

# Evidence review: What works to support 15 to 24-year olds at risk of becoming NEET?

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Learning and Work Institute

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## Introduction

The Government has committed to providing effective early intervention for young people at-risk of inactivity and therefore not in education, employment or training (NEET). The development of approaches designed to prevent disengagement address a range of key challenges in the economy including: an entrenched productivity gap relative to other advanced economies; poor health and wellbeing outcomes; and low social mobility by international standards that does not show signs of improvement.

To ensure the Government can develop effective approaches it is necessary to identify the existing evidence base of interventions that support young people at-risk of becoming NEET. As such, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Learning and Work Institute (L&W) to undertake a review to collate and synthesise the range of evidence on challenging education, employment and training disengagement and inactivity amongst young people aged 15-24 years.

The evidence review sought to identify effective programmes that could attribute improvements in attainment and employment, progress and engagement. In line with current DfE priorities, the review is focused on those interventions which target young people at key transition points (such as Key Stage 4 and at-16) and where there are heightened risk factors associated with disengagement.<sup>1</sup>

This report presents the high-level findings of the evidence review and identifies a series of considerations for the DfE in relation to future NEET prevention policy.<sup>2</sup>

## Context

In February 2020, the Department for Education published the NEET statistics annual brief showing that 11.3% of 16-24 year olds in England were not in education, employment or training (NEET).<sup>3,4</sup> It is estimated that £2.7 billion is spent each year on benefits for young people NEET as well as being more likely to experience poorer mental and physical health outcomes. When moving into employment, those with a history of NEET, are more likely to be in unstable and low-paid work.<sup>5</sup>

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests early intervention at key transition points, such as Key Stage 4 and decision making at 16, can be effective in diverting at-risk groups from NEET. A range of Government policies and programmes are aligned to this evidence base. The introduction of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in 2011 (replacing the Education Maintenance Allowance in England) was introduced to provide targeted support

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<sup>1</sup> Siraj, I. (2014) Report on Students who are not in Education, Employment or Training. Institute for Education

<sup>2</sup> This report is accompanied by a separate bibliography of evidence that provides a detailed breakdown of each study, including target group, scope and scale of intervention and outcomes/impact identified.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2020) Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

<sup>4</sup> The ONS distinguishes between those who are unemployed but have been actively seeking and are available for work (40 per cent of the total 16 to 24-year-old NEET) and those who are economically inactive.

<sup>5</sup> McCrone, T. and Banford, S. (2016) NEET Prevention: Keeping Students Engaged at Key Stage 4. National Foundation for Educational Research

for disadvantaged learners with costs related to their education (including transport).<sup>6</sup> In 2013, the participation age for compulsory education or training was raised to 18.

The introduction of Traineeships in England in 2013 specifically targeted 16-24 year olds (and those up to age 25 with an EHCP) with basic skills to support transitions to apprenticeships and employment. The introduction of the Adult Education Budget in England in 2016 brought with it a number of programmes to support the unemployed, including fully funded learning for 19-23 year olds who want to attain qualifications at Level 2 and 3, at Level 2 for 24+ unemployed and free training for those aged 19 plus who have few or no qualifications to support them into work.<sup>7, 89</sup>

The Government also reformed apprenticeships in England and Wales in 2017 by increasing the range and quality of schemes on offer. Under the apprenticeship levy, employers with an annualised pay bill of over £3 million have 0.5 per cent of their payroll costs above that threshold deducted on a monthly basis. They can use these funds – along with a 10 per cent top-up from government – to cover the training and assessment costs of apprentices on apprenticeship standards. In 2018/19, 742,400 people were participating in an apprenticeship in England.<sup>10, 11</sup>

## Approach to the review

The primary focus of the review was on interventions produced from 2010 to 2020 that aim to improve attainment and employment, progression and engagement. There was one exception to this; the JobStart evaluation was undertaken in 1993 but followed participants for several years after the intervention ended. This study is regarded as one of the few long-term impact assessments in the area of employment support. The populations of interest were students and young people between 15 and 24 years old. The approach to this review means that other outcomes including changes in behaviour (for example, engagement and reduced anti-social behaviour), were also captured because they are linked to progression.<sup>12</sup> Other outcomes were also considered given their close association with increased engagement with education and training and reducing the risk of being NEET; for example, increased confidence, self-esteem and relationship building.<sup>13</sup> A definition of these outcomes is provided in Box 1.

