GAMECHANGERS Liverpool City Region

Year 1

Impact Report

















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1. Mission Statement

GameChangers is all about bringing people together to forge effective strategic partnerships to help address the skills challenges faced by the games industry. When combined, the creative force of game development studios, the expertise from educational and career providers, and the invaluable insights of community organisations will ensure a brighter future for the Liverpool City Region games industry.

Members of GameChangers pledge to support the growth and development of gaming talent by working together to make our Liverpool City Region the best home for game development careers in the world.

Together, we are **GAMECHANGERS**

















































































2. Year 1 Review

Jamie Brayshaw, Co-Chair of GameChangers

We've only just started and already we've laid incredible foundations for lasting change in the careers landscape for the games industry. The momentum created by bringing together the games industry, academia, skills agencies, community groups and the combined authority is incredible. Collaboration is our super-power and we're all inspired by the passion and commitment of everyone involved. It's true that 'Together, we are GameChangers'.



Gill Walsh, Strategic Careers Hub Lead, **Liverpool City Region Combined Authority**

What began as a simple strategic intervention has grown into a powerful movement. In just a year, we've united over 30 member organisations and dedicated more than 2,000 hours towards driving change. Seeing over 300 students participate in Experience of the Workplace events alone is proof that we're helping to deliver better outcomes for young people in ways we couldn't have imagined a year ago.



Michelle Dow, Managing Director, All About Futures

Even in our first year, while laying the groundwork, we've engaged 2,700 young people and delivered an innovative 'Experience of the Workplace' initiative that has given 300 students hands-on exposure to the games industry, and reached over 380 parents and teachers. This scale of impact hasn't been possible before and demonstrates the value of what we can achieve together.



Jemma Grindlay, Employer Relationships Manager, **All About Futures**

Onboarding such a diverse group of companies into the pledge has revealed so many opportunities to increase the impact we can have collectively. We've been able to avoid duplication of effort, share best practice, align our messaging, and even matchmake members who had been independently working toward the same goals. It's this kind of coordination that is driving us toward lasting and meaningful change.





Alison Lacy, Co-Chair of GameChangers

With our strategic groups now established, we're well placed to build on the momentum we've generated so far and strengthen our mission to make Liverpool the best place for games careers in the world. There's still much to do, as you'll see in this report, but with the dedication of everyone involved, we're creating pathways to real, transformative change.



Together, GameChangers have...



Assembled a network of 31 GameChangers (and growing!) representing games studios, skills and education providers, community, and charity organisations – to share expertise, advice, and best practice, and inform strategy



Created a one-front door for schools and colleges to sign up for news on events and to send calls for activities with games studios - sharing the load of requests with the network and increasing the chances of a young person in the city region having an encounter with a games studio



Delivered 3 Experience of the Workplace Events for over 300 **students** – allowing students to have hands-on experience with the games industry, driving more high-quality employer experiences to those who need it most



Formed 4 strategic groups – focused on addressing gaps around education pathways, apprenticeships, technical and vocational training, and skills and careers at all stages in the games industry



Delivered parent/carer and teacher online sessions addressing the key influencers of our young people, educating them of post-16 pathways and working to dispel stereotypes around the games industry in the city region



Collated a bedrock of data - looking at what we are doing together and individually to enable strategic action, focusing our efforts as we move forward to ensure we target those who need it most



3. Pledge

Members of GameChangers pledge to support the growth and development of gaming talent by working together to make our Liverpool City Region the best home for game development careers in the world.

Pledge Members promise to:

- © Contribute 8+ Hours to the initiative
- Report their activity to help track progress and impact
- © Announce their pledge to the world and celebrate and disseminate best practice

Join Us





Think you can help to inspire the next generation or play your part in a strategic group?

Email Jemma @ gamechangers@allaboutfutures.co.uk

4. Impact so far





Over **1,600** hours dedicated to engaging with young people, schools & colleges

Over **2,700** young people have had an encounter / experience with a **GameChanger**





Over **2,000** hours dedicated to the initiative by our members

Delivered 3 experience of the workplace events for **OVER 300 students** – supported by 13 Pledge Members





150+ hours dedicated to working with charities or community organisations



Over 380 Parents & Carers registered to attend across 2 CPD sessions



work experience or T-level placements supported / offered by GameChangers studios



4 studios have provided T-level placements, internships or work experience for students aged 14-18

5. Background

The Liverpool City Region is home to around 50 Games development companies, employing 1,800 people across the region, with all 6 of the Liverpool City Region boroughs being home to at least one Games company.

