



EVERFI

**Creating a compassionate society:** how important should compassion be to business?



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## Compassion: what difference does it make?

*“Right now, we’re seeing companies really recognise the importance of compassion - it’s on their radar like never before,”* says Rasmus Hougaard, the CEO of global leadership development firm Potential Project.

Hougaard, who works with business leaders across the world, points to the number of global firms who now include the word compassion in their mission statements and the many others who are rethinking their business objectives with compassion in mind.

But it’s by no means only business leaders who are realising the importance of compassion - it’s something many of us now recognise as a key feature of the society we want to create and it’s changing our behaviour as consumers as a result.



New research by EVERFI has found that **87% of UK consumers** now consider whether a business has been compassionate in their response to the pandemic when deciding whether to buy a product or service.



**“**EVERFI's research shows that **90%** of UK consumers say the pandemic has highlighted the need for a compassionate society.**”**

**“Everybody has suffered during the pandemic and compassion is the most natural, intuitive response to suffering,”** says Hougaard.

**“What we're effectively saying to one another is: ‘What can I do to help?’”**

As consumers, he says, we're drawn towards the businesses that show compassion because we're **“innately and neurologically wired to look for good”** and we want to be part of something that improves our society.

Certainly since the pandemic, there have been some wonderful examples of acts of compassion.

Several months after Covid-19 had started to batter the travel industry, the CEO of Airbnb, Brian Chesky, wrote to staff with some very difficult news: 1,900 of his 7,500 employees were to lose their jobs.

But rather than communicate this in cold, corporate-speak, Chesky showed what many felt was genuine compassion. As the news magazine Forbes said, his letter to colleagues was a “blueprint of how layoffs should be done both caring and just”.

**“Other companies will be lucky to have you,”**

Chesky told those who he had to let go.

**“We will be launching a public-facing website to help teammates leaving find new jobs... We are encouraging all remaining employees to opt-in to a program to assist departing teammates to find their next role.”** He added

that their **“contributions mattered”** and that they would **“always be part of the company's story”**.

It's clear that compassion is higher on the agenda than ever before, but what does a compassionate society actually look like?

For Professor Paul Gilbert, from the Centre for Compassion Research and Training at the University of Derby, it's a society in which we are motivated to be sensitive to suffering and to both alleviate and prevent it, in others and ourselves.

**“A compassionate response depends on the context,”** Gilbert says. **“Imagine the emotions and skills of a firefighter risking their life to save a family. The motivation is compassion to prevent suffering, but consider the emotions and skills of somebody fighting social injustice, or counselling the bereaved. These behaviours are designed to address different types of suffering, and in very different ways.”**



As humans, Gilbert says, we have developed fantastic cognitive capacities that enable us to knowingly and skillfully orientate towards being caring and helpful. That is one reason we have developed professional medicine and have been able to develop vaccines.

