

2025

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



MindSpark

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About Us

We're a social enterprise on a mission...

We believe that everyone, regardless of background, should have the cognitive and emotional skills that we need to thrive across all areas of life. Our approach brings insights from psychology and neuroscience into classrooms, communities and workplaces to make a real and lasting difference. We do this in four ways:



Training & Consultancy

A whole-organisation approach to executive functions (INSET, talks, resources, parent workshops, bespoke consultancy)



EF Coach Training

Working with organisations and individuals, we establish sustainable and impactful coaching programmes



Resilience Coaching

Supporting our beneficiaries directly through EF coaching, behaviour change and goal-setting strategies



Research & Evaluation

Sharing our learning and impact with leaders, partners and communities



303

teachers &
professionals
trained in using
our EF approach

£573,570

of grant
funding
secured

40



professionals
trained as EF
coaches

Ran our first
Educators'
Conference



10,172

young people
reached through
coaching and
training

Hosted our
first in-person
Celebration
Event

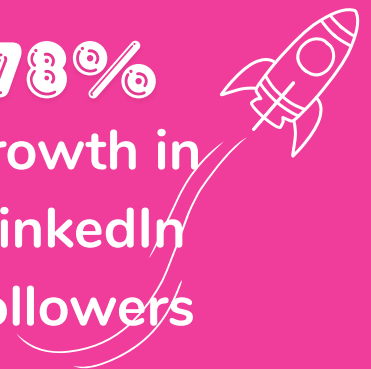


6

incredible
volunteers

270
hours of
volunteered
time

178%
growth in
LinkedIn
followers



8

speaking events
reaching 1515
professionals

12

new school, youth
& community
partners

1

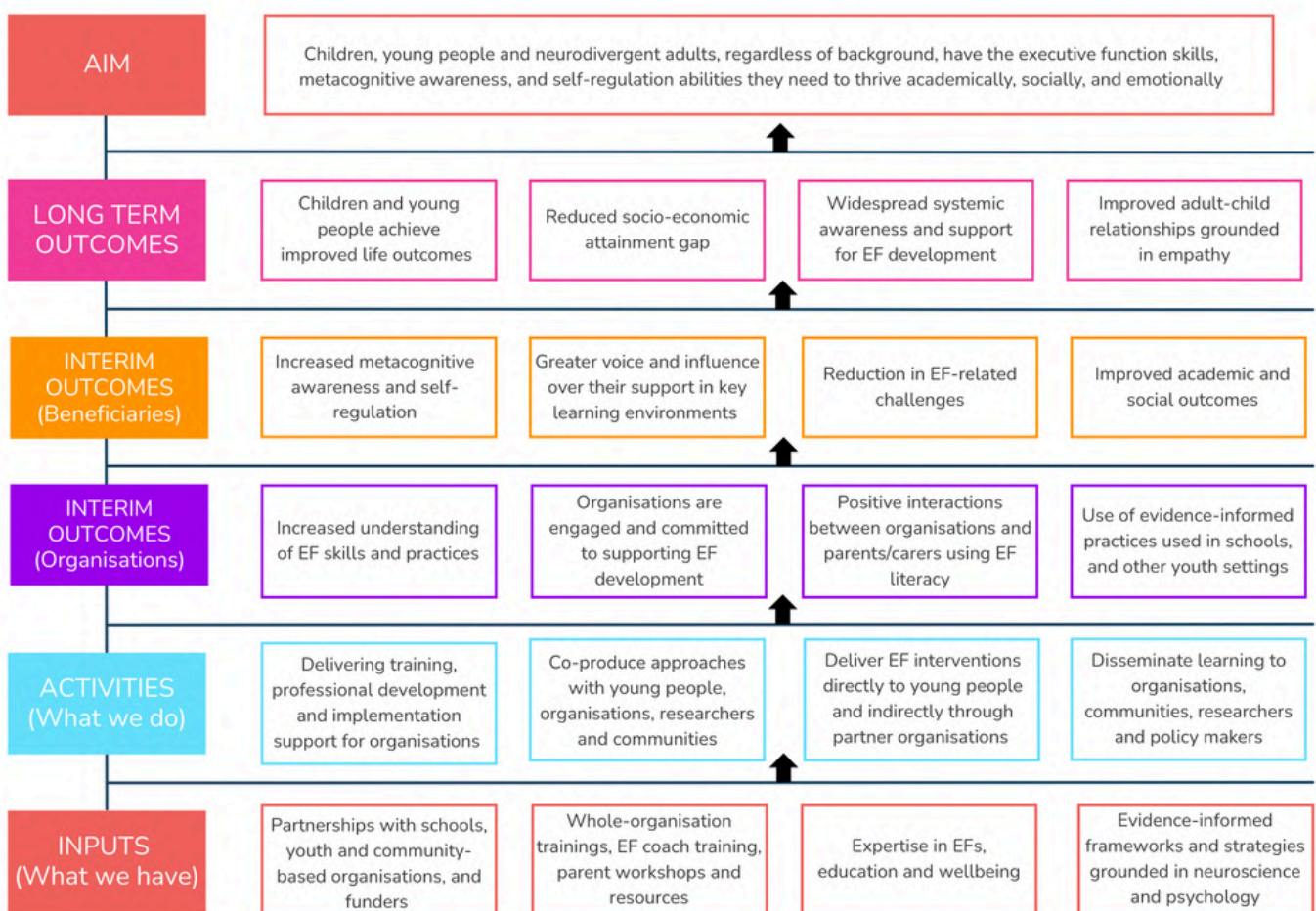


Accredited
Coach Training
Course

Why We Do It

Our Theory of Change sets out our why and transformation vision. It shows how our activities build the skills and supportive environments that young people and adults need for better life outcomes.

MindSpark Theory of Change



Director's Message

Over the past 18 months, what stands out is not just the volume of activity, but the depth and impact of our work, with increasing numbers of people feeling equipped to support executive function, champion neuroinclusion, and create environments where individuals can thrive.

Since 2018, we have partnered with schools, youth organisations and coaches to embed our evidence-informed executive function approach into practice. Over the past 18 months, this has accelerated, with increased reach and demand as more settings engage with our work. This direction is reflected more widely in the UK Government's schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving (February 2026), which explicitly identifies executive function as a key area for development in children.

