



# WHAT **WORKS** IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

**A GUIDE TO IMPROVE PRACTICE**

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June 2021



## **Institute for Employment Studies**

IES is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in public employment policy and HR management. It works closely with employers in all sectors, government departments, agencies, professional bodies and associations. IES is a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets, and HR planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation.

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The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK. Their aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. From giving grants to those working at the front line to carrying out research and policy analysis, they shine a light on how to make successful change happen. The Health Foundation use what they know works on the ground to inform effective policymaking and vice versa. They believe good health and health care are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what they learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, they aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

## **The young people's future health inquiry**

This guide is part of the Young people's future health inquiry which is funded by the Health Foundation. The inquiry is a first-of-its-kind research and engagement project that sets out to consider how the experiences of young people today are likely to shape their future health outcomes. This guide forms part of a wider programme of policy research in the action phase of the inquiry. The research is led by IES across the four UK nations and is focused on understanding how to improve access to good youth employment and amplifying the voices of young people in research and policy-influencing.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Martina Kane and Cara Leavey of the Health Foundation, for their stewardship and support throughout this time. I am incredibly grateful to Becci Newton at IES, for her time, invaluable support and expert input in the development of this work. Thanks also goes to Tony Wilson at IES for his guidance and input. Finally, I would also like to thank each of the participants that took part in the sense-checking workshop in March 2021, whose contribution was key to this work.

## **About the author**

Cristiana Orlando is a Research Fellow at IES, leading the programme of research on improving access to good quality youth employment as part of the employment strand of the Young people's future health inquiry.

# Introduction



## What is the purpose of the guide?

This guide aims to support stakeholders who are working or looking to work as part of a youth employment partnership. The aim is to build understanding of the principles and practical steps to designing, developing, and implementing effective partnership practices to support young people's transitions into good quality employment, education, and training opportunities.



## How was the guide developed?

The guide was developed through a review of 45 national and international high-quality evidence sources. This was complemented by sense-checking workshops with 27 youth employment service leads and practitioners working in government and the third sector from England, Scotland, and Wales.



## Who is the guide for?

The guide has been developed for youth employment service leads, programme managers, and practitioners, as well as educators, trainers, and advisors. It is a resource for all who wish to design, develop, deliver, and fund youth employment interventions through effective partnerships.



## What is in the guide?

The guide provides in-depth and step-by-step insight into the principles and practical steps of the four key elements of youth employment partnerships: developing the partnership, managing the partnership, engaging young people, and engaging employers. The guide is divided in four sections, one for each of these elements.



## How can the guide be used?

The guide aims to provide a versatile and flexible tool, which can be adapted to accommodate different types of partnerships and services. It can be used when starting on a partnership journey or when looking to improve current practices, to build shared understanding, design interventions, improve delivery, or monitor progress. The 'Check Your Progress' matrix at the end of each section provides a rating scale to check your progress against each good practice element for the section.

# Youth Employment Partnerships

## Are youth employment partnerships distinctive?

Youth employment partnerships are in many aspects similar to other employment partnerships i.e. a group of organisations with shared interest and expertise to support individuals into employment (or an intermediate step such as education or training). There are, however, some distinctive aspects to youth employment partnerships because they focus on young people:

- **Supporting young people.** Young people experience multiple transitions at early stages of their lives, moving between education phases and into the labour market in the years generally between 14 and 25. Disruptions and negative experiences at these points can cause long-lasting scarring effects, and the factors that increase risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) overlap with the factors that result from being NEET for a long period (over six months) (Kirchner Sala, et al. 2015) (Speckesser and Kirchner Sala 2015) (Bell and Blanchflower 2011). To tackle these complex issues, youth employment partnerships use multidimensional and highly dynamic approaches, which often involve a tightly linked net of support provision that extends beyond employment (Santos-Brien 2018).
- **Working across a quadruple front.** Young people often face challenges when they seek to enter the labour market because employers seek to recruit based on experience (Pollard, et al. 2015). The group that engages with youth employment services for support, i.e. often those at risk of long-term NEET, experience increased challenges, complex barriers to work and may be at higher risk of disengaging from education (Sanderson 2019) (Jones 2002). Youth employment partnerships are tasked to address these barriers working on four fronts:
  - With the *young people* to develop their confidence, resilience, and skills both in relation to employment and more widely in their lives.
  - With *employers* to change attitudes and misconceptions about young people and help them develop youth-friendly practices.
  - With *educators* to bridge the gaps between educational settings and work and provide timely support at key transition points.
  - With *support services*, cooperating with a wide range of providers in the community to maximise outreach and minimise risks of young people falling through service gaps.
- **Going the extra mile.** Young people often find navigating the landscape of support challenging, and may not reach out for support. Youth employment partnerships involve and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, from Jobcentre Plus (JCP), NEET Teams and Pupil Referral Units, to Youth Offending Services, CAMHS, housing, health, and social services teams to identify and then support young people to ensure they don't fall through the gaps.

This list is not exhaustive. It highlights the added complexities which organisations addressing youth employment need to navigate, and the key role that partnership plays in supporting the development of effective and good quality provision.

## The levels of partnership

There are different forms and degrees of partnership, and different approaches might suit different types of engagement (Himmelman 1996). These include:

- **Networking** involves exchanging information for mutual benefit across interested parties, and involves stakeholders beyond the 'core' group affected by a service or intervention. It helps when establishing the scope of the partnership or sharing learning.
- **Coordination** involves some joint planning and more intensive communication to align activities to achieve a common purpose. It can help address problems of fragmentation, overlap and duplication across services.
- **Cooperation** involves some sharing of resources, such as funding, staff and premises, and involves the 'core' stakeholders affected by a service or intervention. It can help where services decide to 'co-locate' to reach respective goals.
- **Collaboration** involves an active effort where stakeholders enhance each other's capacity, establish and realise objectives jointly, and work towards mutual benefit. It is key to developing large-scale and holistic interventions.

