

Education to employment transitions: support in 2024

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organisation which has around 50 multidisciplinary staff and international associates. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, publications and the internet. Our values infuse our work. We strive for excellence, to be collaborative and to bring curiosity to what we do. We work with integrity and treat people respectfully and with compassion.

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About

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. Youth Futures wants to see a society where every young person can achieve good work.

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Executive summary

In 2024, Youth Futures Foundation commissioned IES to conduct research into the landscape of policy, support mechanisms and engagement points for specific groups of young people less likely to transition successfully from education and training into good work (i.e. good quality employment opportunities). This was intended to help Youth Futures and other stakeholders to understand the journeys of young people from education and training into employment.

Rationale for the work

Despite the existence of support to access and sustain education, employment and training, some young people continue to face significant challenges in the labour market. For instance, young people with experience of the care system are substantially less likely to be in employment in the years following school, with long term unemployment rates considerably higher than average. Similarly, young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are less likely to be in work and tend to earn less over time than people without special educational needs. This report summarises the education-to-employment support available to groups of young people who are at particular risk of marginalisation in the labour market.

About this research project

This project sought to map the support systems that exist at the national, devolved, regional and local levels for young people as they transition through education and training into work. To do this, four overlapping groups of young people were identified by Youth Futures as people who were less likely to make a straightforward transition from education and training into good work outcomes. These were young people with one or more of:

- special educational needs and disabilities;
- experience of the care system;
- mental ill-health; and/or experience of the criminal justice system.

The support mapping was limited to provision that:

- had at least some national government funding;
- targeted education to employment transitions; and

- was available to people aged 14 to 30¹ years old in England in 2024.

Emerging findings were shared with expert advisers (a Youth Advisory Group and professionals working in these areas) and their reflections have informed this report. A deep dive was undertaken towards the end of the project to map all available education-to-employment support for two local authority areas (County Durham and Newcastle), to identify the extent to which charity and community support was supplementing government funded support. Additionally, a data mapping exercise was conducted to map data sources that included, or were likely to include, education-to-employment support for these young people. This framework was intended primarily for Youth Futures' internal use and is not included in this report.

The purpose of this report is to inform policymakers, funders and employers about the support landscape for the four groups of interest, to highlight complexities and gaps in support, and to contribute to ongoing discussions around best practice in supporting youth transitions through education and training into employment.

Intersectionality

We have presented findings for the four identified groups separately in this report. This allows a clear account of the support available to people with each separate characteristic. However, it is important to consider intersections between groups and their experiences when reading the report. Inevitably these intersections add to the complexity of individual transitions. These groups may also be at greater risk of other experiences associated with marginalisation. For example, all the groups explored were more likely than their peers to experience challenges such as poor mental health. In addition, care experienced young people and those with additional learning needs faced an increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Beyond these characteristics, and while not explicitly highlighted, it is also important to consider ethnicity and socio-economic status when reading this report. It is well researched that ethnic minority groups experience disadvantage throughout education and employment, resulting in lower educational attainment and poorer labour market outcomes. This is similarly observed among individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Key findings

There was a complex support landscape: IES used a bespoke framework to identify 80 government-funded support for the reference groups. Although no single individual

¹ Support for people with an education, health and care plan and some care leavers may be available until age 25. Therefore, the upper age limit for this work was set to 30 years old to capture support for transitions at or after 25 years old.

would access them all, the figure reflected the complexity of the support landscape in England in 2024. The 80 support mechanisms included statutory support managed and distributed by a charity/community organisation, statutory support funded by central/local government but delivered by a charity/community organisation and charities/community organisations that received some funding from central or local government towards the relevant support programme. It did not include the extensive support provided by charities and community organisations without government funding.

Support specifically for young people with special educational needs and disabilities was predominantly provided in education. Key transition points for young people with special educational needs were GCSEs, transitions between education providers, leaving education and moving into employment. Aside from Supported Internships, support specifically for special educational needs was less common for adults and tended to be grouped with support for mental ill-health and disabilities such as Access to Work, Disability Employment Advisers and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) schemes. Support for young people with special educational needs was reliant on disclosure and in some cases diagnosis, required knowledge of the support that existed and, at times, navigating complicated or lengthy application processes such as education, health and care (EHC) assessments.

Support for young people with experience of mental ill-health was frequently tied to a particular education provider, such as Mental Health Support Teams working in schools or colleges, meaning new sources of support were required during and after each transition point. Furthermore, some government-funded support was not available everywhere, such as Early Mental Health Support Hubs that provided mental health and well-being services to young people aged 11-25 in community centres, of which only 70 were operating in 2024. Support to transition into employment (through Individual Placement and Support schemes, Jobcentre Disability Employment Advisers, health adjustment passports and Access to Work) required a person to disclose their mental ill-health which some people were reluctant to do. One expert adviser highlighted the workplace Mental Health Charter, a social movement to change the way people think and act about mental health challenges, as an example of good practice for employers.

Support for young people with experience of the care system was delivered by local authorities that had corporate parenting responsibilities placed on them through the Children and Social Work Act 2017. There were multiple accommodation arrangements available, which were intended to provide care experienced people with a comfortable, safe space, and stability in individuals' transitions into independent living and employment. Expert advisers noted that there was a 'cliff-edge' in support at age 18, but some care leavers were not ready to enter employment at 18 and needed ongoing emotional and practical support beyond this age. Some of the expert advisers reported that support varied between local authorities, with one describing the support landscape as a 'postcode lottery'.

Support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system was determined by their age and the nature of the contact, such as whether an arrest led to a caution or a charge, and whether or not charges resulted in a conviction. Gaps in support identified through expert review included support being available for flexible lengths of time (as opposed to 'fixed length' support), and support that allowed people multiple chances to engage. In 2024, government-funded early intervention support included community-based programmes such as the Changing Futures Programme, projects funded through the Life Chances Fund, and the Ministry of Justice's Turnaround Programme.

Third sector support varied by area: Replicating the support mapping work in two local authorities (County Durham and Newcastle) illustrated the complexity of the landscape of support, with 79 additional support mechanisms (including non-government funded support) identified across both local authorities. The support was not evenly spread across the reference groups, life stages, or local authorities. For example, in County Durham the search found no non-government funded support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system and only one charity supporting people with special educational needs was identified. However, it was not possible to ascertain from this research whether the lack of non-government funded support reflected gaps or a more streamlined and comprehensive support offer by the local authorities. Additionally, people aged 16-25 had more support for transitions through education and training into employment than 25- to 30-year-olds.

