

FLIGHT path

Exploring careers in aviation
Big Ideas Impact Report
June 2026



Funded by
UK Government



INTRODUCTION

Flight Path connected 5,647 young Londoners with aviation professionals, helping them discover career opportunities, challenge stereotypes and build confidence in their future aspirations.

London is home to one of the world's largest aviation hubs, supporting thousands of jobs across airports, airlines, engineering, logistics, technology and customer service. Yet many young people remain unaware of the breadth of opportunities available within the sector or do not see these careers as accessible to them.

Flight Path was created to address this challenge by connecting young people with aviation professionals, showcasing diverse career pathways and helping them recognise how their own skills and aspirations could translate into future careers in the industry. Delivered by Big Ideas and funded through the Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund, the programme demonstrated the power of employer encounters to broaden horizons, challenge stereotypes and inspire the next generation of aviation talent.

Between January and July 2026, Flight Path engaged **5,647 young people** aged 8–18 from **61 schools and education providers** across London through a programme of:

- Interactive digital workshops for primary and secondary schools
- In-person workshops in Alternative Provision and SEND settings
- An at-home aviation recruitment poster challenge
- Exclusive aviation careers experiences at British Airways Headquarters and Heathrow Terminal 5 for winning classes

This report highlights the impact of the programme and the difference it made in raising awareness, broadening perceptions and building aspiration among young people across London.

FLIGHT PATH AT A GLANCE

5,647 young people reached

61 schools engaged

50% of London boroughs represented

206 classes participated

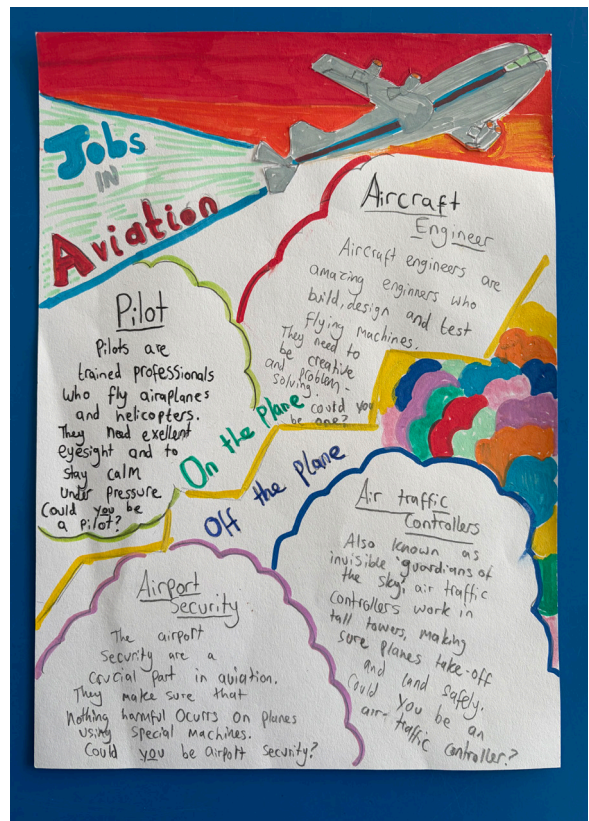
82 young people in SEND and Alternative Provision settings

100% learned something new

95% changed perceptions

90% of teachers more likely to discuss aviation careers

88% above target



Top image: Students at Oak Lodge Special School in Barnet take part

Bottom image: poster design by a student at Chisenhale Primary School

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

The aim of the Flight Path programme was to empower young people in London to explore careers in the aviation industry through:

- raising awareness of the wide range of roles and opportunities available in the sector, particularly among underserved young people
- broadening perceptions and challenging stereotypes of who can work in the industry by connecting young people with diverse aviation role models
- motivating young people to explore education and career pathways into aviation through building aspiration and ambition

Big Ideas achieved this by creating an engaging and empowering programme that helped young people recognise how their skills and attributes are valued within the sector.

