

NEET: Young people not in education, employment, or training and violent crime

Literature Review

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Executive Summary

The term NEET, 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training', refers to a person who is not receiving education, in employment, or undertaking vocational training, aged between 16 and 24. As of December 2022, 11.5% of all young people in the United Kingdom were NEET, a total of 788,000. Historic trends show that females have had higher NEET rates than males, but since 2020 this has reversed. The NEET rate for those aged 16-17 years is 4% and for those aged 18-24 the rate has slightly increased to 13.6%. There are demographic differences in NEET rates for ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The NEET rate is slightly higher in Yorkshire and The Humber (5.3%) than England as a whole (4.7%). Bradford has the highest NEET rate (2.9%) and Kirklees the lowest (2.3%). Leeds has the highest rate of NEET or unknown combined (7.8%) The NEET rate has fallen for all districts apart from Leeds compared to the end of 2021. For all districts, the NEET rate is higher for men than women in line with national data.

Young people being NEET has extensive impacts for individuals, communities, and the economy and these effects have been described as 'scarring'. Being NEET, even for a short period of time, can impact on a young person's projected future earnings and is associated with regular unemployment later in life and lower job security. Studies have shown being NEET can have a detrimental effect on young people's physical and mental health and have long-term impacts on skills, confidence, and future aspirations. Being NEET is also associated with engaging in unhealthy behaviours such as drugs and alcohol misuse.

The direct link between being NEET and violent crime is not well established in the literature or available data. Previous research has noted that becoming and remaining NEET can result in being more likely to have a criminal record. There are a number of risk factors and characteristics that increase the likelihood of young people becoming NEET and many of these are consistent with the risk factors associated with violence. Educational, personal, and structural risk factors for becoming NEET have been identified.

Protective factors are characteristics or experiences which mitigate against risk and reduce the likelihood of an individual experiencing negative impacts and outcomes. Protective factors help to provide an explanation for why young people are not all affected in the same way by experiences and are able to avoid negative outcomes and show resilience. Protective factors identified as playing a role in avoiding becoming NEET include positive aspirations, academic engagement and parental support.

Successful interventions for young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET should focus on improving careers information, advice, and guidance, developing subject and curriculum options, availability of apprenticeships, training, and work experience, and providing academic and pastoral support.

Background

The term NEET, 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training', refers to a person who is unemployed, not receiving education or vocational training including apprenticeships, and includes individuals who are or are not seeking a job, excluding those of retirement age. In the United Kingdom, the NEET classification focuses on young people, comprised of those aged 16-24. This group is usually disaggregated into those aged 16-17 and those aged 18-24.

Legislation that raised the 'participation age' (RPA) for young people from 16 to 17 in 2013, and then to 18 in 2015¹ means young people are legally required to remain in some form of education or training for longer than before. Young people are able to choose how they participate, be it through full-time education, a job or volunteering combined with part-time study, or by undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The rationales for raising the participation age were:²

- There is a link between post-16 participation and increased attainment
- Higher attainment is associated with both increased employment and greater earnings for those in employment
- There are wider benefits of learning, including reduced likelihood of teenage pregnancy, reduced likelihood of drug use, and reduced likelihood of offending behaviours
- The estimated lifetime cost to public finance of 16–18-year-olds being NEET is £56,000 (in 2014) with the amount lost to the economy and welfare to individuals and families being even higher

From 2013 to 2015, following the RPA legislation, there was a drop in the proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds classified as NEET. The figures show that at the end of 2013 the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds who were NEET was 7.6%, this fell to 7.5% in 2015, the lowest figure since 2000.³

However, the immediate reduction in the percentage of NEET young people has not persisted, with fluctuations occurring due to changes in the job market, systemic issues in education, and the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ Richmond, T., & Regan, E. (2022). Finding a NEET solution. How to prevent young people from falling out of our education system. *EDSK*. [Link](#).

² Department for Education. (2015). Raising the participation age (RPA). 'Evidence check' memorandum. *Commons Committee*. [Link](#).

³ *ibid*.

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Long-term impacts

Young people being NEET has extensive impacts for individuals, communities, and the economy and these effects have been described as ‘scarring’.

Being NEET, even for a short period of time, can impact on a young person’s projected future earnings, with research from 2010 estimating that individuals who have been NEET lose between £50,000 and £225,000 over the course of their lives. Evidence from 2014 reported that NEET individuals stand to lose around 11% a year in salary compared to their peers and that this continues into their forties.⁴ As well as lower future earnings, being NEET is associated with regular unemployment later in life and lower job security.⁵ Furthermore, studies have shown being NEET can have a detrimental effect on young people’s physical and mental health⁶ and have long-term impacts on a young person’s skills, confidence, and future aspirations. Being NEET is also associated with engaging in unhealthy behaviours such as drugs and alcohol misuse.⁷

Wider communities are also impacted by young people being NEET, not in the least due to the link between NEET and youth crime which is increased amongst the NEET population.⁸

Data from 2010, estimated that for each NEET young person the direct cost to the public sector is £56,500 and the wider resource cost to the economy is estimated at £104,300.⁹ The lost taxes, additional public service costs, and associated impacts such as youth crime and poor health is estimated to cost Britain in excess of £77 billion a year.¹⁰ Estimates of the longer-term costs of young people being NEET found that the economic impact of youth unemployment will be £2.1 billion in 2025.

⁴ Impetus. (2014). Make NEETs history in 2014. [Link.](#)

⁵ PwC & Youth Futures Foundation. (2022). Youth Employment Index 2022. Building a resilient workforce for the future. [Link.](#)

⁶ Coles et al. (2010). Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16–18-year-olds not in Education, Employment or Training. *The University of York*. [Link.](#)

⁷ Richmond & Regan (n 1)

⁸ Impetus (n 4)

⁹ Coles et al. (n 6)

¹⁰ Impetus (n 4)

United Kingdom: the picture

Employment and Unemployment

In the United Kingdom, for the year ending September 2022, the employment rate was 75.6%. The employment rate has seen an increase since September 2020 when there was a large drop due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Table 1 shows the employment rate for different groups.

	Employment rate
Male	79%
Female	72.2%
Aged 16-17	24.7%
Aged 18-24	61.7%

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT RATE BY GENDER AND NEET GROUPINGS

As the employment rate has begun to rise in the wake of the pandemic, the unemployment rate has dropped. As of September 2022, the UK's unemployment rate was 3.7%, a fall from 4.2% the previous year. However, the unemployment rate for those aged 16-17 is 19.5% and for those aged 18-24 is 9.4%.

Economic inactivity

The ONS defines economic inactivity as people of working age (between 16 and 64) not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

Since 1971, the economic inactivity rate had generally been falling, however it increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. For the period up to November 2022, the economic inactivity rate was 21.5%. Most of these individuals are accounted for by students, those who are long-term sick, those looking after their family/home, and retired.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training.¹¹

In 2021/22 there were 740,400 people participating in an apprenticeship in England, with 349,200 apprenticeship starts and 137,900 apprenticeship achievements.¹² The number of apprenticeships starts had fallen due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but has

¹¹ Foley, N. (2021). Apprenticeship Statistics. *House of Commons Library*. [Link](#).

¹² GOV.UK. (2023). Apprenticeships and traineeships – Academic Year 2022/23. [Link](#).

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started to rise again with an 8.6% increase on the previous year. The number of achievements however fell by 19,300.

The pandemic had a disproportionately negative impact on apprenticeship starts for those aged under 19, with 47% of starts in 2021/22 by people aged 25 and over.¹³

Of particular interest is the fall in apprenticeship starts amongst those from disadvantaged areas. Apprenticeship starts have fallen disproportionately amongst apprentices from the most disadvantaged areas especially at lower qualification levels. In addition, those eligible for free school meals are under-represented at all levels of apprenticeships.¹⁴

NEET

As of December 2022, 11.6% of all young people were NEET, a total of 795,000. Historic trends show that females have had higher NEET rates than males, but since 2020 this has reversed. There are slightly more NEET men than women (11.8% compared to 9.1%),¹⁵ which is still 0.5 percentage points down compared to pre-coronavirus levels.¹⁶ The NEET rate for those aged 16-17 years is 3% and for those aged 18-24 the rate has slightly decreased to 12.6%.¹⁷

Nearly a quarter of those aged 16-24 years were inactive due to being 'long term or temporarily sick', and the main reason for inactivity was 'other' which can include those waiting for employment or education to begin or not wanting to participate.¹⁸ In 2022, those NEET were nearly twice as likely to have a health condition compared to the overall 16-24 population and over the last decade this has been largely due to increases in the proportion with a mental health condition.

	Unemployed for more than 6 months	Unemployed for less than 6 months	Long-term or temporary sick	Looking after family/home	Other
2019	14.1%	27.7%	21.5%	17.3%	19.4%
2020	17.8%	28.7%	20.5%	9.9%	23.1%
2021	15.2%	24.0%	24.7%	10.7%	25.5%

TABLE 2: AGE 16-24 NEET RATE AND REASON FOR INACTIVITY

Data from Q3 2019 to Q2 2020 when 11% of all 16–24-year-olds were NEET, found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people were most likely to be NEET (13%), followed by Black young people (12.0%), and white young people (11.0%). The proportion of 16–24-year-olds who were NEET was also higher for those with disabilities (28%) than those

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Cavaglia et al. (2022). The Recent Evolution of Apprenticeships. *The Sutton Trust*. [Link](#).

¹⁵ GOV.UK. (2022). NEET age 16 to 24. [Link](#).

¹⁶ GOV.UK, (2022). Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) UK November 2022. [Link](#).

¹⁷ GOV.UK. (n 15)

¹⁸ GOV.UK. (n 15)

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without (8%). A higher proportion of young people without any qualifications were NEET (24%) than the proportion of those qualified to GCSE level and above (9%).¹⁹

In 2021, young people classed as NEET were almost twice as likely to have a health problem than the overall 16-24 population (46.7% and 24.5% respectively). Those experiencing a mental health condition has almost tripled from 7.7% in 2012 to 20.3% in 2022, and conditions reported include depression, anxiety, or phobias.²⁰

¹⁹ Powell, A. (2021). NEET: Young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training. *House of Commons Library*. [Link](#).