***“That is compassion and collectively that is what makes a compassionate society,”*** he says.

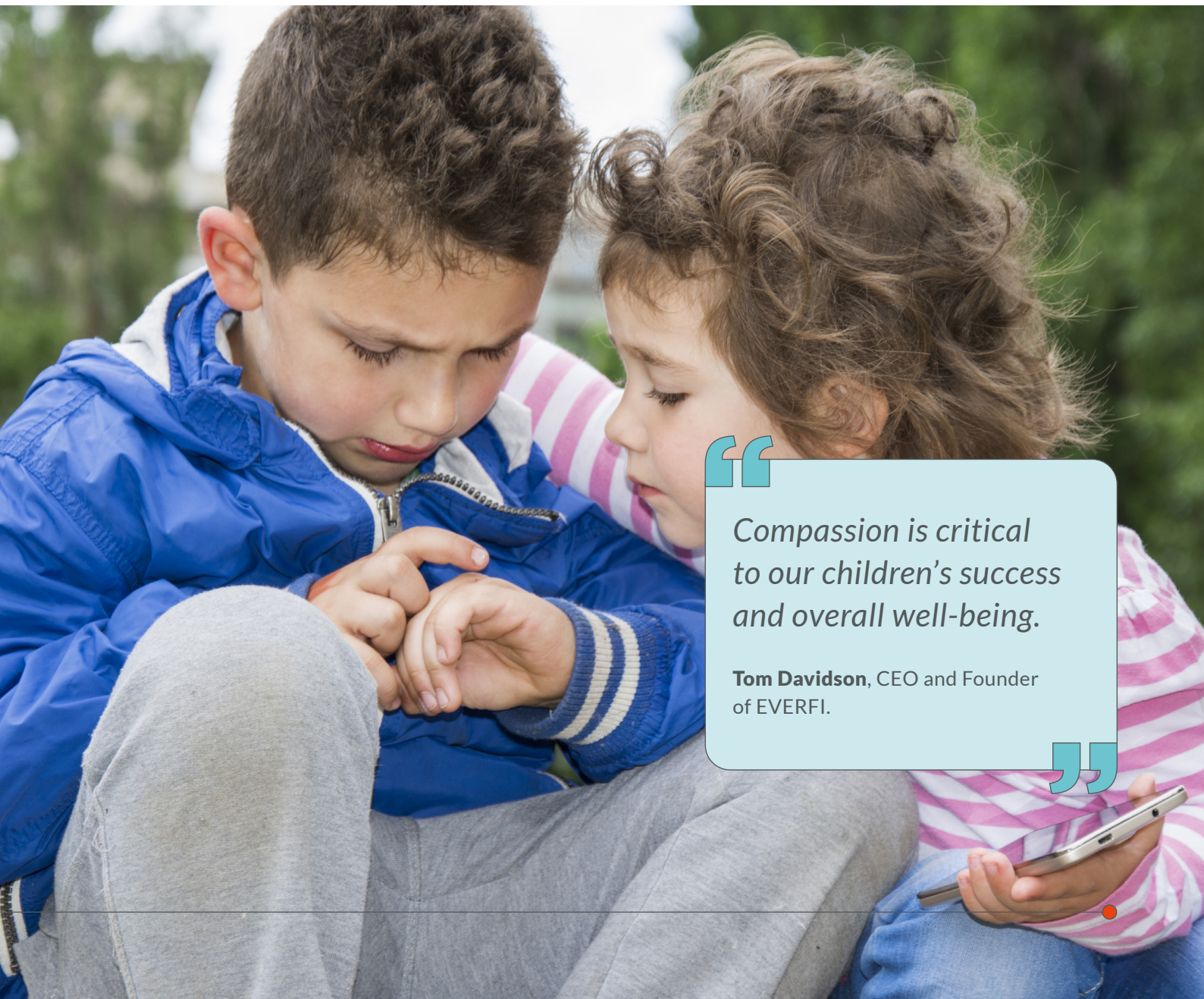
Like so much else, creating a compassionate society comes down to education.

As Tom Davidson, the CEO and Founder of EVERFI has said, ***“compassion is critical to our children’s success and overall well-being”***.

***“It’s crazy that not all children are taught compassion when they are taught many things they may never need,”*** says Hougaard. ***“Compassion is something they could benefit from every single day.”***

It’s no wonder then that at EVERFI we’re seeing increasing demand for **The Compassion Project**, a course for seven to 11-year-olds that is sponsored by businesses so that it is free for schools and uses real-life scenarios, role play and critical thinking skills.

Later on in this report, we’ll show how you can be involved in The Compassion Project.



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*Compassion is critical to our children’s success and overall well-being.*

**Tom Davidson**, CEO and Founder of EVERFI.

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## How important is compassion to consumers?

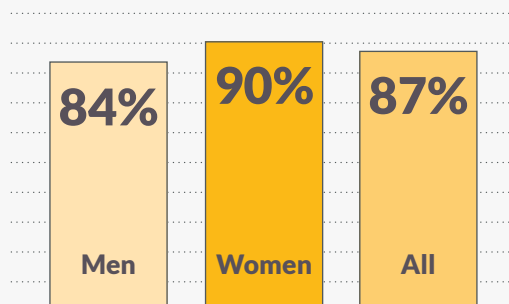
Our desire to live in a compassionate society stretches to what we want from businesses as consumers.

The latest research from EVERFI shows that consumers are making decisions based on whether they perceive a company to be compassionate in its response to the pandemic and in its treatment of staff, customers and the communities around it.

We commissioned market research company Yonder to ask **2,096** adults from across the

UK about the importance of compassion when it came to deciding whether to buy a product or service.

Some **87%** say that when considering whether to buy something, they value whether a business has been compassionate in its response to the pandemic. It seems that women are even more likely to factor in whether a company has acted in a compassionate way - **90%** said they consider a business's compassionate response, compared to **84%** of men.