HIGH LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Over the course of the programme, **5,647 young people aged 8–18 took part** in Flight Path, engaging with aviation careers through interactive workshops, industry insights, and direct encounters with professionals working across the sector. This significantly exceeded the target of 3,000 participants, with the programme reaching **88% more young people than anticipated**. Teachers particularly valued the live question-and-answer sessions with guest speakers, which enabled students to explore careers in aviation in an accessible and meaningful way.

Overall, **96% of teachers reported that their students enjoyed the digital Flight Path workshops**, highlighting the programme’s success in creating a positive and engaging learning experience.

Teachers consistently praised the interactive nature of the sessions and the ability of facilitators to maintain students’ interest throughout. One teacher commented: *“The session was very interactive and they enjoyed trying to work out the answers to questions.”*

The in-person workshops received equally positive feedback, with one teacher describing them as *“one of the best and most engaging workshops we have had.”*

The programme was particularly effective at engaging young people who can often find it difficult to participate in traditional classroom activities. Teachers reported sustained levels of attention and enthusiasm, including among

students who would not typically remain engaged for an entire session. As one teacher from Mayesbrook Park PRU explained, *“They absolutely loved the workshops and students who normally leave lessons early, remained engaged for the entire workshop.”*



Students at St Augustine’s Primary take part in a Flight Path workshop

RAISING AWARENESS OF CAREERS IN AVIATION

“It opened up the world of Aviation careers that they did not even know existed.” - Teacher workshop feedback

The programme significantly increased young people’s awareness of the breadth of careers available within the aviation sector. Through engaging workshops and direct interactions with industry professionals, students gained insights into a wide range of roles, from pilots and cabin crew to the many behind-the-scenes careers.

100% of teachers agreed that their students learned something new about careers in the aviation industry.

For many participants, the programme challenged common perceptions of aviation careers. Rather than focusing solely on visible frontline roles, students

discovered the diverse skills, pathways and opportunities available across the sector.

“It made them think outside the box, not just about pilots or cabin crew, but also about the jobs you don’t usually see and how important and interesting they are.” - Teacher feedback

CONNECTION TO ROLE MODELS

Only 3 out of 98 teachers reported that their students had previously met someone working in aviation.

The programme also addressed a critical gap in access to industry role models. Following the programme, over 5,500 young people across London had met role models working in aviation.

By connecting young people with professionals from across the sector, the programme helped make aviation careers feel more accessible and achievable. Teachers noted the value of hearing from speakers with varied career journeys, with one commenting that *“they were not aware of the variety of jobs within the aviation sector and the ability to switch roles, as in the case of two of the speakers.”*

These encounters broadened students’ understanding of the opportunities available to them and inspired them to consider aviation as a future career pathway.

BROADENING PERCEPTIONS

A key outcome of Flight Path was its ability to challenge stereotypes about who can work in aviation and broaden young people’s perceptions of the opportunities available within the sector. Through direct encounters with aviation professionals and exposure to a diverse range of career pathways, students gained a more inclusive and realistic understanding of the industry.

95% of teachers agreed that the workshops changed their students’ perceptions of careers in aviation.

For many participants, this was the first time they had met aviation professionals from a range of backgrounds and career pathways.

Teachers reported that the programme helped young people recognise the breadth of opportunities available and understand that careers in aviation are open to people with a wide range of skills, interests and backgrounds. One

teacher reflected that *“students did not realise there was such a variety of careers within the industry,”* while another noted that *“it opened their mind about how accessible it is to become someone in the aviation industry.”*

The programme was particularly effective in addressing assumptions about who belongs in the sector. Teachers observed that some students had viewed aviation careers as being out of reach, while others held gendered perceptions about the types of roles available to them.

One teacher commented that *“students were initially thinking only the more able can enter the aviation profession and it is out of reach for them,”* while another highlighted the impact on female students, noting that *“the girls did not realise that within the aviation industry they could potentially apply for any position, not just cabin crew.”*

By connecting young people with diverse aviation role models and showcasing varied career journeys, Flight Path helped students see the sector as a place where people like them can belong, succeed and thrive.