²⁰ GOV.UK. (n 15)

West Yorkshire: the picture

Employment and Unemployment

In West Yorkshire, for the year ending September 2022, the employment rate was 73.5%,²¹ this is a slight increase on the previous year but is lower than the employment rate nationally. The unemployment rate in the region is 3.7%, in line with the national rate. Table 3 shows the employment and unemployment rate by gender for West Yorkshire districts.

	West Yorkshire	Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield
Employed	73.5%	70.2%	72.9%	71.1%	76.3%	75%
Unemployed	3.7%	4.8%	4%	4%	3.7%	3.4%
Females – Employed	69.3%	66.8%	70.3%	65.1%	73.2%	68.5%
Males – Employed	77.6%	73.6%	75.6%	77%	79.2%	81.1%
Females – Unemployed	3.3%	#	#	#	#	#
Males – Unemployed	4.1%	#	#	#	4.8%	#

TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN WEST YORKSHIRE BY GENDER. # SAMPLE SIZE TOO SMALL FOR RELIABLE ESTIMATE

The employment rate is highest in Leeds at 76.3%, which is above the rate for the United Kingdom and West Yorkshire. The unemployment rate is highest in Bradford 4.8% and lowest in Wakefield at 3.4%. In all districts the employment rate was higher for males than females, and the difference was largest in Wakefield.

Economic inactivity

The economic inactivity rate in West Yorkshire for the year ending September 2022 was 23.7%,²² this is slightly higher than the national rate of 21.5%. In 2021, the percentage of workless households (defined as households where no one aged 16 years or over is in employment) in the region was 14.2%, this is a slight increase from 2020 suggesting the number of workless households was impacted by the pandemic.

Apprenticeships

Table 4 shows the number of apprenticeships starts, participation, and achievements across the districts in West Yorkshire for 2021/22. Leeds has the highest number of

²¹ Office for National Statistics. (2022). Employment and unemployment. [Link](#).

²² Office for National Statistics. (2022). Economic inactivity. [Link](#).

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apprenticeships starts, participation, and achievements compared to the other West Yorkshire districts. This can most likely be explained by the high population in this district.

	Bradford	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Wakefield
Starts	1,870	870	1,670	2,780	1,390
Participation	3,980	1,830	3,610	5,650	2,810
Achievements	790	350	770	1,200	600

TABLE 4: APPRENTICESHIP STARTS, PARTICIPATION, AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN WEST YORKSHIRE FOR 2021/22

It should be noted that not all apprenticeships are a yearlong, meaning the number of achievements included below is not a direct proportion of the starts or participation rates. Figure 1 shows the apprenticeship starts by West Yorkshire districts since 2015/16.

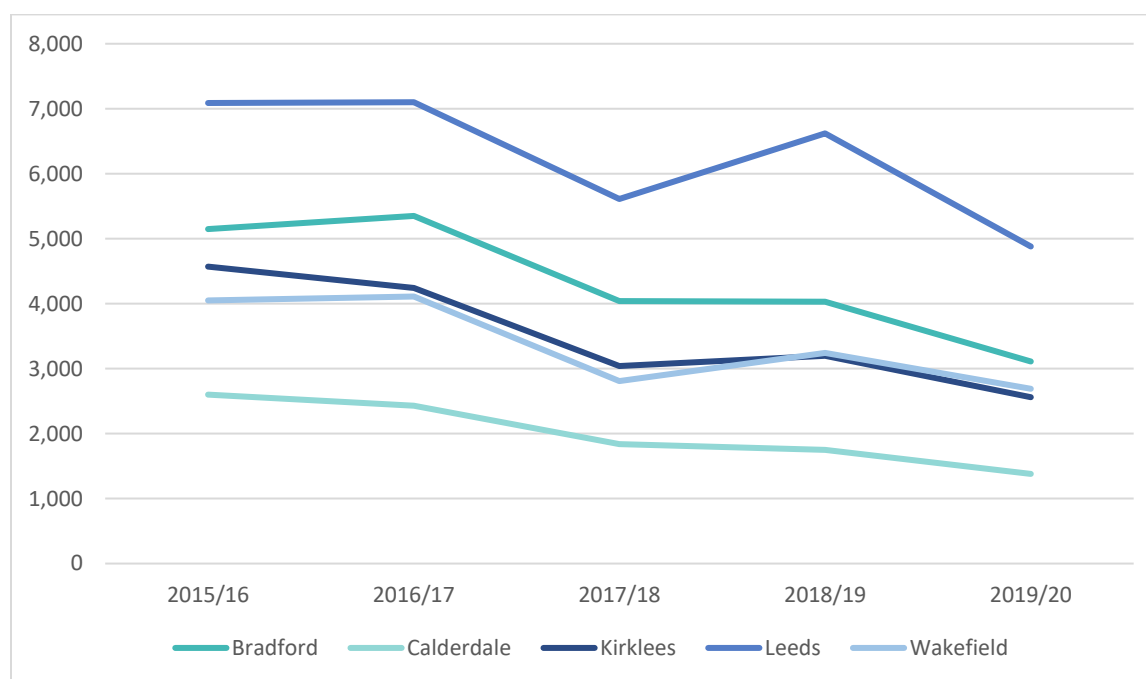


FIGURE 1: APPRENTICESHIP STARTS BY WEST YORKSHIRE DISTRICT SINCE 2015/16 TO 2019/20

All districts have seen a reduction in apprenticeship starts since 2015, with Leeds having the largest reduction and Calderdale the smallest.

NEET

Local authority data shows the proportion of those aged 16-17 not in education, employment, or training, or whose activity is not known. Table 5 shows the NEET rate is slightly higher in Yorkshire and The Humber (5.3%) than England as a whole (4.7%).²³

²³ GOV.UK. (2022). Participation in education, training, and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority. [Link](#).

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	% of 16–17-year-olds either NEET or unknown	Of which % known to be NEET
England	4.7	2.6
Yorkshire & the Humber	5.3	2.9
Bradford	5.9	2.9
Calderdale	3.6	2.8
Kirklees	3.3	2.3
Leeds	7.8	2.5
Wakefield	4.3	2.8

TABLE 5: LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTIMATE FIGURES SHOWING THE PROPORTIONS OF 16-17 YEAR OLDS NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING (2022)

Bradford has the highest NEET rate (2.9%) and Kirklees the lowest (2.3%). Leeds has the highest rate of NEET or unknown combined (7.8%) The NEET rate has fallen for all districts apart from Leeds compared to the end of 2021. For all districts, the NEET rate is higher for men than women in line with national data.

The high percentage of those either NEET or unknown in Leeds could be attributed to this being the district with the highest population in West Yorkshire. In addition, Bradford having the highest proportion of NEET young people could be attributed to this district having a larger young population than the other districts in West Yorkshire.

Youth Participation

Employment and Unemployment

As noted earlier the United Kingdom's classification of NEET is comprised of young people aged 16-24. To understand the wider context, it is necessary to examine youth participation in the economy more generally.

Young people have a lower participation in the labour market than older people, mainly due to the steady increase in student numbers over the last three decades. Young people are also less resilient to shocks in the labour market than older people, for example during the 2008 financial downturn and the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

For the quarter September to November 2022, the employment rate for young people aged 16-24 was 54% and had risen slightly on the previous quarter. This means the employment rate has risen by just over 12,000 to 3,692,000.²⁴

The unemployment rate has also risen slightly to 11.1% of people aged 16-24. There are currently just under 461,000 young people classed as unemployed. Youth unemployment reached a high of 14.9% in July to September 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic but since then has been steadily falling.²⁵ In addition, 58,000 people aged 16-24 have been unemployed for over 12 months.

The economic inactivity rate (those not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two week) is 39.3%, a slight fall on the previous quarter.

Table 6 shows the labour market statistics for the two age groups within the UKs NEET classification.²⁶

	Aged 16-17	Aged 18-24
Employment rate	25.9%	61.7%
Unemployment rate	21.3%	9.8%
Inactivity rate	67.1%	31.7%

TABLE 6: EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND INACTIVITY RATE FOR THOSE AGED 16-17 AND 18-24

Youth unemployment has been an escalating problem in the UK since 2005, with the most recent rises directly attributable to issues of the economy. For young people, unemployment is linked to long-term reductions in wages, increased chances of subsequent periods of unemployment, reduced life chances and poorer health

²⁴ Knight, J. (2023). Labour Market Statistics: January 2023. *Youth Employment UK*. [Link](#).

²⁵ Buchanan, I. (2023). Youth Unemployment Statistics. *House of Commons Library*. [Link](#).

²⁶ Office for National Statistics. (2023). Employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity by age group. [Link](#).

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outcomes²⁷. There are also wider social and economic costs associated with high levels of youth unemployment with the economic cost over the next decade estimated to be £28 billion.

The following causes of youth unemployment have been cited:²⁸

- Lack of jobs
- Lack of skills amongst young people
- Lack of qualifications or appropriate qualifications
- Lack of work experience
- Rise in retirement age
- Recruitment methods
- Poor vocational options

The correlations between unemployment, negative mental health,²⁹ life expectancy,³⁰ and violence³¹ have been well established evidencing how wide-reaching the impact of unemployment can be.

Apprenticeships

As highlighted earlier, a disproportionate number of apprenticeship starts are by those aged 25 and over, with only 22.2% of starts by under 19-year-olds in 2021/22.³² The youngest age group (those aged 16-18) are better represented among lower-level apprenticeships. Sectoral composition of apprenticeships reflects labour market participation in that those 18 or younger are most likely to be undertaking an apprenticeship in retail.³³

Where young people do enter apprenticeships at a higher level, this is more likely to be in sectors like ICT, Engineering or Construction than older people.

Industry differences

There are differences in the industries young people are participating in. The annual population survey 2019 found that young people aged 16 to 24 were primarily working in

²⁷ Youth Employment UK. (2023). Youth Unemployment in the UK. [Link](#).

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Wilson, H. & Finch, D. (2021). Unemployment and mental health – Why both require action for our Covid-19 recovery. *The Health Foundation*. [Link](#).

³⁰ The Health Foundation. (2023). Employment and unemployment – How does work affect our health? [Link](#).

³¹ Nordin, M. & Almén, D. (2016). Long-term unemployment and violent crime. *Empirical Economics*. [Link](#).

³² GOV.UK. (n 12)

³³ Cavaglia et al. (n 14)

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‘wholesale, retail, or repair of vehicles’, ‘accommodation and food services’, ‘arts, entertainment, and recreation’, and ‘health and social work’.

