

Inspiring Women

In association with Education and Employers charity



Reach for the skies

Fantastic female role models get youngsters to aim for career highs

Kate Hilpern

OVER 55 PER CENT of girls aged 11 to 21 think there is a lack of female role models, according to recent research. "This is absurd because there are hundreds of thousands of fantastic women role models in the UK alone," says Miriam Gonzalez, partner of international legal practice Dechert and wife of Liberal Democrat party leader and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

The more Gonzalez contemplated this, the more she felt a duty to do something about it. "Women from my generation have benefited a lot from what women from previous generations have done for us. We can vote, work, decide freely about our

lives and express openly our opinions because other women in the past got those rights for us. It is easy to take all that for granted. I think we have a duty towards young girls today. We cannot only be at the receiving end, we have to give as well."

And that, in a nutshell, is how the national Inspiring Women campaign was born. Launched on 17 October last year by Gonzalez and the Inspiring the Future initiative, the concept is simple but effective. Women from a wide range of occupations go in to state schools talking to young women, with the aim of showing them that there are more accessible opportunities than they've ever dreamed of.

**Inspiring
women**

Already, the campaign has over 10,000 women talking to girls and their ambition is to see 15,000 women over the next year talking to 250,000 young women. With 75 per cent of state secondary schools already having signed up, the potential reach of the campaign is huge.

"We were ambitious from the outset," says Nick Chambers, director of the Education and Employers' Taskforce, the charity which backs the campaign, who explains that it's

all about giving girls first-hand insight into a range of jobs to help break down misconceptions and gender stereotyping. "We know that at an early age, girls rule out certain careers because they think it's a boys' job. Others just have no idea of the breadth of jobs that exist. With these events, you get women who work in science, RAF, parliament, broadcasting and more all coming along to show what's on offer."

Different events are aimed at different age-groups, he says. "While some are for 13-year-olds making their GCSE choices, others are organised for older girls making university choices." The usual format is usually a bit like speed dating. "The school gets 10 tables out, each with 10

chairs, and we invite 10 women along, one for each table. Girls then come along and choose a table to sit at, then move to another when the bell goes."

Not that it's a set formula, with one recent event having involved women from Aston Martin showcasing their cars. Barrister Emma Edhem adds, "When I went to the City of London School, each of the women were invited to have our own stand. We were asked to dress up in the uniform of our profession, so I came in my wig and gown. The girls were then invited to walk round and ask us questions, while our role was to help them get

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Inspiring Women Special pullout

'Students were excited and it gave me a buzz'

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a better understanding of what we do and inspire them to realise careers like ours are not out of reach for women, and indeed them personally."

Sometimes the Bar can feel like a closed world, so Edhem was delighted when some of the girls said to her, "I want to do what you're doing." Edhem says: "I explained how they can go about it, as well as emphasising the need to stay positive. We often find that young women grow up amplifying their weaknesses and failing to look at their strengths. For instance, if women reach 90 per cent of where they think they should be to make an application, they tend to wait to get the other 10 per cent, whereas if a man hits 50 per cent, he makes the application."

Edhem is also able to show these young women that it's possible to have a career like hers, as well as being a mother. "I have two, well-adjusted sons and I'm quick to tell them that."

It's not just the girls that benefit, points out Yasmin Yazdi, choreographer at Thriller Productions. "I go away feeling so energised when I've spent time helping young people on their path. Even if they don't want a career in the performing arts, you're still helping get the message out there that it's good to strive to be successful. And for those who are interested, I get to give them a broader perspective of the industry. Most have no idea just how many careers there are within it."

There was nothing like these events when she was at school, says Claire



Miriam Gonzalez: a desire to inspire

Davey, CSR executive of London City Airport. "In fact, I left school with a very poor understanding of the world of work and the beauty of this is that it gives pupils an insight before they make key choices around qualifications. When I was invited to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson school, I snapped up the opportunity of telling students not just about my career, but also how many jobs are available within this industry. They were genuinely excited and you could tell it made a real impact on them, as well as giving me a great buzz."