BUILDING ASPIRATION AND AMBITION

Flight Path helped young people see that the aviation sector is open to everyone, regardless of their background, circumstances, or starting point. By connecting students with aviation professionals and showcasing a wide range of career pathways, the programme broadened horizons and encouraged young people to consider opportunities they may never previously have imagined.

“I didn’t realise there were so many opportunities in airports. I am going to look into it.” Girl, age 17, Clapton Girls’ Academy

This was particularly important for students in underserved communities and alternative provision settings, who often have fewer opportunities to engage with employers and explore future career options. As one teacher from St Augustine’s Catholic Primary School in Lewisham reflected:

“The workshop made a massive impression on the children. It opened their eyes. We are in one of the most deprived areas in the country, so reaching out in this way really does have an impact.” - Teacher feedback

The programme helped students recognise that careers in aviation are both accessible and achievable, while building confidence and ambition for the future. Teachers observed young people becoming more engaged in conversations about careers and more optimistic about their own potential.

A teacher from Samuel Rhodes School noted that:

“The facilitators of the workshops raised the self-esteem of our students and made them feel ‘good about themselves’, which would boost their confidence for finding a job in the future.”

Similarly, a teacher from St Martin of Porres Primary School reported that:

“The workshop really got a number of the students in my class thinking about careers in aviation.”

The programme’s influence is likely to extend beyond the young people who participated directly. By increasing teachers’ awareness of the breadth of opportunities available within aviation and providing them with relevant examples to draw upon in the classroom, Flight Path has helped create a lasting legacy within participating schools.

This longer-term potential is reflected in survey findings, with nine in ten teachers agreeing that taking part in Flight Path would make them more likely to reference aviation careers and career pathways in future lessons.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT

The programme was designed to be inclusive, offering participation to all schools in the Greater London Authority Area. The digital workshops were offered to all primary and secondary schools, with different content for the primary and secondary versions of the workshops. A simple digital pathway was created and shared with local authority partners. The offer proved popular among teachers and we often saw peer referral where teachers would recommend to other teachers in the schools. In total, 5,565 young people (aged 8 - 14 years), 206 classes from 61 schools signed up for workshops.

DIGITAL WORKSHOPS

On Tuesday 10th February two Flight Path workshops were held online for London schools. 10am for primary schools and 2pm for secondary, each lasting 55 minutes. We worked with three of the Department for Transport’s Aviation Ambassadors, all with different roles. Sigourney Ansah is a trainee pilot for EasyJet, Abdullah Bin Sajid Butt, is an Airline Disruption Coordinator and Sam Higgins is a former British Airways cabin crew member who now works in their outreach team.



Aviation Ambassadors in action live on Zoom with Big Ideas host Dekan Apajee

Young people explored aviation careers through live quizzes, skills challenges and interactive activities designed to help them identify the skills and attributes needed across the sector.



Word Cloud created live in Flight Path digital workshop

The three guests spoke openly about their personal journeys in aviation, from what the best part of their day was, to how they stay calm and build resilience and practical aspects including their income. Students had the opportunity to engage directly with the guests and ask them further questions including:

“How does it feel to fly a plane?” - Pentland Field School Yr6

*“If you could pick another job in aviation, what would it be?” -
Christ Church Yr 4*

“How do you overcome fear” - St Augustines

To conclude the workshop, each guest offered advice to participants on how to embark on a career in aviation:

“Don’t think that where you start is always where you are going to end up. Just say yes to every opportunity that comes your way.” - Sigourney Ansah

“Be curious. There is so much to the aviation world beyond the pilot or cabin crew roles. Do your research.” - Abdullah Bin Sajid Butt

“Be helpful and be proactive. People like helpful people and like working with people who are positive and proactive and really really helpful. The more you do that the more people will remember you for opportunities. - Sam Higgins



