

sopra  steria

Partnership Impact Report

2023-24

About Villiers Park

Villiers Park is a national social mobility charity dedicated to empowering young people aged 14-19 from under-represented backgrounds. We aim to broaden young people's horizons and help them plan pathways to their goals, supporting young people to realise their potential and, in turn, build a more equitable future.

Through partnerships with schools and colleges, universities and employers, Villiers Park is committed to breaking down barriers for young people. Our Future Leaders Programme is a four-year programme that combines one-to-one coaching, student-led projects, insight days and subject-specific courses that equip young people with the skills, confidence and opportunities to realise their potential.

We believe that social and economic inequalities shouldn't determine a young person's future. We are committed to ensuring every young person has the chance to succeed.



Celebrating Milestones and Progress

This year marks a key milestone in the partnership between Villiers Park and Sopra Steria, as we reflect on the first two years of our partnership and celebrate the first of a new three-year Principal Partnership.

Sopra Steria's commitment to corporate social responsibility aligns closely with our mission, emphasising social inclusion and positive community impact. This shared vision has laid a strong foundation for our collaboration, allowing us to support young people facing barriers to higher education and professional careers.

Through this partnership, Sopra Steria plays an essential role in expanding our reach and impact, particularly in offering STEM and employability-focused opportunities. Initiatives like office insight days and targeted financial support give young people the chance to envision their futures beyond the classroom and explore potential career paths. This is especially impactful for many of our students, who are the first in their families to consider higher education and careers in STEM fields.

We know that the cost of living crisis has had a disproportionate effect on the young people we work with, making essential steps like visiting universities or purchasing study materials unaffordable for some. The targeted support we provide through Sopra Steria is a simple but incredibly effective way to empower young people with the freedom to explore their options and help make informed choices. Engaging with Sopra Steria volunteers and visiting their offices offers invaluable exposure to careers in STEM, which beforehand may have seemed out of reach. These experiences support young people to picture future pathways into their careers and know that there is a network of support to help them along the way.

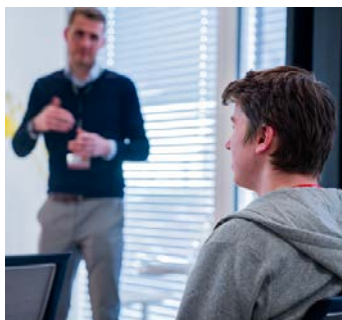
We are thrilled to continue working with Sopra Steria and look forward to building on this incredible progress to make a lasting difference together.

550

Future Leaders supported on the Future Leaders programme

112

students supported through the Opportunities Fund



10

students engaged in the Sopra Steria University Support Scheme

45

students attended an employer insight day at Sopra Steria



60

volunteers engaged directly with Future Leaders in 2023-24

30

students supported at Crowdys Hill School in Swindon

Empowering Young People Through Targeted Financial Support


The Opportunities Fund and the University Support Scheme both provide targeted financial support to students that mitigate against the cost of living crisis. These bursaries open up opportunities that might otherwise not exist and aim to build confidence and skills that in turn allow young people to build a more hopeful and optimistic picture of the future.

University Support Scheme

Sopra Steria is currently supporting ten Villiers Park alumni through a bursary scheme which offers a tech grant of up to £1000 every year through their university studies. Requests have included laptops, tablets, printers, hard drives and software needed for university courses.

The students have all completed their first year at university:

- University of Reading: BA Accounting and Business
- University of Southampton: Civil Engineering with Architecture
- University of Bristol: Aerospace Engineering
- University of Southampton: Biochemistry
- Imperial College London: Physics
- Newcastle University: Electronics and Computer Engineering
- University of Reading: Accounting and Finance
- Cardiff University: Chemistry
- Newcastle University: Mathematics
- Swansea University: Computer Science



“I’ve been doing aerospace engineering at the University of Bristol and the bursary has been very helpful. I’ve spent the money on a new laptop, which for engineering is a great advantage being able to run CAD programmes with a powerful laptop.”

Abdullah



The Opportunities Fund

The Opportunities Fund has supported over 300 bursary requests in its first two years, from tutoring and learning materials to travel to visit universities, laptops and other technology.