Accessing support could be challenging: To access support an individual or their support person needed to know it was available and how to access it. Some support was triggered by having a diagnosis for example of special educational needs or by disclosing personal information that they were reluctant to disclose, such as being a care leaver or having experience of mental ill-health. And even after overcoming these hurdles, the application process may have been complex (such as EHCPs) or waiting times lengthy (such as Access to Work).

Atypical journeys affected support access: The experts we spoke to felt that it was harder for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) to find a way back into support, than for people already in education, employment or training and following a 'typical' journey. This was due to support being tied to a particular education provider or education stage, or people needing support again after it ended, such as personal advisers.

Gaps in support: The mapping process identified the number and types of support mechanisms for all young people and the reference groups, which gives an indication of where there may be gaps in support. Three gaps identified in this research were transitions between education providers, flexible length provision and support that could be accessed multiple times.

Implications of this research: Young people's journeys are shaped by the complexity, fragmentation and unevenness of provision. Access to support can rely on disclosure, diagnosis or geography creating potential 'postcode lotteries' with support that is often short-term and difficult to navigate. This leaves many young people facing confusing pathways especially at key transition points. Placing young peoples lived experience at the centre of policy and practice is essential in building a more coherent, stable and equitable system.

1. Introduction

Project aim

This work was commissioned by Youth Futures to inform and support their Policy and Evaluation teams, as well as be a source of information to other professionals working in the youth sector.

The project aim was to:

- Understand the current landscape of policy, support mechanisms and engagement points for specific groups of young people less likely to transition successfully from education and training into good work outcomes (i.e. good quality employment opportunities), and identify the administrative datasets that capture their participation, progress and outcomes.

To achieve this aim, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- What policy and support systems exist at the national, devolved, regional and local levels for young people as they transition through education and training into work?
- What contacts do support providers and other key government agencies have with these young people?

This report sought to identify and map the support that is meant to be available to the four groups of interest within the research. This offers an indication of areas for further research exploring how well particular support, or the wider support landscape is working in practice.

For the full list of research sub-questions and the strands of work used to answer them, see Figure 12 in Appendix 1. Support for young people to transition into, through and out of higher education was deemed out of scope for this research and is not covered in this report.

Groups of interest

The four groups of young people that were the focus of this work were young people with:

- special educational needs and/or disabilities;
- experience of mental ill-health;
- experience of the criminal justice system; and

- experience of the care system.

For the remainder of this report, these groups are referred to as 'the reference groups' except where they are disaggregated.

Some recent statistics showing the prevalence of the reference groups give context to the support landscape:

- In the academic year 2024 to 2025, 1.7 million pupils in England had special educational needs, and 5.3% of all pupils had an education, health and care plan (EHCP).²
- In 2023, about 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 25 years were identified as having a probable mental disorder.³
- 83,000 children or 70 children per 10,000 (0.7%) were looked after by a local authority in 2024.⁴
- In 2023 there were just under 8,300 child (aged 10 to 17) first time entrants to the youth justice system, and around 13,700 children received cautions or sentences.⁵

Intersectional barriers

To present the support available for each of the four reference groups clearly, this research explored each as if they were discrete groups without intersecting characteristics or multiple experiences. Support available to most of the reference groups is detailed in the section 'Support available to multiple groups of marginalised young people' in Chapter 2. It is important to consider intersections between groups and commonalities in their experiences when reading the report. Inevitably, these intersections add to the complexity of the support landscape and individual transitions.

There was strong evidence that all the reference groups were more likely to experience poor mental health compared with other young people.^{6,7,8} Similarly, evidence highlighted the increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system among

² Source: www.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2024-25 Accessed June 2025.

³ Source: www.digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2023-wave-4-follow-up Accessed June 2025.

⁴ Source: www.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2024 Accessed June 2025.

⁵ Source: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024 Accessed June 2025.

⁶ Source: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng205/resources/lookedafter-children-and-young-people-pdf-66143716414405 Accessed June 2025.

⁷ Source: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng54 Accessed June 2025.

care experienced young people⁸, and those who involved in the criminal justice system often had lived with undiagnosed learning needs and in unstable environments.⁹

All the reference groups experienced poorer labour market outcomes than those who did not fall into one of these groups. For example, 25% of people with experience of the care system had never been in employment eight years after leaving school, compared to just 4% of all school leavers.¹⁰ Similarly, people with special educational needs and/or disabilities were significantly less likely to be in work, and on average had lower earnings up to 15 years after Key Stage 4 than people without special educational needs and/or disabilities.¹¹ While this report identifies support that was intended to be available to access and sustain education, employment and training, these differential labour market outcomes show that this may not be working as intended. Where possible, this research identified barriers to accessing support, support gaps and problems with the support landscape.

Beyond the intersections between the reference groups, the findings of this report should also be considered in the context of other demographics and experiences that may result in marginalisation. It is well researched that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve lower education attainment and labour market outcomes.^{12,13} Similarly, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to achieve positive educational outcomes and 'good work' outcomes.^{14,15} Coupled with these persistent attainment gaps, research indicates that young people from ethnic minority and low income backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the youth justice

⁸ Source: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng66/resources/mental-health-of-adults-in-contact-with-the-criminal-justice-system-pdf-1837577120965 Accessed June 2025.

⁹ Source: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/articles/theeducationbackgroundoflookedafterchildrenwhointeractwiththecriminaljusticesystem/december2022 Accessed June 2025.

¹⁰ Source: https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Care_experience_Research_insights_from_administrative_data.pdf Accessed June 2025

¹¹ Source: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/children-with-special-educational-needs-and-employment/> Accessed June 2025

¹² Source: <https://epi.org.uk/annual-report-2024-ethnicity-2/> Accessed August 2025.

¹³ Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/674710b0a72d7eb7f348c024/Labour_Market_Outcomes_Chapter_1_-_Ethnicity.pdf Accessed August 2025.

¹⁴ Source: <https://epi.org.uk/annual-report-2024-disadvantage-2/> Accessed August 2025.