A class at Greig City Academy in Harringey connect with Aviation Ambassadors

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

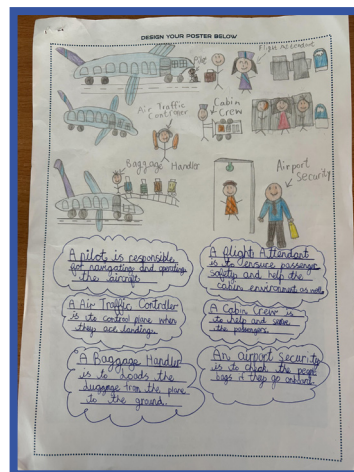
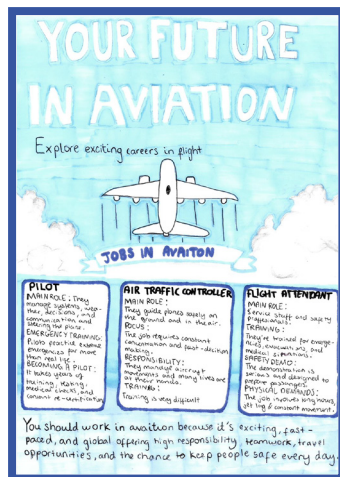
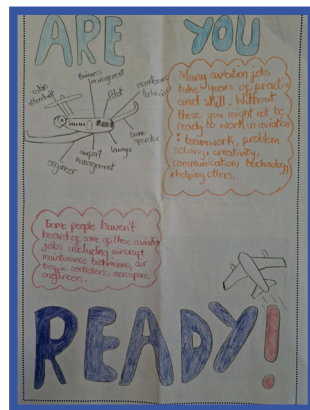
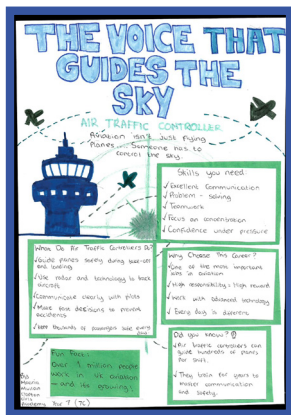
As a final activity students were asked to create their own aviation recruitment poster aimed at sharing what they had learned about opportunities in aviation with other young people.

This activity was supported by a PDF resource sent to all participating classes as a simple homework sheet. By completing this activity at home young people will engage with their parents and carers about what they have learned about aviation, an important dimension of cultural capital particular for those who are underserved.

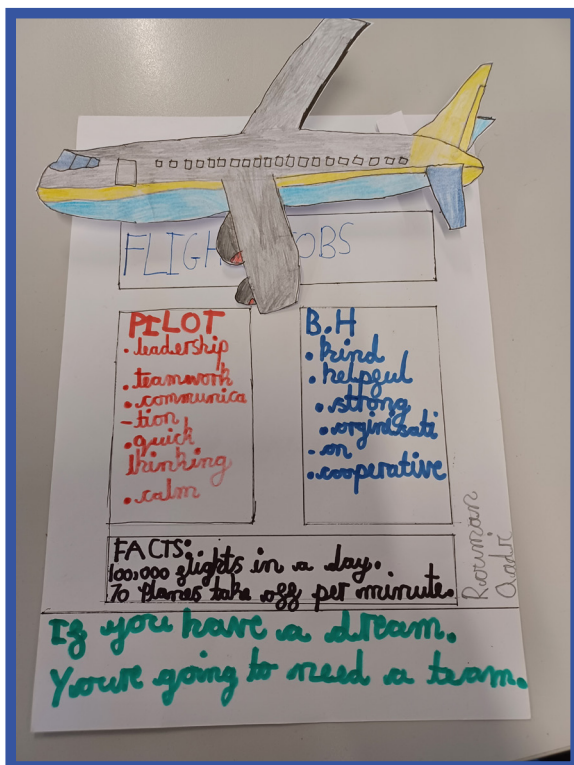
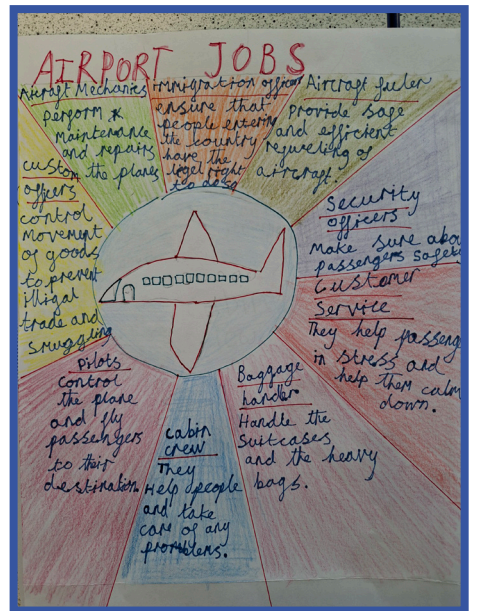
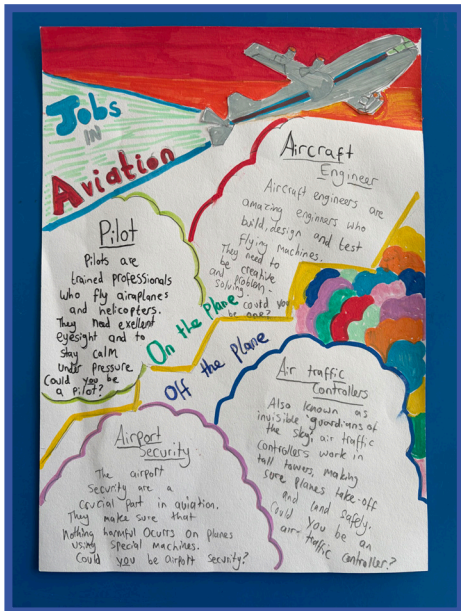
65 entries were received from young people who had participated in Flight Path workshops.

