

# Planting the Seeds

## Pilot Evaluation 2026

### Confidence First, Futures Follow.

A CHEXS GROWTH initiative connecting Year 10 students with relatable local business role models.

**1 July 2026**

Pilot at Goffs Churchgate Academy

**~120**

Year 10 students attended

**Local**

Professionals led interactive sessions

## Executive summary

Planting the Seeds brought CHEXS, Goffs Churchgate Academy and local professionals from Synergy Hertford BNI together for a different kind of futures event. Through practical activities, small-group conversations and real stories from working life, Year 10 students explored confidence, communication, resilience and the many routes that can lead to a fulfilling future.

The pilot was designed as early preparation rather than a careers fair or recruitment exercise. Its purpose was to strengthen the personal and social foundations that help young people make the most of careers education, work experience, apprenticeships, training and future employment conversations.

*Eight students completed the anonymous follow-up survey. The sample is small, so the survey findings in this report are presented as encouraging early evidence rather than representative results for the whole year group. The evaluation also draws on staff feedback and observations from the morning.*

## Early indications

**8/8**

reported increased confidence speaking to unfamiliar adults

**8/8**

reported greater understanding of different routes to success

**8/8**

said the session inspired or motivated them in some way

**"I don't have to know exactly what I want to do now."**

Year 10 student

## Why we developed Planting the Seeds

Young people receive careers information at school, but information alone does not always remove the barriers that can stop them engaging with it. A student may be unsure how to speak to an unfamiliar adult, worried about saying the wrong thing, unclear about their own strengths or unable to picture themselves in the opportunities being described.

CHEXS designed Planting the Seeds to work on those foundations before the pressure of major decisions becomes too great. Year 10 was chosen deliberately: identity and self-belief are still developing, while work experience and post-16 choices are moving closer. The aim was to prepare, not pressure - to widen horizons, build confidence and help students recognise that there is more than one route to success.

## Our aims

|                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                 |
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| <b>Build confidence and resilience</b><br>Strengthen communication, self-belief and aspiration.                       | <b>Recognise strengths</b><br>Help students understand how personal qualities connect with working life.        |
| <b>Meet relatable role models</b><br>Hear honest accounts of different routes, setbacks and achievements.             | <b>Practise conversation</b><br>Create a safe space for active listening, introductions and asking questions.   |
| <b>Broaden future pathways</b><br>Explore employment, apprenticeships, training, entrepreneurship and skilled trades. | <b>Connect school and community</b><br>Strengthen the bridge between school, local businesses and young people. |

## The delivery model

Planting the Seeds is the purpose; the CHEXS GROWTH approach provides the delivery model. The pilot was shaped around four connected principles:

|                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>Meaning and purpose</b><br>Helping students see that their abilities, interests and contribution have value. | <b>Resilience</b><br>Showing that progress is rarely a straight line and that setbacks do not have to define what happens next. | <b>Expectation</b><br>Introducing the behaviours, communication and professional standards that help people build trust. | <b>Aspiration</b><br>Opening up possibilities and helping young people move from "that is not for someone like me" towards "yes, I could do that". |
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## What we did

On 1 July 2026, approximately 120 Year 10 students at Goffs Churchgate Academy took part in the first Planting the Seeds session. Students attended in two half-year groups and moved through a series of interactive activities led by local professionals, with support from CHEXS and school staff. Rather than listening to formal presentations, they were encouraged to ask questions, join conversations and explore themes such as confidence, communication, trust, teamwork and the different routes people can take into working life.

### Year 10

The pilot was timed before work experience and post-16 decisions move closer

### 2 groups

Students attended in two half-year groups

### Interactive

Sessions centred on conversation and practical activity

## The role of local professionals

Each business volunteer brought a different story and perspective, but every session focused on the young people rather than promoting a company. Contributors drew on experience from construction and the trades, finance and insurance, human resources, marketing, training and self-development.

One session asked students to think about how trust is built and why somebody might choose to work with them. Students practised active listening, considered body language and eye contact, and reflected on the qualities they would want others to notice. The most powerful moments were often the simplest: a student asking a question they might previously have held back, recognising that determination is a skill, or hearing an adult say that they did not have everything worked out at the same age.