Despite its success, connecting young people with opportunities in this field remains a challenge. The Careers Hub, in partnership with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), engaged All About Futures to bridge the gap between local employers and young people by developing a city region Employers' Network. By bringing game studios together, the intention was to identify stronger, more successful and more inclusive pathways into the industry for future talent.

Gill Walsh, Operational Careers Hub Lead, **Liverpool City Region Careers Hub**

Liverpool's games sector is not just a source of regional pride but a hub of untapped potential for young people. We saw an opportunity to help employers in this innovative industry connect with each other, to identify opportunities and key barriers for talent and growth in the region. We established a series of workshops to explore this together. As this work developed, insights came into focus around recruitment and skills development at all ages and stages, opening the door to new opportunities for growth.

Jamie Brayshaw, GameChangers

We quickly realised that our studios all face similar obstacles for growth and that there's a need to improve pathways for recruitment, upskilling, and career progression in our industry. The breakthrough came when we realised that we could have a far greater impact on tackling these obstacles by joining forces - across employers, skills agencies, educators, and the combined authority. By working together, we can develop more effective and inclusive pathways for talent at all levels across the Liverpool City Region—we can work together to make Liverpool the best place for games careers in the world.

This shared vision highlighted the importance of collaboration and a joined-up approach across an entire network, to supercharge everyone's efforts and identify key areas of impact.



Michelle Dow, Managing Director of All About Futures / **All About STEM**

The studios were all individually doing work to ensure that young people across the city region had encounters with their companies, to inspire people into games and dispel the stereotypes. But a coordinated effort – underpinned by data and informed by best practice - would supercharge these efforts to make these encounters more meaningful. We also identified that the earlier we can engage with students, the better - so they can be given the information they need to choose their next best step, so a focus on engaging earlier and developing a pathway into games was needed.



It was clear that to make the city region the best home for game development careers in the world, we needed to work together to inspire, educate and up-skill prospective and existing talent.

From here, the Pledge was born – to encourage all partners to commit to the same mission and invest the time needed to develop the strategy further.





6. Powered by Strategic Groups

As the GameChangers mission has evolved, we've created four strategic steering groups, each interconnected and aligned with our overarching mission: to make the city region the best place in the world for careers in games.

Each of the four groups has collaborative co-captains and meets regularly with members to share progress, best practices, and drive the mission forward.

The four groups address distinct but complementary aspects of the mission.

Discovery & Learning

Aim: To inspire and empower young people aged 5-18 across the city region to explore the games industry; working together to develop resources and ensure effective delivery and high impact engagement, providing them with the knowledge they need to consider games as their next step.

Michelle Dow, All About Futures, Strategic Group Leader

Since the formation of strategic groups, we've worked closely with employers and consulted a group of sixth form and college educators, to identify gaps in knowledge and delivery.

Both our strategic meetings and our parent/carer and teacher sessions highlighted a lack of knowledge around pathways into games and identified stereotypes held by young people, teachers, and parents and carers around the games industry. When we asked parents, carers and teachers to rate their knowledge of the games industry from 0-5, the average rating was just 1.2 stars which jumped to an average of 4.5 stars post event.

To help address some of these problems, we've developed a standard GameChangers presentation to help with a consistent approach to delivery in schools and colleges - focused on illuminating careers in games, highlighting local labour market information, post-16 pathways and local games course providers and employers.

We've also worked closely with employers on their own workshops and presentations, ensuring language and content is right for the audience.

We hope to continue the great work in Year 2 by delivering more sessions for the influencers of our young people and creating standardised pre-work for games studios to provide for students ahead of their activities, ensuring they have a meaningful encounter.



Education Pathways

Aim: To ensure that students on games courses become more employable and that courses, where possible, are up to date and industry leading, by working with Further and Higher Education institutions at a strategic and curriculum level.

Shirley Hoang, Lucid Games and Phil Owen, D3T, Strategic Group Leaders

We know from the SkillFUL report that skills providers lack an understanding of current and future industry needs. Working with education providers within the city region has enabled our strategic





group to identify areas of the curriculum that require our focus and support. This collaboration has not only improved course delivery at both FE and HE levels but also deepened our understanding as an industry, of the evolving needs and changes in education within our region.