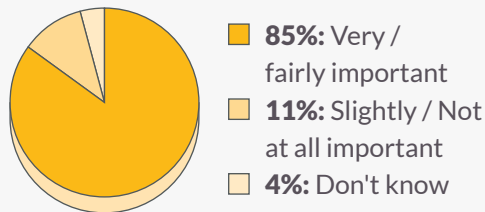


**Q.** To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

***I value brands or businesses that have been compassionate in their response to the pandemic***

Base: **2,096 Adults.**

More specifically, **85%** of us take into account whether a business shows compassion towards their employees, customers and the communities around them when weighing up whether to make a purchase.



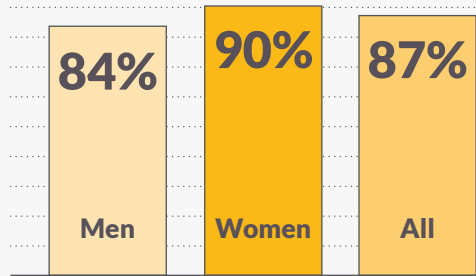
**Q.** How important would this be in your decision to purchase/receive goods or services from a business or brand:

***If a brand or business demonstrates compassion for their staff, customers and communities***

Base: **2096 Adults**

Unsurprisingly, many of us want to know that a company is making a positive contribution to the welfare of future generations. For **77%** of us, it's important that a business we're buying from is taking part in initiatives to support young people's futures.

Without a doubt, our research shows that compassion is becoming increasingly important to consumers.



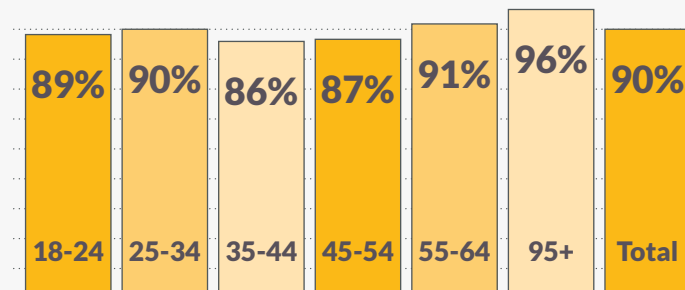
**Q.** How important would this be in your decision to purchase/receive goods or services from a business or brand:

***If a brand or business takes part in initiatives which aim to support the futures of young people***

Base: **2,096 Adults**

Some **90%** of us say that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of compassion in society. There are interesting variations across the generations. While **96%** of those aged 65 and over say the pandemic has highlighted the importance of compassion in society, this drops slightly to **89%** among 18 to 24-year-olds.

As our research clearly shows, companies that act in a compassionate way inspire loyal customers, but this is just one of many benefits. Studies also show that compassionate behaviour in the workplace results in better recruitment, lower turnover of staff and a more engaged workforce.

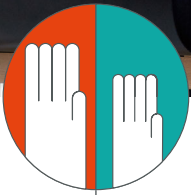


The pandemic has highlighted the importance of compassion in society

% Agree

Base: **2096 Adults**





## Why diversity, equity and inclusion need compassion at their core

Many businesses have looked again at their diversity, equity and inclusion policies as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement and the pandemic.

Some **96%** of CEOs now say diversity, equity and inclusion – DEI – is a **“personal strategic priority”** for them and want to invest in it across their businesses, according to a survey by Fortune and Deloitte.

Definitions of DEI vary according to a business’s focus and culture, but they generally encourage and support fair opportunities and participation across the workforce, regardless of the age, race, gender, personality, religion, sexual orientation or education of the employee.

**“Almost every company says they want an atmosphere where all employees can belong, contribute and thrive,”** says Jesse Bridges, Senior Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at EVERFI. **“That requires**