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<sup>6</sup> The EMA is still active in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

<sup>7</sup> Powell, A. (2018) NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training, House of Commons Briefing Paper Number SN06705

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2017) Traineeship information for Employers. (Accessed 1st February 2020)

<sup>9</sup> Department for Education (2019) Adult Education Funding Rules, 2019-2020. (Accessed 25th March 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Dromey, J. and Evans, S. (2019) Bridging the gap: Where next for the apprenticeship levy. Learning and Work Institute

<sup>11</sup> Foley, N. (2020) Apprenticeship Statistics, House of Commons Briefing Paper Number 06113

<sup>12</sup> Trotman, D., Tucker, S. and Martyn, M. (2015) Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusions in an English city. *Journal of Educational Research*, 57, 3, 237 - 253

<sup>13</sup> Hernandez-Gantes, V.M., Keighobadi, S and Fletcher, E.C. (2018) Building community bonds, bridges, and linkages to promote the career readiness of high school students in the United States. *Journal of Education and Work* 31, 2, 190 -203

### **Box 1: Outcome measures**

**Attainment and employment:** Definitions of attainment are primarily driven by educational qualifications (vocational or academic), or levels achieved. For example, receipt of a qualification or credential that indicates the learner has reached a certain level. Educational attainment measures in this review included GCSEs, Functional Skills qualifications (Level 1 and Level 2), Level 3 and above; and supported internships and apprenticeships. Outcomes related to accessing and sustaining employment are also included in this.

**Progress:** Progress refers to distance travelled (i.e. progress made). For example, many studies in this review use number of credits earned as a positive indicator of academic progress. Other studies use scores on standardised literacy and numeracy tests to measure achievement or progress. Other studies incorporate making positive progress in work experience placements and developing soft skills as part of the distance travelled by participants.

**Engagement:** Definitions of engagement focus on changing students' behaviours and attitudes. Changes include awareness of their own and others' emotions (resulting in a reduction in anti-social behaviour, for example), increased confidence, understanding their preferred style of learning, and recognising and acknowledging their own responsibility for learning. Increased engagement can also result in an individual remaining in, or returning to, education, training or employment.

In addition, a range of factors were considered as proxies for 'at risk' of being NEET. These included being NEET at least once before, being an unpaid carer, eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM), poor mental health, school exclusions, pregnancy and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).<sup>14</sup>

Study designs in scope included individual and group interventions (including coaching and mentoring, either one-to-one or group based), intensive career guidance, confidence building, peer-to-peer learning and behavioural nudges and communication approaches. Interventions must have been subject to robust evaluation; both process and impact evaluations were in scope in order to identify what works, for whom and in what contexts.

The review identified precise search terms and synonyms to conduct a comprehensive search of a wide range of sources, see Figure 1.

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<sup>14</sup> Maguire, s. (2018) Who cares? Exploring economic inactivity among young women in the NEET group across England. *Journal of Education and Work*, 31, 7 – 8, 660 - 775

**Figure 1: Examples of search terms and synonyms**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Young people	NEET	Training	Eligible for Free School Meals
Young persons	Unemployed/unemployment	Educational/Vocational qualifications	ESOL
Youth	Transition	KS4	School exclusions/truancy
15 to 16-year olds	Inactivity	Traineeships Apprenticeships	SEND, Emotional, Social and Behavioural difficulties, mental health problems
Post-16	Labour market marginality	Employment programmes	Young carers/unpaid carers
16 to 24-year olds	Social exclusion	Work-based learning	Care leavers, young offenders, pregnant/pregnancy

The search for relevant studies included academic databases (for example, the Applied Social Science Index, the British Education Index and ProQuest, including ERIC), specialist research institutes, government websites, for example the Department for Education and the (former) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, think tanks and other organisations with an interest in improving outcomes for students and young people at risk of becoming NEET (for example, Learning and Work Institute, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Resolution Foundation, MDRC, CVER).

We also scrutinized the reference lists of studies retrieved to identify additional papers and searched contents pages of specific academic journals, for example, British Educational Research Journal, Journal of Vocational Education and Training, Research in Post-Compulsory Education, and Journal of Education and Work.

Reports from OECD countries that are published in English were also included.

Titles and abstracts of studies were screened using the search terms and synonyms outlined in Figure 1. The initial screening created a long list of 199 studies. These studies were then assessed for eligibility against the inclusion criteria. The final bibliography includes 58 studies. Much of the literature reviewed from the initial search met the inclusion criteria in terms of population, programme type and outcome, but not the criteria for the study design. Most of the studies were excluded because the programme or project was not subject to an evaluation, or sample sizes were too small; for example, this included case studies, which provided in-depth information on less than ten participants.

## Quality and nature of the evidence

The shortlisted studies were quality assessed using the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods which measures the quality of a study based on methodology, risk of contamination, attrition rate, sample size and date.<sup>15</sup>

Of the 58 studies in this review, 25 were evaluated via a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) with a Maryland Scale Score of 5. The majority of these RCTs were conducted in the United States, with only 4 RCTs undertaken in England, and Norway contributed one RCT. Twelve studies used some form of comparison group (Maryland Scale Score of 2 to 4). Twenty-one studies were of non-experimental design (Maryland Scale Score of 1).