This kind of enthusiasm from both the pupils and the volunteers is common, says Chambers, who points out that even giving one hour a year is a great help. "Schools often can't believe that it's so easy and indeed free, with many asking: 'What's the catch?' But there isn't one."



Ready for action: St Luke's Primary was the London hub of yesterday's campaign launch

Possibilities are endless

Primary Futures will introduce a world of career options to young people, says **Kate Rowe**

Taking up the inspirational baton, and into our primary schools, the Primary Futures campaign launches this week as part of National Primary Futures Week (13-17 October). The project is led by the National Association of Head Teachers in partnership with the Education and Employers Taskforce charity, whose remit is to "ensure that every school and college has an effective partnership with employers" to help young people "achieve their potential" and "secure the UK's future prosperity". It will run concurrently with secondary- and college-focused Inspiring the Future programmes such as Inspiring Women.

The rationale behind Primary Futures sprang to life when it became evident that pupils form opinions about themselves and their possible careers well before they reach secondary school. Research shows that by the age of only six, children classify jobs as male or female. By the age of eight, they are aligning their aspirations with their gender, and by 13 many have already ruled out career options that do not fit within gender stereotypes. So, bringing the world of working possibilities to children pre-KS3 became a focus.

Knowing an adult in a profession significantly influences a child's desire to work in that area, and 68 per cent of pupils have known someone who worked in either their first or second choice of job. So putting a variety of professionals in contact with pupils, before their minds are closed to opportunities, is imperative. This week's launch of National Primary Futures

Primary Futures

Week has seen schools across England open their doors to an array of businesses, including talks from over 100 MPs, and David Cameron joining the volunteer network soon. Another aim is to show primary and junior school children that what they do in school now is connected to what they choose as work in the future. During the pilot phase of Primary Futures, it took a lawyer and her immaculately-scribed briefs to prove to a six-year-old boy that practising handwriting is important.

"The key thing is establishing the link between the learning in school and the possibilities for the future," says Steve Iredale, former president of NAHT and headteacher of 24 years. Steve emphasises "possibilities" over "jobs" as he believes that Primary Futures' mission is more evocative than traditional careers advice. "It's not about telling children what job to do, but about widening choice and raising aspirations."

Yesterday's official launch events of Primary Futures took place in five schools across the regions, as well as St Luke's CE Primary near Old Street - the London hub for the day. They welcomed more than 30 speakers, including Air Vice-Marshal Elaine West (the most senior woman in the RAF), an archaeologist, a neuroscientist, a pilot, a yoga teacher, a resource coordinator for Tate Modern, and a cheesemonger.

Ann Dwulit, executive headteacher at St Luke's, is working with Primary Futures and its network of 8,989 London-based volunteers because "we want to open children's minds about the world of work, and encourage their aspirations by hearing how volunteers got to what they are today - their journey." Last night, pupils from the school performed a dance enactment of what they hope to achieve in the future to educators and influencers at a launch event at Lincoln's Inn, receiving a resounding reception.

Speaking at last night's event, BBC Economics Editor Robert Peston said: "Schools are the fabric of the nation and for too long we have regarded them as someone else's business not ours." With the free available to all state primary schools in England, and more than 16,000 speakers sharing insight into their chosen fields, it's no wonder schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland want to sign up. Rollout will

form part of the continuation of the project in coming months.

Nick Boles MP said: "I think to my school days and I wonder if I had had a glimpse of Primary Futures and heard a speaker from Speakers for Schools I might have found a better job than being a politician."