**deliberate, intentional action and measuring the impact of those actions.”**

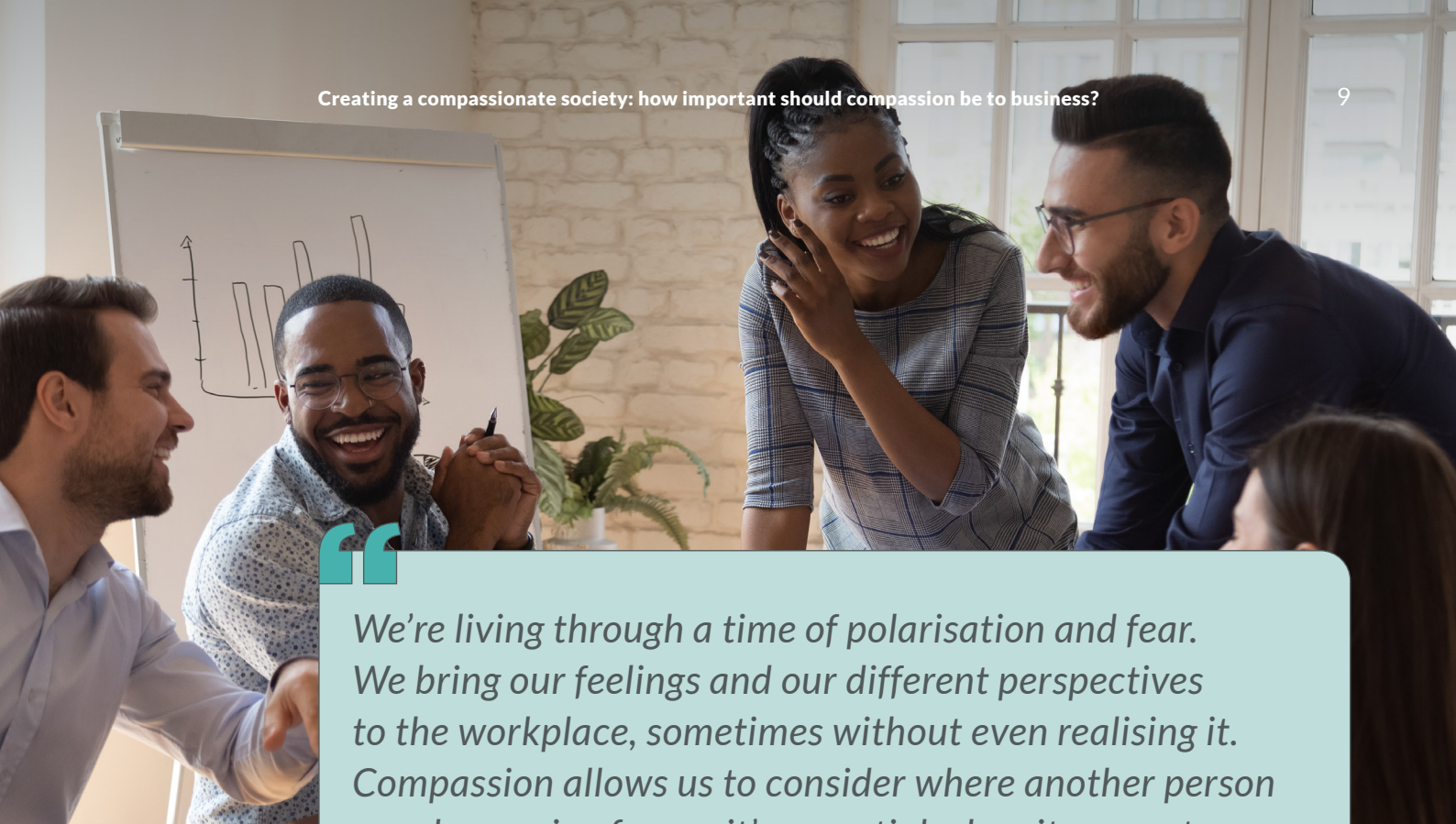
Jesse argues that DEI needs to be **“reframed”** so that it has compassion at its core.

**“Compassion is about how to see the world from someone else’s perspective – it’s empathy plus action – and this is sometimes lacking, or missed as a cornerstone of efforts, when we talk about DEI nowadays,”** she says.

**“Too often, we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion in terms of what we shouldn’t be doing, but to understand why some actions are not inclusive and might actually harm another person and an environment of equity and inclusion within an organisation, we need compassion. DEI needs to be reframed with compassion at its core.”**

Jesse believes this is all the more important in the current climate.





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*We're living through a time of polarisation and fear. We bring our feelings and our different perspectives to the workplace, sometimes without even realising it. Compassion allows us to consider where another person may be coming from – it's essential when it comes to embedding an inclusive culture in any organisation.*

**Jesse Bridges**, Senior Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at EVERFI.

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Inclusive leaders can set the tone when it comes to ensuring compassion is at the heart of DEI, Jesse says because, among other things, they understand that we see the world through different cultural frames and understand the biases they hold.

Jeff Weiner, for example, has built his leadership on compassionate management. In a recent speech, he told graduates to **“create a culture where people take the time to understand the other person's perspective, and not assume nefarious intentions; build trust; and align around a shared mission”**.