# Youth Employment Partnerships

## What are the benefits of partnering?

Young people face issues which are often too complex for any one organisation to address on its own, given the specialist knowledge required on a range of issues (Clayton 2015) (Santos-Brien 2018). The key benefit of working through partnership is to increase the range of support an intervention can provide, improving the effectiveness and efficiency and creating added value. Tied to this are a series of additional benefits (Scoppetta 2013) (Moore, et al. 2014) (Santos-Brien 2018) (Clayton and Williams 2014) (Centre for Cities 2017) (OECD 2013) (Luecking, et al. 2015) (Hawley, Hall-Nevala and Weber 2012) (Miles and Trott 2011):

- **Increased capacity.** Partnerships enable organisations to expand their reach, share knowledge and skills, and access additional support networks. In turn, this allows them to achieve more and better, by widening and diversifying the pool of resources the intervention can draw on.
- **Innovation.** Partnerships bring together organisations and staff with different and complementary expertise, encouraging the exchange of ideas, promoting creativity, which can lead to better decision-making, and ultimately innovative solutions.
- **Improved quality of support.** By linking up multiple provision, partnerships can create more accessible pathways for young people, and develop holistic and person-centred approaches which lead to better quality support.
- **Financial sustainability.** Through partnership, individual services can join forces to leverage multiple or larger sources of funding, invest jointly and more strategically, use resources more efficiently, and achieve economies of scale leading to increased sustainability. Collaborative interventions can also be more attractive to funders and can facilitate access to repeat or additional funding.
- **Decreased fragmentation.** Youth employment services have been traditionally characterised by a high level of fragmentation, often originating at the institutional level and leading to a proliferation of disjointed provision. Partnerships work to align objectives and resources across services, and to improve working relationships by creating shared goals. This can help reduce duplication, competition and therefore inefficiency of interventions.
- **Increased impact.** The sum of these elements enables services working in partnership to develop more robust and effective interventions, providing better quality pathways to engagement and support for beneficiaries, and ultimately leading to improved outcomes for young people and partners themselves.

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## DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP



# BUILDING TRUE PARTNERSHIP



**WHAT IS IT?** Partnerships that join forces as a result of a shared vision, goal, and commitment, rather than a perceived obligation. They have young people's interests at their core, and their aim is to improve efficiency and achieve better outcomes through cross-sectoral working.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Partnerships built on strong foundations are able to quickly identify and address issues and challenges as they arise. This improves the partnership's efficiency and sustainability, as well as service delivery, enabling a better quality offer for young people.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Partnerships that share a strong ethos and direction achieve greater momentum and greater leverage within the community, as they provide a more coherent and joined up offer, building on partners' strengths to put them at the service of clients.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Identify and convene partners at the earliest opportunity to explore potential for joint work – ensure you include services with an established presence in the community and previous experience of partnership work.
- Discuss the case for partnership - why it is needed, what added value it could bring, how each partner would benefit, what the ethos and mission should be.
- Ensure there are plenty of opportunities for partners to meet face-to-face, to build trust, discuss and strengthen intervention design, and provide a smooth journey to implementation.
- Foster an environment for open and inclusive dialogue - actively listening to each partner's needs, giving everyone equal voice, collaborating to integrate different ways of working.
- Jointly establish clear goals around the issue or ambition at hand and get buy in on priorities and strategic direction from all involved.
- Start with the outcomes and work backwards, show how collaboration supports goals.
- Identify key measurable indicators early on, get commitment to measure these from all involved, to enable the partnership to track success, review strategies, maintain momentum.
- Build in time for planning - agreeing data-sharing mechanisms, establishing monitoring and evaluation criteria, and ensuring partners are ready to collect data before delivery begins.
- Consider early challenges - what could undermine the partnership, how it could be overcome.
- Establish governance arrangements, with clear responsibilities, resource requirements and mechanisms for accountability.



### Department for Work & Pensions

#### BOX 1: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) was an ESF-funded initiative aimed at supporting young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET). It was delivered in England from 2014 to 2020 across 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

The YEI was focused on developing local approaches to meet local needs, and required bidders to demonstrate strong knowledge of their local areas, and robust approaches to collaborative work. YEI partnerships were often formed at the point of bidding, following frequent meetings, discussions, and workshops to scope and involve potential partners. During scoping work, many YEI partners led consultations with potential service users, evidence reviews on previous interventions working with NEET young people locally, and local labour market data analysis.

In this way, partners were able to develop a deeper understanding of each other and local area needs. This in turn supported early relationship-building and provided key background knowledge to inform effective intervention design and development.

# ESTABLISHING NO WRONG DOORS



**WHAT IS IT?** Systematic linking of services and 'networked' approach, in contrast to 'vertical journeys' through one enabler service at a time (eg. housing, health), focused on providing an integrated support offer to young people across services.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It can reach larger numbers of young people, addressing multiple needs at once, provide a more coherent package of measures, and reduce the risk of young people disengaging as a result of being passed on from one service to the next with no connection.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It has the potential to reduce duplication, increase coordination and improve young people's engagement, enabling them to have access to a range of advisors, across different areas of need, through a single gateway.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Establish the rationale for a no-wrong-door approach, eg. supporting early intervention, streamlining provision, reducing risk of young people falling through the gaps.
- Explore the scope for an integrated multi-disciplinary or wrap-around service involving core partners (employment, education, housing, health, etc.).
- Identify complementarity across roles and organisations, the links between the support offered and the impact on service users, and how the approach contributes to outcomes.
- Discuss and agree resources required from each partner and establish clear roles and communication lines.
- Identify the modality for the approach – eg. multiple access points, co-location of staff, hub model, drop-in centres, triage system.
- Consider how to ensure continuity of relationship between young people and frontline staff as service users move through different types of support.
- Develop a shared service framework and training offer for frontline staff, to encourage shared understanding of the service and respective roles, and build common intent and purpose.
- Establish straightforward referral mechanisms, focused on warm referrals and seamless client journeys, and ensure all partners understand and use these correctly.



### BOX 2: ENGAGE PROJECT

The Engage Project was a three-year ESF-funded project run across South West Wales between 2009 and 2012, targeting young people aged 14-19 at risk of disengaging from education and those who were NEET. Core elements of Engage were the provision of intensive one-to-one employment support, and specialist support in collaboration with local services.

To ensure no young person would fall through the gaps, Engage used a three-way approach which included: youth workers and restorative justice workers based in schools to identify young people needing support and provide it in loco, outreach workers cooperating with Careers Wales to ensure warm referrals, and joint work with secondary schools to develop transition support offers for young people leaving education.

This approach allowed Engage to build a strong presence in schools across the area, and raise awareness across careers services, ensuring that young people could access help quickly and easily, minimising the risk of being turned away from support and of disengagement.



# JOINING UP RESOURCES



**WHAT IS IT?** Cooperating across the partnership to develop mechanisms for service integration, resource, skills and knowledge sharing, and joined learning opportunities.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It helps build capacity across all partners and creates an individualised service network, reducing variety and risks for overlap and duplication. Resources are used more efficiently, data can be shared more effectively, and partners managed more easily.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It can simplify referral processes and encourage increased referral rates, streamline communication, expand the range of provision available to young people, facilitate access to useful services for partners, and promote stronger working relationships.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Jointly develop a shared directory of provision and support services, review and update it regularly, and ensure that it is regularly circulated among partners.
- Co-locate support with services in the community – JCP, schools and colleges, housing associations, health services, GP surgeries, advice services, social services, etc.
- Establish straightforward mechanisms to share information, feedback, resources, good practice and guidance and ensure they are used by all partners.
- Identify peer learning opportunities to support staff across the partnership navigate similar challenges and find common solutions.
- Build strong links to Local Authorities, who have detailed knowledge of the local labour market and skills needs, and schools, who have most access to young people, especially those at risk of disengaging from education.
- Develop joint events for marketing and promotion, particularly with referral partners, to support improved understanding of the service and increase referral rates.
- Explore opportunities for mobile provision, enabling staff to work across locations or delivering services from partners' premises, particularly in more rural or deprived areas.
- Maintain contact and information flow across partners, at the strategic and operational level, and bring strategic and operational teams together regularly to share feedback and learning.



