

# Transforming opportunity

## Learning and Work Institute's vision for a Youth Guarantee

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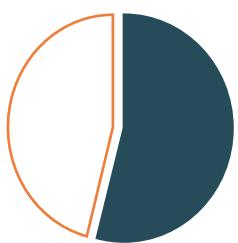
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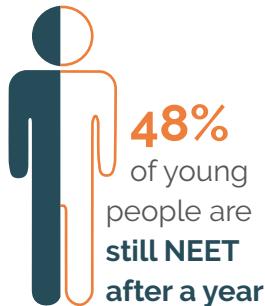
# Summary

1,000,000

Nearly one million young people in the UK are not in education, employment, or training (NEET)



58% of NEET young people have never had a paid job



48% of young people are still NEET after a year



2X as many young people are **not working because of health reasons** than 10 years ago



NEET rates are highest among  
**20-24 year olds**

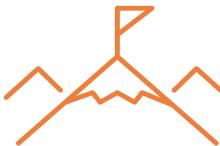


L&W's ambition: Fewer than 10% of young people in the UK should be NEET and no young person who is able to engage with work or training should be NEET for more than a year.

A Youth Guarantee will:



Drive economic growth



Improve young people's economic and wider life chances



Positively impact on wellbeing and behaviour



Reduce spend on benefits

Invest £1.9 billion in the Youth Guarantee to



Move 150,000 young people into work by providing tailored, person-centred employment support and a guaranteed job for those facing the greatest barriers to work

Support 10,000 young people to get qualified to at least level 3



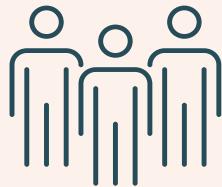
Increase the number of young apprentices by 90,000 and focus on apprenticeship quality

Delivering an effective Youth Guarantee



- Offer every young person a job, education place or apprenticeship
- Make it open to all young people aged 16-24
- Engage young people in a variety of community settings and online, with services provided at the same location
- Bring together existing provision and local partners
- Ensure support is accessible in all parts of the country
- Engage employers to offer more apprenticeships and jobs

# Introduction



In the UK nearly one million young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), representing 13% of all 16-24-year-olds<sup>1</sup>.

Young people being NEET is not a new issue, but it is a growing one. In England, the percentage of young people who are NEET has been rising steadily in the last three years, increasing from 624,000 (11%) in 2021 to 837,000 (14%) in 2024<sup>2</sup>. While the percentage of young people in the UK who are NEET is lower than the OECD average, we still have a long way to go to catch up with the countries with the lowest NEET rates, like the Netherlands. The current situation means too many young people face long-term harm to their career and life prospects as a result of being NEET. That needs to change.

A Youth Guarantee is a commitment to provide **all** young people who are not in education or work with access to a job, training, or apprenticeship. The idea of a Youth Guarantee is not a new one; across the EU, countries have been implementing Youth Guarantees since 2013. Some parts of the UK also have an existing Youth Guarantee; Wales, Scotland and Greater Manchester introduced initiatives in response to Covid-19 and the West Midlands launched its Guarantee in 2024. They differ in design but commonly bring together existing support under the umbrella of a Youth Guarantee and make it easier for young people to access that support.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) first called for a Youth Guarantee in 2020<sup>3</sup>, and in 2024, the Government committed to introducing a Youth Guarantee for 18- to 21-year-olds in England. Eight trailblazer areas are leading the way on implementing the Guarantee. These are Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, Tees Valley, East Midlands, West of England, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and two areas of London. The Government intends to take forward learning from the trailblazer pilots to then develop a Youth Guarantee across England.

We believe that the Youth Guarantee, if implemented effectively, can help the UK meet its target of an 80% employment rate by reducing the number of young people who are disengaged from work and education.



**We are calling for the Government to be ambitious in its offer for young people so that fewer than 10% of young people are NEET and no young person who is able to engage with work or training is NEET for more than a year.**

This paper sets out L&W's vision for how the Youth Guarantee can be effectively implemented to help meet these targets. It is based on evidence gathered through a literature review, interviews with stakeholders from existing Youth Guarantee areas, and consultation with young people, policymakers, and practitioners.

1. Office for National Statistics, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: February 2025](#)

2. Department for Education, [NEET age 16 to 24](#), March 2025

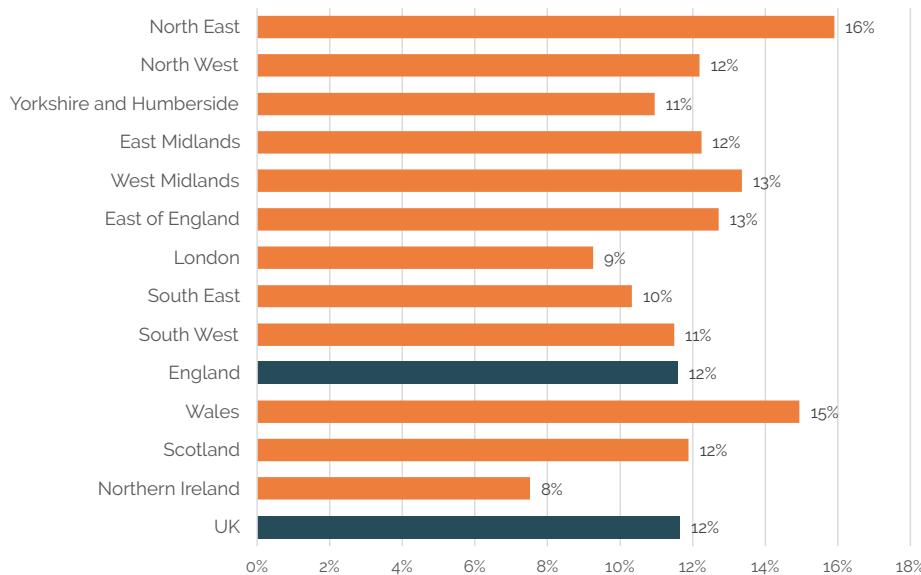
3. Learning and Work Institute, [Unleashing Talent: Levelling up opportunity for young people: youth commission final report](#), December 2020

# Setting the scene

## NEET young people in the UK

L&W's analysis shows that the one million young people who are NEET are not evenly spread across the country; 16% of all young people in the North East are NEET compared to 9% of young people in London and 10% in the South East<sup>4</sup>. This means where young people live matters, and it is important for the Youth Guarantee to work closely with local partners to address differing local needs.