¹⁵ Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67487e802ac8a6da307239a2/Chapter_2_-_Socioeconomic_Status.pdf Accessed August 2025.

service¹⁶ and the care system¹⁷. These additional intersections extend the complexities of key transitions, and support landscape for young people. Report scope and intended audience

The research included support mapping, data mapping, expert reviews and a review of support in two local authorities (see the section 'Methods' below). This report summarises all elements of the work except for the data mapping which is documented in the associated technical report and produced a 'data mapping framework' for Youth Futures internal use.

This report includes chapters on the following:

- support available to multiple reference groups for this research, recognising the intersectionality of young people's characteristics. This includes a summary of support available to all 14- to 30-year-olds, although this was not the primary focus of the research;
- one chapter for each of the four reference groups, summarising government-funded support;
- support available for the reference groups in two local authority areas; and
- conclusion discussing the key findings, methodological challenges and recommendations for further research.

Methods

The project started with an initial scoping phase, followed by support mapping and expert review. Mapping of support in two local authorities in the North East of England followed, prior to the creation of infographic outputs. Mapping of administrative data sources for Youth Futures' staff to evaluate the journeys through education to employment was conducted in parallel to the other strands of work. Each strand of work is summarised below and discussed in more detail in the associated technical report.

The scoping phase defined the parameters for desk research, including defining policy, support types/mechanisms and other key terms; identifying sources to search, search terms, scale of the review, and the extent to which regional differences should be

¹⁶ Source: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/YEF_Racial_Disproportionality_FINAL.pdf Accessed August 2025.

¹⁷ Source: https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/nfjo_briefing_paper_ethnicity_20230518_FINAL.pdf Accessed August 2025.

explored; specifying the data mapping strand; and expert adviser consultation approach.

The definition of 'support' used in this report included that which:

- had an element of government funding, regardless of the delivery organisation: statutory support managed and distributed by a charity/community organisation; statutory support funded by central/local government but delivered by a charity/community organisation; and charities/community organisations that received some funding from central or local government towards the relevant support programme. It did not include the extensive support provided by charities and community organisations without government funding;
- was intended to support young people as they transitioned through education and training and/or as they transitioned from education and training into employment;
- was available to people aged 14 to 30;
- was available in England in 2024; and
- was targeted at one or more of the reference groups.

Full details of the inclusion criteria are available in the associated technical report.

Mapping

Support

The list of support and associated policies was gained from several sources, including:

- Scoping interviews with experts;
- Gov.uk and departmental pages such as DfE, DWP, DHSC, MoJ and MHCLG; and
- Third-sector organisation websites who are key in supporting these young people, such as Catch 22, Nasen, Centrepoint, Mind, Young Minds.

Gov.uk and support organisation websites were searched using search strings tailored to each of the reference groups to surface relevant support (see technical report for details). Where relevant, searches were filtered for published works in English only.

Data

A data mapping framework was created detailing over 50 data sources that IES believed contain information about the support available to these reference groups as they transition through education and training into employment. Data portals were accessed to identify these data sources, including the ONS Metadata catalogue, and UK Data Service and Administrative Data Research (ADR) UK, along with snowballing, staff knowledge and cross-checking with other similar projects. The associated technical report provides more details on the search methods. The data mapping framework was not published or publicly available and will be used by Youth Futures staff to inform their ongoing work in this area.

Expert review

Professionals

Early support mapping results were shared with 37 professionals in November 2024, to gather feedback on the completeness of the mapping work and identify key support and transition points for young people as they move through education and training into employment. Thirteen professionals responded (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of professionals that provided feedback, by area of expertise

Adviser area of expertise	Number
Special educational needs and/or disabilities	3
The care system	6
The criminal justice system	2
Mental ill-health	2
Total	13

Source: IES, 2025.

Youth Advisory Group

Early support mapping results were shared with a Youth Advisory Group between December 2024 and February 2025, to gather feedback on the completeness of the mapping work and identify key support and transition points for young people as they moved through education and training into employment. We engaged with 10 young people aged 18 to 30 years old, in small online groups and one-to-one online interviews

(see Figure 2). Youth Advisory Group members were recruited from IES adverts promoted by the charity McPin and youth organisation Participation People.

Figure 2: Number of people participating in Youth Advisory Groups and interviews by personal characteristics and experience

Characteristics and experiences	Number
Young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4
Young people with experience of the care system	1
Young people with experience of the criminal justice system	1
Young people with experience of mental ill-health	4
Total	10

Source: IES, 2025.

Local authority case studies: North East focus

To complement the national picture of government-funded support, a localised review of all support available to young people, regardless of funding source, was conducted in two local authorities in the North East of England; County Durham and Newcastle. These local authorities were chosen to complement other work being undertaken by Youth Futures. The review involved desk research to identify all support available to help people aged 14 to 30, transitioning through education and training into employment. Similar to the national review the support was intended to help people with special educational needs and disabilities, experience of care, mental ill-health, and/or the criminal justice system.

Limitations of the work

Some specific limitations that readers should be mindful of are:

- The definition of support was limited to support (national or regional) delivered in 2024 that received an element of government funding. Therefore, this work was not a complete picture of **all** education-to-employment support that the reference groups could access. IES and Youth Futures acknowledge that this definition excludes a large proportion of charity and community support. See Chapter 7 for a summary of all support available in two local authorities.

- Due to time and budget constraints, the wider landscape of support available to all 14- to 30-year-olds was not sourced systematically and was instead sourced mostly from discussions within IES and Youth Futures. Consequently, while it is a good summary of support available there may be support missing. Since this research was commissioned and during the research period, the policy landscape shifted, which will have implications for the longevity of the data gathered and how current it remains. In 2024 (the time-point for this work) the Labour Party returned to government in the UK and started to introduce policy changes that will change the landscape of support detailed in this report.
- This research highlighted several funds for community projects that were available in 2024 but have since ended. These included the Adventures Away from Home Fund, Changing Futures Programme and Life Chances Fund.

2. Support available to multiple groups of marginalised young people

There were different types of support, which all had a role to play in supporting young people as they transitioned through education and training into employment. These included:

- **Targeted support** aimed at helping young people based on a specific identified need (such as special educational needs or disabilities), or a defined experience (such as experience of being in care, being in contact with the criminal justice system or of mental-ill health).
- **Wider support** available to young people who had an identified need or defined experience, but not directly related to their education-to-employment journey. These included housing or health support or the benefits system.
- **Support available to all young people** to aid education-to-employment transitions, such as the National Careers Service.