### BOX 3: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT GATEWAY

The Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) was a programme delivered by Liverpool City Region (LCR) between November 2014 and 2017 aimed at supporting young people claiming benefits into sustained employment. The programme focused on joined up and collaborative work to develop and source high quality provision, ensure resource efficiency and intervention effectiveness. To do this, the YEG team worked on three fronts:

1. It developed joint ventures with JCP, such as employability and IT courses, to improve relationships with advisors and increase referrals.
2. It worked closely with LA departments (homeless units, debt advisers, council tax officers, Troubled Families teams, etc.) to source wrap-around support for participants with more complex needs.
3. It worked with local providers to develop provision which was not previously available, including a mental health and wellbeing course in partnership with a college, and additional sector-based training with a council's adult learning service.

Effective joint work across each of these aspects was one of the key success factors of the YEG and contributed to the intervention notably surpassing its outcome targets in Phase 1 of the programme (829 participants moved into work against a target of 590, 439 participants achieved a 26-week job outcome).



# INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE



**WHAT IS IT?** Supporting young people to participate in the design and development of interventions and have a role as equal partners within the partnership.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Young people are the end users of the service offered by the partnership and are experts by experience. Their inclusion in design is key to building credibility, the trust of young people in the service, and to develop accessible and youth-friendly provision.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Young people bring the appreciation of the service user's perspective and what can work to engage and support them. They can help partners understand how to maximise engagement, minimise risks of drop-out, and achieve the best outcomes.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Ensure all partners understand the purpose of involving young people and buy into it
- Identify the right support to help partners develop the skills for meaningful youth involvement – eg. through youth work approaches and collaboration with youth organisations.
- Liaise closely with the services supporting young people to engage and ensure the opportunity is open to all young people, and that a diverse and inclusive group are engaged.
- Involve young people through a collaborative and ongoing approach rather than tokenistic and one-off meetings.
- Clearly explain to young people the purpose for their participation, what tangible outcome it is going to lead to, and their role in influencing the result.
- Treat the young people as equal partners, avoid being condescending or patronising.
- Minimise the use of jargon, highly technical, or bureaucratic language.
- Ensure young people are provided with the right tools to engage, and develop feedback mechanisms to adjust the process where needed.
- Actively involve young people in intervention design activities – eg. outreach strategies and campaigns, selection of delivery partners, peer mentoring.
- Ask young people what they would like to see from the intervention and what partners should prioritise in the interest of service users.



### COMMUNITY FUND BOX 4: TALENT MATCH

Talent Match was a youth employment programme that ran from 2014 to 2018 in 21 Local Enterprise Partnerships across England. It focused on supporting young people aged 18-24 who were furthest from the labour market to get closer to work.

During both programme design and delivery stages, young people were included as key members of the Talent Match partnership. Organisations supporting young people and programme partners joined forces to develop youth-friendly approaches to enable young people to get involved.

Activities young people were part of ranged from sitting on interview panels for the selection of delivery partners, and informing intervention design through collaborative workshops, to participating in outreach work, and training as peer mentors to support clients.

The involvement of young people at each stage was a key element of success of Talent Match, enriching the partnership through the service user perspective, challenging misconceptions, and influencing organisations' practices.



# THINKING ABOUT THE LOCAL CONTEXT



**WHAT IS IT?** Considering the geography of the partnership and the local labour market where the intervention will take place, and potential challenges or enablers tied to this.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** The local context has potential to have a significant impact on the partnership's success and its ability to provide support. A lack of certain jobs or entry-level positions will make it more difficult to help young people into and progress in meaningful work.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Thinking about the local context during partnership formation helps strengthen intervention design, anticipate challenges, and identify ways in which the partnership can have the most traction locally.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Consider the strength of the local supply chain and the availability and quality of local opportunities for young people.
- Identify what opportunities are available to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and how sustainable they may be.
- Map the landscape of training provision, match it to the local labour market needs and young people's aspirations to identify gaps, and establish how the partnership can fill these.
- Explore the partnership's capacity to provide support with transport and connectivity to enable access to opportunities outside the local area.



### BOX 5: GETTING AHEAD

The Getting Ahead Programme was a Welsh Government initiative, delivered across Wales between 2013 and 2016, to support young people aged 16-18 who were NEET and had been in care or were known to the Youth Offending Services, to help them transition into EET destinations.

Two core delivery partners were the Centre for Business and Social Action, one of the largest business membership organisations in Wales, and the Construction Youth Trust, a charity supporting disadvantaged young people into the construction industry. These organisations had an established presence in the community, strong knowledge of the local labour market, and long-standing links to employers.

They were key to ensuring the partnership was able to source the right opportunities for young people locally. Through this approach, Getting Ahead was able to source a wide range of work placements in retail, construction, hospitality and catering services. Placements were individually tailored and did not rely on a bank of employers, thus decreasing the risks of mismatch between skills and local opportunities.

## Additional resources

- [Developing community partnerships and multi-agency working](#). This Welsh Government toolkit is designed to provide practical guidance for intervention planning for stakeholders looking to develop school-community partnerships to support improved outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- [Best value toolkit: Effective partnership working](#). This Audit Scotland toolkit provides an evaluation framework to help assess whether a partnership is set up to provide best value. The toolkit provides a series of structured key questions, with a matrix of performance levels (from basic to advanced practice).
- [IEP Partnership Toolkit](#). This Nesta toolkit provides practical guidance to support the operationalisation of the partnership and develop partnership agreements.



	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS	NOT STARTED	IN PROGRESS	COMPLETE
BUILDING TRUE PARTNERSHIP	The partnership includes a good mix of partners (expertise, strong local networks, previous experience of similar interventions).	○	○	○
	The case for partnership has been discussed and partners agree on goals, strategy, and direction.	○	○	○
	The partnership has established and agreed on mechanisms to track progress and impact.	○	○	○
	Governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms, and resourcing requirements have been established.	○	○	○
	The partnership has considered potential early challenges.	○	○	○
	Partners understand their roles and responsibilities and have a shared understanding of each other and each aspect and stage of the partnership.	○	○	○
JOINING UP RESOURCES	Partners have explored scope for wrap-around support as part of the intervention.	○	○	○
	Mechanisms for joint working and service integration have been established.	○	○	○
	The partnership has agreed the way it will operate (co-location, staff share, triage, hub, etc.).	○	○	○
	The partnership has agreed mechanisms to ensure continuity of engagement and support for service users as they move through services.	○	○	○
INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE	Partners have explored the scope for developing shared resources and learning opportunities.	○	○	○
	Partners have identified opportunities to involve young people during design, development, and/or delivery of the intervention.	○	○	○
	Partners have agreed on resources and processes to ensure young people are engaged appropriately and meaningfully.	○	○	○
	The partnership has considered the local context, including opportunities and challenges in local provision and make-up of the labour.	○	○	○



# REFERENCES

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Clayton, N., Williams, M. 2014. <i>Delivering change: Cities and the youth unemployment challenge</i> .		✓	✓			
Clayton, N. 2015. <i>Youth Opportunity: Lessons from US cities on improving young people's employment prospects</i> .	✓				✓	
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Learning and Skills Council. 2010. <i>Evaluation of the Advancement Network Prototypes</i> .	✓	✓	✓			
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# MANAGING THE PARTNERSHIP

# DEVELOPING REFERRAL PRACTICES

 **WHAT IS IT?** Partnerships investing in relationship-building with referral partners early on, sustaining engagement, ensuring there is shared understanding and sharing of information.