There were only a limited number of studies that targeted specific transition points, for example, 15 to 16-year olds taking GCSEs at Key Stage 4 in England or at-16 transitions. There were very few studies that examined what works to support individuals with learning disabilities, care leavers, young adult carers and ex-offenders.

Given that several the studies in this review are from the United States it is important to consider the extent to which they are transferable to the UK context. The outcome measures used in US studies can be roughly equated to qualifications levels in the UK skills system.<sup>16</sup> However, it is important to caveat that the systems cannot be compared like for like, placing limitations on transferability.

## What works to support 15-24 year olds at risk of becoming NEET?

This section provides an overview of the current evidence of what works to support 15 to 24-year olds at risk of becoming NEET. Those studies with robust causal evidence are included here in order to identify approaches which have been effective in supporting young people across attainment and employment, progress and engagement outcomes. A summary of each study included in the wider review is in Appendix A.

A limited number of studies assessed cost-effectiveness of interventions. Details of these studies are included in the Appendix.

## Attainment and employment

**Multiple interventions and ‘wrap around’ approaches work effectively for disadvantaged learners to improve attainment and job prospects.** The Youth Villages Transitional Living Programme provided support to young people leaving care and the criminal justice system for activities such as money management, job seeking and, in addition, assistance from a Transitional Living Specialist. A positive impact on employment rates was identified at the two-year follow-up across those participants who had engaged with the programme for at least nine months. Additionally, at year two, the Transitional Living Programme had a statistically significant impact of six percentage points on the

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<sup>15</sup> Madalena, M. and Waights, S. [Guide to scoring methods using the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale](#) (Accessed 10 October 2019)

<sup>16</sup>The American General Educational Development (GED) qualification is equivalent to a UK Level 3 qualification or ‘A’ level.

proportion of young people who earned \$2,500 or more. However, Transitional Living did not produce statistically significant differences in educational attainment between the programme and control groups. Approximately 50 per cent had obtained a high school diploma 12-months following their enrolment and approximately 17 per cent in both cohorts had obtained their GED certificate.

The Learn and Earn Achieve Potential (LEAP) initiative targeted individuals who had been involved in the justice system. The programme supported two distinct groups of young people. The first group had not completed high school and the intervention developed curriculum focused skills and provided personalised support with goal setting, high school enrolment and 12-month follow-up provision. Of those who completed the programme, 76 per cent were either in school or employment at the six-month follow up. The second group were young people making the transition to high school; support for this group included developing academic and career skill sets, personalised guidance on college and career training, plus 12-month post-enrolment support. Sixty-eight per cent of participants from this group enrolled in either postsecondary education or a job training scheme.

The Improving Engagement and Attainment in maths and English project used several behavioural interventions, including text messages to learners aged 19 and over to improve class attendance and social support texts from family and friends to support 16 to 19-year old learners. The older cohort who received text messages to improve class attendance, increased their attendance rate by 22 per cent (7.4 percentage points from 34.0 to 41.4 per cent) and their achievement rates by 16 per cent (8.7 percentage points, from 54.5 to 63.2 per cent). For the younger cohort, the social support texts improved Level 2 attainment rates by 24 per cent (5.1 percentage points from 21.1 to 26.2 per cent)

**Traineeships, supported internships and apprenticeship programmes can deliver positive employment and earnings outcomes for young people at risk of becoming NEET.** The Traineeships Programme in Wales provided 16 to 19-years olds with numeracy and literacy support and work experience placements. A third of those who participated in traineeships went on to find employment, and those completing the programme earned over £600 more in the following year than those in the control group.

The Traineeship Programme in England, which was introduced in August 2013, provides young people aged 16 to 24 (and those up to age 25 with an EHCP) with an intensive period of work experience and work preparation training. Participants are also offered support to improve their English and maths to provide the best opportunity of transitioning to an apprenticeship or employment. Twelve months after beginning their Traineeship, 75 per cent had started in a positive destination (further learning, employment or apprenticeship). Whilst the apprenticeships and participation at level 2 increased, learning at a higher level was reduced, particularly among younger trainees. Longer-term follow-up would help to explain the reasons for this.

As part of the Year UP programme (PACE), disadvantaged young people were given 6-month internships based at large organisations. The impact assessment identified the intervention group were more likely to gain permanent employment than their control group

peers, earning a total of \$13,645 more during years two to four following the intervention. After their internships, participants on the PACE programme earned 40 per cent more than those in the control group after 30 months; this was a 13 per cent reduction from the follow-up at 20 months.

The Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) offered disengaged 16 to 24-year olds temporary paid internships, along with support services. In the first year of follow-up those who had subsidised employment doubled their earnings and increased employment by 30 percentage points, when compared to controls. However, programme benefits did not last beyond 30 months of follow-up with outcomes no better than their control group peers. A similar programme in Spain did not increase employment prospects of those at risk of NEET, nor did the intervention lead to positive results in re-engagement with formal education for 16 to 18-year olds.