We've worked closely this year with City of Liverpool College (COLC), to discuss their Level 2 - Level 6 curriculum. We plan for Year 2 to be even more impactful by helping to enhance the delivery of their games courses for 2024/2025 by providing experiences for both students and lecturers and expand our collaborations to include more local institutions.

Chris Butler, City of Liverpool College, **Project Manager and Partnership Lead**

As a FE and HE institution, we are excited to collaborate with Liverpool City Region GameChangers. This partnership positions us to leverage the vast experience GameChangers and local industry experts have to offer, bringing substantial benefits to our students. It's an opportunity to enrich their learning and prepare them for dynamic challenges.

Partnering with GameChangers, alongside the local industry's insights, provides our students with invaluable learning experiences, preparing them to be the leaders of tomorrow.







Apprenticeship, Technical and Vocational Training

Aim: To investigate existing mechanisms and identify opportunities for development and improvement in collaboration with industry partners for vocational pathways into the games industry including apprenticeships, skills bootcamps or supporting vocational training and education.

Marcia Deakin, NextGen Skills Academy, Strategic Group

Forming a strategic group to bring together employers, skills agencies, educators, and community organisations has highlighted key areas we need to address in order to strengthen vocational pathways into the games industry.



From established apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy, to skills bootcamps and new technical training, it's clear that there is much work to be done to create programs that meet both industry needs and social mobility goals, which will in part be shaped by the new labour government. We have an opportunity to influence this to some degree as part of national efforts aligned with UKIE, Games Skills Alliance and other bodies collectively striving to affect meaningful change to a more flexible approach to skills and skills funding.

While this work continues, we've begun an active project locally with the COLC and key partners to explore and develop Level 2 to Level 6 apprenticeship and engagement programs. This partnership is the first step toward creating a more structured and impactful training pathway, which we aim to launch in Year 2."





Skills & Careers

Aim: To build an ecosystem of employers of all sizes that can work collectively to nurture and develop our people enabling them to set the bar for thriving and inclusive working environments, high quality technical and creative output, and successful businesses.

Perri Lewis, Mastered, and Alison Lacy, **Strategic Group Leaders**

Since the formation of our strategic group, we've acknowledged that we are an ecosystem of employers who are all reliant on the same pipeline of highly skilled individuals. As a result, it's in



everyone's best interest to solve talent and career problems together. We choose to err on the side of collaboration over the side of competition.

Through this shared commitment, we aim to build deeper relationships between studios at all levels of seniority to support this endeavour. Despite our differences in size, structure or type of work, the challenges we face are more similar than they are different.

To address some of the challenges we all face, we have taken the first steps in designing a city region Games Leadership course – meeting directly with games employers and partners to identify specific needs around leadership in the games industry.



Targeted at senior leadership, we hope to deliver this in Year 2 to around 15 individuals from games companies across the city region not only upskilling staff but creating a cohort of senior leaders who can continue to work together to share ideas and experiences.



7. Ambitions for Year 2

As GameChangers, we are determined to continue the momentum of the first year of the Pledge. By working together and utilising the knowledge and skills of our talented network, we can ensure the biggest impact possible.

Having spent our first year building partnerships and establishing strategic groups, Year 2 will see a focus on continuing delivery, such as more Experience of the Workplace programmes and engaging with teachers, parents, and carers, as well as innovative pilot programmes which work towards the aims of each strategic group.

With the continuing support and funding from the Careers Hub, we can continue to collate information on what we are doing, together and individually, as well as carrying on the conversation around the issues we face - working strategically to identify areas of focus for Year 2 and beyond.

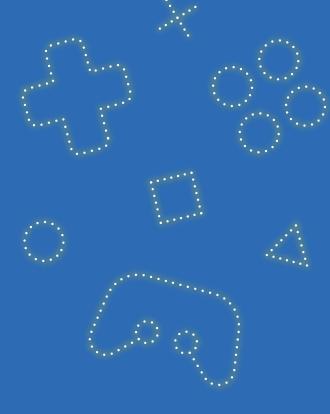
Join Us

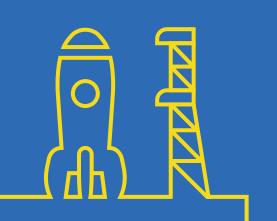
Want to help change the game?



Think you can help to inspire the next generation or play your part in a strategic group?

