

## Sixteen-year-old girl who inspired Workfinder app opens doors for thousands of young women in Newcastle

- New 'Trip Advisor' style App connects students to work experience in less than 5 minutes;
- Newcastle to benefit from up to 5,000 work experience scholarships for 16-18 year-old women to work in digital companies and charities;
- Funded by £200k investment from social tech investor, Nominet Trust;
- Preparing girls for jobs of the future the 'challenge of a generation'.

**NEWCASTLE, UK** – 29 November 2017: Gov-tech education charity Founders4Schools (F4S), whose mission is to connect inspiring business leaders with schools, has today announced the creation of a scholarship fund to benefit thousands of young women across Newcastle with work experience opportunities. These roles are on offer to girls aged 16 to 18, as the charity puts powerful tools into the hands of girls looking for work experience in the city's thriving digital sector.

The placements will be available through F4S' ground-breaking mobile-phone app **Workfinder**, which was inspired by sixteen-year-old Maitri Panchal while she was on work experience with the charity herself. Workfinder enables young people to filter preferences, share recommendations and connect with great companies in as little as five minutes.

The opportunities are offered in fast-growing digital and tech Newcastle businesses, including NRG, printed.com and hedgehog lab. They help young people unlock their potential and kick-start their careers using STEM skills. The Newcastle scholarships for girls have been made possible through funding from social tech investors **Nominet Trust, amongst others**.

Speaking at a Founders4Schools event: **Future Forward: Connecting Young People to the Future World of Work** at the Boiler Shop, Newcastle today, **Sherry Coutu**, CBE, Chair of Founders4Schools and The ScaleUp Institute, said: "The current work experience model is broken. According to the ScaleUp Institute, 90% of UK scaleup businesses are concerned about a lack of skills post-Brexit but existing structures do not allow UK plc. to foster home-grown skills."

Work Experience helps young people grow their skills and businesses benefit from much needed talent, but the reliance on informal networks means that many pupils in deprived areas secured no work experience at all last year. During November, UK digital businesses have come together to pledge to offer, via Workfinder, week-long work-experience placements that are needed by the 1.8 million 16-18 year-old students in UK schools.

Sherry Coutu continued: "93% of teachers say that work experience boosts student attainment and aspirations. Great companies are learning environments and need talent to grow; young people need help to find their passion in life. It's the challenge of a generation, and I hope Workfinder will give them the power to discover their route to a meaningful career."

**Vicki Hearn**, Director of Nominet Trust added: "Nominet Trust's purpose is to transform lives with tech - but that's only possible if we give the next generation, regardless of their background and circumstance, the opportunity to develop digital skills. We're excited about continuing our partnership with Founders4Schools by funding 5,000 placements available through Workfinder in major UK cities, because of the opportunity it gives to young women to develop careers in STEM subjects, boosting their contribution to the UK's growing digital economy."

**Sam Mcloughlin**, Business Engagement Manager, Studio West, said: "We guarantee our students aged 16 and over two days a week of work experience with companies in the Newcastle area. I have seen countless times the dramatic impact this has on young people. When they return, students tell us they are inspired and have confidence to pursue a career they may not have known existed before. The opportunities Founders4Schools is opening up are vital and Workfinder makes it easier than ever before to help students connect their learning to the world of work."

**Simone Roche**, Founder, Northern Power Women, said "I welcome this brilliant initiative to give young women in Newcastle the opportunity to grow their skills. For the whole region it's vital that we grow our talent base and foster gender equality. I urge others to also support the work Founders4Schools are doing."

**Lauren Garey**, Chair of Founders4Schools' Diversity Advisory Committee, added: "It's critical that businesses work with young talent to address the gender imbalance within the technology sector. One of our partners, Martha Lane Fox at Dot Everyone, recently stated that the technology sector accounts for 67% of women-led businesses in the UK, but women currently occupy only 17% of technology jobs and 4% of software engineering jobs. Providing work experience and first-hand experience to STEM careers will help to ensure that our future leaders, investors and entrepreneurs come from the widest pool of diverse talent.

**Therese Liddle**, CEO, NRG, said: "As a leading recruitment agency in the North East, NRG are delighted to support Founders4Schools. We have strong partnerships with companies across all sectors and know that, while many are already supporting young people, many more would appreciate the opportunity to do so. Fostering the skills and talents of the upcoming generation is critical to our wider economic and social success and we believe that Workfinder is a brilliant platform to create that vital link between education, business and young people."

**Catherine Boland**, HR Manager, printed.com, said: "Offering work experience produces great benefits to the business as well as students and I would encourage other companies to do it. We have developed a programme that is meaningful and in the process, we reflect on our own organisation and the skills we look for in future talent. Plus, employee engagement is boosted as teams enjoy being involved and value supporting the local community."

**Workfinder can be downloaded by students to connect to these and other work experience opportunities free of charge from the app store.**

Teachers can find out about Workfinder here: <http://bit.ly/2iXg6Ks>.

Parents can find out about Workfinder here: <https://www.workfinder.com/>

Businesses willing to host work experience at their companies can sign up here:

<https://www.workfinder.com/employer/pledge>

**ENDS**

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#### **About Founders4Schools:**

Founders4Schools (F4S) builds smart connections between schools and the world of work. As a GovTech charity operating in the education sector, it is dedicated to improving the ecosystem for scaleups by closing the skills gap. F4S works with enterprise advisors, school coordinators and head teachers in primary and secondary schools throughout England and Scotland to help their pupils aged 8 to 16 reach the milestone of at least four encounters with employers each year and to help their pupils aged 16-24 reach the milestone of 140 hours of work experience placements.

F4S works nationally and locally with organisations including the Science Park Association, the LEP Network, LinkedIn, Duedil, the CBI, FSB, IOD, Chambers of Commerce, LEPs, Local Authorities and CEC. National partners include the BBC, Barclays Bank, The Evolution Trust, Peter Cundill Foundation and Nominet Trust. Local partners include regional government such as Camden Council, as well as public, private and third sector business, and community support groups and networks. Their programmes help educators to connect with successful, growing businesses through a wide variety of career and business encounters.

Their work-experience service, Workfinder, which is available on mobile phones, puts the young person at the centre of the search process and enables them to gain work experience and apprenticeship roles with fast-growing businesses within their local communities.

The programme is sustained by more than 2,000 partners and 35,000 business leaders of startups and scaleups who volunteer their time. More than 100,000 young people have had on average two encounters with business leaders. After such encounters, 96% reported feeling inspired by the speakers, 87% said they wished to go into business (versus the national average of 60%) and 54% were keen to go on to study STEM subjects (twice the national average).

#### **About Nominet Trust:**

Nominet Trust is the UK's leading dedicated investor of socially motivated tech, believing that when tech is inspired by social need, it reaches its life changing potential. The Social Tech Growth Fund is a fund open to Nominet Trust's live projects and alumni and is designed to provide grant funding to those projects wanting to scale and/or to get to a position where they are more attractive to investors; thus supporting them along the way to becoming sustainable.