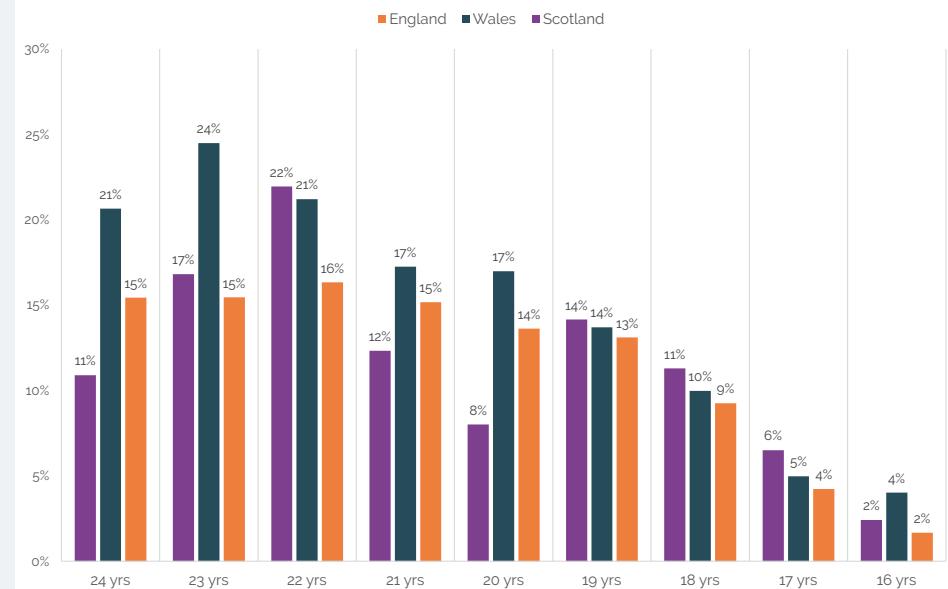
**NEET rates for 16–24-year-olds by regions of England and countries of the UK**



Source: Labour Force Survey, 8 quarters pooled, Oct-Dec 2022 to Jul-Sep 2024.

The proportion of under 18s that are NEET in England is fairly low with between 3-5% of 16- and 17-year-olds not working or learning. However, given that since 2015 young people in England have been required to remain in education, training, or work-based learning until the age of 18, this figure is still concerning. In England, NEET rates are highest among 20- to 24-year-olds, where for each year of age, between 14-16% of young people are NEET. At present, the Government's Youth Guarantee only supports young people aged 18-21, despite a very similar proportion of 22- to 24-year-olds being NEET. **A broader age range is needed to meaningfully reduce the number of young people who are NEET.**

**Percentage of young people who are NEET by single year of age in England, Scotland, and Wales.**



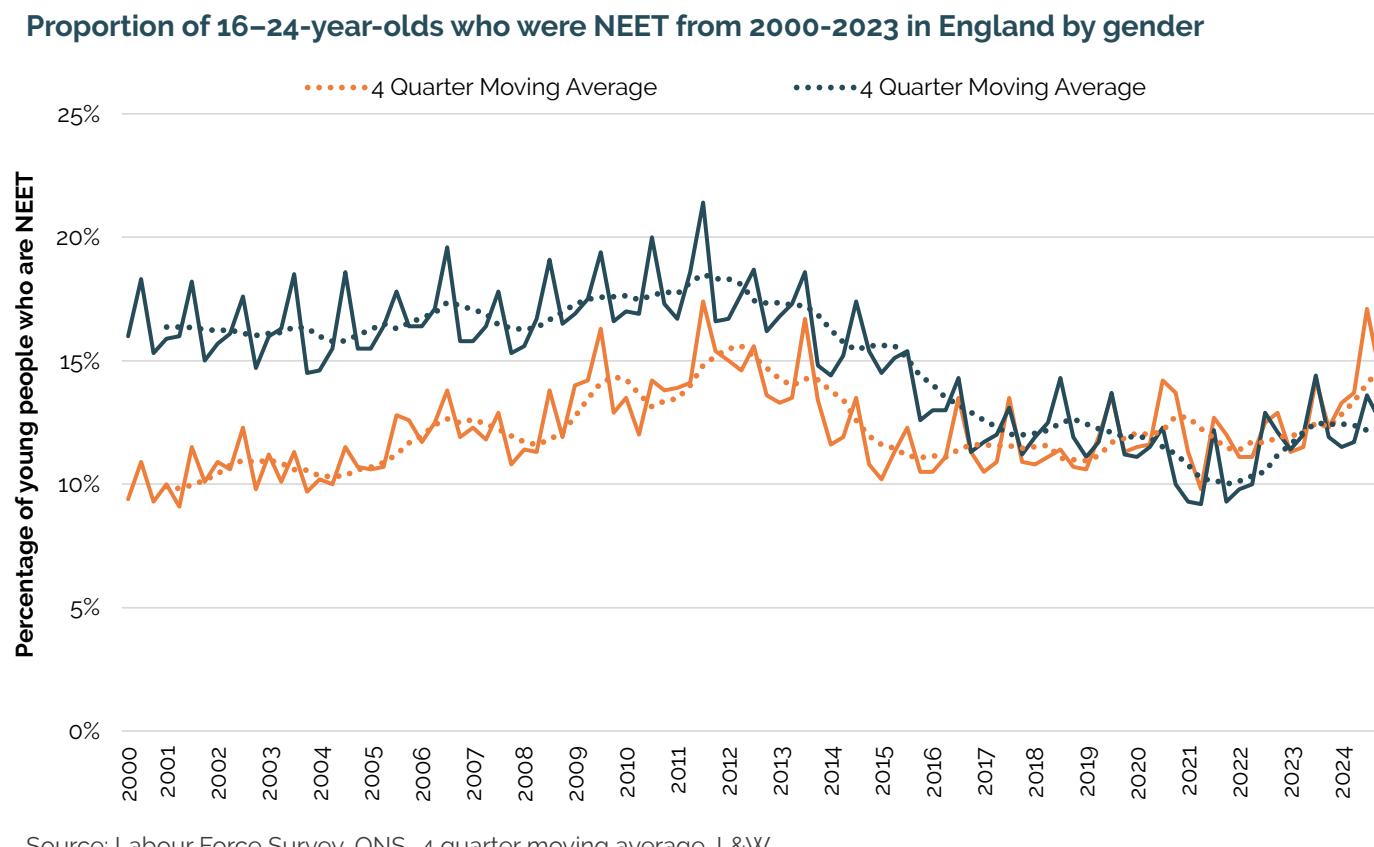
Source: Labour Force Survey, 8 quarters pooled, Oct-Dec 2022 to Jul-Sep 2024.