During the pandemic large falls in employment were concentrated in lower-skilled elementary jobs, for example, hospitality, as well as sales and caring professions,³⁴ where young people make up high numbers of employees. Furthermore, 300,000 young people’s jobs have not returned since the pandemic and most of these are those in structural decline, such as hospitality, retail, and support services.

In addition, young people tend to be overrepresented in the sectors which are forecast to see lower employment in the long term and underrepresented in occupations where we are likely to see the strongest jobs growth.

Demographic differences

There are demographic differences in youth participation in the labour market.

Young women are 11 times more likely than young men to be economically inactive due to family responsibilities. Whereas young men are generally more likely to be economically inactive due to sick or disability.³⁵ This may be reflective of persisting societal and cultural expectations that domestic responsibilities lie with women.

There is also disparity between young people from different ethnic backgrounds who are NEET. Young people from Black (15.6%), Pakistani (18.5%), and Bangladeshi (15.4%) backgrounds are over one and a half times more likely to be NEET than those from Indian (9.9%) backgrounds. Young people from white backgrounds have a middling NEET rate of 13.0%.³⁶

Analysing NEET by qualification level shows that the NEET rate is higher for young people with lower qualification levels, particularly those with five GCSEs (or equivalent) and below.

Qualification level	NEET rate
Degree or equivalent	12.4%
Level 2 qualifications	23.1%
Other qualifications	32.7%
No qualifications	51.3%

TABLE 7: NEET STATUS BY QUALIFICATION LEVEL

³⁴ Williams et al. (2021). A Better Future: Transforming jobs and skills for young people post-pandemic. *Institute for Employment Studies*. [Link](#).

³⁵ The Prince’s Trust. (2022). The Power of Potential. Supporting the future of ‘NEET’ young people in the labour market. *Learning and Work Institute*. [Link](#).

³⁶ *ibid*

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Economic prospects can be affected by a person's socio-economic background with upwards socio-economic mobility still being limited for individuals from workless or working-class backgrounds³⁷. Socio-economic background is labelled as: professions (higher managerial, administrative, and professional occupations), intermediate, working class (routine and manual occupations) and workless. Classification is based on the occupation of an individual's highest earning parent (or family member living in the household). Within the labour market there has been a steady increase in the share of young people from the highest socio-economic background.³⁸

In 2021, 48% of young people came from the professions background and the smallest group (7%) are those coming from workless households. Young people coming from workless households are more likely to not be in employment and to be economically inactive than young people from any other background. For young people from workless households the employment rate is 51.9% and the economic inactivity rate is 36.2%, as of July 2021. This has been a consistent trend since 2014.

³⁷ Friedman et al. (2017). Social Mobility, the Class Pay Gap, and Intergenerational Worklessness: New Insights from The Labour Force Survey. *Social Mobility Commission*. [Link](#).

³⁸ Office for National Statistics. (2022). Young people in the labour market by socio-economic background, UK: 2014 to 2021. [Link](#).

Impact of Covid-19

Young people were heavily impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the UK economy and labour market. Those aged 16-24 accounted for nearly half of the total fall in employment despite only representing one in nine of the pre-pandemic labour market. Data from the Labour Force Survey following the first lockdown found that there were 260,000 fewer young people in work. For 16 and 17-year-olds, employment rates had fallen to the lowest ever with just one in six of this age group being in work.³⁹

The impact of the pandemic on young people is particularly due to its effect on specific sectors and occupations. Young people were more likely to be in jobs affected by social distancing restrictions, in particular hospitality, caring and leisure. In addition, young people pre-pandemic were more likely to have insecure forms of employment, for example fixed term contracts and zero hours or agency work, leaving them vulnerable to external labour market shocks.⁴⁰ As well as leaving young people vulnerable to external impacts, working temporary jobs affects mental health with those in temporary jobs being 29% more likely to experience mental health problems than those in permanent jobs.⁴¹ Research into the experience of young people navigating insecure work during the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted a number of consequences from this including: economic instability, feeling as though their lives are on hold, limitations on choice, isolation and anxiety, the collapse of part time work, and feeling limited in their ability to be active citizens e.g., through community participation.⁴² Job application processes also present a barrier to young people trying to gain secure employment. Recent findings showed that one in five polled young people reported struggling with a job application or interview process⁴³.

The pandemic also affected different groups of young people quite differently. Young men accounted for all of the fall in employment among young people, falling from 65.7% in employment before the pandemic in 2020 to 63.6% in employment after the pandemic began. Young people from non-white ethnic groups experienced more significant falls in employment than white people. The fall in employment rates has been four times greater for young Black people than for young white people.⁴⁴

Whilst employment fell for young people during the pandemic, participation in education increased. This is positive as education may result in better future employment and earning prospects. The pandemic however did result in less young people working whilst

³⁹ Wilson, T. & Papoutsaki, D. (2021). An Unequal Crisis: The impact of the pandemic on the youth labour market. *Institute for Employment Studies*. [Link](#).

⁴⁰ PwC & Youth Futures Foundation (N 5)

⁴¹ Thorley C and Cook W (2017) Flexibility for who? Millennials and mental health in the modern labour market

⁴² Christie, F. (2022). The impact of Covid-19 on Young Workers in England. *Manchester Metropolitan University*. [Link](#).

⁴³ The Prince's Trust. (n 35)

⁴⁴ Wilson, T. & Papoutsaki, D. (n 39)

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studying, therefore, fewer people during this time were accessing work experience and building wider employability skills which may affect their future prospects when transitioning from education to employment.⁴⁵

Young people are acutely aware of the impact of the pandemic, with two-fifths believing that the pandemic has harmed their long-term career prospects. 18- to 21-year-olds are the age group least likely to feel confident that they will be able to achieve their future career aspirations.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Crowley, L. (2021). Youth Employment in the UK 2021. *CIPD*. [Link](#).

Link to violent crime

The direct link between being NEET and violent crime is not well established in the literature or available data. Previous research has noted that becoming and remaining NEET can have long-term impacts, including being more likely to have a criminal record.⁴⁷ Associations between being NEET and criminality for specific groups within the population have also been highlighted. For example, young people with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are at higher risk of falling into the NEET demographic and facing criminal convictions, which then further complicates their transition into employment following education.⁴⁸ Beyond these examples though literature has rarely explored the relationship between being NEET and violent crime.

Separately, research has explored the link of both (un)employment and education with violence, but in most cases, these look at the general population as opposed to young people not in education, employment, or training. There are high levels of unemployment evident in perpetrators of violent crime in West Yorkshire, with 47% of all offenders having a recorded occupation as unemployed. For female offenders this rate is higher at 53%. For offenders aged 25 and over, rates of unemployment increase to 52% overall and 61% for female offenders.

Job losses, and subsequent unemployment, of men and women, have also been found to lead to higher incidents of domestic violence. A study in Brazil using court registers found that male job loss resulted in a roughly 30% increase in the chances that a man perpetrates domestic violence, whilst female job loss increases the chances that they will become a victim of domestic violence.⁴⁹

Interventions that target students at risk of becoming NEET have frequently utilised mentoring programmes. The mentoring programme Mentoring Plus, a project that aimed to reduce youth crime and other at-risk behaviour and help young people back into education, training and employment was primarily referred to by Youth Offending Teams and schools. The young people involved in the programme were more likely than the general population to be disengage from education, training, and work (40% compared with 4%). An evaluation of the programme found that 93% of the young people participating had committed at least one offence at some point in their lives and most (85%) had done so during the previous 12 months. Young people in the cohort were more than four and a half times as likely as those in the general youth population to have committed a violent offence during the previous 12 months.⁵⁰ These findings highlight the

⁴⁷ Allen, M. (2014). Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET). *Public Health England, UCL Institute of Health Equity*. [Link](#).

⁴⁸ Youth Futures Foundation. (2021). Young people, ADHD, and employment. [Link](#).

⁴⁹ Bhalotra et al. (2021). Domestic violence: the potential role of job loss and unemployment benefits. *CAGE Research Centre, University of Warwick*. [Link](#).

⁵⁰ Shiner et al. (2004). Mentoring disaffected young people: an evaluation of Mentoring Plus. *The Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. [Link](#).

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relationship between disengagement from education and (un)employment with violence amongst young people.

Whilst the direct links between being NEET and violence is not well explored, the risk factors for becoming and remaining NEET overlap with the risk factors identified as driving violent crime and the protective factors which can mitigate violence have also been found to be relevant to reducing the impacts of being NEET. The following sections will examine these risk and protective factors in more detail.

Risk Factors

There are a number of risk factors and characteristics that increase the likelihood of young people becoming NEET and many of these are consistent with the risk factors associated with violence. In July 2010, the Audit Commission⁵¹ examined which characteristics increased a young person’s chances of being NEET, and these are summarised in the table below.

Factor	Increase in chance of being NEET for six months or more
Being NEET at least once before	7.9 times more likely
Pregnancy or parenthood	2.8 times more likely
Supervision by youth offending team	2.6 times more likely
Fewer than three months post-16 education	2.3 times more likely
Disclosed substance abuse	2.1 times more likely
Responsibilities as a carer	2.0 times more likely

TABLE 8: AUDIT COMMISSION, INCREASED CHANCES OF BEING NEET

The Department for Education⁵² published a research report which looked at a cohort of pupils who completed Key Stage 4 in 2010/11 to understand the characteristics of those who were NEET for the year 2013/14. The chart below compares the characteristics of the cohort with the characteristics of those who were NEET for the whole year.