Support, both targeted and universal, is often subject to short-term, fixed funding arrangements targeted at addressing specific challenges, for example economic inactivity or youth unemployment. This generates an insecure support landscape wherein programmes, funds and provision are frequently opening and closing. In addition to the complexity this adds to understanding the support available to individuals, this has knock-on effects on the stability within the workforce delivering support which as a result experiences high turnover. This has subsequent implications on young people being signposted to, and receiving, relevant support.

Targeted support available to a range of young people

This project identified support available to four groups of young people. However, some support was targeted at a range of marginalised young people, and therefore was relevant to more than one of the following chapters. To minimise repetition in the report, here we summarise support that was available to three or more groups of marginalised young people.

Through the **16 to 19 bursary (discretionary fund)** (formerly the Education Maintenance Allowance¹⁸) some people in 16 to 19 education were eligible for a financial bursary of up to £1,200 for transport, meals, books and other education-related equipment. Funding was allocated to schools, colleges and training providers to support students from low-income households or facing financial barriers to participating in further education or training. Institutions could set their own eligibility criteria, within government guidelines, around how to allocate the funds. The reference groups within this research were key target groups of the fund.

Before it ended in 2024, people aged 11 to 18, and those aged up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities, may have been able to access bursaries for outdoor learning through the **Adventures Away from Home Fund**. The fund supported 12,793 people between December 2023 and March 2024 and was launched as part of the **National Youth Guarantee** to facilitate taking part in outdoor learning experiences such as residential stays, to improve confidence, resilience, teamwork and mental wellbeing. Of the reference groups in this research, this was accessible to young people with experience of the care system, criminal justice system and mental ill-health.

The **Life Chances Fund**, which ended in March 2025, aimed to help people who faced significant barriers to lead happy and productive lives. The Fund consisted of 29 projects supporting over 58,000 individuals across the UK tackling a range of social issues including homelessness and mental health support. Each project had its own eligibility criteria, with some providing support to the reference groups in this research.

Similarly, the **Changing Futures Programme** which ran until March 2025, aimed to stabilise and improve the lives and outcomes of adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as crime, poverty or mental ill-health. The programme operated in 15 areas in England supporting around 4,000 people and was a partnership between local services and the voluntary and community sector. Local areas could develop their own support delivery models following the programme principles that included a person-centred approach to services.

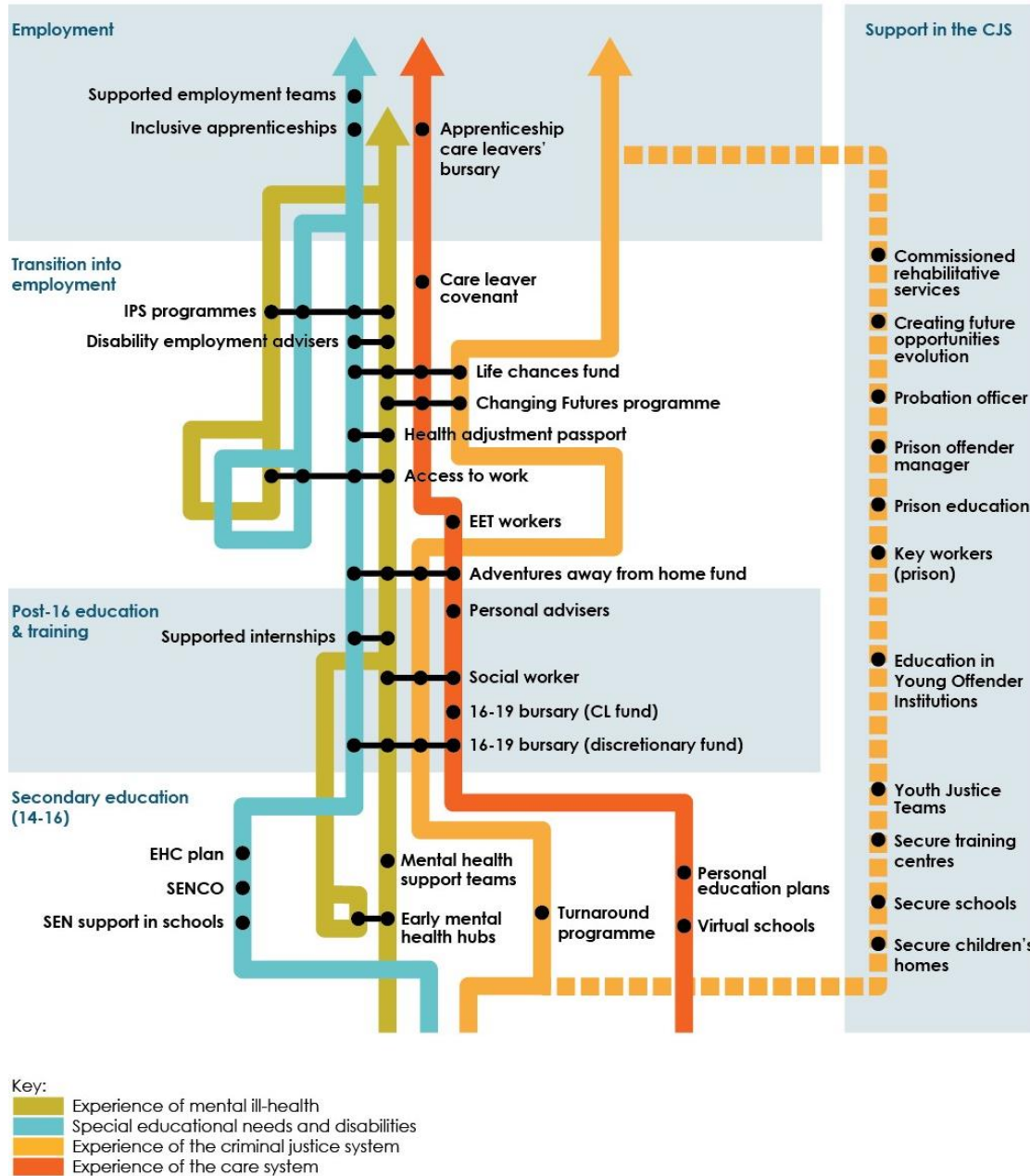
About the 'train line' infographic

To visually represent the support available to young people, particularly people with multiple experiences, IES created an infographic based on a 'train line' map (see Figure 3 below). A few points to note about this infographic:

¹⁸ Source: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06154/> Accessed August 2025.

