

Young Rewired State

Festival of Code 2015 – Launch Press Release

Young Rewired State is a worldwide community of digital makers aged 18 and under. They introduce them to like-minded peers, and expert mentors, at free events around the world where they use freely available open data to build apps, websites and algorithms to solve real world challenges and help their communities. By providing a fun and supportive environment where young people with a passion for technology can develop and apply their skills, Young Rewired State hopes to play a significant part in narrowing the digital skills gap currently challenging employers across the UK.

Since its inception in 2009 Young Rewired State has worked with over 2000 young people in the UK, predominantly through running the largest annual hack event in the world, the 'Festival of Code'. Every year the Festival sees over 1000 young people and 300 expert mentors team up in over 60 local centres all over the UK, for a week in the summer holidays, to build digital prototypes, before coming together to present what they've made at the Festival weekend. Local centres are run by a variety of partner organisations, ranging from schools, to tech start-ups, to charities to large corporations.

With the introduction of computer programming into the national curriculum in September 2014, the Festival of Code in 2015 is set to be bigger than ever. This year the Festival weekend is scheduled to take place at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham and Young Rewired State are preparing to welcome up to 2,000 young coders from 100 locations across the UK, to the weekend showcase. Participants will also get to stretch their skills by taking on a variety of programming challenges, set by sponsors and partner organisations, and experimenting with cutting edge technologies, over the course of the weekend. The whole event is free to attend and is supported by sponsors, from a variety of sectors, including Google and Pearson.

Following the success of hosting a remote centre in Kosovo for the duration of the 2015 Festival, Young Rewired State are also opening up participation to centres in Europe for the first time, giving young coders in the UK the opportunity to share skills with their counterparts overseas.

Young Rewired State is also one of 37 organisations to receive a 2015 Google RISE (Roots in Science and Engineering) Award to run an access scheme alongside the 2015 Festival. The program will be aimed at encouraging participation of under-represented groups in computer science, particularly girls and children from low-income families. The support from Google will make it possible for Young Rewired State to provide assistance with travel costs to and from the Festival to low income families, and coordinate peer outreach from their existing community to these groups.

Alongside the Festival of Code, Young Rewired State runs regular meet-ups around the UK, in partnership with American Express, through their 'Hyperlocal' program. These informal sessions are a great opportunity for young developers to brush up on their skills in advance of the Festival and even carry on developing their projects after the Festival ends, with the support of mentors and their peers.

Attendees of Young Rewired State events go on to utilize their digital skills in a number of different ways. Some become software developers but others move into creative industries or even become young entrepreneurs. Alex Christie, 18, has been attending the Festival of Code since 2013 and recently attracted venture capital funding to take his freelancer matching and rating app, 'briefly.io', to market. He plans to return to the Festival this year to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs with his story, and said the event provides 'a great opportunity for young programmers to come out of isolation and deliver a working prototype as a team - the lessons learned from the Festival of Code make it a great platform from which to continue in the tech industry'.

The Festival of Code 2015 will take place in centres across the from Monday 27th July to Friday 31st July and the Festival Showcase Weekend will take place at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham on the 1st and 2nd August. For more information and to take part visit festival.yrs.io.