## Setting the scene

More young men are NEET than young women, but rates are increasing for both genders. Latest estimates show that 14% of young men and 12% of young women are NEET in the UK, equating to 56,000 more young men and 53,000 more young women not being in work or training than a year ago<sup>5</sup>. This has not always been the case. In England, for much of the 2000s more young women were NEET than young men. NEET rates also declined for most of the early 2010s and it was not until the early 2020s that NEET rates started rising again.

Around this point in time a higher proportion of young men were NEET than young women for the first time since the turn of the century.

**All NEET young people deserve access to support to help them move into work or training, but the Youth Guarantee needs to provide tailored, person-centred support that is able to help disengaged young men and women.**



5. Office for National Statistics, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: February 2025](#)

## Setting the scene

The majority of young people who are NEET in the UK (59%) are economically inactive – this means they say they are currently unavailable for work or not looking for work for a variety of reasons. Health conditions are an increasing reason young people say they are not working; the percentage of young people in England who say they are economically inactive because of health reasons has more than doubled in the past decade (increasing from 97,500 in 2013 to 220,000 in 2024). Mental health in particular impacts on young people's ability to work; 30% of young people in the UK who report mental health conditions as their main health condition are NEET. Young people who are economically inactive should not be written off; with the right support, many could engage in employment or training.

***'I've got a chronic illness as well and it obviously affects me. So it's like I go [to the] hospital, like every month for treatment and stuff like that. [...] I'm just trying to look for a job, but it's just honestly just so hard.'***

Member of our youth consultant team

Many young people are juggling multiple disadvantages with health conditions being just one barrier to employment and training; 48% of NEET young people in the UK who have a health condition or disability do not report their health as the main reason they are NEET. Support through the Youth Guarantee needs to look at young people's needs, including the impact of health conditions, and provide holistic support to help those currently unavailable for work into employment where they are able to.

Our research also highlighted that of the nearly one million young people who are NEET, 58% have never had a paid job. These young people lack valuable work experience, which can make it harder for them to move into work. The Youth Guarantee will need to include a focus on making sure young people are employable, and that those that currently lack work experience are not left behind.

***'Every time I apply for like an admin job or anything of the sort it just doesn't work. They say my experience is not enough.'***

Member of our youth consultant team

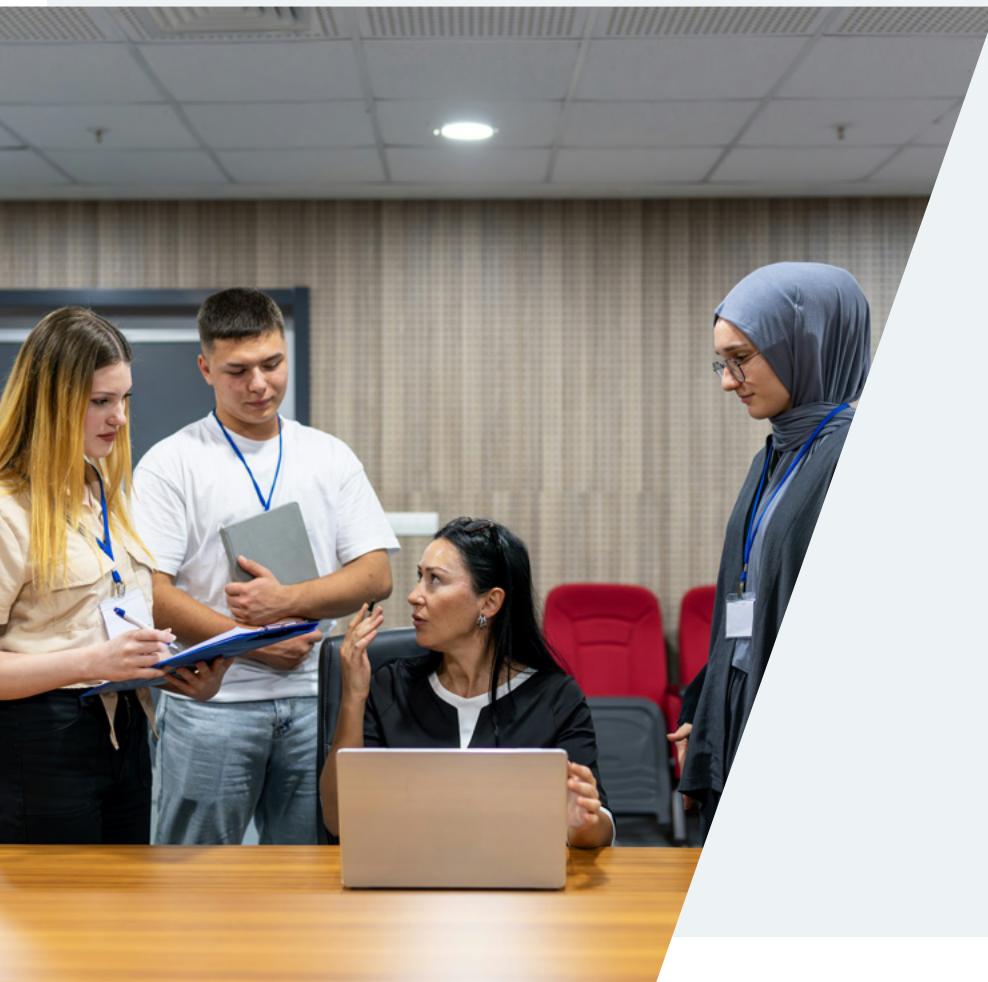
Being NEET for a sustained period of time can have long-term negative impacts for young people, as well as broader society, and the economy<sup>6</sup>. It is therefore concerning that 48% of young people are still not in education, employment or training a year after they first become NEET. Reaching these disengaged young people will be important to the Youth Guarantee's success.



