



# TECgirls Reach for the Sky Festival Impact Report

Prepared by:

Suzanne Manson, TECwomen CIC COO

Caitlin Gould, TECwomen CIC CEO

Sponsored By:

Department for Transport and  
Civil Aviation Authority

through the Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund



# Introduction

Aviation has always been at the forefront of innovation, leading the way in the use of advanced technologies. Over the past 15 years, there has been an increased demand across the industry for highly skilled professionals such as Aircraft Mechanics, Avionics Technicians, Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers, and Aeronautical Engineers.

Yet, women in these highly skilled aviation roles are significantly under-represented, with few holding the most senior positions. Under 6% of the UK's 16,000 pilots and fewer than 10% of the sector's engineers are female.

**Led by TECwomen CIC, our Reach for the Sky project is a Southwest of England based initiative to encourage more girls to consider a highly skilled future career in aviation.**

**This report summarises the impact of this intervention that took place in June 2024.**

## About us

TECwomen CIC runs the award-winning TECgirls education project aimed at igniting an interest in technology, engineering, and creative-digital (T.E.C) for young girls. We've already reached 5,000+ girls and we know what it takes to get them excited about highly skilled technical and engineering careers across a range of different sectors; from AgriTech to Aerospace!

Our 2022 'Take Up Space' event was an evening of technology, engineering, and creativity (with an aerospace focus) hosted by TECgirls in partnership with CSATT and CloS Digital Skills Partnership in November 2022. It was a sell-out (free) event with an overwhelmingly positive response.

By receiving support from the Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund (Department of Transport and Civil Aviation Authority), this provided the opportunity to extend the scope of this event to cover aviation careers, extend the impact of the event to reach more girls, with a bigger impact and to support those most in need to be able to travel to attend a 'free' event.

Our leadership team:



Suzanne Manson

Doer. Analyst. Maker. Mentor.  
TECgirls Operations Director



Caitlin Gould

Curious. Digital. Creative. Feminist.  
TECgirls Founder and Director



Jane Orme

Coder. Analyst. Writer. Artist.  
TECgirls Co-Founder and  
Non-Exec Director



# Reach for the Sky Project

We knew the event needed to be big, bold, exciting and fun, so the team dreamed up the idea of the first ever 'Reach for the Sky' Festival of Flight, for hundreds of girls and their families.

Taking place at RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall on 22nd June 2024, the festival was designed to be a celebration of all the exciting opportunities in aviation in the Southwest of England. To inspire young girls, it needed to be fun and interesting, so we programmed in engaging shows, inspirational speakers and hands-on workshops including aircraft building, VR flight simulation and coding. The team at RNAS Culdrose also brought some of their best gadgets to get girls really excited about the sector.

## Our partners and friends

As well as support from the Reach for the Sky Challenge Fund, we also had support from our partners and friends. The project advisory team included RNAS Culdrose, Spaceport Cornwall, Cornwall Council, Goonhilly Earth Station and the Digital Skills Partnership. A major strength of the partnership was the ability to bring together additional aviation organisations to ensure the festival was a success. Over 20 partners joined us to exhibit and run activities on the day. A big thank you to all of you!



# Headline Findings

1

643 people signed up for the event. (We sold out of tickets, twice!) 587 people attended the festival. Drop-outs are inevitable, especially at free events, but over 90% attended which is a great result.

2

Of the 317 children attending, 278 identified as girls and non binary. 75% of survey respondents said that the fact it was a festival aimed at girls was a key factor in their decision to book.

3

100% of survey respondents said they enjoyed their experience at the festival. 99% said they were excited by what they learnt.

4

98% of respondents said that their child learned more about working in aviation and/or aerospace at the Reach for the Sky festival.

5

95% of respondents felt their child is more excited or interested in aviation and/or aerospace after attending the Reach for the Sky festival

**Our data shows that when technology and engineering programs are designed specifically for girls, they have the opportunity to explore their interests and develop their skills in a supportive environment, free from gender stereotypes. These early experiences help girls discover their strengths and passions before societal norms discourage them from pursuing these fields and events like this play a crucial role in reducing the gender gap in STEM.**





# The festival day in images



## Activities & Demos



## Rocket Shows



## Role models



## Inspiring talks





## In their own words:

Below are some extracts from the qualitative data received in the attendees **survey responses**:

*Loved it. Speaking to the female pilots was a highlight.*

*It's been a brilliant day, I'm taking home four very inspired girls of all different ages. There was something for all of them!*

*"Best place in the universe" from Calla-Rose age 7. If you don't run it again we'd be gutted.*

*An incredible day! The children were inspired by all of the hands on science and the show. We could have spent two days there and would love to see this as an annual event. Thank you for such a great day*

*We had such an extraordinarily brilliant day!! I can't praise you guys high enough. The location was really exciting and special. Everyone there was so encouraging and excited, it was such a brilliant brilliant day!! Thank you so so much. Please make it an annual thing, it is something Cornwall is in need of. So inspiring and exceptionally well organised.*

*I liked the demos that taught the girls things. On the way home they were telling me all about the things they learned about 3D printing and flying drones. 2 subjects they have never talked about or ever shown any interest in. Amazing to find they both found it fascinating. A family member has a drone - they've never shown any interest. They've since phoned that person and asked if they can go and visit next week to see his drone. He's chuffed. They are over the moon and I'm so pleased they had a fun day out and unwittingly learnt so much without even realising that they were at "school". Amazing.*



# Next Steps

Overall the TECgirls Reach for the Sky Future of Flight festival was a huge success. As the data and feedback demonstrates, the festival achieved its core aims and there is a clear desire from those involved and attending to make this an annual event!

**TECwomen CIC would love to make this a reality!**

## Funding Support for TECgirls Reach for the Sky Festival

The festival was supported by funding from the Department of Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority through their Reach for the Sky challenge fund. The aim was to encourage more girls to consider a highly skilled future career in aviation.

Without funding there will not be a Reach for the Sky festival in 2025, despite its proven success.

**CAN YOU HELP** make the Reach for the Sky Festival 2025 a reality? We would love to hear from you. Please contact us at [Caitlin@tecgirls.co.uk](mailto:Caitlin@tecgirls.co.uk)

## Not in the Southwest of England and wish there was an event like this near you?

We would love to hear from you to discuss how we could take this festival to other areas of the UK and beyond.

## Interested in exploring the TECgirls Festival concept with us to focus on a different highly skilled future career sector?

Whilst the focus of this event was to promote highly skilled future careers in aviation, the team at TECwomen have ideas on how this format could also extend to future careers in other sectors where there is a need to address gender imbalance. We would love to hear from you to discuss making this a reality.