We are seeing educators, leaders and wider teams take the executive function language and coaching conversations and make them their own, adapting them to fit their setting and embedding them in ways that begin to shift everyday practice.

*Belinda Edington
Director, MindSpark CIC*



As teachers, professionals, parents and children become better equipped to notice what sits beneath barriers and behaviour, and to recognise the strategies that support them, change becomes more consistent and more likely to last.

Alongside this, we have extended our delivery to universities and services supporting neurodivergent adults, where the same underlying skills support learning, wellbeing, neuroinclusion, confidence and independence.

We have also strengthened our ability to learn and improve as we grow. Alongside delivery, we have continued to refine our resources, training and ways of working, using feedback and evidence to shape what we do next, while remaining responsive to the challenges facing society.

This is reflected in the accreditation of our coach training by the Association for Coaching, and in our ability to offer CPD-accredited training to schools and organisations, further strengthening the quality and recognition of our work.

This period has also been one of increased visibility and credibility for MindSpark, and for the wider conversation around executive function, self-regulation and neuroinclusion. Through events, conferences, podcasts and our own educators' conference, we have created more opportunities to share practice and contribute to the sector. We see this as a key part of our impact.

Alongside this, we have continued to build organisational resilience and sustainability. Through the SSE Trade Up programme, support from Selby, and investment in business development, we have strengthened our foundations and prepared for the launch of MindSpark Schools in 2026.

We have also developed key partnerships with Parent Skills2Go and Parent Action, and secured funding through the Building Brighter Futures programme and the Maudsley Charity to extend our reach through direct coaching delivery.

Everything we have done is anchored in our values: integrity, collaboration, impact and inclusivity. As we look ahead, these values will continue to guide our growth, our partnerships, and the change we exist to create.

None of this would be possible without the commitment and contribution of our team, directors, partners, volunteers and wider network, whose ongoing support continues to shape and strengthen everything we do.