- **Mapping support:** this infographic represents the targeted support people may have accessed as they progressed through education and training, possibly via unemployment or the criminal justice system (CJS), and into employment.
- **Government funded support:** the support shown represents support that had an element of government funding, available to people between the ages of 14 and 30, in England, in 2024.
- **Optional support:** the 'stops' on the train line represent the support people **might** engage with. It is not realistic or necessary to expect every person with a specific characteristic or experience to need to engage with every type of support on their 'line'.
- **Representation not reality:** in the spirit of train and London Underground maps, the infographic is intended to be a useful guide, not an accurate, scalable, replica of real life. We recognise that education to employment journeys are not all straight lines from A to B, and may involve periods of repetition, pauses, and trial and error.
- **Read bottom to top:** the infographic should be read from the bottom up.
- **The loops represent support that is available in more than one stage** for example Access to Work supported people to attend job interviews and in employment.
- **The criminal justice 'branch line':** the stages of the CJS do not reflect the education system, and people can enter and exit at any age. Therefore, this was represented as a 'branch line'.

Figure 3: Support available to four groups of marginalised young people as they transitioned through education and training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Support landscape for all 14- to 30-year-olds

The support illustrated in Figure 3 above was only part of the landscape of support available to these four groups of young people. They could have accessed a wide range of other education, training, careers and unemployment support available to everyone between the ages of 14 and 30 (the focus of this project). Below we

summarise the support available to all young people as they transitioned through education and into employment, which included some government-funded support delivered by local authorities and third sector organisations.

Some government-funded support was for general mental-health and wellbeing, and therefore was not included in the list of support specifically targeting education-to-employment transitions. For example, the **Pioneer Project** in the South West of England provided emotional and mental wellbeing support to people who experienced disadvantage. The support involved giving people the opportunity to try new activities, develop new interests to help build confidence and self-esteem.

The benefit system in England supported young people during times of unemployment. The main benefit the reference groups might have been eligible for was Universal Credit, a monthly payment to help people with their living costs if they were out of work or on a low income. Additional housing support for care leavers is discussed in Chapter 5.

Support available to all 14- to 16-year-olds

'**Ordinarily available provision**' described the support available to young people in state-funded education as part of the local authority's local offer of support. The exact nature of this support varied between local authorities but was intended to make learning accessible to all learners including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Local authorities provided guidance to schools to support them to deliver quality education tailored to individual needs across whole schools in a consistent way. **Pupil Premium** and **Pupil Premium Plus** payments were used by education providers to improve educational outcomes for all pupils, rather than providers being required to spend the monies directly on the individual(s) who attracted the additional funding.

Additionally, in 2024 five local authorities piloted the use of '**attendance mentors**', with a further 10 local authorities due to adopt this in the academic year 2025 to 2026. Attendance mentors worked with pupils in years 6 to 11 (aged 10-16) who were identified as being persistently or severely absent from school. Support was available to students and their families weekly, for up to 20 weeks, to identify causes of low attendance and ways in which these could be avoided.

Support available to all 14- to 18-year-olds

Careers advisers were one aspect of careers guidance that state-funded schools and academies in England had to provide. The provision applied to all students from year 7 to year 13 (aged 12 to 18) and involved ensuring there were equal opportunities in schools so that all students were aware of further education, training and employment pathways. Careers guidance in education was based on the eight Gatsby Benchmarks and providers were supported by the Careers and Enterprise Company. The Department for Education (DfE) also funded the National Careers Service to provide free, impartial careers information, advice and guidance to students, parents and teachers (see the

section 'Supporting transitions into employment' below for more information on careers support for transitions to employment, and Chapter 7 for examples of locally funded careers advice and guidance).

In 2024, people aged 16 to 18 years old could also build skills such as team work, presenting and communication, and take part in residential trips and community programmes provided by the **National Citizen Service** (NCS). The NCS aimed to empower young people as part of the government's National Youth Guarantee, however, the NCS ceased in 2025.

Many community projects were funded by the government's **Youth Investment Fund (YIF)**. Across phases one and two of the YIF, over £400 million was available to expand and improve local youth facilities and their services, such as the Tokko Youth Hub in Luton. The main objective of the fund was to drive positive outcomes for young people, including improved mental and physical wellbeing, and skills for life and work.

Supporting transitions into employment

Careers advice and guidance was available to everyone from the **National Careers Service** and young people not in work could access a range of employment programmes aimed at supporting them back into work. These included **Jobs Plus**, and Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP's) Youth Offer. The Youth Offer provided support for people up to the age of 25 years through the **Youth Employability Programme** which had specialist **Youth Employability Coaches** and **Youth Hubs** bring employment, training and wellbeing providers together under one roof. There were also nationally funded locally designed projects, such as the Working Well project in Greater Manchester that supported people experiencing, or who were at risk of, long-term unemployment. For those aged over 25, Jobcentre Work Coaches provided support to people on benefits looking for work, making referrals to DWP programmes such as Restart as needed. Sector-based work academy programme (SWAPs) and skills bootcamps provided short training courses aimed at a particular sector or job, and there were fully funded qualifications for adults with low digital skills.

In 2024 people out of work due to long term sickness, disabled people, those with health conditions, or any additional barriers, were eligible for support back into employment through **Universal Support**. Similarly, people with additional needs including, but not limited to, disabled people, carers, the homeless, young people who are part of gangs, refugees, victims of domestic violence, and those dependent on drugs were able to receive support to move into work from the **Work and Health Programme**. This programme ended in Autumn 2024. These were replaced in 2025 with **Connect to Work**, a work programme to help disabled people, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment, to find sustainable work.

About the 'target board' illustrations

To situate targeted support available for each of the reference groups within the wider universal support landscape, IES produced additional infographic in the style of a target board (see Appendix 2). Like the train line infographic, it is important to note that people will not access every support mechanism within a particular infographic. These infographics were designed to display the prevalence of support available for each group across all life stages and can be used to provide an indicative insight into groups that have limited support available.

3. Supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Special educational needs and disabilities is a broad label for a variety of characteristics including neurodiversity such as autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, learning difficulties, and physical disabilities such as those affecting mobility, vision and hearing. In this chapter we summarise the support available to help young people with special educational needs and disabilities as they transition through education and training into employment.

Mental ill-health can also be a recognised disability, but for the purposes of this report support for people with experience of mental ill-health is reported separately in Chapter 4.