Email Jemma @ gamechangers@allaboutfutures.co.uk





8. Experience of the Workplace



We know how important it is for students to have first-hand experiences of the workplace to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks. But for the games industry, where content is 18+ and NDAs come as standard when visiting studios, experiences of the workplace are often impossible.

To deliver a meaningful experience of the workplace that allowed young people to explore the city region's largest creative industry, understand the skills used in games, and inspire them to choose a career in this thriving sector, we needed a collaborative approach which overcame the barriers to accessing our games studios.

The GameChangers Experience of the Workplace events funded* by the Careers Hub and facilitated by All About Futures/All About STEM, happened across three days, 2 locations and included 300+ young people, aged 15-18.

Starting the day with an introduction to games and local labour market information, groups were then sent to take part in 5 workshops delivered by different games industry employers. Groups explored aspects of games development, and the many people and skills involved in the process, before developing their own concept for a game after the event.

Throughout the day, students were given the chance to meet a range of employers and people from the workplace and our Sixth Form and College students also had the chance to speak with Games course providers from City of Liverpool College, Liverpool Hope University, the University of Liverpool and Hugh Baird College during a lunchtime marketplace highlighting pathways into games.

Educators were also encouraged to take part in the workshops alongside students – upskilling them on the games industry and giving them a chance to connect with local businesses.

Funded by The Careers and Enterprise Company, Experience of the Workplace for Future Industries Pilot *



Gill Walsh, Strategic Careers Hub Lead said: "We recognise that traditional work experience models must evolve, particularly for industries with significant barriers to gaining experience, like the gaming sector. This is why we have delivered our Experiences of the Workplace events with our GameChangers. These experiences not only give students an insight into what it is like to work in the games industry but, more importantly, help them develop essential skills they can use in the workplace to ensure they are career ready."

Aaron Humphreys, Senior Character Artist @LucidGames: "It was a really great experience watching the students' eyes light up when asked to engage in our hands on workshop. The amount of unique & creative ideas that they were excited to show us at the end was pleasantly overwhelming with detailed character designs & story telling. I think it definitely inspired them to continue trying it at home or exploring new ways that they can use their skills to get into the industry one day!"

Dan Giles, Senior Manager in Publishing, Compliance and Operations at **Playstation:** "What really took me by surprise is how much I took from it personally. Of course, I expected it to be rewarding but I didn't really understand how rewarding it would be [for me]."

Carmel College Student

The event was truly eye-opening, I went into it with a vague idea of the games world, simply knowing about games and companies, but I came out of it actually wanting a job within the games industry, the whole event changed how I want my future to go. This was mainly down to learning about the variety of jobs within the industry as I thought it was simply designers, coders and developers but I found out that there is a much wider range of jobs that would suit my interests.

Our experience of the workplace events were supported by:



























9. GameChangers Highlights

Throughout the last year, the impact of GameChangers has been amazing. But here, we highlight just some of the amazing success stories from a handful of Pledge Members that show just how brilliant the games industry in the city region is.

Work experience with **Skyhook Games**

Work experience in the games industry is difficult to arrange for young people, but one studio supporting students in the city region is Skyhook Games.



Since 2022, the creators of Lawn Mowing Simulator, have hosted around 8 students per year from schools and colleges across the region.

At the start of their weeklong placement, students are given a project to complete depending on their area of interest and introduced to the key roles and careers within games. During their time at Skyhook, students have the opportunity to chat with and explore the different departments involved in game development including QA, Design, Art, Code and marketing.

Abi, Skyhook Work Experience Student: "Throughout the 4 days, I learned about many distinct aspects that go towards the gaming industry. It was great to see how people build on ideas and projects they are given. I loved watching projects being made and experiencing diverse ways people work together...



My time here has helped me to discover what kind of area I would like to involve myself in."

Susan Burns, Head of Studio: "Over the last couple of years, it's been our pleasure to host a number of work experience students from various schools, colleges and universities throughout the Liverpool City Region.

The response from all the students has been fantastic as they get the opportunity to learn about the different departments that are present within most game studios. All of them say how useful the experience is to provide them with an insight into what goes into making computer games

and for most of them it solidifies the desire to look at careers within the games industry.

This is why we offer such placements, so that it gives the students the opportunity to explore our workplace and potentially inform their career decisions moving forward."