“ When people understand what sits beneath barriers and behaviour, change becomes more consistent and more likely to last. ”



Our Year in Pictures



The Maudsley Charity
Celebration Event



Yasamin exhibiting at Nasen
Live



Whole School INSET at
Hotham Primary School



Warwick University
Inclusion Conference



SSE Trading for Good 2025
Cohort



Joining the Cavendish
Presents Panel with Bettina



Theory of Change workshop
with the Maudsley Charity



Cirl (Eton College) 10-Year
Celebration



Speaking at the Neurodiversity
Network Conference

Celebrating MindSpark

We brought our community together for our first in-person event for an evening of celebration, learning and connection.

Almost 100 of you attended the evening to celebrate MindSpark! The programme featured TED-style talks, a Q&A and networking sessions. We heard from three incredible women: MindSpark co-founder Bettina Hohnen (author of *The Incredible Teenage Brain*), our Director of Research Naheeda Maharasingam (Headteacher of the Year 2024 winner), and school leader Joan Deslandes OBE, who shared practical approaches informed by child development, neuroscience and executive functioning.

Across the evening, speakers returned to the idea of using an executive function lens when children and

young people are struggling. Rather than interpreting behaviour as defiance, adults can identify the skill that is missing, teach it explicitly and reduce cycles of blame and shame by responding with curiosity and practical support. Joan and Naheeda highlighted the importance of this work for equity, particularly for those facing greater barriers and instability.

Thank you to our sponsors who made the evening possible:

Brighton College, Tetra Live-in Care, Gordon Edington and Beri Bush.

“Listening to the significant impact of EFs in schools that experience a multitude of socio-economic barriers was nothing short of inspiring.”



For weeks after the event, we continued to feel the energy and positivity it generated. Our highlights included:

- Partners, organisations and friends made new connections through shared purpose and aligned work
- A community-led discussion on gaps in provision, and where executive function support can make the greatest difference
- Speakers sharing practical insights and tools that attendees could take back into services and schools



SAVE THE DATE!

We can't wait to do it all over again this summer...mark your calendars for **Thursday 11th June 2026!**



“By integrating the concept of executive functions, Kingsford has redefined how children and parents engage with learning, and has made their school the best-performing in the borough.”





SPOTLIGHT

Kingsford School

When I first heard the term executive function, I thought it had something to do with corporate boardrooms. As I listened to how these processes shape young people's ability to focus and self-regulate, I realised I'd discovered something transformational.

Kingsford sits at the heart of East London, serving 1,500 students from richly diverse backgrounds. Many are newly arrived in the UK, some refugees and unaccompanied children, and a large number face social and economic challenges.

Our collaboration with MindSpark provided a framework for understanding executive functions, enabling us to see that difficulties with behaviour, focus, or self-regulation were not simply discipline issues; they were often signs of unmet needs. I've seen students who once struggled to stay focused now manage their learning with confidence and calm. I've seen pupils who used to act out of frustration begin to articulate their emotions and take responsibility.

Joan Delandes, OBE
Head Teacher



These aren't small changes; they're life-changing ones that they will carry throughout the rest of their lives.

MindSpark's support has been invaluable to our school community, providing not only the research and frameworks we need but also helping us raise awareness of how executive functions underpin student performance, behaviour and wellbeing. Their guidance has enabled us to identify when students are struggling with their executive function skills and to design practical strategies that build resilience and the ability to self-regulate.

I am proud of what we've achieved together. MindSpark's work is not just important, it's essential in giving educators the tools to nurture every child's potential.

The 2025–26 academic year will see an ongoing collaboration with MindSpark, as Kingsford adopts coaching conversations across the school, benefiting pupils and staff.



Educators' Conference

MindSpark's first Educators' Conference brought together educators, school leaders, researchers and youth and community professionals.

Three school leaders, Lisle von Buchenroder, Naheeda Maharasingam and Abigail Rodriguez, shared their executive function journey and their experiences of implementing the executive function approach to learning. While each school has been working from the same core executive

function principles, each speaker described how they have adapted the approach in different ways to align with their priorities and pupil needs.