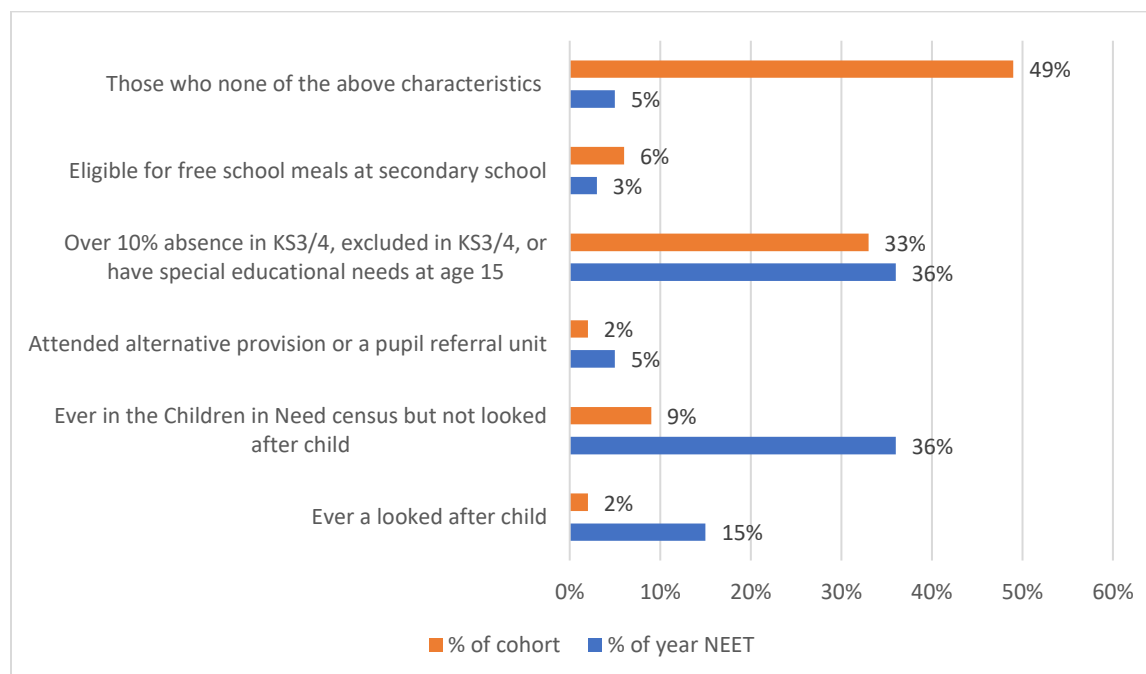


FIGURE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LONG-TERM NEET 2013/14

⁵¹ Powell (n 19)

⁵² Department for Education. (2018). Characteristics of young people who are long-term NEET. [Link](#).

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As well as educational risk factors, for example school exclusions, and personal risk factors, for example difficult family circumstances, structural risk factors for becoming NEET⁵³ have been identified including labour market conditions and a lack of available opportunities.

Educational engagement and attainment

Disengagement from education, and low educational achievement, which may or may not result from this, are key risk factors associated with becoming NEET. Disengagement from education is usually a cumulative process that can begin early in a child's school experience, becoming more entrenched throughout secondary school.⁵⁴ It is well-documented that a number of external factors can cause disengagement from education, including poor housing, health, drug and alcohol dependency, special educational needs, bullying, caring responsibilities, domestic violence, gang culture, peer pressure, or a cultural context which doesn't value learning.⁵⁵ These factors have also been identified in literature as key risk factors that drive violence. Many who become and remain disengaged from learning have low educational attainment, which has also been identified as a predictive factor for a young person becoming NEET⁵⁶, which is why it is important to look at these connected factors together.

It has been noted that between the ages of 11 and 14 there is a crucial period in which young people begin to form relatively realistic ambitions about their future, and this is also when disengagement from learning is likely to occur.⁵⁷ 14 is also the age where permanent exclusions (which will be discussed later) and suspensions⁵⁸ peak meaning this age could be extremely impactful on a young person's future trajectory.

Previous research by the National Foundation for Educational Research found that two-thirds of those NEET at 16-17 had negative feelings about learning pre-16 years old and this was associated with resistance to engaging in learning post-16. Irrelevant and outdated curriculums that focus primarily on academic performance can cause a disinterest in learning, leading to disruptive behaviours, and eventual disengagement and becoming NEET.⁵⁹

How transition points throughout a person's journey through education are experienced can have a lasting impact on young people's future trajectories. The transition from primary to secondary school has been described as a risk-point for vulnerable learners having "*deleterious effects on self-esteem, depression, and academic attainment at age*

⁵³ Siraj et al. (2014). Report on students who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). *Institute of Education University of London, Department for Education*. [Link](#).

⁵⁴ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (2014). Changing the NEET mindset – Achieving more effective transitions between education and work. *Centre for Innovation in Learning*. [Link](#).

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ Richmond & Regan (n 1)

⁵⁷ Gottfredson, L.S. (2002). Gottfredson's theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation. in Brown, D. (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp 85–148). [Link](#).

⁵⁸ GOV.UK. (2022). Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England. [Link](#).

⁵⁹ Rocket Science. (2022). Raising Aspirations – Final report for West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit. [Link](#).

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18” for pupils who described this transition as difficult.⁶⁰ A positive transition from primary to secondary school is critical in providing positive experiences of learning and continued engagement with education. During these transitions young people need to be appropriately supported to manage the range of emotions that are experienced as these can be vital for long-term aspirations.⁶¹

Research into how the aspirations of young people could be raised to support longer-term employment and training prospects found that a lack of confidence was the most-cited factor causing disengagement from education. Lacking confidence affected young people’s academic performance as well as their view of the career choices available to them in the future. The focus on academic performance has been highlighted as a key reason behind disengagement as it can leave some young people feeling unequipped to succeed in life upon leaving school contributing to becoming NEET.

As noted previously, low educational attainment has been identified as a predictive factor for young people becoming NEET. The relationship between educational attainment and NEET status has been highlighted in a number of studies.

The Department for Education followed a cohort from the end of Key Stage 4 in 2010/11 for three years and found that those without any A-C* grades in their GCSEs were the most over-represented group in the NEET population. They accounted for two-thirds of those who were NEET but only 19% of the cohort as a whole.⁶² Another study found that young people with low qualifications were twice as likely to be NEET compared to those with five GCSEs (29% vs 15%), with the highest-qualified young people experiencing the lowest NEET rates (8%).⁶³

Whilst general educational attainment has been found to influence the probability of a young person becoming NEET, literacy and numeracy have been identified as particularly important. Young people with both English and maths GCSEs are 16% less likely to be NEET for six months, and 9% less likely to be NEET for 12 months, compared to those with any five GCSEs⁶⁴. In addition, the Department for Education found that those who do not achieve the expected standard of literacy or numeracy at the end of primary school were 32 percentage points more likely to become NEET at age 18.⁶⁵ Young people who are NEET are aware of the impact that poor educational achievement can have, with interviews finding that many believe not low attainment, especially not passing English and maths were a key reason for the difficulties they face getting into further education, employment, or training.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Rice et al. (2019). Identifying Factors That Predict Successful and Difficult Transitions to Secondary School. *Nuffield Foundation*. [Link](#).

⁶¹ Rocket Science. (n 59)

⁶² Department for Education. (n 52)

⁶³ Gadsby, B. (2019). Research briefing 1: Establishing the Employment Gap. *Impetus*. [Link](#).

⁶⁴ Gadsby, B. (2020). Research Briefing 9: The Impact of English and Maths. *Impetus*. [Link](#).

⁶⁵ Department for Education. (n 52)

⁶⁶ Siraj et al. (n 53)

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Poor attainment restricts the options available and creates barriers to entering further education, employment, or training post-16. Furthermore, the greater risk of becoming NEET amongst disengaged young people demonstrates how critical it is to ensure engagement with the school offering in order to protect future pathways into further education or employment.⁶⁷

Disengagement and low attainment is also associated with offending behaviour. Poor educational attainment was found to be a common factor amongst children who commit offences with half of 15–17-year-olds entering Young Offenders' Institutions having literacy or numeracy levels expected of 7–11-year-olds.⁶⁸ Understanding the influence of disengagement from education and low attainment on becoming NEET, as well as the association with violence, also reveals potential protective factors as well as avenues for interventions to prevent young people becoming and remaining NEET.

Exclusion

Disengagement from education has been evidenced as a risk factor for becoming NEET, and at the worst end of the spectrum this disengagement can manifest in truancy, suspensions, and ultimately, exclusion. In the 2020/21 academic year, there were 3,900 permanent exclusions and 352,500 suspensions across the United Kingdom.⁶⁹ Excluding pupils from school has a huge societal cost, estimated (in 2017) to be £370,000 in additional education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs across a lifetime per pupil⁷⁰. In addition, the likelihood of exclusion is increased for some of the most vulnerable groups in society including those living in poverty, experiencing abuse, having a learning difficulty and suffering from a mental health condition.⁷¹

Research has found that more than a fifth of pupils who had been permanently excluded during secondary school spent the year NEET⁷² and 25% of persistent truants in Year 11 were NEET the following year.⁷³ Being excluded has knock-on effects on young person's educational achievement with only 1% of excluded children achieving five A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and maths,⁷⁴ which has been linked to becoming NEET. Experiences of long-term unemployment is high amongst excluded young people, with the Youth Cohort Study finding that more than one in four (27%) excluded young people were NEET for between one and two years by the time they were 19, compared to one in 10 young people who had never been excluded.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Rocket Science. (n 59)

⁶⁸ Ministry of Justice. (2013). Transforming Youth Custody. Putting education at the heart of detention. [Link](#).

⁶⁹ GOV.UK. (n 58)

⁷⁰ Gill et al. (2017). Making the Difference – Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion. *Institute for Public Policy Research*. [Link](#).

⁷¹ *ibid*

⁷² Department for Education. (n 52)

⁷³ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (n 54)

⁷⁴ Graham et al. (2019). School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children. *Department for Education*. [Link](#).

⁷⁵ Department for Education. (2011). Youth Cohort Study & Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 19-year-olds: England 2010. [Link](#).

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Exclusion can create a cycle of social immobility which results in poor outcomes for an individual in terms of health, qualifications, employment, and criminality. There is an overlap between education, criminal justice, and employment with several vulnerabilities increasing the likelihood of exclusion and becoming NEET and many of these mirror the risk factors for violent crime, further evidencing a potential link between NEET status and violence. Academic performance, poor behaviour at school, truancy and exclusion have all been associated with high risk of offending.⁷⁶ A longitudinal study of prisoners by the Ministry of Justice (2012) found the majority of UK prisoners were excluded from school. 63% of prisoners reported being temporarily excluded and 42% had been permanently excluded. Those who had been permanently excluded were more likely to be repeat offenders than other prisoners.⁷⁷

In addition, certain ethnic groups are disproportionately likely to be excluded from school, with analysis showing that for black boys in particular there is a link between poor attainment and entry into the criminal justice system.⁷⁸ For black Caribbean boys it has been argued that the high level of exclusions amongst this group and use of pupil referral units and alternative provision increases the risk of being involved in crime and youth violence. Within West Yorkshire, 48% of the young people who had committed serious or violent offences were outside of mainstream education.⁷⁹

Exclusion from education is linked to extensive negative outcomes for young people, impacting their future trajectories in terms of entering further education, employment, or training and marking them at a higher risk for perpetrating violent behaviour.

