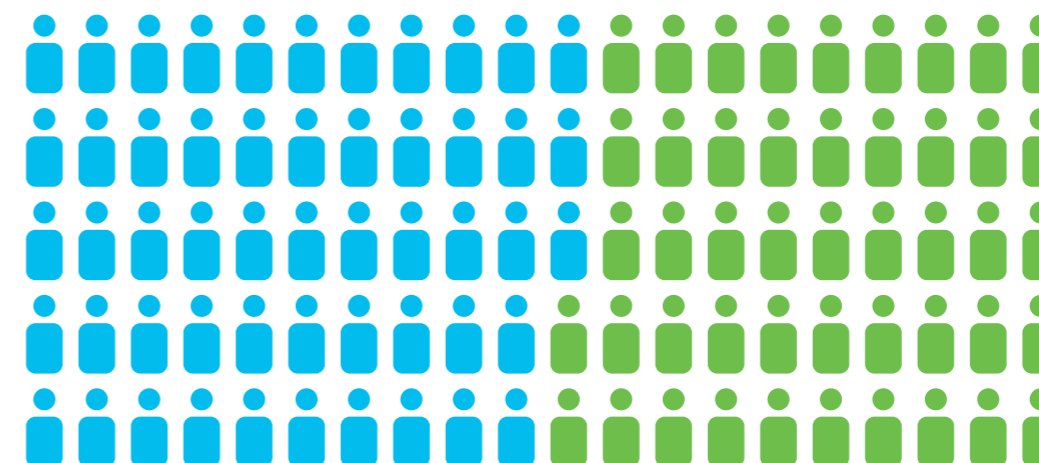
Cisco and MyKindaFuture

MyKindaFuture are a key partner for Cisco in delivering the Pathways programme. They have led the way in developing Cisco's partnerships with schools, and work closely with Cisco to deliver the programme for younger students – including designing workshop content and providing experienced facilitators to run the sessions.



Pathways 2019: Diversity

A key objective of Pathways is to reach students of all backgrounds, in order to help address the lack of diversity in the IT/STEM sector.



53%

of students who took part in Pathways identified as BAME



42%

of students who took part in Pathways identified as female

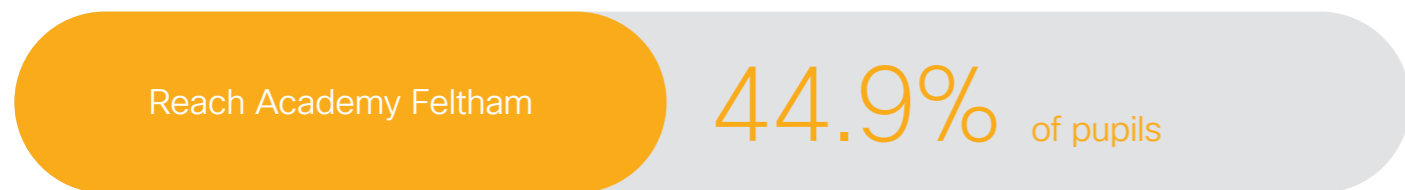


One of the eight partner schools is a girls' school

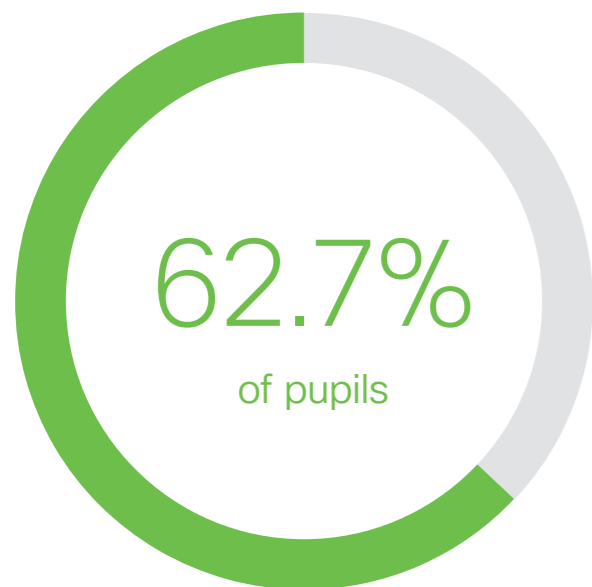
Social mobility

All eight partner schools have had an above-average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the past 6 years...