 **WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It is key to the successful functioning of the partnership and to minimise risks of poor buy-in or uptake, and of wrong referrals.

 **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It expands the reach of the intervention and streamlines delivery, supporting uptake and achievement of targets.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Invest time to build trust between delivery partners and referral agencies and engage in the process early on, to ensure referrers are bought into the service once delivery starts.
- Put yourself in the referrer's shoes – why should they refer young people to the service? What information do they need to do this effectively? What is in it for them?
- Improve awareness of the services provided by each delivery partner, through leaflets and information events bringing together all potential referrers.
- Maintain regular contact with referral agencies and develop a shared agenda from the outset.
- Build on what has worked in the past, further strengthening links to previous referral partners.
- Ensure that referrals are followed up promptly, and that there is clear communication about who is doing what, and what happens next.
- Ensure there is sequencing and joining up of support with referral agencies, and that they have clear guidance and a key point of contact when referring young people.
- Ensure all partners maintain an updated database of young people engaging in the service, allowing the journey and outcome of the referral to be tracked across the partnership.
- Identify poor referral practice (eg. low or wrong referrals) and address it early on, improving communication with referral agencies or checking in more frequently.



### BOX 6: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT GATEWAY

As the main referral partner for the YEG (see Box 3), engagement and coordination with JCP was a key aspect of the intervention. To strengthen relationships, YEG staff worked from JCP offices on agreed days, to enable discussion with Work Coaches on programme eligibility and participant progress frequently and face to face. They also held joint workshops and group information sessions to develop shared knowledge on their services.

A key achievement was to implement a shared database which allowed YEG staff to know when young claimants met their eight-week eligibility criteria to enter the programme. These practices progressively improved referral conversion rates as the intervention progressed and contributed to the YEG exceeding its target for starts in Phase 1 by 50 per cent.



# ENSURING GOOD DATA GOVERNANCE



**WHAT IS IT?** Building trust and clear processes to ensure data is shared and handled appropriately across partners, streamlining data sharing practices, dispelling misconceptions of legal barriers to sharing data (sharing data in itself does not infringe GDPR, the key issue is how data gets handled once shared).



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It is key to understand the impact of the partnership, source quality opportunities for young people, and appropriate specialist support to progress participants with higher needs. It is also key to avoid young people going through multiple profiling experiences.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It helps partners understand whether the partnership is using the right measures and targeting the right groups, which is especially important given the heterogeneity and the diverse needs of young people. Good use of performance and management information can also help diversify provision and identify the right support.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Engage partners early on to jointly establish what data needs sharing, whether and how it can be shared, and common processes for sharing.
- Address concerns about data protection issues and ensure all partners understand how this works, and the implications of sharing customer data from the outset.
- Develop shared guidance and good practice for data sharing to be used by all partners.
- Explore ways to provide a unified database across the partnership or shared access to a tracking system so that participants' progression can be tracked across all partners.
- Build strong links to schools and Pupil Referral Units to improve access to school leavers' destination data.
- Join forces with schools and careers services to improve NEET tracking systems and ensure consistent practices.



### BOX 7: GLASGOW YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PARTNERSHIP

The Glasgow Youth Employability Partnership (YEP) was a multi-agency partnership active between 2008 and 2014, aimed at reducing the fragmentation across the complex youth employment landscape in Glasgow, and reducing NEET figures.

One of the key issues identified by the YEP was that school leaver destination statistics were patchy and inconsistent, and that appropriate data sharing mechanisms between schools and agencies were not in place. Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the national skills development agency and a key partner on the YEP, was tasked with developing a single shared management information system and work with schools to promote a cultural shift towards improving the monitoring and sharing of intelligence.

This led to the development of SDS data hubs across Glasgow, and improvements in data quality and sharing practices, which in turn supported the development of Glasgow's Youth Gateway, a single gateway for all 15-19 year olds in Glasgow who required intensive employment support.



# BUILDING IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION



**WHAT IS IT?** The process which allows the collection and analysis of data to understand how the intervention and partnership are performing against their goals (monitoring), and subsequent systematic assessment of effectiveness and impact (evaluation).



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It is key to understand whether the intervention is reaching its goals and the overall relevance and impact of the partnership, to hold partners to account and identify ways to improve service delivery and outcomes for young people.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It is a tangible way to demonstrate the work of the partnership, and can facilitate debates about sustainability and future direction, identify key lessons and what works, inform future policy and intervention design and leverage funding.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Ensure all partners understand the importance of monitoring for the purpose of the partnership and intervention, and its key role to track implementation progress and outcomes.
- Establish shared performance metrics, monitoring framework, and quality standards early on.
- Ensure partners agree on it, that it is clear who will be responsible for monitoring activities in each organisation, and that the resourcing requirements are agreed and understood.
- Assign a key person or organisation to oversee monitoring practices across the partnership and act as a single point of contact to which other partners report regularly.
- Ensure there is sufficient focus on soft and short-term outcomes and that monitoring practices allow the recording of positive destinations beyond employment and training.
- Develop adequate and accessible tools to support customer journeys – ensuring they are user friendly, inclusive, allow flexibility for the diversity of journeys, but also include standardised indicators to ensure comparability.
- Think about how the intervention will be evaluated, asking what the evaluation is interested in demonstrating:
  - **Performance evaluation**, assesses how well intervention objectives have been designed and the progress in achieving the objectives.
  - **Process evaluation**, assesses how well the intervention is being implemented.
  - **Impact evaluation**, assesses causality and whether objectives were met as a result of the intervention – it is the most robust type, but resource-intensive.
  - **Cost-benefit analysis**, assesses if intervention costs are justified when compared to benefits and to other similar interventions.



### BOX 8: DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is the Scottish Government's Youth

Employment strategy aimed at strengthening the pipeline between education and employment. DYW operates through employer-led Regional Groups, across 21 Scottish local authorities. A dedicated executive team oversees operations and is responsible for monitoring activities, employer engagement, and programme progression.