Socio-economic factors

Many socio-economic factors have been identified as influencing the likelihood that an individual spends time NEET. The evidence suggests that young people are more likely to be NEET, and feel the scarring effects of this, if they are from a less well-off background, from particular ethnic groups, are disabled, have learning difficulties, have caring responsibilities or grew up in care.⁸⁰ Parental income and social class have been shown to have a major impact on school to work transitions, with young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds being more likely to stay on in full-time education than their less privileged peers.⁸¹ Socio-economic disadvantage has a significant impact on a young person attaining good GCSEs, which as explored previously, further increases the likelihood of becoming NEET.⁸²

⁷⁶ Flood-Page et al. (2000). Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey. *Home Office Research*. [Link](#).

⁷⁷ Williams et al. (2012). Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds. *Ministry of Justice*. [Link](#).

⁷⁸ Youth Futures Foundation. (2022). Minority ethnic youth employment outcomes. *Learning and Work Institute*. [Link](#).

⁷⁹ Crest Advisory. (2021). Education inclusion project. [Link](#).

⁸⁰ AVECO. (2012). Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford. [Link](#).

⁸¹ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (2012). Beating the Odds: Exploring the Impact of Social Risk on Young People's School-to-Work Transitions during Recession in the UK. *National Institute Economic Review*. [Link](#).

⁸² Impetus (n 4)

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Poverty and deprivation has been associated with being NEET and there is a strong link between young people who are NEET and living in the most deprived areas of the country.⁸³ Young people who grow up in poor areas are more likely to experience negative outcomes in the future compared to those who grow up in more affluent areas, including engaging in anti-social and criminal behaviour.⁸⁴ The correlation between deprivation and violence has been explored previously, and it has been found that injury in youth violence intensified with deprivation in UK cities.⁸⁵ Furthermore, young people who grow up in high Crime Score areas are more likely to become NEET in comparison to those who grow up in low Crime Score areas, suggesting a relationship between crime, deprivation, and being NEET.⁸⁶

Disadvantage and subsequent low educational outcomes can have a combined impact on the probability of being NEET. The low attainment gap that can result from family disadvantage creates a “double disadvantage” for young people which means when educational attainment is considered young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are 50% more likely to be NEET⁸⁷. Additionally, low education attainment is one of the key mechanisms in the intergenerational transfer of disadvantage.⁸⁸ For example, 9% of 16 to 21 year-olds whose labour market trajectories are concerning are more likely to come from families with lower parental qualifications, and more likely to live in social housing. In comparison, 91% of young people who stay in education between the ages of 16 have parents with medium or high qualifications.⁸⁹ At age 16, 36% of young people from low-income backgrounds achieved five good GCSEs, including English and maths, compared to 63% of the rest of population.⁹⁰

The impact of exclusion has been explored previously and this is also related to poverty and deprivation. On average, poorer young people are four times more likely to be excluded than their peers from more well-off backgrounds⁹¹. Also, the Department for Education found that 55% of 5-10 year olds and 40% of 11-15 year olds in schools for excluded pupils are eligible for free school meals (an indicator of deprivation), compared to 14% of the entire pupil population.⁹²

⁸³ Department for Education. (n 52)

⁸⁴ Karyda, M. (2015). The Effect of Crime in the Community on Becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at 18-19 years in England. *UCL Institute of Education*. [Link](#).

⁸⁵ Jones et al. (2010). The impact of deprivation on youth violence: a comparison of cities and their feeder towns. *Emergency Medical Journal*. [Link](#).

⁸⁶ Karyda, M. (n 84)

⁸⁷ Boshoff et al. (2019). Inequality in education and labour market participation of young people across English localities: An exploration based on Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data. *Centre for Vocational Education Research*. [Link](#).

⁸⁸ Ermisch, J., Jäntti, M. & Smeeding, T. (2012). *From Parents to Children: The Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

⁸⁹ Dorsett, R & Lucchino, P. (2011). *Beyond school leaving age: the first five years*. *Nuffield Foundation*. [Link](#).

⁹⁰ Ofsted. (2020). *Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on*. [Link](#).

⁹¹ GOV.UK. (2017). *Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2015 to 2016*. [Link](#).

⁹² GOV.UK. (2017). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017*. [Link](#).

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Family background, especially for those living in poverty, can be influential for young people becoming and remaining NEET. Pemberton⁹³ noted that NEET young people generally have lower levels of support from their families which presents a significant disadvantage as support from parents paired with parental knowledge about opportunities is important for people entering or re-entering education, employment, or training and reduces the likelihood of them becoming NEET. There is also evidence of intergenerational transmission of a 'culture of worklessness', where there is a higher likelihood of being NEET for individuals raised in workless households or where the father was unemployed.⁹⁴ This group of young people have been categorised as *core NEETs including generational NEETs*; young people who come from families where the accepted norm is for adults to be unemployed.⁹⁵

Ethnicity is also a predictor of NEET status. In 2021, economic inactivity was higher for individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds (27%) compared to their white peers (21%).⁹⁶ In addition, as evidenced previously there are substantial ethnic disparities in the proportion who are NEET with Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Black young people more likely to be NEET than white young people. Furthermore, 24.6% of White British boys eligible for Free School Meals achieved 5 GCSEs A*-C, compared to a national average of 58.8% and 40.3% of Black boys.⁹⁷ Educational attainment as a risk factor for becoming NEET has been evidenced and this, combined with ethnicity and socio-economic deprivation, may exacerbate the disparities for certain ethnic groups.

Socio-economic disadvantage is also linked to living arrangements, for example those in social housing have lower incomes, lower qualifications, and earlier parenthood⁹⁸. The odds of having spent time NEET was found to be eleven times higher for British Cohort Study individuals living in social housing compared to the rest of the cohort members.⁹⁹ Furthermore, data from the British Household Panel Survey found 77% of young people who are long-term workless between the ages of 16 and 21 lived in social rented housing.¹⁰⁰ Social housing also overlaps with ethnicity, as individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to live in precarious and overcrowded housing as well as social housing, and evidence shows that those living in social housing are generally more distant from the labour market.¹⁰¹ Links have also been drawn between being NEET and

⁹³ Pemberton S. (2008). Tackling the NEET generation and the ability of policy to generate a 'NEET' solution—evidence from the UK. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*. [Link](#).

⁹⁴ Zuccotti, C. & O'Reilly, J. (2018). Ethnicity, Gender, and Household Effects on Becoming NEET: An Intersectional Analysis. *Work, Employment, and Society*. [Link](#).

⁹⁵ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (n 54)

⁹⁶ GOV.UK. (2022). Economic inactivity. [Link](#).

⁹⁷ Department for Education. (2013). GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2011/12. [Link](#).

⁹⁸ Hills, J. (2007). Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England. *ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion*. [Link](#).

⁹⁹ Feinstein et al. (2008). The Public Value of Social Housing: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Relationship between Housing and Life Chances. *The Smith Institute*. [Link](#).

¹⁰⁰ Dorsett, R & Lucchino, P. (n 89)

¹⁰¹ Housing Commission. (2018). Social Housing and Employment – Helping social housing be the springboard to a better life. [Link](#).

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becoming homeless. A 2008 survey estimated that 57% of 16-17 year olds who became homeless were NEET, in some cases this was because being homeless caused disruption whilst others felt they would be financially worse off in work or on a course.¹⁰² For young people, growing up and continuing to live in inadequate housing situations or becoming homeless, can increase vulnerability towards violence. This suggests that there may be an overlap between being NEET and violence related to a person's housing situation, along with the other socio-economic factors discussed.

Mental health

Time spent NEET has been shown to have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health.¹⁰³ The 2022 Mental Health of Children and Young People survey found that 18% of children aged 7 to 16 and 22% of young people aged 17 to 24 had a probable mental health disorder.¹⁰⁴ The trend for mental health disorders is more prevalent in the NEET population, with 21.3% of young people who are NEET having a mental health condition in 2021. This has risen dramatically from 7.7% in 2012.¹⁰⁵

Unemployment, especially in the early stages of a young person's career, can increase a person's susceptibility to illness and mental stress, which can lead to a loss of self-esteem and depression.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, long-term unemployment at a young age and the low life satisfaction that may result can lead to engagement with criminal activity,¹⁰⁷ for example young men who are NEET are five times more likely to have a criminal record than their peers.¹⁰⁸ Although causality is difficult to establish, it is likely that for some unemployment young people the crimes committed are a necessity for instrumental reasons, i.e. making money.

The relationship between NEET status and exclusions has been discussed and school exclusions can also have a great impact on young people's mental health. The Department for Education found in 2015/16, that one in fifty children in the general population was recognised as having a social, emotional, and mental health needs, and in schools for excluded pupils this rose to one in two.¹⁰⁹ Even though causality can not be established this further evidences the danger school exclusions can have for young people's life chances.

(Un)employment

Early unemployment can increase the risk of future unemployment becoming part of a perpetual negative cycle. Unemployment at the beginning of a young person's career can

¹⁰² Coles et al. (n 6)

¹⁰³ PwC & Youth Futures Foundation (n 5)

¹⁰⁴ NHS. (2022). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2022. [Link.](#)

¹⁰⁵ Richmond & Regan (n 1)

¹⁰⁶ AVECO. (n 80)

¹⁰⁷ Allen, M. (n 47)

¹⁰⁸ Audit Commission. (2010). Against the odds: Re-engaging young people in education, employment or training 2010. [Link.](#)

¹⁰⁹ Department for Education. (2017). Special Educational Needs in England: January 2017. [Link.](#)

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have long-term consequences on their skills and confidence, leading to a depreciation of human capital over time.¹¹⁰ As highlighted earlier, the Covid-19 pandemic caused a rise in youth unemployment and exacerbated existing inequalities, for example the decline in working hours for young people with no qualifications was five times higher than for those with a degree-level qualification.