For schools with an established enterprise education culture, Primary Futures encourages students to aim higher by providing access to volunteers from a range of backgrounds and echelons of seniority thanks to the work of Inspiring the Future, Inspiring Women and NAHT. At one such school, William Tyndale Primary School, headteacher Tanya Watson feels they are supporting their local community by allying themselves with Primary Futures. "Youth unemployment stands at 16.2 per cent in Islington, and we want to contribute to reducing this. National Primary Futures Week is a week that is the beginning of more."

How to get involved

Whether you are a state school, an employer, or a volunteer, it is easy to become part of the entirely free Primary Futures programme. Sign up today to volunteer one hour, once a year to talk with pupils about your job, in a school near home or work. "Anybody can sign up to this - you just go online." As one volunteer says here, the safe, secure online

system on the website inspiringthefuture.org enables you to make a difference to the aspirations of children.

Go to the Primary Futures page to register your school or speak to schools manager Charlotte on 0203 206 0510 or email charlotte.lightman@educationandemployers.org.

Inspiring Women Special pullout

Send for the professionals

Inspiring the Future volunteers can play a valuable role in schools. By **Kate Hilpern**

When Andy Spencer left school at 15 with no GCSEs, he hardly expected to wind up being a senior manufacturing engineer at Aston Martin. "But the fact that I wasn't a straight-A student is why young people like hearing my story. It makes them realise that, whatever their grades so far, they could aim for a job like mine," explains Spencer, who is one of over 16,000 volunteers for Inspiring the Future.

The initiative matches volunteers from all professions, jobs and sectors with teachers in schools, who call on them when they want to give young students first-hand career insights. You can give as little as one hour a year in a school near where you live or work.

"It's enormously rewarding," says Spencer. "Not just because I'm giving something back, but because it's good

for my professional development. I get to practice presentation skills and I learn so much from watching teachers give lessons. I've seen CEOs with lesser presentation skills."

Volunteers aren't generally expected to give big lectures. In fact, there's no set format: some people come in to chat with a small group of A-level English students; others have one-to-one chats with 14-year-olds.

Typical student feedback includes the comments "I didn't realise those careers existed" and "I didn't think I could do anything like that".

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Will Butler-Adams: Brompton Bicycles' MD is a vocal supporter of the scheme

"We were aware that lots of employers were keen to help schools and lots of schools wanted the input of employers, but both were unsure how to go about it," explains Nick Chambers, director of the Education and Employers Taskforce, the charity behind the initiative. "So we wanted to find a way to bring a structure to this good will, particularly as we know that when young people hear people talking about their jobs, it can have a massive impact on their aspirations."

Having brought together brains from organisations ranging from the Government to business, and having called on Deloitte to help with software that

could efficiently connect schools and businesses, Inspiring the Future enjoyed an official launch in July 2012. "We got a lot of volunteers immediately and the more word spread, the more we got," says Chambers.

One of the reasons the initiative, supported by all the main UK teaching unions and headteachers' associations, has been so successful is that it's tailored. "The teacher can look through the volunteers in their area and think: 'That person would be great for my maths class'," explains Chambers.

From apprentices to CEOs, and archaeologists to zoologists, teachers certainly have enough choice. "One

teacher might want a small business owner to talk about start-ups. Another might want someone who uses foreign languages in their job."

Will Butler-Adams, MD of Brompton Bicycles, became a volunteer because he believes Inspiring the Future brings studying to life: "There are so many people in school who don't really get why they are learning stuff. Their exposure to the world of work is probably their parents and a few parents' friends. There are lots of exciting jobs and industries they don't know about - and neither do their parents."

Other reasons he was attracted to the scheme include the fact that it's not just about people at the top ("It's about real, accessible people whose career journey they can relate to") and employers can encourage their workforce to sign up as well. "One invitation I got from a school to be a judge in a competition felt much more relevant to one of my employees," he says. "She was nervous as she'd never done anything like it before, but the school loved her. She with a real sense of pride."