Performance monitoring involves managing and coordinating Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, tracking DYW activity across all areas of operation, and producing progress reports for the Scottish Government. For each Regional Group, the executive team tracks DYW progress against local KPIs, typically including number of school-employer partnerships, young people participating in meaningful work experience, and employer engagement with young people.

This enables the Scottish Government to develop yearly performance evaluation reports, assessing the progress and impact of DYW at national and local level, and plan next steps.



# PROMOTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



**WHAT IS IT?** Maintaining open communication at every level and stage of the partnership, investing in solidifying relationships, promoting dialogue and shared benefits with delivery partners, and building learning and sharing opportunities.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** A focus on building and maintaining positive relationships can support better outcomes for the partnership, and is key to address risks of competition and service duplication, and losing progress due to staff turnover.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** When positive relationships are cultivated, this can promote trust between services and increase focus on joint goals. Where long-standing links have been formed there is a reduced risk of the relationship breaking down when staff leave.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Consider having a dedicated staff member as the link between the strategic and operational level of the partnership, acting as the conduit for information, feedback and reporting.
- Map the local service landscape – what exists, how would they fit in the intervention partnership, are there opportunities for convergence, is there a risk for competition or duplication, how can it be overcome?
- Invest time to get to know the local ecology, explore opportunities to meet staff from other services face-to-face, listen actively, understand their priorities, and identify ways to collaborate to each other's advantage.
- Build on pre-existing links to other services and further strengthen these, aiming to create an established and long-standing relationship beyond the duration of the intervention.
- Establish a network or forum to share learning, best practice, and mutually beneficial opportunities (eg. connecting clients to follow-on programmes).
- Identify opportunities to share challenges, identify common issues, and jointly develop strategies to address these, to promote collaboration and develop trust across services.



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### BOX 9: ACTIVITY AGREEMENT PILOTS

The Activity Agreement Pilots (AA) were a government-led initiative designed for young people aged 16-17 who were NEET, which took place between 2006 and 2011 in eight areas across England. The programme, delivered by the Connexions service, provided a weekly allowance to young people who agreed to take part in a range of activities aimed at supporting them into EET.

Given the nature of the AA and the groups it looked to target, particularly harder to reach young people from vulnerable backgrounds, the programme worked to extend and strengthen links with a wide range of support agencies to source referrals.

By working closely together and cultivating relationships, AA staff and local agencies developed a 'win win' approach, whereby agencies referred young people to the AA and entry to the programme was classified as a 'positive outcome' for the agencies. This approach improved shared understanding among the AA partners and local providers of each other's roles and the ways in which they could work together beyond the AA.

## Additional resources

- [Journey to Employment Framework](#). This NPC framework provides practical guidance to help organisations measure young people's journey to employment. It includes a guide to understanding the factors that support young people to get and sustain a job, an evidence-based framework on seven groups of factors that contribute to successful job outcomes, and a suite of tools to measure impact.
- [Evaluation Toolkit For Youth Guarantee Projects](#). This European Commission toolkit was designed to support partners delivering Youth Guarantee interventions in evaluating the impact of their programmes. It includes guidance on deciding which type of evaluation is right for the intervention, planning and conducting the evaluation, and reporting results.
- [Impact measurement in the NEETs sector](#). This NPC guide is aimed at organisations working with NEET young people to help them measure and communicate their impact. It focuses on four practical aspects to improving measurement and how to develop consensus across partners around the outcomes they want to achieve.
- [PHF Assessing Impact Framework](#). This Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) framework provides a guide for partnerships looking to understand how the funding they receive creates impact, using a practical framework of indicators focused on individuals and communities, organisations, and practice and policy.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS	NOT STARTED	IN PROGRESS	COMPLETE
EFFECTIVE REFERRAL PRACTICES	The partnership has identified referral partners and agreed a shared approach to engagement.	○	○	○
	Partners agreed on and assigned resources to relationship-building and developing processes with referral partners (regular engagement, information sharing, joint activities, etc.).	○	○	○
	Partners have established clear communication lines between referrers and delivery partners.	○	○	○
	Partners have established an integrated and coherent referral pathway to ensure warm referrals and continuity of support.	○	○	○
	Referrers have access to data tracking systems, are using these correctly, and partners have access to this data.	○	○	○
GOOD DATA GOVERNANCE	Data sharing processes and protocols have been agreed across the partnership.	○	○	○
	Shared performance metrics, monitoring frameworks, and quality standards have been agreed across the partnership.	○	○	○
	All partners are clear about their data monitoring and data sharing responsibilities.	○	○	○
	There is buy-in across all partners to monitor and share data as needed and resources have been assigned to these activities.	○	○	○
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS	There is connection, coordination, and communication between the strategic and operational levels of the partnership.	○	○	○
	Open and inclusive dialogue is maintained across the partnership through established mechanisms.	○	○	○
	There are sufficient learning and sharing opportunities across the partnership.	○	○	○



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# ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

# BUILDING COHERENT PATHWAYS



**WHAT IS IT?** Pathways that focus on providing a smooth journey for young people, at each stage of the intervention and across the support they access. This ensures that young people have a key point of reference at all times and access the right support for them at the right time.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It is key to developing strong relationships with young people, build their trust in the service, offer them high quality and positive journeys. It is also important to minimise risks of young people slipping through the net as a result of poor coordination between services.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It helps reduce the risk of disengagement, and fine-tune support to the young person's needs and aspirations, facilitating close monitoring of their progress. It also supports relationship-building between partners, strengthening communication lines, and minimising risks tied to relying on institutional network linkages.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Develop mechanisms to ensure warm referrals between delivery partners – eg. triaging, co-location, joint events, etc.
- Keep gateway advisors' knowledge of local services up to date and ensure they know how and who to sign-post young people to.
- Where possible have a single keyworker broker links between services, 'sewing together' a personalised package of support for the young person and following them along the journey.
- Recruit keyworkers with an established community presence and reputation in order to make use of both their street-level knowledge and relatability to young people.
- Strive to minimise multiple profiling experiences, which are burdensome both for staff and young people and can take away time from supporting the client.
- Co-create the support plan with the young person, and regularly review this, to ensure the support offered meets their needs, minimise risk of mismatch between aspirations and provision, and empower them to take charge of their journey.
- Reduce bureaucratic burdens on young people, using youth-friendly language, and identifying the best communication channels for them (eg. social media).
- Make use of community and youth-friendly spaces with a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere, where staff can interact with young people in an informal way, to minimise young people being put off by JCP and school-like settings.



### BOX 10: MyGo

MyGo was a youth employment support service developed and delivered by Suffolk County Council, in partnership with PeoplePlus and JCP, which ran between 2014 and 2017. The MyGo model was based on the integration of JCP within the MyGo 'brand' and identity.

In the first phase of the programme this involved co-location of JCP staff in the dedicated MyGo centre, while in the second phase MyGo coaches operated on an outreach basis, either in JCP offices or in 'pop-ups' in community locations.