Clara, a Future Leader from Hastings, received funding to visit an open day at the University of St Andrews. We are thrilled to share that Clara has secured a place at St Andrews, and shared her experience at the Hastings and Bexhill Celebration event in June.

"Villiers Park has this amazing thing called the Sopra Steria Opportunities Fund, and that's been fantastic. I'm actually wearing some trousers that they got me from my House of Commons work experience as I didn't have any appropriate clothes. I was able to apply for the funding for that and it was great because I could feel super professional at this crazy competitive work experience, it was just a dream, a fantastic opportunity."

Clara, Future Leaders Alum from Hastings and Bexhill

Partnership Activities: Building Skills and Industry Insights

London Office Visit

In April, 46 Year 12 students visited Sopra Steria's London office, where they participated in a range of interactive sessions aimed at broadening their understanding of the tech industry. The day included a CV workshop, sessions on AI and how it's used in the workplace and a chance to speak with Sopra Steria volunteers about their own career journeys.

The visit provided students with an insight into the variety of roles available in a tech company and the chance to learn from Sopra Steria colleagues first-hand. After the visit, 62% of students said they would now consider a career in tech or STEM fields, and 89% felt they had gained valuable insights into working in the corporate world.

One student reflected, "I loved the day because the workers at Sopra Steria gave us lots of insight into their work, shared their backgrounds, and explained how the skills they developed helped them advance in their careers."

Crowdys Hill School Visit

Crowdys Hill School, based in Swindon, supports students with special educational needs to be active learners, moving towards independence, autonomy, control and choice. Villiers Park runs an adapted version of our Future Leaders programme with Crowdys Hill.

In May, Adrian Fieldhouse and Leigh-Ann Weatherley visited Crowdys Hill School, with students who have benefited from the Opportunities Fund over the past two years. This support enabled 20 students to receive tailored careers counselling and six students to earn their Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Green Card, a key qualification for careers in construction.

The visit provided a platform for students to explore their future career ambitions, which included entrepreneurship and construction, with Adrian and Leigh-Ann sharing personal insights and guidance. Our ongoing partnership with Crowdys Hill empowers students to pursue their goals and equips them with the tools they need for success in the workplace.



SPRINT Sessions at Bath University

In June we welcomed ten Sopra Steria volunteers back to the University of Bath for our Year 10 Residential. Our residential enable young people to visualise themselves at university, with students coming together from schools across the country to collaborate on projects that increase their academic skills, motivation to learn and confidence.

The Sopra Steria volunteers led three 45-minute workshops focused on how to run a SPRINT session and their value in developing new project ideas. This linked directly to the students' work at the residential, where they were tasked with creating a presentation about either a degree or apprenticeship.

The hands-on experience gave students practical tools to enhance their project development and presentation skills. A total of 81 students participated in the workshops, with 74% rating the sessions as good or excellent.

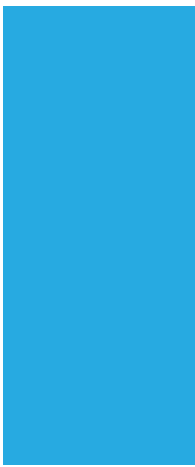
Our partnership with Sopra Steria is part of a broader network of support that includes the invaluable contributions of the Villiers Park team, dedicated teachers and partner schools. Together, we work to create meaningful opportunities and remove barriers for young people from under-represented backgrounds. Sopra Steria's impact builds on and amplifies the efforts of this collective, helping to drive lasting change for students who benefit from a wide circle of encouragement and guidance.



Thank You

We are thrilled by the impact of Sopra Steria's support over the last three years, and especially in the last year as the company has increased their support as Villiers Park's Principal Partner.

We thank Sopra Steria for their incredible support which has already transformed the opportunities of over 1,200 young people on our programmes. Together, we're shaping a generation to take charge of their education and careers with confidence and purpose. As our principal partner, our work together will improve equality in education and careers across the UK.



Get in touch

Maria Healy
Head of Fundraising and Partnerships
maria.healy@villierspark.org.uk
07717 730131

Stay connected



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