> You can read more about Abi's time on work experience, and hear from the other students too, at https://skyhookgames.com/news/

Avalanche Studios Group – **Enterprise Adviser Network**



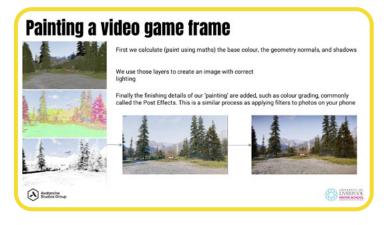
Avalanche Studios Group (ASG), best known for developing the Just Cause game series, opened their fourth location in Liverpool in 2020 and, through the Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Adviser Network, have worked closely with the University of Liverpool Maths School to embed games careers into the curriculum since 2022.

Examining the subjects covered throughout the curriculum in conjunction with subject and careers leaders, developers from ASG were able to create resources focused on two topics which explained where these skills were used in the world of games.

"Our partnership with the University of Liverpool Maths School has been a result of our goal to create a long-lasting impact on young people in a way that could be shared across multiple schools.

We kept in mind that young people who are studying courses not specific to IT/Games don't necessarily consider a career in the Games Industry despite their knowledge and skills being relevant.

The aim of the partnership is to bring that awareness to students by showing them how the curriculum content can be applied to the Games



Industry. We hope this will spark an interest from students in pursuing games as a career when they discover how the subject is applied to an exciting, real-life example.

Avalanche Studios Group, Liverpool: "We also hope that the resources can be shared amongst other schools in the city region for a number of years."

Mel Aspinall, Careers Hub Enterprise Coordinator: "By embedding careers in the curriculum, we can ensure that students see the topics they are learning as relevant to them, help them to understand the pathways into games and raise their aspirations encouraging them to see games as a viable career path."

David Hemsley, Deputy Head Teacher, University of Liverpool Maths School: "It has been really useful working with Avalanche on curriculum materials. We have been able to discuss viable inputs to curriculum content and have been able to collaborate to suggest areas where a clear industrial context can highlight the importance of a subject area. We look forward to launching these lessons with students and know this will increase their engagement within the curriculum".

Businesses and individuals help schools and colleges to shape futures by getting involved with the Enterprise Adviser Network here.



Scenegraph Studios -Internships, T-Level Support and Resources

Scenegraph Studios, an XR as a Service development Scenegraph Studios company based on the Wirral, have worked closely with young people, adults and educators in the city region to provide support, advice and guidance on becoming games industry ready.

This year alone, Scenegraph have provided week-long internships for 5 students and hosted a 6-month T-level placement for Wirral Met College, enabling a range of students to develop their 3D skills and providing invaluable experience of what it's like to work in games or other industries which use 3D technologies (Architecture, Engineering, Software). In addition, working with Wirral-based charity 'Autism Together', they have supported a young adult, helping them to understand the level at which they are currently working, answering their questions about the games industry, reviewing their CV and providing advice about what they could improve to gain a successful interview.

Dr Dave Tully, Scenegraph Studios: "We know how important it is for people who are looking for a career in games to have experience of the industry as well as honest advice and guidance from people working in it. With so many misconceptions and stereotypes around the industry and the skills needed to work in it, it's also vital that their tutors and parents/carers have the right information too.

As a small business, we struggle to meet the demand from schools, colleges, and universities for engagement with students, but we give as much hands-on support as we can by offering internships, placements and advice.

We've also launched www.Scenegraph. Academy, which provides free resources for students and tutors, designed to help the next generation get into software and games development."

To learn from developers who love what they do, visit Scenegraph. Academy here.





Universally Speaking – and The Learning Foundry



Universally Speaking, a specialist provider for the global gaming industry who offer end-to-end services for quality assurance, localization, and audio, are one studio in the city region offering entry level roles into games testing.

The studio partnered with The Learning Foundry in 2024, a training provider based in Liverpool whose mission is to 'Make Talent Shine' through programmes that support employability, tackle skills gaps and reduce skills shortages, and support everyone into meaningful work.

Universally Speaking and The Learning Foundry offered six open sessions to potential applicants, where they provided insights about the role of an FQA tester and shared their personal success story in the video game industry - helping to motivate and inspire people to consider a career in games.

Interested candidates were then enrolled in a 2-week training programme, delivered by The Learning Foundry which covered employability skills such as problem solving and time management, and skills needed for the video games industry, such as teamwork, excel skills and customer service. During these 2 weeks, candidates also participated in a recruitment process including a QA assessment and a group interview.

