

Words for Work: Women in Leadership

Evaluation summary for 2018/19

Introduction



In September 2018, the National Literacy Trust launched its Words for Work: Women in Leadership programme, in partnership with Lancôme and their global Write Her Future literacy initiative, to challenge inequalities in employment opportunities for young women from disadvantaged communities.

This report provides a summary of the programme and its impact on participants' literacy skills, leadership abilities and preparedness for work in 2018/19.

Words for Work: Women in Leadership

Words for Work: Women in Leadership gives girls and young women in post-16 education the literacy skills, leadership abilities and confidence they need to achieve their potential.

The negative impact of low literacy on employability is twice as large for women than for men¹, and the programme is deployed in areas of deprivation where young women are much less likely than their peers to gain the qualifications they need to access further education and employment².



The programme comprises three key components:

- 1. A day with Lancôme:** students are immersed in an office environment in London or a distribution centre in Manchester and Nottingham where they have the opportunity to speak to Lancôme employees about different job roles, career paths and the value of good communications skills.
- 2. Teacher-led workshops:** students explore literacy, communication and leadership skills with their school or college teacher, including writing and presenting speeches.
- 3. A panel event with a range of inspiring women in work:** students taking part in the programme, and other young women from local schools and colleges, get the chance to hear from a range of inspiring women in different job roles and sectors about their journeys to success, the challenges they faced and how they used literacy skills to overcome them.

Overview of programme delivery in 2018/19

- Words for Work: Women in Leadership was delivered in **3 secondary schools and colleges** serving deprived communities in London, Manchester and Nottingham
- We directly improved the literacy skills and employability outcomes of **75 young women**
- We provided **600 young women** with the opportunity to attend panel events where they heard from **17 inspirational women in leadership roles**
- We trained **9 teachers** to deliver the programme in their schools and colleges, helping their students develop strong literacy skills and improve workplace readiness
- **26 volunteers** from Lancôme were given the chance to support and mentor young women
- **3 participants** successfully applied for places on the paid **Lancôme's Summer Internship** scheme

¹ National Literacy Trust (2014) [Literacy Changes Lives](#)

² In 2017, 16-year-old girls from the poorest communities were twice as likely to fail to achieve good grades in GCSE English and maths than their more affluent peers (56% vs 29%) [[Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2016 to 2017](#)]

Key evaluation findings

The National Literacy Trust evaluated the impact of the programme on young women's literacy skills, confidence, leadership abilities and preparedness for the workplace using a mixed-method approach.

Students and teachers both completed two surveys, one following the panel event and one on the completion of the overall programme. Panellists also reflected on their experiences through a post-event questionnaire.

Key findings include:

Words for Work: Women in Leadership improved young women's literacy and communication skills for the workplace

- 97% of young women said they now know how to give a speech and how to communicate in the workplace
- 80% of young women said they have a better understanding of what may be expected of them in a job interview
- 73% of young women said they now know how to write a formal email in a work content
- 100% of teachers said the programme improved student's speaking and listening skills

"This programme was very informative and educational. It was a great opportunity and I feel more confident about interviews and communication." – Student

Words for Work: Women in Leadership increased young women's confidence in the skills they need for work

- Young women were more than twice as likely to be confident working in a team after taking part in the programme (from 38% to 93%)
- Young women were three times more likely to be confident going in to a job interview after taking part in the programme (from 26% to 73%)
- The programme resulted in a 42% increase in the number of young women who were confident writing in a workplace context (i.e. writing a CV or email)

"It has prepared me to tackle the challenges I may face in the workplace being a young woman." – Student

Words for Work: Women in Leadership improved young women's leadership abilities, raised aspirations and boosted preparedness for work

- 96% of young women now feel more prepared to enter employment
- 84% of young women feel that they can now reflect and evaluate their team's approaches to tasks and carefully influence them to get better results
- 81% of young women now feel they can better adapt their leadership style depending on the situation
- 78% of young women now know what skills they will need for the job they want
- 100% of teachers said the programme raised students' aspirations

"The day [at Lancôme] gave our young female students a deeper understanding of the world of work and left them feeling that there are no limitations to what they can achieve and how high they can aim." – Jodie Fink, Tutor, Newham Sixth Form College

For more information about Words for Work: Women in Leadership, visit: literacytrust.org.uk/women-in-leadership.