Key factors which strengthened service integration and helped develop seamless support pathways for young people included staff from both organisations using MyGo branded uniforms to convey the idea of a unified service, shared staff social events, a three-way initial client registration meeting (between JCP, MyGo coaches and service users) to co-ordinate support, and a buddying system, whereby MyGo and JCP work coaches shared a client caseload and had meetings jointly, to further improve support co-ordination.



# FOCUSING ON HOLISTIC APPROACHES



**WHAT IS IT?** Approaches offering a package of services and wrap-around support, including core services (eg. employment support) and add-on services (eg. specialist, advice, psychological and social). This recognises that young people have complex needs, and that a number of wider enablers are needed to support their advancement.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** No one service can provide support which is fully holistic and person-centred, and tackling the multiple barriers which young people often face requires a multi-pronged approach focused on multiple enablers (eg. linking housing, health, work, wellbeing).



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Multi-service, holistic support makes the best use of existing resources, supports young people to want to engage, and ensures that they are supported at all stages of their journey. Effective holistic support also helps young people sustain positive destinations for longer, as it helps them build confidence, motivation, and resilience across multiple aspects of their lives, and achieve positive outcomes beyond employment.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Collaborate with partners to establish what a holistic approach should look like and develop a comprehensive model of support, identifying areas of provision that the targeted young people are likely to benefit from and resources required to provide that support.
- Map the different type of provision available locally for each of these core areas: education, employability and employment, motivational, psychological, social, welfare, health and wellbeing. Where there are gaps consider how the partnership might fill these.
- Engage with providers to understand how the support will be offered and if it reflects the approach, ethos and values taken by the partnership.
- Communicate with partners to develop a plan for how the holistic offer will be realised, to coordinate and join up services at each stage of the young person's journey.
- Each young person is different and no one size fits all – tailor the support offer to the individual needs of each beneficiary, aiming to provide young people with a 'menu of choice' between different provision, and allow room for flexibility.
- Upskill frontline staff to be able to signpost and refer young people effectively to the specialist support they need and to broker provision where it may not already be available.



### BOX 11: SIEL PROJECT

The SIEL Project was a Welsh Government initiative that ran between 2010 and 2013 which supported 12 youth offending teams (YOTs) across Wales to deliver additional, intensive support to young people involved in the criminal justice system to help them transition into EET destinations.

The SIEL Project was built on the principle that young people who had been through the justice system had negative experiences in educational settings and required intensive support to overcome their aversion and re-engage positively with EET. One of the main strengths of the project was its 'young person' centred approach, where keyworkers prioritised working at the young person's pace and level and co-developing support journeys with them. The key contribution of the project, and its added value to the YOT's work, was to allow for more resource investment in improving capacity, joint working and communication across providers to source carefully tailored provision for the specific needs of young people in the justice system, including advocacy and specialist support.

The approach relied on thorough assessments of participants' needs by a SIEL Keyworker, who oversaw the young people's journey, and improved communication and information sharing with partners to source the right support. Where partners identified gaps in support, the project and the relationships they had built through it, enabled them to develop bespoke solutions.



# COLLABORATING WITH SUPPORT SERVICES



**WHAT IS IT?** Involving organisations that are closest to young people to allow partnerships to reach those that mainstream services typically do not. It includes collaboration with schools, VCSE organisations, Youth Offending Services, Leaving Care teams, housing departments and associations, parents support services, and social services.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Collaborating with a range of services who are in contact with young people, can identify those at risk and those facing complex barriers, and often already have trusted relationships with them.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Increasing chances of engaging young people, by going through trusted links. These services often have the deepest understanding of young people's needs and challenges, and can play a key role to help design the most effective interventions.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Extend and strengthen links with schools and local support agencies and where possible involve them in the design of the intervention.
- Establish regular contact and updates with key services, such as youth offending teams, leaving care teams, and social services who can facilitate access to hard-to-reach and/or hard-to-support groups.
- Lead outreach from premises of services that young people already engage with.
- Work with support services to repeatedly re-engage young people who struggle to stay on, and get their support to facilitate regular contact and gain the young people's trust.
- Engage directly with young people in schools and, where possible, establish 'Youth to Youth' approaches, through peer workers, to build their trust and create a sense of ownership.



### BOX 12: ENGAGE PROJECT

As part of the Engage project (see Box 2), the Keeping In Touch (KIT) Team focused on engaging young people at risk of dropping out of education or who were already NEET, working closely with referral partners.

Effective engagement of the 16-19 age group was proving hard for the KIT Team and this led to advisors working out of JCP offices twice a week, to engage the group of young people who were regularly attending to claim benefits. Successively, the KIT Team also engaged local advisors from Communities First, a service working in local communities to support the most vulnerable and deprived groups, as they had experience of targeting and engaging the harder to reach 18+ cohort of young people.

This approach enabled the KIT Team to engage with around 500 young people who they had not been able to reach previously.



# EMBEDDING IN-WORK SUPPORT



**WHAT IS IT?** support provided after young people leave the intervention and move into a positive destination. Some in-work support is provided by employers and training providers, but often young people, particularly those who have been away from education or work for longer periods, need extra practical or emotional support from a trusted person to sustain their destinations.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Positive outcomes often dramatically decrease at transition points, as young people struggle with work transitions or get stuck in insecure or unfulfilling work, and in-work support can minimise these risks.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Continued in-work support can enable young people to access the extra help they need to cope with the challenges of transition, sustain employment and progress into better opportunities.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Consider factors that help young people sustain employment beyond in-work support and how the intervention can support these – eg. young people are in jobs they like and match their skills, jobs are local, employers commit to support young people.
- Identify challenges faced by young people when moving into work and the type of support that can help them – eg. advice on workplace behaviour, balancing personal and work life, managing relationships, work or non-work emotional support, support to progress.
- Explore how in-work support can also be beneficial to the employer and improve their capacity to support the young person – eg. involve the employer where appropriate.
- Negotiate and agree with partners how in-work support will be developed, what type and extent of support will be provided, and identify ways to share resourcing for this purpose
- Tailor the support offer to individual's needs, experiences and circumstances – from light touch (eg. informal checking in) to intensive (eg. support in the workplace).
- Ensure any evaluation activity places attention on post-intervention outcomes, particularly on whether young people received further support, the type of support they received, and whether this had an impact on them.



## COMMUNITY FUND BOX 13: TALENT MATCH

A key feature of the Talent Match programme (see Box 4), which sets it aside from other employment support interventions, was the longer-term support available to young people and employers after the end of the participant's journey on the programme.

Over half of participants on the programme accessed in-work support, provided either by the keyworker which the young person had engaged with throughout their journey (usually in smaller partnerships) or by a member of the employer engagement team who had brokered the job opportunity (in bigger partnerships).

The main type of support provided was either around the transition to work, including practical support (eg. transport, buying clothes) or advice on workplace behaviour, emotional support on issues which could impact young people's ability to sustain work, and support around progressing in work.