## A different kind of business involvement

### ***"Be honest, human and useful."***

The principle behind business participation

Businesses were not asked to arrive with a polished corporate presentation. They were asked to share what helped them, what challenged them and what they have learned about working with other people. This created a two-way benefit: young people gained relatable insight, while businesses made a direct local contribution and developed a stronger understanding of the hopes and concerns of young people in their community.

## What students told us

*Eight students completed the anonymous follow-up survey. This is a small response sample, so the findings below should be read as early indicators rather than a measure of the whole year group. When combined with staff feedback and observations from the morning, however, they provide useful learning for the next version of the project.*

**8/8**

reported increased confidence speaking to unfamiliar adults

**8/8**

reported greater understanding of different routes to success

**8/8**

said the session had inspired or motivated them in some way

## Skills students recognised

### Asking questions

Confidence to speak up and engage with unfamiliar adults.

### Determination

Recognising persistence as a quality that matters in working life.

### Teamwork

Understanding how contribution and reliability affect other people.

### Resilience

Seeing that setbacks and uncertainty do not have to define the next step.

## Student voices

**"Adam, because he showed me I can do it."**

Year 10 student

**"It's not always straightforward and that's OK."**

Year 10 student

**"Stuff is possible."**

Year 10 student

**"I know I could achieve the success I want."**

Year 10 student

## School feedback

**"This is brilliant."**

Georgia King, Head of Year

Staff feedback also highlighted students' engagement and their appetite for more time with the visiting professionals.



## Impact linked to CHEXS purpose and outcomes

The pilot showed promising links to the outcomes at the heart of the CHEXS GROWTH approach. These links are qualitative and should be viewed alongside the small survey sample, but they help explain where the project appears to add value.

### Confidence and communication

Students practised speaking with unfamiliar adults, asking questions, listening carefully and introducing their strengths. Every survey respondent reported at least some increase in confidence.

### Self-belief and aspiration

Student comments suggest a shift from receiving distant careers information towards seeing personal possibility: "stuff is possible" and "I know I could achieve the success I want".

### Resilience and realistic hope

Professionals did not present success as effortless or linear. Their honesty helped students understand that uncertainty and setbacks are normal while still leaving them with a sense of agency.

### Meaning and purpose

Activities encouraged students to identify qualities such as determination, teamwork and reliability and connect who they are now with the contribution they could make in future.

### Community connection

The partnership brought school, charity and local enterprise around the same group of young people, showing how a community can contribute to preparation for adult life.

### Future readiness

The approach gives young people a chance to practise the personal and social skills that can help them make more of work experience, apprenticeships, training and future employment conversations.

## The power of a relatable story

Adam from BME Construction made a particularly strong connection by sharing his journey with honesty and warmth. The value was not simply learning about one job; it was the shift from observing somebody else's success to believing that progress might also be possible for them.

***"Adam, because he showed me I can do it."***

Year 10 student

## What we learned

The strongest message was that students wanted more. Their suggestions were practical and constructive: longer sessions, more time for conversation, smaller groups, a wider range of professionals and clearer information about how to take the next step towards particular pathways.

## What we will change next time

### Protect more conversation time

Allow longer interaction with visiting professionals rather than trying to cover too much.

### Use smaller groups where possible

Create more opportunities for students who may be less confident to ask questions and take part.

### Broaden the business network

Bring in a wider mix of sectors, routes into work and life experiences.

### Make pathways more practical

Give clearer next-step information for students interested in particular options.

### Capture feedback before students leave

Increase the response rate and build a fuller evidence base for future evaluation.

### Invite business reflections

Collect structured feedback from volunteers on what they observed, learned and would adapt.

## What happens next

CHEXS wants to build on the pilot and develop a growing network of local businesses willing to support future Planting the Seeds sessions across schools. As the network expands, volunteers can rotate between events, bringing different sectors, life experiences and perspectives into the room.

The commitment is intentionally manageable: one morning, an honest story and a willingness to engage with young people. Together, those contributions can help young people feel better prepared for work experience, apprenticeships, training, employment and the choices ahead.

### COULD YOUR BUSINESS HELP PLANT THE NEXT SEED?

Give one morning of your time, share what you have learned and help a young person see what might be possible.

**Register your interest**

## With thanks

CHEXS would like to thank Goffs Churchgate Academy, Synergy Hertford BNI, every participating local professional, and the students who brought their questions, energy and ideas to the pilot. Planting the Seeds worked because people came together

around a shared belief: young people deserve opportunities to build confidence, understand their strengths and imagine a future that feels possible.