## Progress

**Basic skills support can improve progress and reduce the risk of NEET.** The Improving Basic Skills intervention (as part of the US Adult Education in Welfare to Work Programmes) was aimed at post-16 low-income, unemployed and single parent women who did not have a high-school diploma. The courses prepared participants for their GED exam, including regular high school classes and ESOL courses. The intervention increased both educational engagement and attainment. The receipt of the GED was an important predictor of subsequent enrolment in post-secondary educational programmes.

The Bridging the Gap study involved eight summer school programmes. The aim of the intervention was to assist young people to transition and navigate their new academic environment and improve their academic outcomes in college. The five-week summer school provided academic support with maths, reading and writing. The intervention group performed significantly better in their first-year college maths and writing classes compared to those in the control group. However, there was no significant difference in scores between the groups at the two-year follow up.

The Summer Arts College programme was delivered by the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council in England to support young people recently released from custody and at risk of re-offending. The intervention used an arts-based programme to embed literacy and numeracy skills. Of those who participated in the programme, 72 per cent progressed to an education, employment or training destination within one month. Seventy per cent increased their literacy and numeracy grades and reduced rates of reoffending.

**Access to work experience can result in long-term employment and earning gains.** Both the Jobs Corp and Challenge programmes included educational provision working in combination with health services and vocational training related to different careers, including the military. Job Corps participants stayed in education for a year longer compared with the control group. At the four year follow up, Job Corps participants were earning more than the control group. However, there was no significant difference in the employment rate between the groups. Challenge participants were more likely to obtain a high school diploma than those who did not take part.

The YouthBuild programme delivered educational and vocational training (primarily in construction). Participants of the programme were more likely to participate in further education and training, and earn more, compared to a control group.

Pima College Pathways to Healthcare Program in the US provided accelerated basic skills courses, occupational training and scholarships for tuition and books. Participants attended significantly more hours of occupational training (in Healthcare) and earned significantly more college credits than the control group.

## Engagement

### **Mentoring and counselling can effectively support pupils at risk of becoming NEET.**

Think Forward provided targeted support for pupils in England who were identified as at risk of becoming NEET on completion of their secondary education. The intervention aimed to secure a successful transition into adulthood (further education, training or employment). Coaches were assigned to pupils for the duration of the intervention (18 months for Year 10 pupils and 6 months for those in Year 11). The support provided included one-to-one sessions and group work to build life skills and confidence and connect young people to relevant services. There was little evidence of improved GCSE scores, absence or pupil attitude; however, teachers reported improvements in the behaviour of the Year 11 group as the students approached the end of the programme. The Youth Service NEET programme in New Zealand, which provided 16 and 17-year olds with mentoring and counselling to support and encourage them to remain in further education or training, raised educational participation by 10 per cent.

The Career Development Skills Intervention focused on delivering an alternative format of career counselling, known as the Integrative Contextual Model. Participants who received the non-traditional approach had greater levels of work readiness and were able to engage in self-regulated learning compared to those in the control groups. The between group effect sizes of the vocational skills and career development outcomes were statistically significant (they ranged from 0.49 to 0.57).

**Multiple interventions which target motivational and confidence skills building can improve engagement, but flexibility of intervention delivery is key.** The NEET Prevention Study in England involved mentoring, counselling, group support networks and work placements to keep young people engaged at Key Stage 4. The intervention was a 6-week package of support that focused on increasing motivation and identifying opportunities for young people who were NEET. The programme aimed to raise participant self-esteem through education and training and by allowing progress in alternative areas considered by the participants themselves. The intervention was delivered by a work-integration social enterprise in an area of high unemployment. Three quarters of the students remained engaged in education between 2013 and 2015 and had more positive attitudes towards school and increased confidence and emotional wellbeing.

The Youthreach initiative in Ireland targeted early school leavers (aged 15 to 20) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and to progress to further education, training and employment. The programme assisted learners to

overcome personal, social and learning difficulties and provided opportunities for basic skills, personal development, vocational training and work experience. Youthreach centres offered more flexibility in course content so educators could address the needs of the learners rather than being required to implement a programme that was prescribed at a national level. The time spent at Youthreach centres was also flexible, so learners could take longer to learn skills than is usually permitted in mainstream schools. The retention rate of participants to Leaving Certificate level at school was 76 per cent in 2004 and had risen to 80 per cent in 2009.