The in-work support provided to young people played an important role in helping Talent Match participants sustain employment. This contributed to the programme exceeding its target of supporting 40 per cent of participants in work, and to five partnerships exceeding the target of 20 per cent sustained jobs (6-12 months).

## Additional resources

- [Youth engagement and progression framework](#). This Welsh Government framework provides a pathway to increasing youth engagement and progression through five stages, including early identification, brokerage, progress tracking, provision, employability and accountability. The framework outlines and uses the Careers Wales Five-tier Model of Engagement of young people who are NEET, a data management model used to track the post-statutory education status of young people in Wales and coordinate provision.
- [Ready for Work](#). This Impetus report provides a capabilities framework and shared language for partners working with young people to support them into EET, focusing on a shared approach work readiness and placing an emphasis on soft skills development.
- [PEP-Choices tool](#). This diagnostic tool is part of AV4U Future Perfect programme, a collaborative programme focused on working with schools, providers and employers to develop a joined-up and integrated approach to developing young people's work readiness.
- [Sustainable Activation of NEETs](#). This European Commission practitioner toolkit provides person-centred and practical guidance and tools for youth employment services and partnerships to assess NEET challenges, set priorities for their area and service, implement action plans, develop tools for measurement, and review performance.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS	NOT STARTED	IN PROGRESS	COMPLETE
BUILDING COHERENT PATHWAYS	Frontline staff are kept up to date about local provision and partnership developments.	○	○	○
	Support pathways are sufficiently linked across delivery partners.	○	○	○
	Frontline staff have the right knowledge and expertise (eg. of the local community, of provision, of employers) to support the target group.	○	○	○
	The partnership collaborates to streamline and minimise profiling experiences and paperwork for young people.	○	○	○
	Youth-friendly processes and spaces have been set up.	○	○	○
FOCUSING ON HOLISTIC APPROACHES	The partnership is focused on providing holistic processes and models of support.	○	○	○
	Mapping of available provision to establish gaps in provision has been carried out.	○	○	○
	Young people are provided with provision that is fully tailored to their needs and aspirations.	○	○	○
	Young people are actively involved in the co-creation of their support journeys.	○	○	○
COLLABORATING WITH SERVICES	There are strong links to schools, careers services, and pupil referral units.	○	○	○
	There is regular contact between partners and wider support services engaged in the partnership.	○	○	○
IN-WORK SUPPORT	In-work support and resourcing requirements have been fully considered.	○	○	○



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## ENGAGING EMPLOYERS



# DEVELOPING LONG-TERM APPROACHES



**WHAT IS IT?** Strategies which give employers choice and flexibility in their engagement, that are coordinated and build over time, and are informed by progressive knowledge of what local employers are more likely to respond to.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Many employers, and particularly SMEs, have limited capacity, time and resources, and little knowledge of employing young people. A varied, informed and staged approach is key to help employers feel understood and in charge of their engagement.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** High quality programmes are viewed by some employers as recruitment pipelines. Providing them with choice and flexibility and building engagement over time helps develop strong relationships in the long-term, leading to 'repeat business'.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Assess the local labour market, the make-up of the local industry, and local business needs, analysing labour market data and consulting with business representatives.
- Avoid bombarding or overwhelming employers with information or requests, working with partners to develop a coordinated approach tailored to different employers' needs.
- Offer employers a menu of choice – from light-touch engagement (eg. informal or short-term training, tasters) to more intensive collaboration (eg. work placements). This type of engagement also helps young people gradually ease into the world of work and have multiple experiences before committing to a job or training.
- Provide employers with a choice of support beyond financial incentives – eg. mediation, mentoring, recruitment.
- Develop an ambassador network drawing on employers and businesses that the partnership has previously engaged and leverage their support for employer engagement activities and events.



### Department for Education

#### BOX 14: THE YOUTH CONTRACT

The Youth Contract (YC) was a government-funded programme, run between 2012 and 2015, and included support for young people aged 16-17 who were NEET to participate in education, training and work across England.

Many of the employers that the YC sought to engage were SMEs with an interest in supporting young unemployed people, but little experience or capacity. The programme sought different ways of engaging these employers. In one area, the YC service offered sessions for employers to meet YC participants, to discuss their organisations and type of work, and their expectations around work behaviour. It also provided a monthly financial incentive to employers to support them to retain young people in their training and only placed participants with businesses that paid the living wage. In another area, the focus for YC delivery was the brokering of apprenticeship training, and YC staff worked closely with employers who were seeking to fill vacancies to provide recruitment support and source the right candidates.

Where dedicated employer teams were not available, YC staff in some areas still endeavoured to develop meaningful employer engagement, such as workshops, particularly to help SMEs with an interest in supporting young unemployed people, but little experience or capacity, develop youth-friendly employment practices and skills.



# INVESTING IN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT



**WHAT IS IT?** Engaging employers requires specialised skills and dedicated resources and can be facilitated through a bespoke employer engagement strategy. This can include specialist staff members, such as employer advisors, or a dedicated employer engagement team with different roles (comms, employer mentoring, job matching, etc.).



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Effective employer engagement requires coordination and investing time in building an understanding of and relationships with local employers. This includes providing support and knowledge which they often cannot access in-house.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It improves relationships with the employers and helps meet their needs and supports the sourcing of better quality opportunities for young people through better alignment of needs, aspirations, and supply.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Ensure there are dedicated resources to invest in employer engagement – for example for a specialised employer advisor or employer engagement team who can support both the young person and the employer.
- Establish mechanisms across partners for sharing employer information (eg. contacts) and identify ways to encourage mutual interest in sharing this.
- Proactively reach out to local employers to understand their business and workforce needs and make the business case for why they should employ the young people being supported.
- Gain in-depth understanding of both the employer's and young person's needs and ambitions, to match skills, job requirements, and aspirations.
- Show employers you see things from their perspective and that you appreciate their needs, use their own language, and explain the process to them in a simple and straightforward way.
- Negotiate with employers highlighting the tangible benefits they will gain – eg. increased business capacity, people with the right skills, a more cost-effective recruitment approach, access to a new talent pipeline.
- Strengthen engagement with SMEs, and provide support which they may lack by mentoring them and offering recruitment services (advertising opportunities, matching vacancies to candidates, shortlisting and preparing interviewees, etc.).



### BOX 15: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCOTLAND FUND

The Youth Employment Scotland Fund (YESF) was a European Social Fund (ESF) and Scottish Government funded programme, run between 2013 and 2015 across Scotland. The YESF aimed to support 10,000 unemployed young people aged 16-29 into work.

The key provision of the YESF was a wage incentive for employers, called the Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI), aimed at incentivising employers to take young people on paid work placements. A key aspect of partnership work focused on marketing, sourcing and referral activities, which involved a joint effort across a wide range of local providers to promote the YESF widely to employers. To support engagement, some local authorities provided screening and shortlisting of candidates, beyond matching. This included reviewing candidates' CVs based on employers' requirements and presenting them with a shortlist of suitable young people to interview.