Claire Sherratt, Head of People, Universally Speaking: "Working with The Learning Foundry allowed us to work strategically to recruit local talent during our peak testing period. As a result, 70% of 148 people who took part in the training programme were entered into our testers' pool.

We also found that 93% of the people who took part were gamers, looking to turn a hobby into a career!"

Kael, Universally Speaking FQA Technician: "My journey with The Learning Foundry was incredibly valuable, as the course was designed to enhance my employability skills and prepare me for group work and interviews. This experience played a crucial role in securing my position at Universally Speaking, where I now work as part of the game QA team. Working at Universally Speaking has been a fantastic experience"

Lesley Penton Director of Partnerships for The Regenda Group and Chair of the Careers Hub Cornerstones Employers Group: "It's been a brilliant partnership between Universally Speaking and The Learning Foundry who collaborated to create pre-employability programmes supporting people to learn new skills in a dynamic growing sector. It's fantastic to hear of the successful learners who have secured employment with Universally Speaking."

The Learning Foundry deliver bespoke aspirational programmes, create opportunities, and improve social mobility for those living in our most disadvantaged communities, whilst also meeting the needs of regional and national employers. You can find out more here.



EARNING

Lucid Games -Sandwich Year Placement Students



Lucid Games, developers of PlayStation 5 Destruction All Stars, are currently running their fourth internship programme, offering a 12-month paid placement for second-year university students.

During their time at the studio, interns contribute to real projects in development, often working on multiple initiatives and collaborating with co-development partners. This allows them to gain valuable experience working alongside other studios, while immersing themselves in every aspect of studio life. Interns not only learn about the industry and its workflows, but also build lasting friendships, socialise, and grow both personally and professionally.

Shirley Brown, Social Media Manager and Education Outreach at Lucid Games:

"Interns are welcomed into the studio and integrated just like any other member of Team Lucid. They are never treated as "students," assigned to fake projects, or asked to make coffee-unless it's their own!

We have offered internships in Design, Art, Programming, and QA, with many leading to full-time positions after completing their third year of studies and graduating. Several interns have now returned to join the studio permanently, including our first-ever intern, who has developed over the years from being a Junior Programmer to a Programmer. The feedback from all interns has been outstanding, and their contributions have proven invaluable to the teams they work with."

Valentyna Sipova is now a Junior Game Designer at Lucid Games after completing her internship in 2022/2023 and graduating in 2024 with a BA (Hons) in Game Design.

Valentyna Sipova: "Joining Lucid to gain experience in the industry was the best decision I could make as a 2nd-year student. I was given so much guidance and help within all the projects I joined and learnt a lot of practical things from all the amazing and talented people working here.

Regardless of being an international student intern, I always felt like a team member, treated with respect and given help whenever needed. Saying my opinions out loud and seeing that they are listened to helped me build my confidence and put a value on all my work. Each project gave me new experiences I will put to use during my final year of university and future career."

Valentyna's lecturer, Rhoda Daly from The University of Central Lancashire: "Knowing she was returning to Lucid Games following graduation was instrumental to Val's ambition and enthusiasm in developing a first-class portfolio of work. Lucid Games internships are game changers, and I would absolutely encourage every student to apply."



10. Join Us!

As we reflect on our first year and try to distil an impossible amount of information succinctly into these pages, it's clear that the real power of GameChangers lies in the strength of our community and our shared commitment to shaping the future of the games industry and talent pathways for people of all ages in the Liverpool City Region. With each success, we've seen how much more we can achieve by working together. And with the sharing of priorities and the efforts we are all individually making, we are beginning to gain clarity on how much more effective we can be when we team up.

We're confident that by continuing to work together and align our efforts, we can achieve our mission. And we can share the lessons we learn along the way with the wider games industry.

As we look ahead to Year 2, we invite more of you to join us on this journey by helping us inspire the next generation of games talent, or engaging with one of our strategic groups, to help make the city region the best home for games talent in the world.

Together, we are GAMECHANGERS

Contact Us

To get involved and help shape the future of talent, skills and education pathways, please get in touch with any of the GameChangers champions:

To sign up or find out more, contact Jemma Grindlay @ gamechangers@allaboutfutures.co.uk

To find out more about the city regions Employers' Network visit: https://lcrcareershub.co.uk/employers/the-lcr-employers-network/