Key findings

- Support specifically for young people with special educational needs was predominantly provided in education, unless someone had an EHCP specifying additional support up to the age of 25. It was the local authorities' responsibility to fund this support.
- Key transition points for young people with special educational needs were GCSEs, transitions between education providers, leaving education and moving into employment. This was due to support potentially being tied to types of education provider or education stage, and therefore the support mechanism changed at the same time as the education provider changed.
- In adulthood, support for people with special educational needs and people with mental ill-health was under the disability element of the Equality Act 2010. This included Access to Work, access to Disability Employment Advisers and IPS schemes.
- Support for young people with special educational needs was reliant on disclosure and in some cases diagnosis, including support specified in EHCPs.

This chapter, whilst outlining the support nominally targeted towards people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), should also be understood as outlining the support available in a challenging national context. SEND services and support have been under pressure for a prolonged period, with multiple challenges facing government, local authorities, young people and their families. Diagnosis of conditions is

reliant on clinical professionals, of which there is a shortage both in terms of staffing numbers and time availability, resulting in increasing waiting times for access to support. A growing understanding of the complexities faced in the SEND support system has seen promising progress in terms of policy reforms and changing approaches to SEND, particularly in education, but challenges remain, with the current government approach being one prioritising early intervention and inclusive support in mainstream settings to address needs before additional intervention is required.¹⁹

Special educational needs and disabilities: Intersectionality

For this research IES followed the Children and Families Act 2014 definition of special educational needs and disabilities as those identified through an assessment by a health professional.

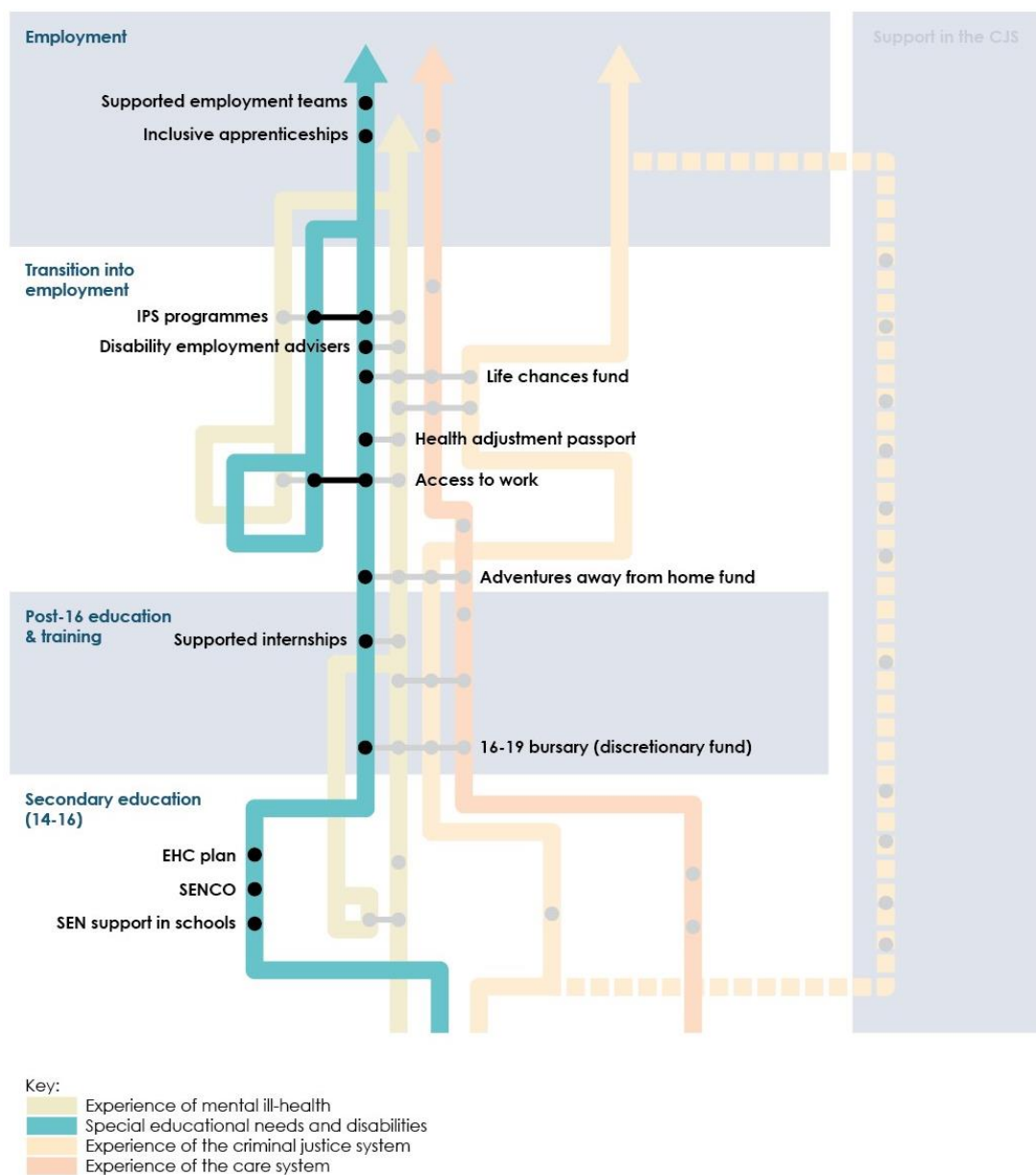
It should be noted that while this chapter discusses the support targeted towards people with special educational needs and disabilities, there were often intersecting characteristics within this group that meant they were deemed eligible for other types of support. Young people with special educational needs were more likely to experience mental health issues.³ Support for the two types of need was generally separate within the education system, but support overlapped for adults with less distinct provision for each group. Provision that facilitated transitions into work for both groups included Access to Work, Disability Employment Advisers, IPS schemes and Supported Internships.

Government funded support

Below, and in Figure 4, we highlight the government funded support available **specifically** to young people with special educational needs and disabilities that was intended to support them through education and training into employment. The support detailed here was limited to that which had an element of government funding and was available in England in 2024 (see the section 'Mapping' in Chapter 1 for more information on how this support was found).

Figure 4: Support available to help young people with special educational needs and disabilities move through education and training into employment (England, 2024)

¹⁹ Source: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-06-16/debates/6F1AE468-954E-4F36-B20D-F08D2D3C363B/SENDSupportChildrenWithoutAnEHCP> Accessed August 2025.