Long-term unemployment can have negative impacts on the lifetime career prospects and income of young people. Unemployment at a young age increases the likelihood of being unemployed and welfare-dependent later in life, with the average young unemployed person spending an extra 2 months per year out of work by their late twenties.¹¹¹

Experiences of long-term unemployment, defined as the proportion of 15–24-year-olds without a job for longer than 12 months, has been attributed to a theory called ‘negative duration dependency’. ‘Negative duration dependency’¹¹² argues that the longer a worker has been unemployed already, the less likely it is that they will find a job. There are two possible explanations proposed for negative duration dependency: true duration dependency and unobserved heterogeneity. True duration dependency suggests that over time unemployed people lose skills associated with working and attachments to networks that can be used to find jobs, meaning long-term unemployment begins to signify a lack of ability, whether correctly or incorrectly. Unobserved heterogeneity suggests that long-term unemployment can also be driven by structural reasons, for example the decline in skilled industries where those who are made unemployed do not have skills that are transferable to other industries.

As well as unemployment, young people are facing the problem of underemployment. Underemployment refers to the proportion of young people who are not working as many hours as they want to. Underemployment leaves more young people at risk of becoming NEET as the percentage of higher-educated young people working in zero-hours or lower skills roles has increased, meaning a reduction in roles for less qualified young people who are the group already at risk of being NEET.¹¹³ The prevalence of underemployment in the UK has highlighted the declining quality of jobs in terms of pay, prospects for progression, skills required, and job security.¹¹⁴

In relation to crime, those who are unemployed are more likely to become involved in anti-social activity, with studies finding that increases in youth unemployment relate to increases in burglaries, thefts, and drug offences.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ PwC & Youth Futures Foundation (n 5)

¹¹¹ AVECO. (n 80)

¹¹² Hornstein, A. & Lubik, T.A. (2015). The Rise in Long-Term Unemployment: Potential Causes and Implications. *Economic Quarterly*. [Link](#).

¹¹³ Williams et al. (n 34)

¹¹⁴ McPherson, C. (2021). Between the Rhetoric of Employability and the Reality of Youth (Under)Employment: NEET Policy Rhetoric in the UK and Scotland. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*. [Link](#).

¹¹⁵ AVECO. (n 80)

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Exposure to crime and violence

The relationship between living in deprivation, crime, and being NEET has been evidenced, with those who live in high Crime Score areas having a higher probability of becoming NEET compared to those living in low Crime Score areas.¹¹⁶

An investigation into the impact of being exposed to violence in the community and future educational aspirations during adolescence found that educational aspirations were negatively correlated with exposure to violence, attitudes, and violent behaviour.¹¹⁷ This relationship was present for the American youth researched, at both age 12 and age 22 highlighting how influential exposure to violence at a young age can be. Being exposed to violence in the community predicted lower future educational aspirations and the perception of violence as a preferred path to education, thus leading to disengagement from education, a risk factor for becoming NEET.

This research also suggested that the setting in which young people are exposed to violence can be crucial. For example, if young people are fearful of violence taking place within educational settings this may affect educational performance, which is a risk factor for becoming NEET, and lead to young people engaging in other activities which lead to violence, such as gang involvement.¹¹⁸

In addition, previous engagement in criminal activity has been identified as a risk factor for becoming NEET. The Audit Commission found that young people under the supervision of a youth offending team are more than four times as likely to have spent 6 or more months NEET as those in the general population.¹¹⁹

Summary

Numerous risk factors for becoming NEET have been evidenced in the literature and have also been identified elsewhere as risk factors that drive violence. Looking across the risk factors discussed, educational engagement and attainment, exclusion, socio-economic factors including deprivation, mental health, (un)employment, and exposure to crime and violence, there is a common theme of adversity.

Experiences of adversity, and the adverse effects that result from being NEET, can accumulate. This is especially relevant for young people who are unemployed, as those with prolonged periods of unemployment may begin to be seen as unemployable due to not having the opportunity to gain skills or skills.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Karyda, M. (n 84)

¹¹⁷ Stoddard et al. (2015). Predicting violent behaviour: the role of violence exposure and future educational aspirations during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*. [Link](#).

¹¹⁸ *ibid*

¹¹⁹ Audit Commission. (n 108)

¹²⁰ Thurlby-Campbell, I., & Bell, L. (2015). How to Treat NEET: The NEET Policy Problem. *In Agency, Structure and the NEET Policy Problem: The Experiences of Young People*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

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Although young people who are NEET are not a homogeneous group, there are shared characteristics that “*after 11 years of statutory education they are [often] united by their common experience of social and economic disadvantage, low educational attainment, relative underachievement, and alienation from the education and training system*”,¹²¹ result in low levels of confidence and self-esteem. There is a commonality of experiences of adversity in the forms of disadvantage, a culture of worklessness, and low aspirations which increase the likelihood of becoming NEET and entering a cycle of negative long-term impacts.

Furthermore, the negative experiences young people who become NEET may have had during their time in education and entry into further education, employment or training, can also lead to feelings of failure. This is especially common in relation to educational attainment, for example the requirement that students must pass their GCSE English and maths. Ofsted have argued that the damage of repeated ‘failure’ cannot be underestimated especially relating to students’ confidence and self-esteem.¹²² This sense of failure has been shown to affect young people’s “*capacity for self-motivation, and for identifying, realising, and implementing their aspirations*”, which are a significant protective factor against becoming NEET.¹²³

Although the direct link between being NEET and violence is not well established, the risk factors for both are similar, indicating that the root causes of NEET may also be those that drive violence and violent crime. The risk factors, whilst extensive, are all rooted in adversity and disadvantage, and begin early in a person’s life with potential long-lasting impacts, highlighting the importance of strengthening protective factors and early interventions.

¹²¹ Hayward et al. (2008). Findings of the Engaging Youth Enquiry into young people classified as ‘NEET’. *Rathbone UK*. [Link](#).

¹²² Ofsted. (2018). The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills 2017/18. [Link](#).

¹²³ Archer, L. & Yamashita, H. (2003) ‘Knowing their limits?’ Identities, inequalities and inner-city school leavers’ post-16 aspirations. *Journal of Educational Policy*. [Link](#).

Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics or experiences which mitigate against risk and reduce the likelihood of an individual experiencing negative impacts and outcomes. Recent literature on youth violence distinguished between *direct* and *buffering* protective factors.¹²⁴ *Direct* protective factors have main effects on the prediction of lower levels of problematic behaviours or negative impacts in the future. *Buffering* protective factors on the other hand have a moderating effecting attenuating the impact of risk factors.

Protective factors help to provide an explanation for why young people are not all affected in the same way by experiences and are able to avoid negative outcomes and show resilience.¹²⁵ Although protective factors have not been as widely examined as risk factors, research has highlighted the important role aspirations play in avoiding becoming NEET, as well as positive academic engagement and parental support.

Aspirations and opportunities

Becoming NEET and the impact this has on a young person's life chances correlates with their aspirations.¹²⁶ Educational aspirations can have a positive effect in avoiding young people becoming NEET¹²⁷ and can feature in how young people predict their future education and/or career choices.¹²⁸ For example, the unsuitability of higher education for some and the reduction in uptake of apprenticeships makes the route for meeting aspirations, particularly for disadvantaged young people, complex and potentially inadequate.¹²⁹

Having positive aspirations of the future have been found to lead to more positive outcomes even after young people experience adversity including violence.¹³⁰ Higher levels of educational aspirations were identified as a protective factor distinguishing violent and non-violent men.¹³¹ Optimistic future aspirations may provide motivation to pursue positive outcomes and paths for success thereby decreasing the propensity to engage in violence.¹³²

However, when there is a disconnect between aspirations, achievements and opportunities this can have negative consequences and impact the wellbeing of young

¹²⁴ Lösel, F. & Farrington, D.P. (2012). Direct Protective and Buffering Protective Factors in the Development of Youth Violence. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. [Link](#).

¹²⁵ Schoon, I. (2006). *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

¹²⁶ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹²⁷ Zuccotti, C. & O'Reilly, J. (n 94)

¹²⁸ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹²⁹ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹³⁰ Stoddard et al. (n 117)

¹³¹ Dubow et al. (2016). Childhood and Adolescent Risk and Protective Factors for Violence in Adulthood. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. [Link](#).

¹³² Stoddard et al. (n 117)

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people.¹³³ Poverty, unemployment, individual inequalities, and limited opportunities results in low career aspirations.¹³⁴ The risk factors for becoming NEET previously discussed can influence the outcomes of aspirations in that only a small portion of young people from low socio-economic backgrounds with high aspirations continue into higher education.¹³⁵ In addition, young women with misaligned ambitions were three times as likely to become NEET and males and females were three times more likely to become NEET if they had uncertain aspirations.¹³⁶

The employment opportunities available, and subsequent life trajectories are determined partially by current labour market conditions and the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the employment options available to young people. Research from 2020 found that the sectors young people aspire to work in differ greatly from the jobs available, creating a damaging disconnect between aspiration and opportunity.¹³⁷ The greatest difference was found in arts, culture, entertainment, and sport with five times as many 17 and 18 year-olds wanting to work in these sectors compared to the projected demand within the economy. Given the undeniable impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and particularly the employment opportunities available for young people future policies must focus on rebuilding aspirations in young people and then bridging the gap between these and the available opportunities.

Academic engagement

School engagement, prior achievement and school characteristics play a part in young people overcoming disadvantage to avoid becoming and remaining NEET.¹³⁸

Engagement with education in the form of motivation for school and not truanting is positively associated with the prevention of a young person becoming NEET.¹³⁹ Disengaged young people are at greater risk of becoming NEET so engagement with the academic offering in schools is critical to protecting future pathways.¹⁴⁰ How engaging the academic offering is depends on both the curriculum and opportunities available for skills development. Avenues for maintaining academic engagement need to involve an assessment of the suitability of the curriculum and skills development offered.

Research indicates that young people who have negative attitudes about school are not likely to continue to post-compulsory education¹⁴¹ with young people who enjoyed school being more likely to continue to full time education rather than follow other trajectories.¹⁴²

¹³³ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹³⁴ Furlong et al. (1996). Neighbourhoods, opportunity structures and occupational aspirations. *Sociology*. [Link](#).

¹³⁵ Karyda, M. (n 84)

¹³⁶ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹³⁷ Chambers et al. (2020). Disconnected: Career aspirations and jobs in the UK. *Education and Employers*. [Link](#).

¹³⁸ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹³⁹ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹⁴⁰ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹⁴¹ Crawford et al. (2010). Young people's education and labour market choices aged 16/17 to 18/19. *Department for Education*. [Link](#).