...for example:



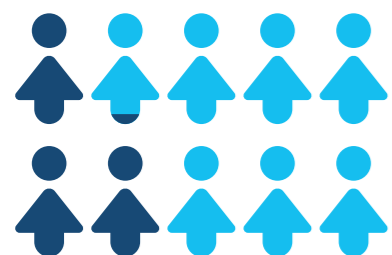
More than double the region's current average



Manchester Communication Academy

X3

More than triple the region's current average

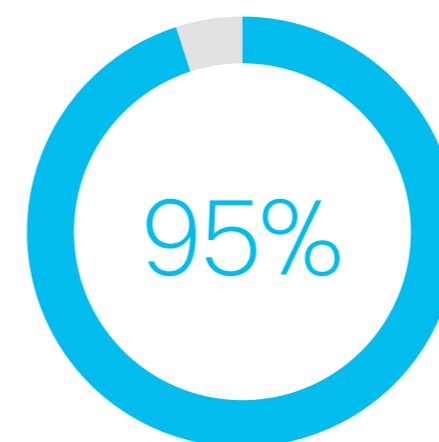


30.7% of pupils

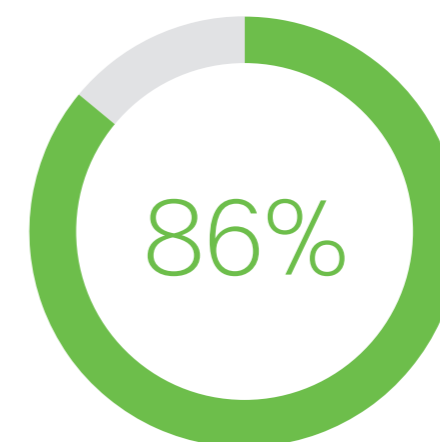
Thomas Knyvett College

Pathways 2019: Student feedback

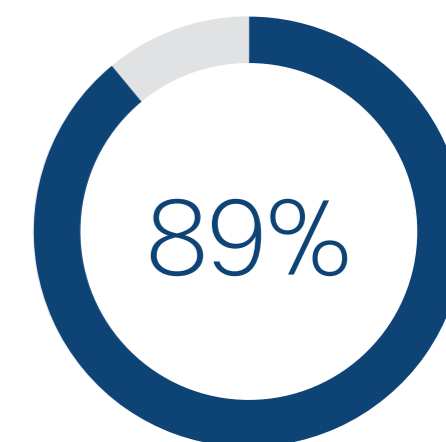
Following the 2019 pilot events, students who took part in Pathways completed feedback questionnaires about the programme. The results were positive:



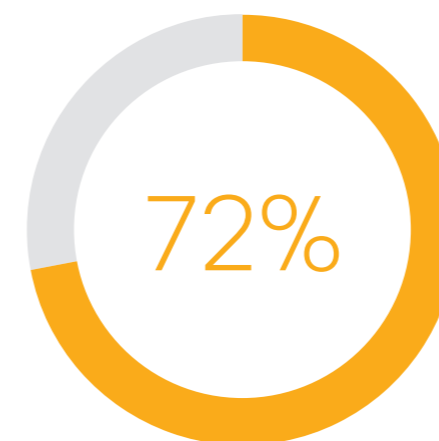
Obtained useful information that will help them with the next steps in their career



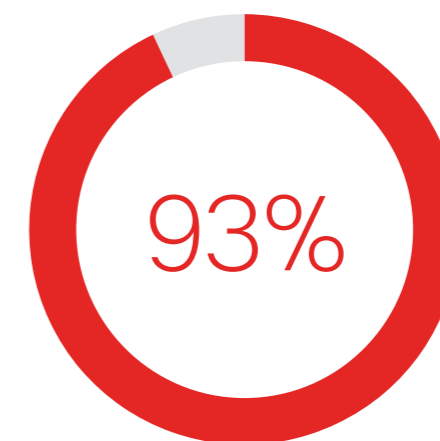
Felt more confident about themselves and the topics covered after taking part