Here are some of our attendees' key takeaways:

- Executive functions are context-dependent and impacted by stress, engagement, sleep, change and nutrition
- Reframing behaviour through an executive function lens fosters understanding and inclusion

“ The content also hit home on a personal level. I went through school with undiagnosed ADHD, and would have loved to have been given support to develop my executive functions when I was at school ”



- Executive function skills can help pupils in both the classroom and pastoral settings
- These skills can be developed and strengthened with the right support, environment and strategies

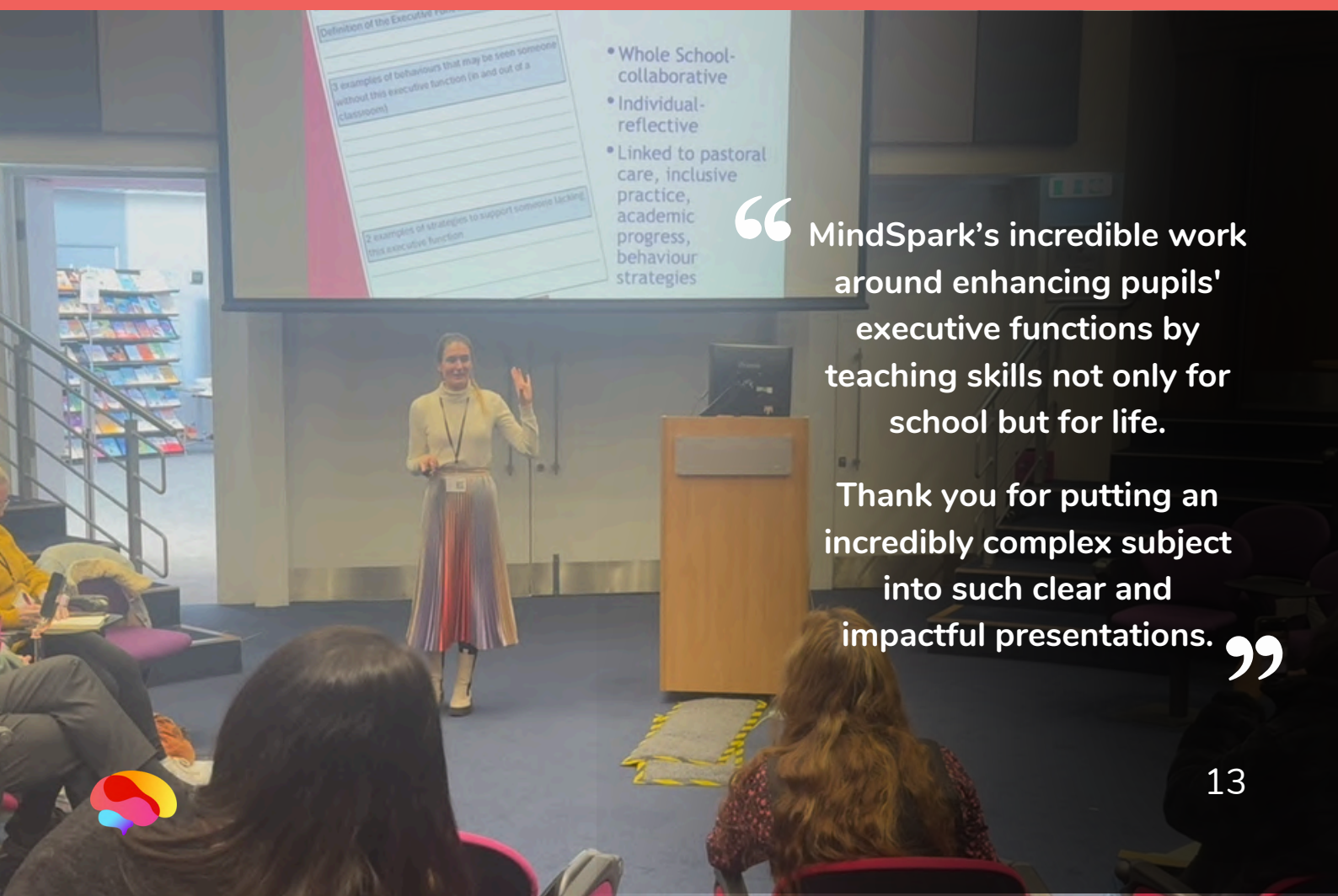
It was wonderful to hear our attendees describe leaving with renewed motivation and clearer, evidence-informed ways to support pupils, particularly those who are neurodivergent or who faced barriers to getting the right support earlier in life. We also created a space for networking between the education and other professionals that support young people to share best practices and explore opportunities for collaboration.