6. Learning and Work Institute, [Facing the future - employment prospects for young people after Coronavirus](#), March 2021

## Setting the scene

L&W's 2025 Youth Opportunity Index showed that young people across England do not have equal access to education and employment opportunities. The best-ranking local authorities are mostly in London, with Sutton coming out on top, while young people in many other local authorities in the country fare much worse. **More needs to be done to make sure that where young people live does not restrict their access to work and training.**



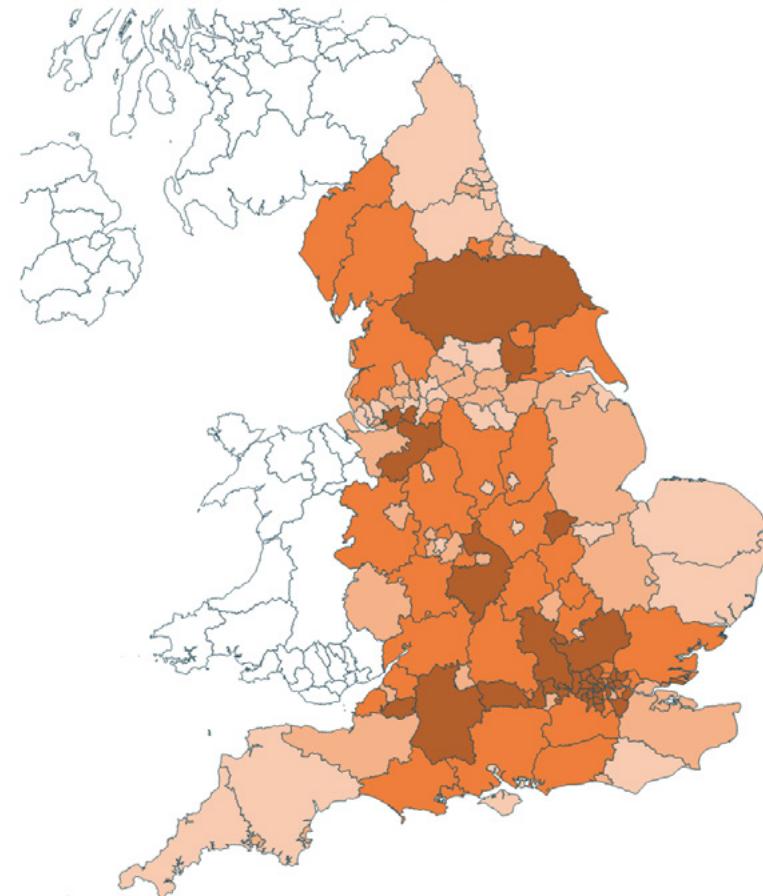
### Youth Opportunity Index 2025 map showing overall opportunity scores

An interactive version of this map is available on the [L&W website](#).

Quartiles indicate the quartile each local authority falls into, from worst to best.

#### Quartile Values

- 23 to 47
- 47 to 54
- 54 to 61
- 61 to 76



Source: Learning and Work Institute, 2025.

## Challenges with current support

Many young people who are NEET will move into work or training without support. However, some young people need help to access sustainable work and training opportunities. A lot of support is already available but does not always meet young people's needs:

- **Lack of awareness of support**

Young people do not always know what support is available to help them to look for work and apply for jobs or training opportunities.

- **Negative perceptions of support**

There can be stigma around accessing support and some young people do not think positively of the support available, particularly that provided through the benefits system.

- **Complex job application processes and discrimination**

Job application processes can be lengthy and complicated and some young people think that there can be discrimination against neurodiverse job applicants, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and other groups.

- **Complexity and a lack of joined-up support**

Support is not holistic and services don't routinely refer young people to other services or share data between them. Finding the right services can be hard.

- **Not equally available across the country**

Where young people live impacts on the services and opportunities they can access.



- **Untailored support**

Young people can be offered one-size-fits-all support that does not take into account their individual needs, barriers to work, and career aspirations.

- **Lack of opportunities**

The number of apprenticeships for young people is low compared to other countries and has fallen in recent years. Some employers are also reluctant to take on and invest in young people.