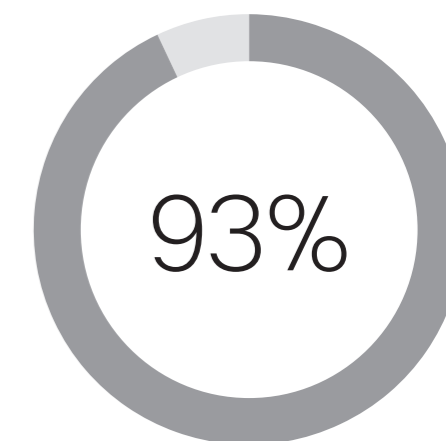
Learnt new skills



Now want to pursue a career in the technology industry



Found Pathways informative and interesting



Found the tutors and facilitators engaging and thought they delivered the sessions well

Developing Pathways: A teacher's perspective



“It is so important for students to hear from companies outside their comfort zone.”

Chrissy Humphrys,
The Green School for Girls

How does Pathways help your school to achieve the Gatsby benchmarks?

Pathways supports at least four of the Gatsby benchmarks. First of all, it helps to demonstrate that we have a stable careers programme (benchmark 1). The workshops help to show how careers link to the curriculum (benchmark 4), as well as providing encounters with employees (benchmark 5). And the visit to Cisco's offices gives the students experience of a workplace (benchmark 6).

What do you envision the long-term impacts of Pathways will be for your school?

I think there'll be a stronger relationship between employees at Cisco and teaching staff at the school. This will foster a better understanding of Cisco's business, which will mean more students apply for work experience and apprenticeship programmes at Cisco.

What role does Cisco play in providing STEM skills and inspiration?

Cisco staff are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They provide just enough information to engage students and help them to understand a little more about how technology is being applied in the working world. It is so important for students to see and hear from companies outside their comfort zone.

How would you like Pathways to develop in the future?

If possible, students could shadow a Cisco employee for the day. And I'd also like Cisco to keep updating all the workshops and evaluating best practice.

Overall, thank you Cisco – you are doing a great job!

Summary and next steps

Long-term impact

Evolving over a number of years, Cisco's work experience has formed a vital component of its pledge to digitally upskill young people in the UK and tackle the lack of diversity in the IT sector.

Extensive feedback has allowed Cisco and MyKindaFuture to monitor the social impact of each iteration.

This has made it possible to:

- Observe the **positive impact** Cisco's work experience has had on young people
- **Evaluate and evolve the programme** to meet the needs of students and schools.

As a result, Cisco made the significant step in 2019 of creating Pathways – its first work experience scheme to encompass secondary school pupils of all ages, building on the success of previous programmes.

And the initial feedback from Pathways has been positive. Nearly all students who took part enjoyed the experience, learnt new skills and found it useful for the next steps in their career.

What's more, the profiles of the participating schools and students saw Cisco delivering on its pledge to reach students of all backgrounds – including those traditionally not exposed to careers in IT and STEM.

Looking to the future

Cisco are excited to be running Pathways once more in 2020. In its second year, the scheme will see another partner school added to its roster (a girls' school), taking the total to nine – with all the schools who partnered in 2019 choosing to take part in the programme again.

Looking ahead, the focus will fall on three areas:

- **Scalability:** How can Cisco reach as many young people as possible, ensuring young people are aware of Cisco, the technology industry and, more generally, the careers available in IT and STEM?
- **Relationships:** How can Cisco further deepen its collaborations with partner schools?
- **Diversity:** How can Cisco achieve greater diversity within its talent pool by ensuring more female and BAME students apply to join the company?

Cisco will also focus on increasing the number of young people who apply for apprenticeships with them – particularly young women. The results from the 2018/19 PTYF programme were encouraging in this regard, with 71% of participating students saying after the activity they would consider an apprenticeship or job with Cisco.

These are the exciting challenges that lie ahead. As we move forward into 2020 and beyond, Cisco will continue to deliver on its Digital Skills Pledge and seek to raise the career aspirations of young people across the country.



In partnership with

**MY
KINDA
FUTURE** ▶