Source: IES 2025.

Support in education

Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) were qualified teachers in mainstream schools who oversaw the strategic development of special educational needs (SEN) policy and provision. Present in all state-funded mainstream schools in England, including academies, free schools and university technical colleges, SENCOs ensured that implementation of SEN policy was followed in day-to-day practice. Schools were generally advised to allow SENCOs to join senior leadership teams to co-ordinate with leadership teams within schools. The **SEND Code of Practice 2015** legally mandated that schools must have a qualified SENCO, and outlined the specific operational duties

for SENCOs, including communication with parents and external professionals, and advising on approaches to providing SEN support.

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities may have required support in addition to that which their education provider was able to give, such as having one-to-one support from a teaching assistant. To access funding for additional support, individuals needed to have an **education, health and care (EHC) assessment**. This assessment could be undertaken at any age up to the age of 25. EHC assessments could be requested by anyone who thinks it may be necessary for a young person to receive additional support, including parents, doctors, health visitors, teaching staff or the young person themselves if they are aged between 16-25. Requests for assessments, made directly to local authorities, could ask for reports from schools, nurseries, doctor's assessments and additional documentation from the person making the request for the child's needs. These assessments could result in an **education, health, and care plan (EHCP)** that outlined additional local authority funded support for the individual. EHCPs were drafted by local authorities, with each local authority having up to 16 weeks after an assessment to decide whether an EHCP would be made, and an additional 20 weeks to send out the final plan. Parents could also be eligible for a personal budget for their child allowing them to have a say in how money is spent on supporting them. When a young person reached 19, the EHCP was reviewed and re-assessed by the local authority each year and could be halted if it was no longer needed.

Education providers received **high needs funding** for pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities who required additional resources to participate in education and learning. The extra government funding was provided from early years to age 19 in schools and colleges, with funding also in place for young people aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP, and pre-16 pupils in alternative provision²⁰ settings. In exceptional circumstances, funding could be extended beyond age 25 where progress has otherwise been interrupted and an EHCP is present.

Post-16 education and training

Additional support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities and an EHCP could have continued into post-16 education and training, if deemed necessary in the local authority's annual review of the EHCP. For example, if post-16 educational outcomes were included in the EHCP, and the need for transitional support between education providers or into employment. In addition, people aged 16 to 19 facing financial barriers to participating in further education or training, were able to receive a bursary from their education provider of up to £1,200 (the **16 to 19 bursary (discretionary fund)**), to assist with costs associated with education including transport,

²⁰ Alternative provision is typically delivered in pupil referral units (PRUs) or alternative provision academies, funded by local authorities for children not in mainstream education due to exclusion, illness or other reasons.

meals, books and other equipment related to education (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' in Chapter 2).

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities could also have accessed **Inclusive Apprenticeships**. These were flexible programmes, following a similar design to apprenticeships but for people with a recognised learning disability. Inclusive apprenticeships ensured that adjustments were made to make apprenticeships accessible and could include flexibility around maths and English entry requirements, working hours, and the duration of the apprenticeship programme. Providers were also incentivised if an apprentice aged 16 to 18, or someone under 25 with an EHCP was hired, by giving them a financial award of £1000 to help cover additional recruitment and support costs.

Transitions into employment

Like Inclusive Apprenticeships, **Supported Internships** were structured work-based study programmes for young people aged 16-24 who had special educational needs and disabilities and an EHCP. Supported internships lasted between six months to a year and interns spend around 70% of their time in the workplace and the remaining time with a learning provider (typically a school or college). Young people were supported into the work placement by a trained job coach and put into a placement by their education provider, with support provided in-work from job coaches that tapered down over time as interns became familiar with their roles. Internships were expected to be bespoke, with training in line with the **National Occupational Standards for Supported Employment** and there were no entry or completion requirements. They aimed to offer a progression route into employment for young people with EHCPs from their existing education provision to effectively transition between education and the world of work. Their provision was in line with the **Children and Families Act 2014** that required local authorities to work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their parents and carers, to develop a Local Offer of the services. Supported Internships also fell under a key area of the **SEND Code of Practice 2015**, specifically, that all children and young people should be prepared for adulthood, including independent living through employment. The range of Supported Internships was growing, with programmes such as Internships Work²¹ providing opportunities in healthcare, NHS, retail, hospitality and office roles. By March 2025, the number of Supported Internships had doubled to 4,500, with 1,500 young people helped into employment in the academic year 2024/25.

Social workers supported young people through listening and empowering them to improve their lives. They assessed individual needs and determined whether they were at risk, offering support, advice and recommendations based on evidence gathered through formal assessments such as EHCPs, and inputs from third parties, and relevant

²¹ Source: www.ndfti.org.uk/change-and-development/internships-work Accessed July 2025.

laws and guidance such as the **SEND Code of Practice 2015**. For young people with special educational needs and disabilities, coordinated support across schools, colleges, health professionals, employment support services and third sector support could all link back to social workers who acted as a common point of contact across services.

Supported Employment Teams were a localised form of support through some local authorities. They provided support through identifying skills and aspirations to help people find jobs that fit their specific needs. They provided induction and training support where needed and offer ongoing support for both individuals and employers once employment has begun. Eligibility criteria could vary, meaning not everyone with special educational needs and disabilities could access the service. For example, some areas required people to be claiming Universal Credit or be known to another service such as Adult Social Care.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) were specially trained work coaches in Jobcentre Plus that help jobseekers with health conditions and disabilities look for work. They referred to specialist support services such as **Access to Work**, work psychologists, or advocate for reasonable adjustments in the workplace for jobseekers. Support could be through direct contact with customers, and through advising other work coaches of available provision and support for referral.

For people with health difficulties including physical disabilities, mental ill-health and complex needs, specialist support to find and sustain employment was available through **Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Schemes**. Support included one-to-one sessions with employment specialists, assistance with job applications and interviews and ongoing in-work support to ensure sustained employment.

At a local level, government funding was used to provide local support, such as through the **Life Chances Fund** and the **Adventures Away from Home Fund** (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' in Chapter 2).

Employment and applications

Health Adjustment Passports set out what support or reasonable adjustments people needed to help them move into and stay in work. The passport was a personal, portable document and could be used by disabled people, and people with a mental health or other health condition to help them talk to employers about adjustments and in-work support that may be needed. These disclosive forms were also used to apply for support from **Access to Work**. The passport addressed personal details and work intentions, health details, workplace access and travel, communication and social needs, assistive technology needs, workplace equipment, environment adjustments and ongoing support required through job coaches, support workers and Access to Work.