Most young people don't have a clue what's out there - not just the jobs on offer, but how you start a career that isn't what your parents do, agrees Jennifer Boussuge, head of global transaction services for EMEA at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, where 1,000 London-based employees are registered with Inspiring the Future. "I just don't think that every young person is aware of the jobs within his or her reach. I hope that through the programme, we educate, inspire and motivate."



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Inspiring Women Special pullout

Benefits of broadened horizons

Kate Rowe meets a pupil, volunteer and corporate supporter whose lives are all enriched by Inspiring Women



SARA KIDHER is a Year 6 pupil at St Luke's CE Primary School, which hosted over 30 illustrious volunteers, who spoke with students and teachers as part of the launch of National Primary Futures Week. She already recognises the value of meeting adults in an array of professions, as "it helps you to understand the jobs out there, and the qualifications you need to get them".

Kidher's exposure to a broad range of career-minded individuals means that she already knows which profession she wishes to follow. "I knew I wanted to be a doctor," she says, "but one speaker inspired me with their job, so I want to be a paediatrician." She feels that knowledge has given her focus, and an idea of what needs to improve if she wants to be a doctor. Happily, she already has a love of science and is proud to be "one of the highest achievers in maths". Kidher's teacher Chris Quinton believes that primary schools "can't operate in a bubble" and that it is much more beneficial for pupils to be "drip-fed reality".

Primary Futures is part of Inspiring the Future, which has up until now launched secondary school-focused initiatives, including Inspiring Women. These interlinked programmes can help with the transition from primary to secondary school. The near future is very much in Kidher's thoughts at the moment, too. She will be starting secondary school next year and admits to being a little anxious but also "excited", as well as looking forward to meeting more volunteers.

KAREN BONNER is deputy head of nursing for abdominal medicine and surgery at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. She volunteered to go into schools to decry the myths that women "end up" as carers, and that nursing is a female-dominated profession. Bonner "chose" her career in nursing at the age of five, and feels this early knowledge has contributed to her ability to reach a high-ranking management position. She regards "exposure to choices" as integral to "having the strength to lead, motivate and inspire others". In addition, she is passionate about "spreading the word about the NHS". "When you look at the NHS as a whole, there are so many careers. My aim is to plant a seed of thought about the roles that exist."

Opportunities to represent nursing and champion the NHS are not Bonner's only motivations for signing up, however. "Volunteers get a lot back," she says. "I get fulfilment from working with diverse people, as I do in my job. I'm not nursing them or caring directly, but I'm caring for them in another way."

As an experienced volunteer on the Inspiring Women programme, she has supported events in various formats, including career insight talks and career speed dating Q&As. Following the launch of National Primary Futures Week, she looks forward to engaging new audiences in new formats, and the challenge of making her message relevant and appealing to children who are the same age as she was when she chose her path to a rewarding vocation.



ANDREA SULLIVAN is head of corporate social responsibility for EMEA at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. "As Inspiring the Future's largest corporate supporter, the bank is integrally involved in the programme, with 1,000 of our staff signed up for volunteering," she says. An influential employer and campaign supporter, Bank of America Merrill Lynch's partnership with Inspiring the Future and Inspiring Women is a way to "be a small part of the solution", Sullivan says. All UK employers "need a thriving economy and educated young people for the future".

This means going into schools and speaking to students about financial literacy and the "softer skills" which increase employability, along with creating understanding about the current "skills mismatch between jobs young people think they're going to do, and what will actually be available".

Inspiring the Future gives companies a forum to ensure that "young people are as versed as possible in all of the possibilities". She encourages all corporations to get on board: "It's not our programme, it's the nation's programme, and it has the potential to be game-changing."

Join our Inspiring Women campaign and sign up today to volunteer one hour, once a year to talk with girls about your job and life experiences in a school near home or work. Visit www.inspiringthefuture.org - and click on the Inspiring Women button.

Connecting with the next generation is our future.

Proud to be the lead corporate partner of Inspiring the Future and Inspiring Women.

Sign up to visit a school and talk about your job
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