**One-to-one and tailored engagement can support disengaged young people to return to education, training and employment.** The Youth Contract Programme designed their programme to meet the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 and who were already NEET. The programme's aim was to re-engage these individuals in learning, so they could transition and re-enter education or begin post-16 training or work. The interventions included experiential learning through practical experience (for example, outdoor learning, music and vocational skills) that aimed to restore confidence and build potential. Twelve months after the Youth Contract Programme, 75 per cent of participants had returned to education, training or employment.

An Alternative Educational Provision Model was trialled in London for 15-16 year old disengaged learners who had either been excluded from school or were at risk of exclusion. The intervention prepared learners for GCSE and BTEC examinations with reduced student-teacher ratios (class sizes of 12 to 15 pupils), learning support assistants, mentoring and increasing the engagement of external agencies, parents and carers. Over 80 per cent of those who completed the programme progressed onto further education courses.

In a non-experimental study, the OnSide Youth Zone project aimed to improve the overall wellbeing and life chances of young people at Key Stage 4 and older in order to reduce the risk of NEET. Targeted activities such as mentoring, sexual health advice, counselling and advice on job searches supported a 3 per cent fall in the NEET figure of participating schools.

The Troubled Families programme in England is a targeted family intervention, run by local authorities. The intervention aims to tackle issues before they require costlier interventions, for example, addressing school truancy, preventing young people becoming NEET and supporting progression to continuous employment. Interventions included a dedicated family worker who provided practical support to access and sustain educational and employment outcomes. The next phase of the programme is due to complete in March 2021. The analysis cannot as yet report on school attendance or engagement outcomes, but data indicates that there is a statistically significant reduction in juvenile convictions amongst participant families.

**Learning Communities can help 16-18 year olds at key transition points to increase their educational engagement.** There are numerous Learning Communities across the USA, which aim to support disadvantaged students and those struggling with academic

progress throughout the duration of their education.<sup>17</sup> The Freshman Learning Community Program targeted new college starters in their first semester to help their transition to a college environment. The aim was for participants to build peer and academic relationships and improve their knowledge of the requirements of their course. Participants subsequently increased their levels of engagement and attainment. Students in the programme group were 10 percentage points more likely than control group students to pass all their courses and 8 percentage points less likely to withdraw from any courses.

**Financial incentives support educational progress, but further testing in a UK context is required.** Moving Forward focused solely on the provision of financial incentives on educational outcomes for low-income males aged 16 and over. A Performance Award was granted contingent on participants enrolling at college and meeting academic benchmarks over three semesters. In the second semester of the intervention, the students on the programme were 13 percentage points more likely to enrol full-time than the control group. Students in the intervention group earned approximately two full credits more than those in the control group, over the first year of the programme.

## Conclusions and areas for further exploration

This evidence review has identified a range of effective approaches to prevent and reduce the risk of 15 to 24-year olds becoming NEET. Approaches that include flexible and tailored support are proven to be particularly effective in acting as a mechanism for positive outcomes across attainment and employment, progress and engagement for at risk young people.

Targeting specific transition points, such as Key Stage 4, at-16 and at-18, can support diversion from NEET and improve attainment. Those interventions that developed personal skills and aspirations were most effective for these groups. Supported work experience and vocational training also worked well, particularly for more vulnerable young people. Group based learning communities and interventions designed to target motivation and confidence also supported to sustain engagement in further learning. While positive causal evidence was identified for behavioural and incentive-based interventions, this requires further testing in a UK context.

A key finding from this review is also the overall scarcity of evidence. A total of 58 studies met the inclusion and quality standard criteria and many of these did not specifically report on outcomes for disadvantaged groups such as care leavers, young adult carers or young offenders. This demonstrates that there is more work to do in establishing a systematic and robust evidence base that identifies what works, for whom and in what contexts.

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<sup>17</sup> Wathington, H.D, Pretlow, J and Mitchell, C (2010 – 2011) The Difference a Cohort makes: Understanding Developmental Learning Communities in Community Colleges. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 12 (2), 225 - 242

## Appendix: The evidence

**Multiple interventions** comprise two or more interventions. From the 58 studies identified in this review, 24 involved some form of multiple intervention. The following summaries provide an illustration of the various types of interventions that are combined in support programmes.