“EFs are not a silver bullet, but they are a golden thread”

Naheeda Maharasingam

We would like to extend a huge and heartfelt thank you to CEME for their support, particularly Noorzaman, Ben, and the events team. We also thank Sacoma for their sponsorship.

We are looking forward to our next conference in collaboration with Star Primary, Newham, in Autumn 2026!



“MindSpark’s incredible work around enhancing pupils’ executive functions by teaching skills not only for school but for life.

Thank you for putting an incredibly complex subject into such clear and impactful presentations.

”



Resilient Youth, Stronger Families

One of our biggest achievements this year was a substantial grant awarded for a three-year executive function and mental health initiative as part of the Maudsley Charity's Building Brighter Futures Project.

In partnership with ParentSkills2Go and Parent Action, we have launched the **Resilient Youth, Stronger Families** project to support young people's mental health and their parents and caregivers in Southwark and Lambeth.

This project was developed in response to a need for a holistic, family-based approach to supporting mental health in communities where there is significant stigma towards mental health. This includes:

- Young people with emerging mental health challenges are supported through Resilience Coaching
- Parents and caregivers take part in My Child & Me, a culturally-relevant mental health programme

- Programmes are delivered in partnership with schools, faith- and community-based organisations to build collaborative and sustainable support systems

Project design and delivery have been shaped by extensive listening: focus groups with 30 young people and 20 parents and carers, as well as stakeholder conversations with over 35 educators, mental health professionals, SLaM representatives, faith leaders, council leaders, researchers, EF coaches and GPs.

We have run two community coffee events to raise awareness of the project, onboarded our project coordinator and recruited 7 Resilience Coaches and 3 My Child & Me facilitators for delivery!



There are ongoing co-production activities and voice groups throughout the duration of the project to ensure the programmes continue to evolve with community feedback.

Anticipated project outcomes include:

- Young people can better manage daily challenges associated with mental health challenges
- Improvements in young people's and families' attitudes towards mental health
- Improved family relationships
- Greater confidence in accessing mental health services



“EF coaching helped me think in a different way about my problems.”



Creche care at one of our community events



Co-production session for the resilience coaching programme



A Partnership Way of Working

Our Resilient Youth, Stronger Families programme is rooted in partnership. The Maudsley Charity highlights that complex challenges require collaborative solutions, and supporting mental health in South London communities is no exception.

We have learned so much already from our partners. ParentSkills2Go and Parent Action bring deep local knowledge and trusted relationships with marginalised communities in Southwark. Together, we combine shared values with complementary strengths, creating a culture of 'cross-pollination' where learning is exchanged and embedded across our work.

This partnership is also shaped by a shared legacy. Imogen Moore-Shelley, founder of both MindSpark and Parent Action, continues to inspire our collaboration. This project is delivered in her memory, carrying forward her vision of supporting young people and families with compassion and hope.



*In memory of
Imogen Moore-Shelley*



MindSpark



Funded by



*Together we are Building Brighter Futures
for young people, families & communities*



Our EF Coaching Community

In the past year, demand for our coaching approach across educational, youth and other community settings has more than doubled.

Existing interventions are often not enough to support young people and neurodivergent adults with more intensive needs. Our EF coaching model offers an empathetic, person-led approach to behaviour change, grounded in neuroscience, and designed to complement existing provision.

Our coach training has grown in both reach and quality. We have trained 40 professionals across schools, youth settings and services supporting neurodivergent adults, including senior leadership teams embedding this approach at a whole-school level. The programme is accredited by the Association for Coaching, reflecting our commitment to high standards.



The course has been extended to include a minimum of 10-hours of coaching practice, combining structured peer-to-peer sessions with applied coaching. This creates a safe and reflective space for participants to build confidence, deepen their skills, and translate learning into real-world contexts.