# Policy context

Policymakers have already recognised that action is needed to support young people into work, training, and apprenticeships. Since 2008 local authorities in England have been required to provide young people under the age of 18 with an appropriate offer of education, employment, or training through the September Guarantee. In September 2024 95% of young people in England received a suitable offer, however, offers are not equally spread across the country. For example, only 74% of young people in Derbyshire received such an offer.

In November 2024, the Get Britain Working white paper launched the Government's Youth Guarantee and introduced the eight trailblazer areas. This included the provision of £45 million of funding to these areas to identify those most at risk of falling out of education or employment and match them to opportunities for education, training or work.

It also announced changing the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy, intended to give more flexibility on how funding can be used. Details of if this change will benefit young people and help reverse the low number of under-25s participating in apprenticeships are still to come. However, in February 2025 the Government announced that it would reduce the minimum length of an apprenticeship and remove the need to study English and maths to successfully achieve an apprenticeship. The rationale for the change was to remove barriers to starting an apprenticeship, but the risk is that quality may be sacrificed in order to increase the quantity of

places available. England is already an outlier in terms of length of apprenticeships and limited hours of general education like English and maths.

In March 2025, the Pathways to Work Green Paper set out plans for a 'clearer youth phase' in the benefits system. This includes a consultation on delaying young people's access to the health element of Universal Credit until they reach the age of 22. Delaying access to this benefit is intended to remove potential disincentives to work for young people with health conditions by mandating engagement with support. The Government says it will reinvest the savings generated from delaying this payment into work support and training opportunities for young people through the Youth Guarantee.



# Examples of existing Youth Guarantees

## Wales – Young Person's Guarantee

**Date implemented:** 2021

**Overview of the Guarantee:** A commitment by the Welsh Government to provide 16–24-year-olds with support to gain a place in education or training, or support to get into work or self-employment. The Young Person's Guarantee is an umbrella structure that brings together existing interventions to make it easier for young people to access support. Using existing support mechanisms enabled the Welsh Young Person's Guarantee to quickly reach and support NEET young people in a way that introducing new provision would not have been able to. The Young Person's Guarantee is accessed mainly through Working Wales, which then signposts young people on to other programmes.

**Example intervention:** Jobs Growth Wales+ was launched in April 2022 with the aim of delivering individualised training, development, and employability support to 16- to 18-year-olds who are NEET. The programme was designed based on learning from two previous employability programmes and is delivered by local partners across Wales. It offers three strands of support; engagement, advancement, or employment, with those on the engagement strand being furthest from the labour market and those on the employment strand being the most ready for work. Employers who take on young people through the programme are given a wage subsidy equivalent to 6 months of the National Minimum Wage.

## European Union – Youth Guarantee

**Date implemented:** All member states were required to submit an implementation plan in 2013, which was then reinforced in 2020

**Overview of the Guarantee:** The reinforced Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. Member countries then implement their own Youth Guarantee to meet local needs.

**Example intervention:** Finland introduced 'Ohjaamo', single point of access hubs, that bring together a wide range of services including employment support, mental and physical health services, and access to social workers. This holistic offer makes it easier for young people to access services by offering everything under one roof, with locations throughout the country so young people do not have to travel far.

France's Youth Guarantee is set up as a contract young people sign to demonstrate their commitment to engaging with work and training. They then receive personalised support to access sustained employment, an intensive programme of training and work-readiness activities, and an allowance payment of up to 528€ a month.

# Why a Youth Guarantee is needed

Reducing the number of young people who are NEET will have a number of benefits for the young people themselves and the UK economy:



**Drive economic growth.** Providing support to reverse the trend of increasing numbers of NEET young people will boost economic growth, by having more people in work to fill labour and skills gaps and improving their productivity by raising skill levels.



**Improve young people's economic life chances.** Being NEET as a young person can have a long-term scarring impact on life chances, making it harder to get employment in the future and leading to lower average earnings across their working lives. This has a subsequent long-term impact on government finances through lower tax revenue.

Young people who are unemployed at a young age will, on average, spend an extra 2 months per year out of work in their late 20s than they would have done otherwise and are likely to be paid less.<sup>7</sup>



**Positively impact on wellbeing and behaviour.** Being NEET has a negative impact on young people's wellbeing, increasing the likelihood of mental health issues. Spending time unemployed under the age of 23 lowers life satisfaction and health status even twenty years later. For some young men in particular, being NEET appears to increase the likelihood of them committing crime<sup>8</sup>.



**Reduce spend on benefits.** Almost 500,000 NEET young people are currently claiming a state benefit, with Universal Credit being the most common. The Youth Guarantee will move more young people into work including those currently claiming benefits.

The challenges set out in the 'setting the scene' section of this document highlight that more needs to be done to support young people into work and training. There are different ways in which this could be done, but a Youth Guarantee would be the most effective method because it will provide:



**A holistic, comprehensive, joined-up offer for all young people.** This will reduce the number of young people who fall through the cracks and provide support to re-engage those who find themselves NEET.

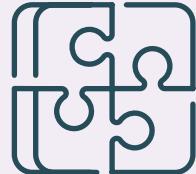


**A universal entitlement for all young people, which will reduce any stigma associated with being NEET and needing support to overcome barriers.** Guaranteeing young people's right to a job, training or an apprenticeship, will help to overcome negative connotations of accessing services.

7. Lindsey Macmillan, The cost of youth unemployment, Annex A in ACEVO Commission Report on Youth Unemployment: The crisis we cannot afford, 2013

8. Matilda Allen, Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), 2014

# What it should include



A successful Youth Guarantee depends on young people being able to access services and opportunities. It needs to bring together existing support, ensure it is available in all locations, and scale up where necessary to ensure it can be accessed by all young people, no matter the barriers they face, or where they live. Young people need to be supported to access employment, education and training, and apprenticeships.