¹⁴² AVECO. (n 80)

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Research from the Department for Children, Schools, and Families found young people who were NEET said they had imagined college would be like school, in a negative way, and this discouraged them from participating, highlighting how positive educational experiences can protect against becoming NEET.¹⁴³

Low attainment has been evidenced as a risk factor for becoming NEET and particularly achievement in English and maths is a powerful predictor of outcomes including completing schooling.¹⁴⁴ As well as increasing the likelihood of disengaging from education, low educational attainment also presents a barrier to entering the labour market.¹⁴⁵ Conversely educational qualifications more than double the chance that economically inactive young people will return to education even after a short inactivity period.¹⁴⁶

School characteristics can also play a role in determining whether young people become NEET through the effect it has on educational achievement. Children in schools with a high proportion of families from low socio-economic backgrounds or low-income households do less well than those in schools with more advantaged students.¹⁴⁷

Crucially positive school experiences can even counterbalance the disadvantages young people experience within their family and wider community,¹⁴⁸ further evidencing the role of education in protecting young people from becoming NEET or engaging in violent behaviour.

Parental support

Parental support during a young person's school years and at their transition into further education, employment, or training can act a key protective factor against becoming and remaining NEET.

Interest and involvement from parents in their children's educational activities and decisions have been shown to be crucial in influencing the trajectories of young people after 16.¹⁴⁹ Parents of young people who were NEET reported not being as supportive or involved in education related activities as parents of young people who continued in education or employment. Characteristics of low involvement that is strongly associated with young people choosing not to continue in education, employment or training include

¹⁴³ Spielhofer et al. (2009). Increasing Participation – Understanding Young People who do not participate in education or training at 16 and 17. *National Foundation for Educational Research*. [Link](#).

¹⁴⁴ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹⁴⁵ Bell, D.N. & Blanchflower, D.G. (2010). UK unemployment in the great recession. *National Institute Economic Review*. [Link](#).

¹⁴⁶ OECD. (2009). Education at a Glance 2009. [Link](#).

¹⁴⁷ Robertson, D. & Symons, J. (2003). 'Do peer groups matter? Peer group versus schooling effects on academic attainment'. *Economica*. [Link](#).

¹⁴⁸ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹⁴⁹ Karyda, M. (n 84)

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low attendance at open days, negative attitudes towards education, and an unwillingness to cooperate with teachers.¹⁵⁰

In addition, parental advice plays a role in determining a young person's education and employment outcomes with support creating suitable conditions for informal advice networks, work experience, and exposure to opportunities.¹⁵¹ Evidence suggests that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds feel they do not have the ability to give their children advice and guidance about their options post-16.¹⁵² Furthermore, the importance of successful transitions from primary to secondary school in preventing young people becoming NEET has been discussed previously, and this can be aided by consistent and ongoing support from responsive and engaged parents.¹⁵³

Parental aspirations also act as a protective factor in mitigating the risk of young people becoming NEET. *"Parents are important socialisers of aspirations and values related to achievement and young people's occupational visions of themselves"*¹⁵⁴ and these aspirations are associated with a child's attainment and progress.¹⁵⁵ Expectations can stem from parents own experiences of education and as noted earlier intergenerational transmission of cultures around disengagement from education and worklessness may result if parents with little or no qualifications feel this did them no harm.¹⁵⁶

Parental aspirations is associated with socio-economic status (an identified risk factor for becoming NEET), those of higher socio-economic status have higher aspirations for their children, which results in higher aspirations amongst these children. Higher aspirations in turn are associated with later academic and career success. The proportion of parents who would like their children to remain in full-time education was higher in young people in education, employment, or training (87%) compared to young people who are NEET (81%), showing that high parental aspirations can have a positive influence on young people remaining in education, employment, or training.

It is unclear how parental support in the context of those who are NEET may mitigate against young people becoming engaged in violence, but positive support within families, parental involvement, and parental level of education have been identified as protective factors for violence.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Karyda, M. (n 84)

¹⁵¹ Karyda, M. (n 84)

¹⁵² AVECO. (n 80)

¹⁵³ Richmond & Regan (n 1)

¹⁵⁴ Duckworth, K. & Schoon, I. (n 81)

¹⁵⁵ Strand, S. (2008). Minority Ethnic Pupils in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England. *Department for Children, Schools, and Families*. [Link](#).

¹⁵⁶ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (n 54)

¹⁵⁷ National Crime Prevention Centre. (2008). Family-based risk and protective factors and their effects on juvenile delinquency: what do we know? *Public Safety Canada*. [Link](#).

What works

Prior policies and interventions employed to reduce the NEET rate have mainly focused on supporting young people who have already become NEET or are immediately at risk. This was evident in the UK Government's response to the impacts of the pandemic, for example the introduction of the 'Kickstart' scheme started in September 2020 which targeted young people at risk of long term unemployment and the 'Restart' scheme which began in July 2021 and aims to provide tailored support to unemployed people.

Whilst it is clearly important to reduce the NEET rate and tackle youth unemployment, solely focusing on young people once they have already become NEET fails to acknowledge and address the earlier risk factors present throughout a young person's time in education as well as wider societal issues such as poverty. Strategies and interventions created for tackling the NEET rate must consider the wider context, including the influence of families and neighbourhoods.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, research has suggested that measures aimed at preventing young people from disengaging from education is more effective in the long-term than measures aimed at re-engaging young people.¹⁵⁹ Providing interventions whilst a young person is still in education, improving engagement and attainment, can increase skills, knowledge, and aspirations,¹⁶⁰ the latter of which play a role in preventing young people becoming NEET.

Approaches have focused on the provision of advice and guidance, skills development, vocational opportunities and support. The evidence base regarding interventions is limited meaning no robust conclusions on what works for those already or at risk of becoming NEET can be drawn.¹⁶¹ However, a systematic review of the effectiveness of interventions found a significant 4% increase in employment, which although small has the potential to save the UK economy as estimated £469 million.¹⁶²

Interviews with young people that investigated what would assist in supporting them into good quality work post the Covid-19 pandemic found that support accessing work experience was most popular with 73% indicating this would help them immediately or in the future. This was followed by financial help for staying in education with 65% feeling this would help immediately or in the future.¹⁶³

Strategies that have been found to work in reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET do the following:¹⁶⁴

- Act early

¹⁵⁸ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (n 54)

¹⁵⁹ LSDA (2003). Learner motivation and barriers to participation in post-16 learning. Learning and Skills Development Agency.

¹⁶⁰ Mawn et al. (2017). Are we failing young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs)? A systematic review and meta-analysis of re-engagement interventions. *Systematic Reviews*. [Link](#).

¹⁶¹ Williams et al. (n 34)

¹⁶² Mawn et al. (n 160)

¹⁶³ Williams et al. (n 34)

¹⁶⁴ Allen, M. (n 47)

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- Tackle barriers and obstacles
- Work across organisational and geographical boundaries
- Work with local employers
- Track people and monitor progress

UK Policies

The UK has introduced a number of policies since the early 2010s focused on tackling the issue of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in education, employment, or training. Frequently these policies have framed youth unemployment as an individual rather than a structural problem, suggesting that being NEET is due to a lack of employability and work ethic amongst young people rather than of opportunities.¹⁶⁵ In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the UK government announced policies targeted at young people, examples of which include:¹⁶⁶

- **Kickstart** which provides funding to employers who create new jobs for young people on Universal credit or at risk of long term unemployment. The scheme intends to create hundreds of thousands of 6-month work placements.
- **Support for those leaving school or college** through funding provided to 18 and 19 year olds leaving school or college to enable them to study for a high value level 2 or 3 qualification if they cannot find employment or work-based training.
- **Support for jobseekers** included the introduction of youth employability coaches, a plan to deliver 100 youth hubs, and making £17 million available to triple the number of sector-based work academy placements
- **16 to 19 Bursary Fund** provides targeted funding support to help young people with the costs of staying on in post-16 education

Careers information, advice, and guidance

High quality careers information, advice, and guidance has been cited as a method to prevent young people from becoming NEET.¹⁶⁷

Best practice for career guidance is outlined in the 'Gatsby Benchmarks',¹⁶⁸ which states that high quality career advice should include:

1. **Stable careers programmes** embedded into a school's career education that is known and understood by pupils, parents, teachers, governors, and employees

¹⁶⁵ McPherson, C. (n 114)

¹⁶⁶ Powell (n 19)

¹⁶⁷ Richmond & Regan (n 1)

¹⁶⁸ Hanson et al. (2021). An Evaluation of the Northeast of England Pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. [Link](#).

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2. **Learning from career and labour market information** so every child has access to good quality information about their future options
3. **Addressing the needs of each pupil** so advice and support is tailored
4. **Linking curriculum learning to careers** to highlight the relevance of subjects to future career paths
5. **Encounters with employers and employees** offering every pupil multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment, and valuable skills
6. **Experiences of the workplace** first-hand through work visits, shadowing and/or work experience
7. **Encounters with further education and higher education** including academic and vocational routes
8. **Personal guidance** at appropriate decision points with a trained career adviser

A recent study found a positive relationship between meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks and positive student destinations for Year 11 leavers, after controlling for factors such as their level of disadvantage, academic grades, school type and location. This positive relationship was stronger in schools with more disadvantaged intakes with an average increase of 31% in the chances of pupils moving into further education, employment, or training.¹⁶⁹

Subject and curriculum options

As highlighted earlier, academic engagement is critical in determining young people's outcomes and curriculum is linked to this. Ofsted have stated that "*the development of a richer and more flexible curriculum was a key factor in re-engaging young people in education, employment, and training and also in preventing 14- to 16- year-olds from becoming disengaged*".¹⁷⁰ The National Curriculum can be made more inclusive and accessible for everyone by offering choice and flexibility. This can be achieved through providing a range of options at age 14 such as different courses, long-term tasters, or taking a year out so young people are not demotivated.¹⁷¹ Traditional curriculums can be updated by including career guidance that supports the development of young people's aspirations, for example one-to-one career sessions or the offering of workplace education.¹⁷²

Vocational education has been lauded as an offering which could prevent some young people from becoming NEET. Currently, the only vocational qualifications available at Key

¹⁶⁹ Percy, C. & Tanner, E. (2021). The Benefits of Gatsby Benchmark Achievement for Post-16 Destinations. *The Careers and Enterprise Company*. [Link](#).

¹⁷⁰ Ofsted. (2010). Reducing the Numbers of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: What Works and Why. [Link](#).