We are also adapting our approach across settings. Resources are being developed to support resilience coaching in South London, university students and neurodivergent adults. While in schools, coaching conversations are being embedded as a whole-school approach to support learning, behaviour and staff development.

Alongside this, we are building a growing community of practice to support coaches beyond training, providing ongoing connection, development and supervision as they deliver in their settings or independently.



In Their Words: Voices of Our Coaches

“

Open discussions about executive functions and the brain helped Amelia understand her strengths and challenges and put her actions and feelings into context.

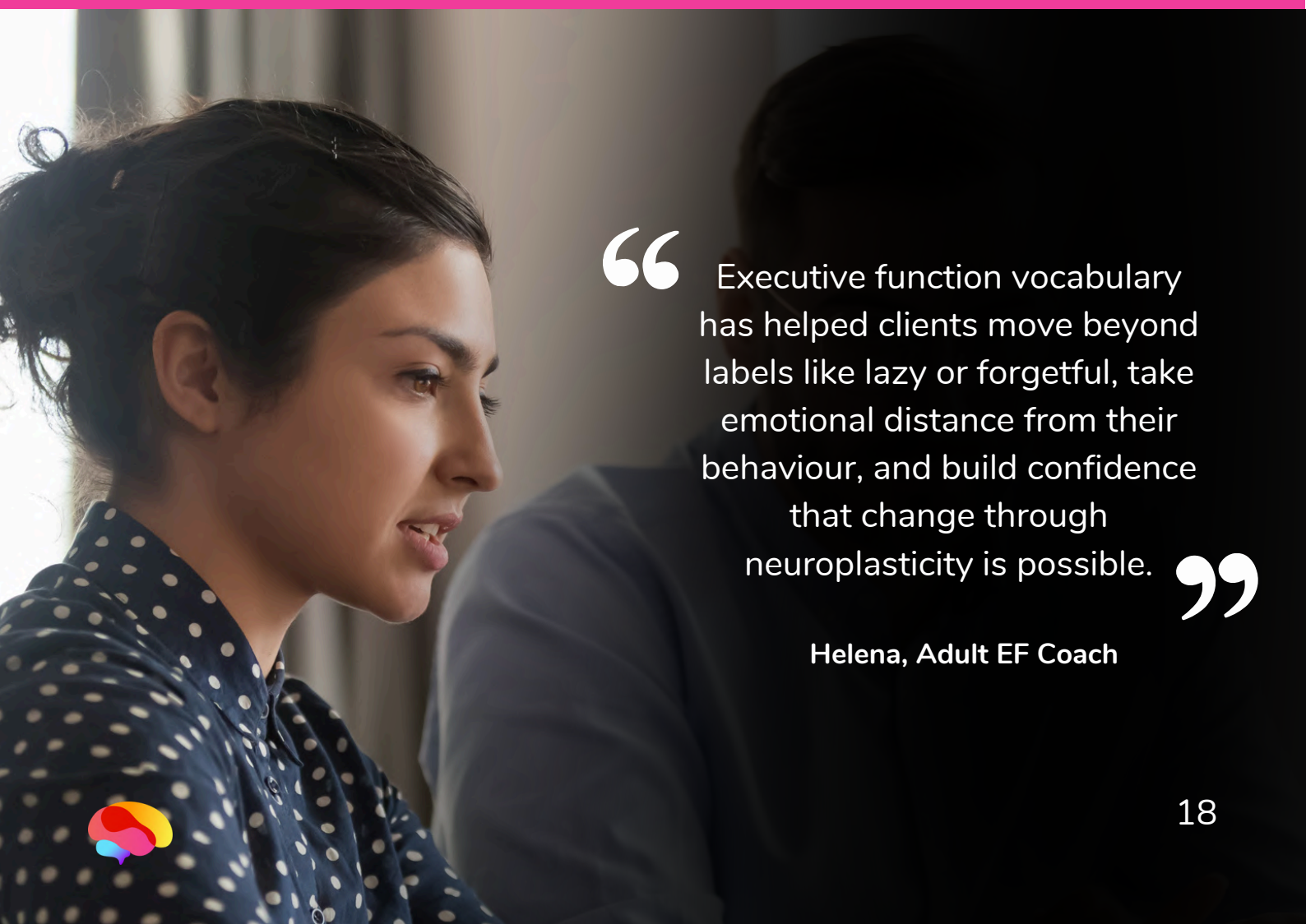
This built her confidence and increased her engagement in the goal-setting process, which has previously been difficult.