## Key features

### A broader age range

It is not just young people aged 18-21 who need support to find work and improve their skills. Young people are at different stages of their career and education journeys, and their progress has often been affected by circumstances outside of their control.

From 2020, the European Youth Guarantee has included young people aged up to 30, which allows a more flexible approach to support that takes into account young people's differing starting points. Most young people we consulted felt that a Youth Guarantee offered to a wider age range than the Government's current plan would provide more effective support. This is particularly important to ensure young people are offered support at key transition points where the risk of disengagement is higher<sup>9</sup>.

**The Government should extend support provided by the Youth Guarantee to people aged 16 to 24.**

### Accessed through a range of locations

Young people don't always want to or might not be able to access Jobcentre Plus and the support they receive does not always address their circumstances or needs holistically. Support can be fragmented between different government departments and services making it hard for young people to access the support they need to find and sustain work.

Youth Hubs use Jobcentre Plus work coaches alongside experienced youth workers. Some Hub staff have expertise of working with particular groups of young people, such as those who have experienced the care system or who are neurodiverse. Support was designed using person-centred therapeutic approaches.

Young people can also access support through housing associations, community centres and groups, targeted support services, education providers like colleges, and in community settings. **We need multiple ways for young people to access support, both online and in person, making it as easy as possible by co-locating services.**



# Employment

## Challenge

In the UK, 41% of young people who are NEET are unemployed (392,000 young people) and therefore actively seeking work. The rest are economically inactive. This means they are currently unavailable for work or are not looking for work. Many young people who are NEET, whether they are unemployed or economically inactive, will need support to find work or move closer to being ready for work.

Many young people who are NEET lack the work experience they need to help them kickstart their career; 58% of NEET young people in the UK have never had a paid job. There is also strong evidence that being NEET for a sustained period of time has a long-term scarring effect on young people's future employment and earnings. This is concerning given that nearly half (48%) of young people in the UK are still not in education, employment or training a year after becoming NEET.

## Evidence

Our consultation with young people and stakeholders highlighted that they do not always know what support is available to them to look for work or training that matches their aspirations. This leaves many struggling through complicated job search and application processes alone, leading to frustration and disengagement.

Previous research found that three in five (62%) young people believe it is more difficult to find a job now than it was ten years ago<sup>10</sup>. When support is received, often through Jobcentre Plus, many young people feel it is not sufficiently tailored to their needs and that they do not always have a consistent, trusted person to guide them through work search requirements and into a sustainable job.

For young people who face the biggest barriers to work, wage subsidies can be a valuable way of incentivising employers to provide young people with work experience. These were used in the previous Kickstart Scheme in the UK and are used for a small number of participants in Jobs Growth Wales+, where employers can receive a subsidy worth 6 months of minimum wage. Employers reported that the subsidy made it easier for them to employ young people through the scheme<sup>11</sup>. Wage subsidies require a big up-front investment from government, but a cost-benefit analysis of the Kickstart Scheme found that returns from the scheme outweighed the costs<sup>12</sup>. Kickstart was introduced at a time when other job opportunities were limited, so any successor programme would need to be carefully targeted at young people who need the most help, or there is a risk that other jobs could be displaced.

10. Clio Berry, [Developing a hope-focused intervention to prevent mental health problems and improve social outcomes for young women who are not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\): A qualitative co-design study in deprived coastal communities in South-East England](#), May 2024

11. Oliver Allies et al., [Evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales+: Interim Report](#), July 2024

12. Department for Work and Pensions, [Kickstart Scheme: A Quantitative Impact Assessment](#), October 2024

## Recommendations and cost

### 1 Support to find work

Young people who are NEET need tailored, person-centred support to find, prepare for, enter, and progress at work. The Jobcentre Plus model does not work for everyone and not everyone out of work is on benefits. The Guarantee should be open to all young people, but treat each as an individual by taking into account their circumstances and needs, such as health conditions, disability, and caring responsibilities, to provide the types of support that meets their needs. Support also needs to be equally available across the country, with investment in areas where young people are currently underserved.

Employment support also needs to be marketed to young people so they are more aware of, and more likely to engage with, the support available.



Supporting 150,000 more young people into work through additional employment support would cost the Government £900 million, some of which could come from the £1 billion of investment announced in the Pathways to Work green paper. This investment could be split over five years at an average of £180 million each year. This cost assumes that only half of young people who engage with employment support will move into work.

### 2 Job Guarantee

Every month a young person spends not in education, employment, or training has a negative impact on their future employment trajectory, and lifelong earnings. Tailored, person-centred employment support should be the first port of call to move young people into work. However, when other support has not succeeded, young people should be guaranteed a job to help them get essential work experience. We recommend that young people who have been NEET for longer than a year and have engaged with other services are guaranteed a job and employers are supported to take on these young people through a wage subsidy. Employers would need to demonstrate this isn't displacing existing work; one way to do that (based on the Future Jobs Fund) would be to focus on the voluntary and community sector.



Guaranteeing a job for up to 50,000 young people who are furthest from the labour market would cost the Government £325 million per year. This would be to cover the cost of a wage subsidy for employers equivalent to six months pay on minimum wage for a 25-hour working week.



# Education and training

## Challenge

Nearly three quarters of NEET young people in the UK finish their education before the age of 19, meaning they do not continue in education long enough to gain higher level qualifications. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that 21% of young people with no qualifications are NEET compared to 11% of young people who have a level 2 qualification or higher (i.e. GCSE grades 9-4 or equivalent). Young people need to get the qualifications that will set them up for success.



## Evidence

Previous research found that four in ten young people say they lack the training or skills they need to find a job<sup>13</sup>. In line with this, one of the most common reasons young people told us they struggled to find work was because they feel underqualified or lack work experience. It isn't just about having qualifications, but having the right ones to get you into work. The Edge Foundation highlighted a mismatch between the skills young people learn at school and those they need to secure work<sup>14</sup>.