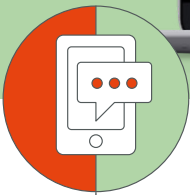
**“After nearly 10 years,”** he said, **“I still celebrate the fact that we can make important decisions in minutes or hours that some companies debate for months. Create the right culture, and you create a competitive advantage.”**

Brene Brown is another example of a leader who shows courageous and compassionate leadership. In one of the lessons in her book, *Dare to Lead*, she writes about empathy and forging authentic workplace connections, but not at the cost of criticising or gossiping about others.

But could a compassionate leader be seen as ‘soft’ by some or as someone who expects less of their employees?

**“Compassionate leadership doesn't mean a lack of accountability – it's just the opposite,”** Jesse says. **“Compassionate leaders require the courage to have hard conversations with employees because they want them to thrive. Compassionate leaders know that you have to convey the expectations that you want from employees because if you don't, you create anxiety for them – they don't know what is expected of them.”**





## The Compassion Project and how you can get involved

**The Compassion Project** is a course for 7 to 11-year-olds that was originally the brainchild of Jeff Weiner, LinkedIn's Executive Chairman.

It's sponsored by businesses so that it can be free in schools and has already been a runaway success in the US, reaching about 20% of primary schools there.

The course uses real-life scenarios, critical thinking skills and role play to help young people understand how to practise compassion.

One pupil says the course taught her ***"not just to understand where others are coming from with their feelings, but to change my own actions based on how others feel, or how I will make them feel"***.



*Sponsoring a course like The Compassion Project is a crucial way to invest in our children's futures.*

**Tom Davidson**, CEO and Founder of EVERFI.



The British Olympic Foundation has supported a new Compassion Project pilot in schools across the country through their existing Get Set programme. Teachers have accessed the EVERFI Compassion product, alongside Get Set's new supporting offline resources that explore how compassion can link to the sporting world and the Olympic and Paralympic Values.



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*I think half of the issues pupils have these days is they don't talk to each other enough. They hide behind screens, so the fact that The Compassion Project is predominantly focused on talking and making it clear that you shouldn't just leave someone on their own or walk away is good.*

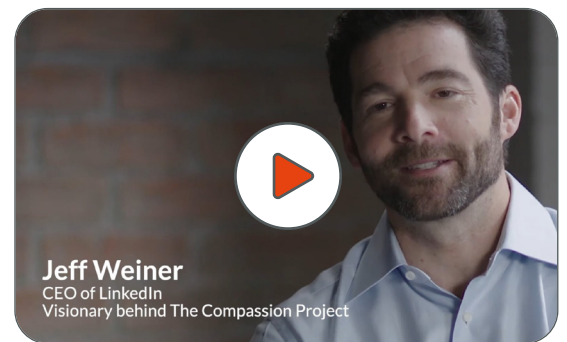
**Chris**, primary school teacher in the East Midlands, involved with the British Olympic Foundation Compassion Project

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Dr Frances Maratos, Associate Professor and Reader in Emotion Science at the University of Derby, says there's now a plethora of research that shows compassion protects against mental health issues too.

**“Compassion can buffer against, or be used to combat, self-criticism and allows for better emotion regulation, as well as the competencies needed to form and maintain good relationships,”** she says.

Weiner says he can't think of anything more important than teaching compassion. **“The benefits are myriad in terms of improving [children's] sense of self, their self-esteem and the way they relate to others,”** he says.



If you or your organisation is interested in supporting the teaching of compassion in schools across the UK, we'd love to hear from you. Please [contact us](#) and we'll be in touch.





## About EVERFI

EVERFI empowers organisations to drive social impact through education.

With our partners, we are committed to tackling social issues and long term inequality by addressing the missing layer of education that limits the life chances of young people and communities.

We offer a platform of digital courses alongside bespoke learning opportunities that helps to tackle the missing layer of education, giving young people the skills they need to succeed in life, becoming better citizens, employees and leaders.

We connect education to the real world, changing perspectives and creating innovative learning experiences for **50 million learners globally.**

**Let's drive social impact together!**

Visit: [everfi.com/uk](https://everfi.com/uk)



The background is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this are various white line-art patterns. These include stylized human profiles, some with circular elements on their heads, and intricate circuit-like diagrams with lines, dots, and rectangular blocks. The patterns are scattered across the entire page, creating a complex, interconnected visual field.

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