Siam, Child EF Coach

”

86%

of coaches can see the benefits of EF coaching



“

Executive function vocabulary has helped clients move beyond labels like lazy or forgetful, take emotional distance from their behaviour, and build confidence that change through neuroplasticity is possible.

”

Helena, Adult EF Coach



“ Sam enjoyed learning about the brain and neuroplasticity. By the end of our sessions, he was much more able to explain which executive functions he found challenging, as well as his strengths. He now understands why he sometimes avoids challenging situations and is using strategies to manage them. ”

Andreas, Adolescent EF Coach



98%

of coaches are
confident in applying
executive function
strategies

“ The 1:1 coaching made a huge impact! With a neurodiverse client who wanted to declutter, we broke a large goal down into smaller steps. Although it initially felt too small, focusing on early achievement helped build momentum. I feel that really went well and was a key to unlocking a lot of her progress. ”

Matteau, Adult EF Coach

SPOTLIGHT

Hotham Primary School

Executive functions have become a key thread running throughout our work at Hotham, which is having a real impact on pupils' learning.

With support from MindSpark through training and consultation, we've been able to build a shared executive function language around learning behaviours that make sense to staff, children and, increasingly, families too.

Our journey began with MindSpark Maths, an Education Endowment Foundation project, which introduced the executive function literacy and strategies using MindSpark's characters. They provided the children and staff with a tangible way to discuss memory, focus and flexible thinking.

As the children took to them really well, we wanted to further develop this across the school. Each half-term, we focus on one skill. For example, starting the year with Take-a-Step Tami to support children with task initiation in their new classes, or Inspector Focus during the assessment period.



Olivia Ridout-Doyle,
Deputy Head Teacher

We lead regular assemblies introducing the characters and what they represent, using stories to bring the characters to life.

Children are pausing more, choosing calm strategies or using the language to describe what they need. Particularly in Years 5 and 6, they demonstrate a clear understanding of the behaviours underpinning each skill. As a part of our re-evaluation for the Inclusion Quality Mark, we found that over 90% of pupils could identify and talk about the different executive functions and how they applied them to learning.

Staff also have a greater awareness that if a child is struggling, it's not because they're lazy or defiant, but rather they may be struggling with a particular executive function skill. This work has been invaluable in becoming a more responsive school with better outcomes for our pupils!



Becky Tyler (Research & Grants Lead) & Belinda Edington (Director)

Looking Ahead

In 2026, we'll focus on growing our impact with integrity, scaling what works and embedding co-production across everything we do.

The Launch of the MindSpark School Awards

Schools consistently tell us they value visible recognition for their work with external partners. Co-developed alongside school leaders, and with funding support from the Selby Trust, we are launching the MindSpark School Awards to support recognition of “best practice” executive function approaches to whole-school change. Join us at our next Celebration Event in London in June to find out more!

Everything Comms

Our 2025–28 communications strategy focuses on making our narrative, services and messages clearer and more distinct for different audiences. We are implementing a consistent drumbeat of communications, an improved website, and targeted communication to nurture new and existing relationships.

Ongoing Support for our Coaching Community

We now have over 120 professionals in our coaching community! We are launching monthly, skills-building workshops focused on coaching practices, common challenges and case-based learning. As well as a new coach training pathway to become an accredited coach with the Association for Coaching.

More Co-production

Co-production has been a core part of how and why we've developed and improved our work. We prioritise bringing lived experience and insights into our decision-making, design and delivery of our interventions. In the year ahead, we'll build on this momentum by embedding it across all programmes, partnerships and organisational practices.



Thank you

To the organisations and individuals that have funded a project, sponsored our events, or gifted a donation to support MindSpark!

Maudsley
Charity



school for
social
entrepreneurs

A&O SHEARMAN



THE
SELBY
TRUST



tLC

TETRA
LIVE-IN
CARE



BRIGHTON
COLLEGE



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