- **National Job Corps Study (USA):** Vocational, academic, health and counselling services, which usually took place in a residential setting. A follow-up study was undertaken and reported ten years after the initial Job Corps programme. The Job Corps programme provided detailed cost benefit analyses. For example, over the 4-year survey period the benefits were found to be less than \$4000, which meant that the programme costs exceeded the programme benefits. Additional follow-up data, 10 years after the initial cost analysis, found that social benefits did not offset programme costs for the full sample of participants (16 to 24 years), but for the older cohort specifically (20 to 24 years) the benefits of the programme did exceed the programme costs.
- **Staying on Course:** The National Guard Youth Challenge (USA): Residential, quasi-military, focus on employment, education, and military service, plus mentoring
- **Jobstart (USA):** Basic academic skills (reading, communication, IT), skills training, counselling, life skills and job placement help
- **Bridging the Gap (USA):** Academic support (maths, reading and writing), one-to-one tutoring, mentoring, computer-based programmes and \$400 stipend to encourage registration
- **Making their Way (USA):** Assessment and individual living plan with a transitional living specialist (advice on job seeking, money management) orientation activities, additional educational support
- **Sustained Gains: Year Up (USA):** Six-month internship with technical skills and professional skills training, the opportunity to earn college credits, personal adviser to discuss barriers/issues
- **Building a Future (USA):** Basic skills, remedial education, vocational training (usually in construction), counselling, community service
- **Focusing on Girls' Futures:** Pathways for Advancing Careers in Education (PACE programme study) (USA): This intervention was for females only. Academic classes and advice, individual counselling, referrals to other services
- **Longer-term impacts of mentoring and education services (USA):** Provided mentoring, education services and financial incentives
- **Improving engagement and attainment in maths and English (UK):** The main focus was text messages as reminders and social support; also, reflective writing sessions (beliefs about learning) and advisor feedback. The authors reported that the estimated

cost of the intervention was less than £5 per learner (including the cost of the messages and staff time). Additional texts to parents, to encourage them to support their child to enrol on a college course, cost £10 and the report noted that this was a cost-effective way of increasing enrolment.

- **Doubling Graduation rates (ASAP programme) (USA):** This intervention combined developmental courses, comprehensive support services and financial support for books and transport. The increase in the number of students who graduated (almost double the number) outweighed the additional cost.
- **Two-year effects of a Freshman learning Community Program (USA):** The programme combined English classes, an academic course, counselling, tutoring, money for textbooks
- **The Youth Contract Provision for 16 – 17-year-old NEET (England):** This scheme gave providers freedom to address participants' specific needs (i.e. without prescription from the Government). Owing to the flexibility of the Youth Contract, the overall programme involved multiple interventions. For example, the Fairbridge Programme aimed to build confidence in disengaged young people through a variety of experiential learning; the Community Links programme involved one-to-one mentoring, counselling and advice
- **Activity Agreement Pilots (England):** Activity Agreements were contracts between a young person and their Connexions advisor. The programme typically lasted 12 – 15 weeks. Participants were offered a package of support; for example, developmental activities (e.g. dealing with money), confidence building and skills progression. The Agreement also included a weekly discretionary payment if the participant engaged in developmental activities
- **Activity Agreement Pilots: Evaluation of the 2009 – 2010 Extension (England):** This report assessed the longer term outcomes of engagement in the Activity Agreement Pilots and noted that in some areas, for a two-year period, parents were also offered a weekly allowance to support their child to engage in learning
- **What works re-engaging young people who are NEET? Entry to Learning Pilots (England):** The Learning Pilot offered discretionary funding to participants (similar to Activity Agreements), and skills progression training (including CV writing). Entry to this learning intervention was on a smaller scale than the Activity Agreement programme and had more involvement from voluntary and community-based organisations
- **Lessons from the Foundation Learning Provision for the new 16 – 19 Study Programmes (England):** This was a personalised programme tailored to the individual young person's needs. Participants worked towards recognised qualifications, completed a work experience placement, had on-going reviews, advice and guidance sessions

- **Youth transitions to Employment (England):** Pre-employment support included job search services and work experience placements (including volunteering); tailored therapeutic and peer mentoring support
- **The Lift Children’s Home Project (Catch 22) (England):** Young care leavers worked one-to-one (to build trust) with key workers about pathway planning, attended workshops to develop skills and had access to ‘Get ready for adult life’ CD resources. To support employability the intervention provided workshops on the employment market and the skills needed, CV support and organisation of work placements, traineeships and apprenticeships
- **Connecting to Opportunity: Lessons on Adapting Interventions for Young People Experiencing Homelessness or Systems Involvement (USA):** The Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) intervention offered two distinct interventions. The first targeted young people who had not completed high school and focused on high school enrolment and curriculum skills development, personalised goal setting and building connections with employers. The second intervention was targeted at young people transitioning to post-secondary education and included developing academic and career skill sets, with personalised college and career training. Both interventions offered 12-month follow-up support
- **Youth and Senior Traveller Training Centre Programmes (Ireland):** This programme provided early school leavers with the knowledge and skills to fully participate in society and progress to further education, training and employment. Initial stages supported learners to develop an individual learning plan and overcome personal, social and learning difficulties and develop competencies for further learning. Latter stages provided a range of educational, training or employment skills and finally transition support to assist progression to further education, training or employment
- **Effective Programmes for NEET Young People (New Zealand):** This four-stage intervention aimed to secure the participant sustainable training or employment. Mentors worked with the young person and their parents to determine the participant’s goals; following this they worked with the young person to identify barriers and put measures in place to overcome them (for example, obtaining a driver’s licence or opening a bank account). Individual pathways were put in place to outline plans and opportunities for training; this usually included short term training. The final stage was to secure education or employment, with ongoing mentor support to help with emerging difficulties
- **NEET Prevention: Keeping Students engaged at KS4 (England):** There were five strands to this intervention. One-to-one mentoring and counselling; a project lead who was the contact point for the participant; group support networks and work placements. This intervention also had a high degree of flexibility. NEET Prevention programme was cost effective. One school reported the cost prior to the intervention was £250,000 for alternative provision, but the outlay for the intervention was £150,00