This was particularly useful for micro and small businesses that had limited recruitment experience and capacity to review a large number of applications. Dedicated staff also worked with employers on business mentoring, to manage expectations of the experience and abilities of young people pre-employment, and support job retention once the young people started work. In total, 9,396 young people engaged with YESF and, for most local authorities, the vast majority sustained employment with YESF businesses long-term.

# ENHANCING EDUCATION AND BUSINESS LINKS



**WHAT IS IT?** Working jointly with education providers and employers and giving them a platform to influence youth employment and training provision.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Strong communication with education providers and employers is key to align support, training, and local labour market needs, and ensure young people access quality offers, which provide adequate support, engaging activities, and real skills and career building.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** It can support young people to re-develop their relationship with learning, align support with jobs that are in demand in local labour markets, and ensure that young people are offered opportunities which reflect their aspirations and skills.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Identify opportunities to strengthen links between training and education and employers – workshops, careers events, information evenings and tasters.
- Ensure employers have a say in influencing curricula and support them to develop their workforce development strategies by sharing data with them, asking them what they need from the young workforce, and aim to align learning and training to the needs of their sectors.
- Involve partners and other agencies in developing employer engagement (eg. careers services, regional bodies, colleges, business membership bodies) as they can provide expertise, networks, and opportunities to build bridges to employers.



### BOX 16: DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

DYW Regional Groups (see Box 8) have the aim to increase the range of choices for school leavers and improve young people's education about options open to them. They do so by bringing schools, colleges, training providers and employers together in partnership to develop local pathways to youth employment. The DYW Executive Teams have progressively strengthened employer and school engagement strategies, drawing on partners' contacts and networks for employers (particularly through the Chamber of Commerce), approaching staff in schools and Directors of Education within the councils, and directly brokering relationships between employers and schools.

Employers with a strong interest and capacity to collaborate are invited to work with schools to shape the Senior Phase curriculum, equivalent to A-levels. A 2019 survey of DYW partner engagement found that the vast majority of secondary schools had set up effective school-employer partnerships (80 per cent), were working with partners to develop their Senior Phase curriculum (84 per cent), and were using the Work Placements Standard, setting out quality standards for DYW work placements, to shape their offer to young people (78 per cent).



# FOCUSING ON QUALITY IN ENGAGEMENT



**WHAT IS IT?** The quality of offers (vacancies, work experience, tasters, etc.) provided to young people depends on multiple factors, including location and availability of opportunities, but services that engage with employers should always include discussion of quality standards (hours, pay, stability, and development at a minimum) when brokering opportunities.



**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** Young people view some roles of limited value if they are 'low-status', involve repetitive tasks, and have no scope for wider career exploration/progression and skills development. People in jobs that are a poor match for their skills and ambitions are more likely to leave that job in the first few weeks. They are also less likely to stick in poor quality jobs – i.e. those with long hours, demanding and unsatisfactory work, and in difficult conditions.



**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?** Any type of work opportunity, from a full-time job to a taster experience, needs to enable young people to gain workplace experience, develop knowledge, skills and confidence, and improve their employability for their successive steps in the labour market.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

- Focus on sourcing 'opportunities with prospects' for young people.
- Invest in personalised, adviser-led support with effective links to local businesses and good job matching.
- Work closely with organisations that work with and represent businesses (eg. BITC).
- Consult with employers to ensure work placements have a clear, varied structure, and provide meaningful activities for young people.
- Ensure employers can provide a range of support – eg. coaching and mentoring, on the job training, help with additional financial costs of transition.
- Negotiate with employers on fair employment terms (pay, hours, etc.) for the young people.

### BOX 17: DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE



Thanks to the dedicated in-house employer engagement team, MyGo (see Box 10) was able to invest resources in quality employer engagement, careful job sourcing and matching for participants, and improve young people's job prospects.

A wide range of employment-focused support was provided by MyGo, including support with job applications, online tests and interview preparation for candidates, and support with recruitment and screening for employers. The support was focused on aligning young people's aspirations and skills and opportunities offered by employers.

This enabled MyGo staff to spend time sourcing high-quality jobs for candidates, with a focus on aspirational jobs and jobs with prospects, which were more likely to be sustained by participants and could enable them to progress in work.

## Additional resources

- [Engaging With And Improving Service To Employers](#). This European Commission toolkit aims to support youth employment services in designing, implementing and monitoring approaches to employer engagement, providing practical guidance, options and examples to help services develop the right approaches to employer engagement.
- [Employer Engagement Strategic Toolkit](#). This DYW toolkit is targeted to schools and careers advisors to help them develop employer engagement strategies, and includes a suite of learning, reflection and development tools.
- [Employer Involvement and Engagement](#). This Talent Match thematic report summarises the findings and lessons from case study research on employer involvement and engagement within Talent Match partnerships.
- [A Toolkit to Engage Employers and Opportunity Youth on the Future of Work](#). This European Commission practitioner toolkit provides person-centred and practical guidance and tools for youth employment services and partnerships to assess NEET challenges, set priorities for their area and service, implement action plans, develop tools for measurement, and review performance.

	CHECK YOUR PROGRESS	NOT STARTED	IN PROGRESS	COMPLETE
DEVELOPING LONG-TERM APPROACHES	A preliminary assessment of the local labour market and business make-up and its alignment to young people's needs has been conducted.	○	○	○
	The partnership has developed a coordinated approach to employer engagement with a clear strategy and dedicated resources.	○	○	○
	Expertise is drawn from across the partnership to improve employer engagement.	○	○	○
	Sustained, tailored, and meaningful engagement is carried out with employers.	○	○	○
	Employers are offered 'a menu of choice' for their engagement and support options.	○	○	○
INVESTING IN ENGAGEMENT	The needs of employers are aligned to young people's aspirations and vice versa.	○	○	○
	A strong personalised business case for why employers should engage has been developed.	○	○	○
	Young people are provided with provision that is fully tailored to their needs and aspirations.	○	○	○
	Young people are actively involved in the co-creation of their support journeys.	○	○	○
ENHANCING LINKS	Partners have identified opportunities to strengthen links between employers and education providers.	○	○	○
FOCUSING ON QUALITY IN ENGAGEMENT	There are strong links to schools, careers services, and pupil referral units.	○	○	○
	There is a focus on sourcing good opportunities, which are sustainable and support progression.	○	○	○
	In-work support forms a part of advisors' discussion with employers.	○	○	○
	There is adequate understanding from employers of what in-work support should include.	○	○	○



# REFERENCES

	DEVELOPING LONG-TERM APPROACHES	INVESTING IN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT	ENHANCING LINKS TO EDUCATION AND BUSINESSES	FOCUSING ON QUALITY IN ENGAGEMENT	GOOD PRACTICE BOXES
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Clayton N., Williams, M. 2014. <i>Delivering change: Cities and the youth unemployment challenge.</i>		✓	✓		
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