## Recommendations and cost

### 3 Supporting qualifications to Level 3

A Guarantee should provide support for NEET young people who do not have them to obtain level 2 and 3 qualifications. Local authorities can work collaboratively with education providers to ensure that flexible pathways to these qualifications are available. Obtaining these essential qualifications will then set young people up for success in their future career or journey to higher education or other training.

This should include access to T levels as a path to technical learning and vocations, and places at further education (FE) colleges.



Offering 10,000 additional young people places to gain level 3 qualifications will cost the Government £62.5 million a year.

13. Clio Berry, 'Developing a hope-focused intervention to prevent mental health problems and improve social outcomes for young women who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET): A qualitative co-design study in deprived coastal communities in South-East England', May 2024

14. Edge Foundation, *Skills shortages in the UK economy 2024*, February 2024



# Apprenticeships

## Challenge

Apprenticeships are a key route for young people to train, learn skills for work, and gain employment. 175,000 under-25s started an apprenticeship in 2023/24. However, the number of young people participating in apprenticeships has declined since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017. About half as many young people started apprenticeships in the 2021/2022 academic year as did in 2015/2016. There has been some improvement in apprenticeships uptake among young people since 2021, but in 2023/2024, 48% of apprentices were over the age of 25<sup>15</sup>.

The Youth Guarantee should help young people access a high-quality apprenticeship, laying the foundations for their career journey.

## Evidence

Many of the young people we spoke to had received most of their guidance about their post-16 options from their school. However, some felt that the advice they had been given did not cover all the avenues available to them, particularly about the benefits of apprenticeships.

Expert stakeholders highlighted that there is a demand for apprenticeships among young people, but a shortage of employers willing to offer them due to perceived risks. The Young Person's Guarantee in Scotland tried to address this through offering employers Apprenticeship Employer Grants of £5,000 for taking on, or upskilling, a 16- to 24-year-old apprentice. It also advertised apprenticeship

places, among other opportunities, to young people through an online information hub for school leavers. Evidence suggests that one of the main obstacles to employer engagement with training and support for young people is lack of awareness and understanding of the range of different options and initiatives for them to engage in<sup>16</sup>.



*'I find myself figuring it out by myself and I feel like school or college hasn't really equipped me well enough to explore my options and figure out how to get into certain careers and certain roles, especially high earning roles.'*

Member of our youth consultant team

## Recommendations and cost

### 4 Increase the number of young people doing an apprenticeship

The Government needs to fund more apprenticeship places for young people. The education system and careers services need to improve how they provide information to young people on the benefits of doing an apprenticeship and help them understand how to access the right apprenticeship for them. Employers need guidance on the benefits and practicalities of taking on young apprentices, and of wider training and support they can offer to their young employees.

15. Department for Education, [Apprenticeships](#), April 2025

16. Learning and Work Institute, Review of occupational traineeships pilots (for DfE), 2022 (unpublished)

£

Supporting 90,000 additional young people into apprenticeships would return apprenticeship participation levels to pre-Levy rates. Doing this would cost £472 million per year in apprenticeship places across levels 2 to 6. This could come through a mix of refocusing existing apprenticeship spend away from older people and higher levels, along with extra government funding particularly for 16- to 18-year-old apprentices.

£

The Government misses out on potential National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for people aged 21-25 who participate in apprenticeships rather than working. We calculate boosting apprenticeship starts among this age group could cost the government up to £142 million in lost NICs each year.

£

Employers receive an incentive for taking on young apprentices. Supporting 40,500 additional 16- to 18-year-olds into apprenticeships would cost the Government £40 million per year.

5

### Apprenticeship quality

Apprenticeships need to provide young people with high-quality training and work experience. L&W recommends that the minimum length of an apprenticeship should be kept at one year in most circumstances and the requirement to achieve level 2 English and maths skills be reinstated. English and maths are key for building young people's skills for work and are common elements of apprenticeships in other countries. For example, apprentices in Germany have around 400 hours of this general education<sup>17</sup>. However, the Government should look at the content, delivery and funding of English and maths to ensure they engage learners and meet employer needs. Being equipped with these foundational skills means that young people have better chances of continuing to develop and progress in their career.



# How to implement an effective Youth Guarantee

The success of a Youth Guarantee also depends on how it is designed and implemented, who it is available to, and how success is measured. Below we set out key considerations for the effective implementation of a Youth Guarantee:

## Cross-government cooperation

The Guarantee should be a cooperative endeavour between central and local government. At a central government level, the Guarantee will require expertise and buy-in from a range of relevant departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Education (DfE), and where relevant, the Treasury, Department for Business and Trade, and Department for Health and Social Care.

In some nations, stakeholders told us that blockages in data were problematic when implementing their Youth Guarantee. This included complications for local authorities in setting up shared data across a range of partners and employers, which proved time-consuming. Assisting local authorities with data-sharing plans and ensuring that data is effectively shared between central and local governments can help to streamline this.

## Consulting with young people

A wide range of stakeholders need to be involved in the process of designing the Youth Guarantee. However, young people, and particularly young people with experience of being NEET, are keen to engage and input into how it can best support them. The Youth Guarantee will directly impact them, and the voice of young people should be heard as part of the design and delivery. Consultation should ensure that the experiences of diverse groups of young people feed into proposals.



*'And I think a group of diverse people like from diverse backgrounds like estranged young people, like people who are care experienced, who are carers, who have children or who have experienced the challenges should be consulted.'*

Member of our youth consultant team

## The role of employers

Effective employer engagement is central to the success of the Youth Guarantee. Employers need to understand the benefits of taking on young people and helping them develop skills for a successful future career. Existing Guarantees, such as in the West Midlands, have ensured employers are engaged by asking them to pledge to offer jobs and work experience opportunities to young people.