- **OnSide Youth Zones: Defining the Impact of a Youth Zone (England):** This programme aimed to make a difference to the overall wellbeing and life chances of its participants. Activities delivered by Youth Zones fell into two categories: Core and Targeted. Core activities were 'Get Active', 'Get Creative' and 'Get Outdoors'; Targeted activities included 'Get Sorted' (for example, mentoring, counselling, sexual health), 'Get Connected' (for example, community projects) and 'Get Ahead' (for example, finding employment). The Youth Zone report assessed the social impact of the programme. The report noted that the cost of the Youth Zones was £3,940,000, with costs to the local authority of £1,200,000; this gave cost benefit ratios of 2.0 and 6.7 respectively. On this calculation, the authors conclude that the social value of the Youth Zones outweighed the costs of provision

**Basic skills interventions** are programmes delivering language, literacy and numeracy provision.

- **Improving Basic Skills (USA):** This offered adult basic education classes (literacy and numeracy) delivered by adult education providers
- **Skills for life learning (England):** Offered free literacy and numeracy classes for those without qualifications at Level 2

**Occupational training and work preparation interventions** are focused on delivering occupational training and preparing skills for the workplace, with the aim of increasing participants' employment and earnings.

- **Evaluation of Career Development Skills (USA):** Provided career counselling, goal setting and work readiness skills
- **Individual Placement and Support (Norway):** This Norwegian intervention provided trained specialists who sought to find good job matches by assessing client preferences through guided choices and decision making
- **Forging a Path (USA):** This young adult internship programme included paid internships, job-readiness training and follow-up
- **The Impact of Training Intensive Labour Market Policies (Spain):** This was a programme of support, lasting one academic year. The intervention was delivered by educational institutions, with a focus on enrolment onto vocational courses, internships and work experience placements; the programme also offered support to those who wanted to re-engage with formal education
- **Effects of an Employment enhancement programme (England):** The programme aimed to increase employability of young people through a six-week package focused on raising motivation (focusing on general self-efficacy) and locating employment opportunities. The findings indicate that the intervention group would have to earn an additional 3.8 college level credits, on average, to justify the initial costs of the programme.

- **Opening Doors to Apprenticeships (England):** This supported apprenticeship scheme aimed to raise the achievement of young people through work-based learning. A further objective was to increase the engagement of employers in workforce development and encourage them to support apprenticeships
- **Findings from In-Depth Interviews with Participants in Subsidised Employment Programmes (USA):** This intervention provided paid work experience, job-readiness training and links to employers
- **Bridging the Opportunity Divide (PACE programme study) (USA):** The initial six months training were classroom-based courses, which addressed occupation specific and general skills. The second six months were spent in full-time customised training in IT or financial services, followed by a six-month internship
- **Pima Community College Pathway to Healthcare Program (PACE programme study) (USA):** The key focus was on occupational training (for healthcare field), with accelerated basic skills training, intensive staff guidance and scholarship payments for tuition, books, etc.
- **Estimating the impact of traineeships (England):** Each traineeship offered work placement, CV writing, interview and job application support, additional English and maths teaching. Traineeships lasted between six weeks and six months
- **Evaluation of the Traineeships Programme (Wales):** The traineeship in Wales provided one-to-one support, vocational courses, improving literacy and numeracy, boosting employability skills and opportunities to prepare for work experience placement. The report concluded that it was value for money. It was also noted that for a two-year time horizon the net present value ranged from £23.9 million to £81.7 million.
- **Fit for Work (England):** Involved one-to-one mentoring and group work and activities to improve young people's mental and physical health. The programme offered bespoke employability activities aimed to build soft, core and vocational skills. Those who progressed to employment had access to in-work support and help and participants who did not find work initially were offered ongoing employability support. The Fit for Work intervention authors reported that for every £1 spent on the project, the benefit to the UK economy was between £1.90 and £2.40.