The posters reflected the learning from the events around the skills and attributes needed to work in aviation.

AVIATION RECRUITMENT POSTERS DESIGNED BY YOUNG PEOPLE



AVIATION RECRUITMENT POSTERS DESIGNED BY YOUNG PEOPLE



Your future could take off

First before you start reading this, start thinking about all jobs in aviation. Got it? Ok lets go. You see, aviation is not just pilots, cabin crew, ground crew and ATC. Now yes, you need those "ingredients" to fuel aviation but there's A LOT more to just that. Whatever Aspirations and traits you have, there is a job in aviation for you. So enter the world of aviation to make sure that your future takes off.

- Cabin crew for teamwork!**
- Be an Aeronautical engineer if you like fixing things**
- ATC for focus and control**
- Security for protecting people in the skies**
- Enjoy tech? Do IT and digital**
- Be a Chief Financial Officer, working to manage an airline's spending.**
- Like airplanes and flying? BE A PILOT YOU CAN DO IT**
- Like painting? Be a aircraft painter**
- Be a customer service officer helping people find their gates and more solving needed problems.**
- Be an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer and repair planes to get them back into the sky.**
- Be an aerial photographer, flying in helicopters, taking pictures from the sky of beautiful skylines**
- Like communicating? Be a check in agent**

Made by: Alexander Shripur Daniel Jameson

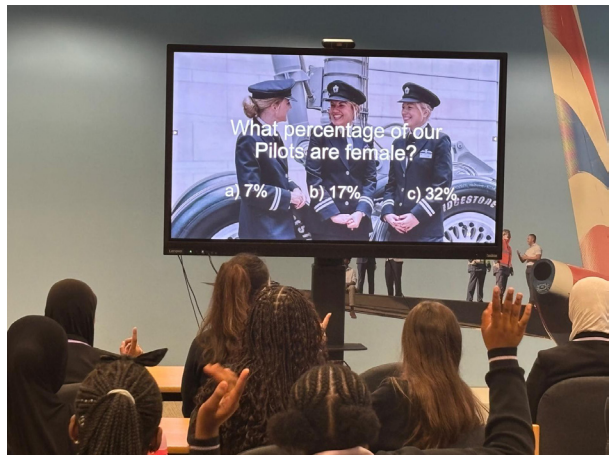
PRIZE-WINNING TRIP

Thanks to Sam Higgins and her team for British Airways, two winning classes won an all-expenses-paid trip to British Airways headquarters and Heathrow Terminal 5. The winners were picked based on their recruitment poster entries submitted as the ‘at home’ challenge following the digital workshops.