To enable employers to play an active role in supporting young people's journey into employment, they need information and guidance on navigating the complex landscape of employability and training schemes. This is crucial in enabling employers to make informed decisions about how they can support young people into employment. For example, whether a sector-based work academy programme, an apprenticeship, or a T Level work placement is the best option for their business.

## Holistic triage

The challenges that young people face can be complex, and they have varied starting points and circumstances. A Youth Guarantee should be focused on ensuring young people get the right support for their needs, whether this be support with finding a job or training, support with skills like budgeting, or help with physical or mental health problems. This will require cooperation and integration from services at the local and national level to enable referrals, ensure that providers have accurate information on other support available, and the ability to share information across services.

## Referral routes from the benefits system

Research into the implementation of other Youth Guarantees demonstrates the importance of making sure young people who are claiming benefits are aware of, and referred to, additional support, such as a Youth Guarantee. Processes will need to be established to connect NEET benefits claimants to the Guarantee, and that there is good knowledge of the Guarantee among frontline staff in the benefits system. Jobcentre Plus work coaches in particular need to have good awareness of the Guarantee and the support it can offer in order to refer eligible claimants to the support.

## Working with local partners

Many young people who are NEET do not claim benefits. These young people may be receiving support from voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. VCS organisations often have good relationships with the young people and higher levels of trust. Working with these organisations, and drawing from their expertise on the local area, can help the Guarantee to reach more young people.



*'There are a fair few organisations that are out there that can support you, that not many social workers are aware of. That not many people are aware of. And that it needs to be put out there and it needs to be accessible to the people that are actually needing it'*

Member of our youth consultant team

## Intensity and length of support

L&W recommends that support through the Youth Guarantee should not be time limited. Instead, the length of time that support is offered for should be tailored to each young person, acknowledging that some young people will need support for longer than others.

Our research shows that young people feel that the Jobcentre Plus model has too often not taken their needs into account and rushed them into jobs that are unsuitable or unsustainable. Allowing more time to find suitable opportunities would result in better long-term outcomes, particularly for young people who have been out of work for some time.

The intensity of support provided may need to be altered to suit each individual young person's needs. In the French Youth Guarantee, support is more intense when a young person first accesses it and then tapers off over time.

# How to implement an effective Youth Guarantee

## Targets and measuring

We are calling for the Government to be ambitious in its offer for young people so that fewer than 10% of young people are NEET and no young person who is able to engage with work or training is NEET for more than a year. However, young people's different starting points mean that this should not be the only measure of success. We should also measure things such as improvements in qualifications, progression at work, and quality and wages at work.

The Government should commission evaluations of the Youth Guarantee to capture how well it supports young people that include both qualitative and quantitative ways of measuring success. It should also publish regular data on participation, options taken, and outcomes of participants.



## Branding and marketing

A Youth Guarantee needs to meet young people where they are. The branding of the Youth Guarantee should set it apart from Jobcentre Plus and the benefits system to make sure existing negative perceptions don't stop young people from accessing support. Communicating positively and avoiding negative terminology like 'NEET' in the promotion and delivery of the Guarantee will help to destigmatise the support. For example, the Welsh Young Person's Guarantee used social media campaigns that emphasised positive messaging about how the Guarantee could help young people to achieve their goals and potential.

Marketing strategies also need to be developed to engage employers. These should take into account the challenges that different employers may face, for example, smaller employers compared to large ones. Employers need to understand what they will gain from engaging with the Guarantee and the different ways in which they can be involved.

# Summary of costs



To support the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee we need additional investment of up to £1.9 billion across employment, education, and apprenticeships.

This cost is made up of:



## £654 million

to move 90,000 more young people into apprenticeships

- **£472 million** investment in apprenticeship places (level 2-6).
- **£142 million** in foregone National Insurance contributions for 21–25-year-olds who participate in apprenticeships rather than working.
- **£40 million** to account for the increased number of employer incentives for those who take on apprentices under the age of 18.



## £1.225 billion

to move 150,000 more young people into work

- **£900 million** of extra investment in employment support for young people, some of which could come from the £1 billion of investment announced in the Pathways to Work green paper. This investment could be split over five years at an average of £180 million each year.
- **£325 million** to support wage subsidies for a Job Guarantee for up to 50,000 young people a year who are furthest from the labour market.



## £62.5 million

to move 10,000 more young people into education and training

- **£62.5 million** should be split across T levels and other further education courses.

# Conclusion

**The Youth Guarantee needs to be ambitious to ensure that fewer than 10% of young people are NEET and no young person remains NEET for more than a year if they are able to work or participate in training.**

This vision includes providing tailored, person-centred employment support to help 150,000 more young people into work and guaranteeing jobs for those furthest from the labour market through a wage subsidy programme. We call for at least 10,000 additional places for young people to study T levels and further education courses. Additionally, we aim to increase the number of young apprentices by 90,000, while making sure apprenticeships remain a high-quality offer.

To achieve these goals, the Youth Guarantee needs to bring together existing support, ensure it is available in all locations, and scale up where necessary to ensure it can be accessed by all young people, no matter the barriers they face, or where they live. This means it should be offered to young people aged 16-24 and delivered through a range of locations that offer integrated, holistic support.

Cross-government cooperation, consultation with young people, and collaboration with local partners and employers are essential for the success of the Youth Guarantee. Tailored support, effective referral routes, and flexibility will ensure that young people receive the help they need.



An effective Youth Guarantee needs to be properly funded. We calculate that getting it right will require extra investment of up to £1.9 billion.

This vision, if implemented effectively, has the potential to transform the lives of young people, drive economic growth, and create a fair and prosperous society. By making support to find education, employment, or training a universal offer, the Youth Guarantee can help all young people realise their potential and contribute positively to the UK economy.



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