**Financial interventions are monetary allowances or support** to assist young people enter, or remain in, education.

- **Moving Forward (USA):** Students could receive \$4,500 over three semesters, but the payment was contingent on meeting academic benchmarks and participating in tutoring and workshops
- **The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund (England):** Provided financial support to young people who faced significant financial barriers to participation in education or training post-16

## **Innovative approaches are less traditional learning support interventions**

- **The Effect of School Renaissance on Student Achievement in Two Mississippi School Districts (USA):** The key element in this programme was the use of the Renaissance computer program to assist educators assess students' academic progress. This digital intervention aimed to accelerate academic progress in reading and maths
- **Partnerships to Support early school leavers (Scotland):** The support programme was designed to support young people, who left school the term before their statutory leaving age, to enter college and engage with college studies. The young people remained the responsibility of their school during this transition
- **The impact of 14 – 16-year olds on further education (England):** This programme supported 14 – 16-year olds to integrate into college with the aim of lowering their disengagement from education and to help them make informed choices about their pre-16 courses. Interventions included close liaison between schools and colleges to ensure smooth transitions, defined pastoral support, which included one-to-one tutorials and additional support in classrooms for those identified in need of extra assistance
- **Summer Arts College 2011 (England):** This programme was for young people recently released from custody. The arts college worked on improving literacy and numeracy skills by embedding subjects into an arts-based delivery, using subject tutors
- **Alternative Educational Provision in an Area of Deprivation in London (England):** This intervention was for learners who had been excluded or were at risk of exclusion. The students had one-to-one mentoring and guidance; class sizes were reduced to 12 – 15 learners with a teacher and learning support assistants. The provision also included significant engagement with external agencies alongside parents and carers
- **Good practice in re-engaging disaffected and reluctant students in secondary schools (England):** This programme was used by secondary schools to reduce absence rates and re-engaged students. It included the use of monitoring systems to identify at risk learners and offered mentoring services. There was collaboration between primary and secondary schools, along with structured communications with parents and carers; curriculums were modified and education providers beyond the school were involved
- **Evaluation of Premiership Rugby's HITZ Learning Academy Programme (England):** Sessions were delivered by HITZ officers working in conjunction with educational learning providers, local and national businesses and the Armed Forces. The intervention aimed to instil confidence and motivation, and combined classroom-based activities and practical activities. The programme was aimed at young people who struggled with the structure and routines of school and college courses

- **The Difference a Cohort Makes: Understanding Developmental Learning Communities in Community Colleges (USA):** Small cohorts of students were enrolled together in two or more linked courses. The intervention sought to evaluate whether such cohorts act as mechanisms for increasing interaction and interdependence between students and if such behavioural changes resulted in student retention

**Mentoring, coaching or small group interventions** are delivered on a one-to-one basis, or in groups no larger than six students.

- **Engage in Education (England):** This provided youth worker support in one-to-one and small group sessions, focusing on counselling and anger management
- **All Stars (USA and Northern Ireland):** Class teachers delivered small group work discussions, including role play, games to prevent onset of risky behaviours, goal setting and decision making
- **Think Forward (England):** The programme targeted support to pupils through deployment of coaches delivering one-to-one support and group work
- **Making a Difference: Big Brothers, Big Sisters (USA):** This school-based mentoring support initiative provided volunteer mentors of different ages to match the differing needs of the participants
- **Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Service: NEET programme (New Zealand):** Community organisations provided young people with tailored mentoring guidance and support, along with coaching and counselling
- **Evaluation of the Innovation Fund Pilot (United Kingdom):** This pilot offered one-to-one support for developing career aspirations, goal setting and help with studying and examinations. Additionally, there was small group work and opportunities to gain employment-related skills. The evaluation of the Innovation Fund Pilot was assessed as value for money, with a benefit to cost ratio of 1.3 for the six projects in Round One of the Fund, and 1.25 for the four projects in Round Two.
- **Pupils with declining attainment between Key Stages 3 and 4 (England):** This targeted support was directly offered to a young person in the areas of curriculum, personal support and careers advice

**Careers Advice providers help and guide individuals to find employment.**

- **An Economic Evaluation of The National Careers Service (England):** This service includes a website to assist people find out about job opportunities along with guidance about the skills and qualifications needed, and how to develop them. A helpline and webchat service and a walk-in service is available, which directs people to the best source of help and advice whatever their needs. For adults aged 19 and over (or 18 and over if seeking work), there is the opportunity for one-to-one face-to-face support from an adviser

**Interventions targeting family problems may reduce antisocial behaviour and likelihood of becoming NEET.**

- **The Troubled Families programme (England):** A targeted family intervention, run by local authorities to address multiple problems within troubled families, including crime, anti-social behaviour, unemployment, truancy and exclusions. The intervention aims to tackle issues before they require costlier interventions, for example, addressing school truancy, preventing young people becoming NEET and supporting progression to continuous employment. The second phase started in 2015 and is due to complete in March 2021. The analysis cannot as yet report on school attendance outcomes, although data indicates that there is a statistically significant reduction in juvenile convictions amongst participant families.