26 secondary school students from Clapton Girls Academy in Hackney attended on Tuesday 2 June and 30 students from St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Barking on 26 June.

The day included a tour of the headquarters, guess the role and a customer service challenge at Terminal 5. Schools were provided with travel bursaries and lunch.

“The students hadn’t heard of any of the roles of the people they spoke to on the day, so it was definitely eye-opening for them and gave them a more rounded understanding of the range of roles and teams involved in working in the aviation industry.” - Nikki Storey, Careers Lead, Clapton Girls Academy, Hackney



Students from Clapton Girls Academy visit Heathrow Terminal 5 and British Airways Headquarters

IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS IN ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SETTINGS

Young people in Alternative Provision and SEND settings are often underrepresented in employer engagement programmes despite facing some of the greatest barriers to accessing careers information and networks.

To ensure participation for all, resource was allocated to deliver 5 half-day in-person workshops in Alternative Provision settings across London. Three workshops were delivered in schools supporting young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and two to young people attending Pupil Referral Units. These were: Horizon Academy (PRU in Bexley), Mayesbrook Park (PRU in Dagenham); Oak Lodge School (SEND school in Barnet); Riverside Bridge (SEND school in Barking) and Samuel Rhodes School (SEND school in Islington).

REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE FURTHEST FROM OPPORTUNITY

Alternative Provision workshops were fully subscribed before they had been formally advertised, demonstrating significant demand for high-quality careers engagement among settings supporting young people who often face barriers to accessing employer encounters.

- **82 young people** from SEND and Alternative Provision settings participated
- Workshops delivered in **5 specialist settings**
- Activities adapted for a wide range of learning and support needs

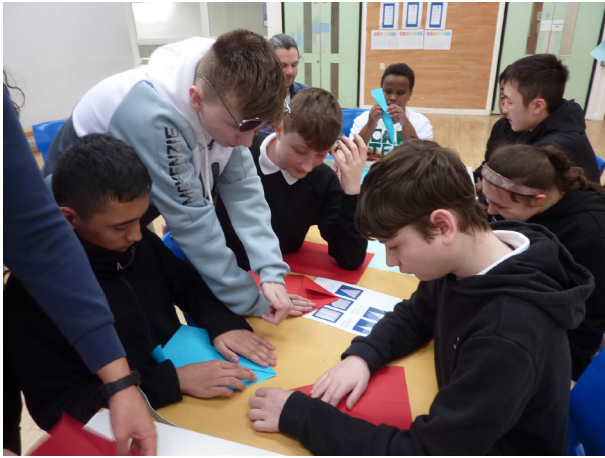
In total **82 students took part in these workshops, ages between 14 and 18** years old, with needs ranging from mild to severe learning difficulties, complex needs, ADHD and ASD as well as social and emotional behavioural needs. Big Ideas designed a flexible workshop structure with supporting resources that had adaptations for each activity in-built so that facilitators could respond in the moment to the young people's needs.

“The facilitators were excellent from the first point of contact our students’ needs were discussed and heard. The workshop created was one of the best and most engaging we have had.” - Teacher feedback

The young people completed four hands-on activities, linked to five different jobs in the aviation sector and using related skills. The four challenges were:

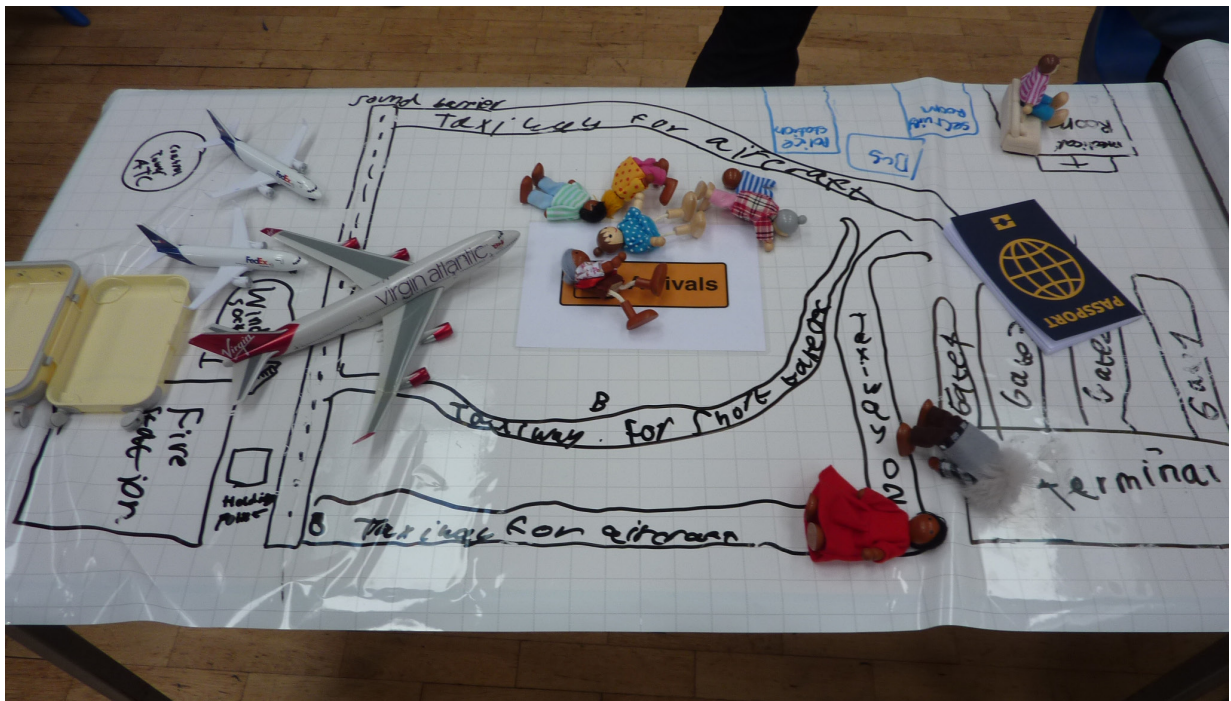
- Cabin Crew - welcoming and looking after passengers
- Aerospace Engineer - design, test and adapt paper aeroplanes
- Airport Designer - designing a dream airport that's accessible for everyone
- Air Traffic Controller and Pilot - navigating a safe path across the sky

*“I am interested in being an engineer. I like building. I like making things.” -
SEND workshop participant, age 16*



Students at Oak Lodge making paper aeroplanes and plotting flight paths

“I would design an airport with a medical room. People don’t always think of things like that.” - SEND workshop participant, age 14



Airport design by students at Oak Lodge School

After completing each challenge, the participants earned a stamp on their cards recognising them as aviation professionals in training. The workshop was designed to be celebratory and empowering, building the confidence of participants to recognise the skills they already have and how these are relevant to jobs in aviation.

“These young people don’t have many aspirations so you coming in and talking to them about one thing is so important. It raises confidence. Makes them believe in themselves a bit.” Amie Power, Teacher, Bexley Horizons Academy



Student at Oak Lodge SEND School with their workshop certificate

CONCLUSION

“It opened up the world of Aviation careers that they did not even know existed.” – Teacher feedback

Flight Path has demonstrated the value of connecting young people with inspiring role models and real-world career opportunities in aviation. In a city home to one of the world’s leading aviation hubs, the programme helped thousands of young Londoners broaden their horizons, challenge stereotypes and recognise that the sector is open to all.

The scale of engagement exceeded expectations, with particularly strong demand from alternative provision settings, highlighting the need for accessible, high-quality employer encounters and career inspiration programmes. The enthusiasm shown by both teachers and students demonstrates the impact these opportunities can have on raising awareness, confidence and aspiration.

We would like to thank the Department for Transport’s Aviation Ambassadors – Sigourney Ansah, Abdullah Bin Sajid Butt and Sam Higgins – for inspiring participants through their experiences and insights. We are also grateful to British Airways for providing a unique prize experience for winning schools, and to the Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority for making Flight Path possible through their support.

In total, Flight Path exceeded its participation target by **88%**, demonstrating both the demand for and value of accessible aviation careers programmes for young people across London.