¹⁷¹ Gracey, S. & Kelly, S. (n 54)

¹⁷² Rocket Science. (n 58)

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Stage 4 are known as 'Technical Awards'. Technical Awards are qualifications that provide students with applied knowledge and practical skills in areas such as leisure, travel, and tourism, arts, media and publishing, and health, public services and care.¹⁷³ An expansion of the Technical Awards offering may be timely given the impact of the pandemic on these sectors, engaging more young people in these vocational opportunities could support these industries to recover.

There are significantly fewer entries to Technical Awards than there are to GCSEs, but the impact should not be undervalued. Analysis from the Department for Education found that taking a Technical Award was associated with a 23% reduction in unauthorised absences, a 10% reduction in fixed period exclusions, and a 62% reduction in permanent exclusions, all of which are risk factors for becoming NEET.¹⁷⁴

Apprenticeships, training, and work experience

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that combine on and off the job training aimed at improving the chances of young people finding long-term employment. The uptake of apprenticeships has been declining over a number of years with a further fall since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In light of this, the UK Government announced in 2021 an increase in the incentive payments made to employers for hires of new apprentices. This decline in the uptake of apprenticeships has seen a particular fall in those under 19 and in new recruits. It has been suggested that employers view 16- and 17- year olds who are looking for employment as *“likely to be low achieving, or below average in terms of personal qualities such as application and perseverance”* meaning that young people who choose not to stay in full-time education, whether school or college, are considered to be 'low quality'.¹⁷⁵

However, apprenticeships are beneficial in that they provide access to work-related learning that is not present most educational environments, further they offer the opportunity to develop employability and social skills whilst providing a potential route into employment. Successful strategies for reducing the NEET rate highlight the need to focus on skills development outside of traditional academic subjects¹⁷⁶ which apprenticeships achieve.

Traineeships are offered for people under 24 who are unemployed and have little work experience but can be prepared for employment or an apprenticeship in six months.¹⁷⁷ Traineeships provide education, training and work experience focused on skills development. An evaluation in 2019 found that 75% of traineeships had a positive outcome, i.e., further education, apprenticeship or employment within 12 months of starting their traineeship. This finding is even more impressive, considering that compared

¹⁷³ Ofqual. (2019). Annual Qualifications Market Report: Academic Year 2018 to 2019. [Link](#).

¹⁷⁴ Department for Education. (2019). Non-GCSE Qualifications in England: Key Stage 4 Entries and Absence and Exclusions Outcomes. [Link](#).

¹⁷⁵ Wolf, A. (2015). Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report. [Link](#).

¹⁷⁶ Allen, M. (n 47)

¹⁷⁷ Powell (n 19)

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to other learners, trainees were 22 percentage points more likely to have Special Educational Needs, a poorer school attendance record, and experienced more exclusions.¹⁷⁸

Work experience can be a useful tool in raising the aspirations of young people and inspiring them to continue with further or higher education, employment or training. An example of a programme providing work experience for young people is Career Ready.¹⁷⁹ Career Ready is a nationwide programme which aims to increase social mobility through providing work experience opportunities to those in Year 12 and 13 to support their transition into work. In 2020, Career Ready delivered 174,000 interventions with 98% of students progressing into sustained education or employment.

There are clear benefits for combining work with full-time education as it provides young people with real-world experiences of the workplace and thus smooths vital transitions, which can play a determining role in young people's engagement with further education, employment, or training.

Academic and pastoral support

Support to young people, both academic and pastoral, should be provided early to reduce the risk of them disengaging with education and thus being increasingly likely to become NEET.

The ThinkForward programme created in 2010 aims to act early to influence young people's transition from education into employment. The programme works by placing coaches in schools to work at those most at risk at age 14 (a particularly formative age in determining future aspirations). Support is offered long-term for up to five years and connects young people to services within their community and to local employers. ThinkForward operates in 14 schools in East London, and 88% of young people who have engaged have improved their behaviour or attendance at school and 95% have continued into further education, employment or training at age 16.¹⁸⁰

One form of support that can be influential is mentoring. Mentors can provide one to one and group support for young people whilst in school but also through community groups. As well as supporting young people to engage with their education, mentoring also holds promise for reducing youth crime. Mentoring Plus combines one-to-one mentoring with an education and training programme, aiming to:

- Reduce youth crime and other at-risk behaviour
- Help at-risk young people back into education, training, and employment
- Enable community members to get involved in solving community problems through volunteering

¹⁷⁸ Dorsett et al. (2019). Estimating the Impact of Traineeships: Final Report. *Department for Education*. [Link](#).

¹⁷⁹ Rocket Science. (n 58)

¹⁸⁰ Allen, M. (n 47)

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An evaluation of the programme found that taking part in Mentoring Plus resulted in a marked increase of social inclusion and the reduction of barriers to engaging in society subsequently reduced offending.¹⁸¹

As well as academic support, pastoral support can be crucial in identifying those at risk of becoming NEET and mitigating against the risk factors experienced. Schools can work to build mental wellbeing and resilience amongst their student population. Whilst local authorities can play a role by providing advice and help to access provisions for suitable housing, financial and debt support, as well as support for physical and mental health problems.¹⁸² Taking a holistic approach to supporting young people at risk of becoming NEET and/or becoming involved in violence works to bolster their resilience and aspirations.

Recommendations

Several recommendations have been made within the literature as to what more could be done to reduce the NEET rate. In summary, some of the key recommendations made are:

1. Ending the bias towards academic subjects and providing vocational and technical qualifications as standard to facilitate progression to apprenticeships, training, or employment
2. Increasing attainment and confidence with English and maths
3. Providing more clear and effective advice, guidance, and support for young people within schools and colleges to create realistic expectations about future progression and raise young people's aspirations
4. Facilitate engagement with employers and employees both through exposure and work experience. This could begin Key Stage 3 providing children opportunities to be exposed to different work environments and understand the skills required for employment
5. More effective careers education which is integrated into the day-to-day life of school and college

In addition, it is recommended that there is a more integrated and localised system to support youth participation and engagement.

Across West Yorkshire, there are a number of services aimed at supporting youth engagement, some of which are funded and/or supported by the Violence Reduction Unit, for example CATCH¹⁸³ and Hamara¹⁸⁴. Wakefield Council have implemented a NEET Strategy 2021-2024 with the vision of *“ensuring every young person has access to appropriate provision after they leave school or college and to increase the aspiration and*

¹⁸¹ Shiner et al. (n 50)

¹⁸² Allen, M. (n 47)

¹⁸³ [CATCH - Community Action to Create Hope \(catchleeds.co.uk\)](https://catchleeds.co.uk)

¹⁸⁴ [Bringing Everybody in The Community Together \(hamara.org.uk\)](https://hamara.org.uk)

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ambitions of young people".¹⁸⁵ The Council plans to take the following actions to achieve this:

- Wakefield – Minimising NEET: Maximising Opportunity and Potential – a piece of research alongside Leeds University
- Collaboration of the Careers and IAG services offer
- Development of three new Youth Support Hubs across the Wakefield District
- Increase the number of Council services providing placements, including supported internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, Kickstart, and work experience opportunities
- A structured 'transition to work' programme aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have special educational needs and disabilities

Examples of interventions implemented by other local authorities include:¹⁸⁶

Developing online opportunities in Hampshire offering opportunities such as:

- Virtual work experience programmes delivered by the council
- Online employer engagement, including virtual careers fairs
- Ted Education interactive videos
- 1:1 remote delivery to post-16 NEET cohort

Innovative Youth Participation in Norfolk Country Council, the council identified a group of young people in year 11 at risk of becoming NEET, who were keen to progress into employment but did not have the necessary 'soft' skills. A '*Positive Activities*' programme was created to encourage team building, confidence, self-esteem and a commitment to a regular activity. The programme also incorporated local inspiring speakers.

Working in partnership to promote youth participation in Birmingham to overcome the challenges they have faced around the gaps in education, employment, and training provision and the flexibility of current funding arrangements for young people in Year 13. The College Collaboration Fund is a peer support programme established to help education colleges share good practice and to develop quality improvement priorities.

¹⁸⁵ Wakefield Council. (2021). NEET Strategy 2021-24. [Link](#).

¹⁸⁶ York Consulting. (2021). Education to Employment – Supporting Youth Participation. *Local Government Association*. [Link](#).

Future directions

The West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit's annual Needs Assessment identifies where there are gaps in the VRU's knowledge and understanding, which are addressed through the design, completion, and commissioning of research projects and delivery of interventions across the region.

From the findings of this report, a few potential future directions for the VRU to explore have been identified:

- **Mapping of services/interventions** – completion of a detailed mapping of the services and interventions for young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET in West Yorkshire. This would aim to understand what service provision is available in the region, how provision varies between districts, and where there are gaps in provision.
- **Building the evidence base** – conducting a research project to explore the links between those not in education, employment, or training and experiences of violence to expand our knowledge of the risk and protective factors, to understand how inequalities contribute to the prevalence and experience of violence, and understand what support is needed to prevent young people becoming NEET.
- **Delivery of a pilot project** – create and deliver a pilot project, potentially at Kirklees College, specifically around exclusion to establish support and interventions where needed.

Conclusion

Young people not being in education, employment, or training has been a rising problem in the UK since the 2008 financial crash, the aftermath of which left one in six young people NEET. Being NEET has long-term, scarring effects for young people in terms of their future employment chances, earning potential, health and wellbeing and social inclusion.

Those who are NEET are not a homogenous group and there are many reasons a young person may become isolated from education, employment, or training, but risk factors rooted in experiences of adversity are a unifying feature amongst NEET young people.

The risk factors identified for becoming NEET mirror those that drive violence: disengagement from education, exclusion, deprivation and poverty, mental health, (un)employment, and prior exposure to crime and violence. Experiencing any or multiple of these risk factors in childhood and early adulthood can have negative impacts on young people which cause a cycle of disadvantage, in some cases permanently excluding them from the labour market and thus increasing their chances of engaging in violence.

Optimistically, factors that protect against becoming and remaining NEET have also been identified, presenting avenues for effective interventions to maintain educational engagement, build resilience, and raise aspirations.

Looking ahead, several recommendations have been made as to how the Government, educational institutions, employers, and local organisations can contribute to reducing the NEET rate and supporting young people to remain engaged in education, employment or training.

Potential avenues for the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit to explore include producing a mapping of services available for those not in education, employment, or training, undertaking a research project to further explore the link between NEET and violence, and piloting a project targeting excluded young people.

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