The **Access to Work** scheme provided support to help people move into or stay in work if they had a physical or mental health condition or disability. The support took the form of

a grant to help pay for practical support with work, support with managing mental health at work, or to pay for communication support at interviews. Anyone over the age of 16 could apply to Access to Work if they were in paid employment, about to start work, or were about to begin a work trial or internship. Employers were expected to make reasonable adjustments under the **Equality Act 2010** but Access to Work could supplement this when costs exceed what was considered reasonable for employers, or when support was highly specialised. Applications were made directly through the respective Gov.uk webpage and delivery was outsourced to providers including Able Futures and Maximus.

As described in the Transitions into employment section above, **Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs)** supported jobseekers with job searches and applications, and advocated for reasonable adjustments in the workplace for jobseekers.

Figure 5 below summarises the government funded support that aided education to employment transitions for people with special educational needs and disabilities, detailing how support was accessed at different stages in the education-to-employment journey.

Figure 5: Support available to help young people with special educational needs and disabilities move through education and training into employment (England, 2024)

Targeted support	Secondary education (14 to 16)	Post-16 education	Transitions into employment	In employment
SEN support in schools	Yes	-		
SENCOs	Yes	-	-	-
EHC plans	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
16 to 19 bursary (discretionary fund)	-	Yes	-	-
Supported internships	-	Yes	-	-
Adventures Away from Home Fund ¹	Yes	Yes	-	-
Life chances fund	Yes	Yes	-	-
Individual placement support schemes	-	-	Yes	-
Disability Employment Advisers	-	-	Yes	-
Health adjustment passport	-	-	Yes	Yes
Access to work	-	-	Yes	Yes
Inclusive apprenticeships	-	-	-	Yes
Supported Employment Teams ²	-	-	-	Yes

1. For 11- to 18-year-olds. Fund ended March 2024.

2. Localised support, not available across whole of England, and nature of support may vary by area.

Source: IES, 2025

Links to policy and legislation

As disability was one of nine protected characteristics in the **Equality Act 2010**, young people with special educational needs and disabilities were protected by law from discrimination on the grounds that they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the ability to undertake daily activities. Education providers were required to make reasonable adjustments to prevent disabled young people from being placed at substantial disadvantage. Likewise, in employment, the Equality Act ensured that transitional experiences such as work experience placements, apprenticeships, and supported internships did not discriminate against people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Act also ensured that workplace rights were in place to protect against discrimination and harassment. Support provision available for young people in education and employment was in place to ensure that discrimination is prevented where possible, including **Access to Work** and **IPS schemes**.

The **Children and Families Act 2014** significantly reformed how support was provided to young people with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly across education, health and social care. The Act replaced Statements of Special Educational Needs with **EHCPs**, integrating education, health and social care support with a focus on preparation for adulthood (PFA), including employment. The extension of statutory support to those aged up to 25 ensured that young people could receive support while in further education or vocational training. The introduction of **Supported Internships** was an illustration of how the employment-focused element of the Act had been implemented.

The **SEND Code of Practice 2015** details statutory guidance issued under the Children and Families Act 2014 in England, setting out young people with special educational needs and disabilities should be supported in education, health and social care setting from birth to 25 years of age. Also supported by the Equality Act 2010 considering disability as a protected characteristic, the SEND Code of Practice 2015 required mainstream schools and further education providers to adapt teaching and provide support facilitating SEND pupil progress, ensure that preparation for adulthood was covered under EHCPs, and promoted Supported Internships for young people aged 16 to 24 with an EHCP.

Complexities of accessing support

Support specifically for people with special educational needs and disabilities was often reliant on disclosure of conditions or having a diagnosis. However, some people such as neurodivergent people, may not have received a diagnosis until adulthood. Many may have needed assistance in navigating the available systems of support. Whilst this was often readily available in the education system through local authorities, SENCOs, and teachers, similar support networks were not as present in the transition to adulthood. Despite there being major life changes such as entering employment through a Supported Internship or other facilitator, navigating and finding these opportunities could be daunting, with young people often reliant on knowledgeable social workers or the support of family to access opportunities. Young people with special educational needs or disabilities **without** these systems of support, likely faced difficulties to navigate a new stage of life.

Some support was potentially challenging to access due to the application process. For example, **EHC assessments** and **EHC plans** were often lengthy processes with a large amount of information required, in some areas there were long waiting times to receive support, and if support was denied or deemed inadequate appeals had to be made to SEND Tribunals.²² Additionally, while support and access to services were technically in place, challenges include increased demand and limited supply of experts including educational psychologists within LAs. Assessments of SEND needs has resultingly become a long process for many with ballooning costs and figures around required assessments projected to make many LAs face bankrupt.²³

Support into employment was present, particularly **Access to Work**. However, the scheme has faced issues including delays in assessments and delivery of support, inconsistencies in the level and nature of support and the application and reimbursement process being challenging to navigate, particularly for those with special educational needs and disabilities.²⁴

It is unclear how well-known **Health Adjustment Passports** were, as the Youth Advisory Group members were not aware of them. However, this was a small sample so should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. Further investigation on the awareness and use of Health Adjustment Passports is a potential avenue for future research. Knowledge of **Access to Work** was similarly limited, particularly from employers who are

²² Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2024/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2024#annual-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-statistics> Accessed June 2025.

²³ Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/mar/03/a-ticking-time-bomb-the-neglected-crisis-of-send-education-in-england> Accessed August 2025.

²⁴ Source: <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/access-to-work-delays-shoot-up-just-as-government-is-trying-to-address-disability-employment/> Accessed June 2025.

often unaware of the existence of the service, and what it offers, with only one in five employers aware of the scheme as of 2024.²⁵

²⁵ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-employer-survey-2024/dwp-employer-survey-2024> Accessed June 2025.

4. Supporting young people with experience of mental ill-health

Mental ill-health can affect anyone, at any age, for varying lengths of time and in different ways. In this chapter we summarise the support available to help young people with experience of mental ill-health as they transition through education and training into employment.

For this project, young people with experience of mental ill-health were defined as people who had experienced at least one episode of mental ill-health that had a long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, regardless of whether they had a formal diagnosis. Early intervention support is also discussed due to its importance in preventing long-term adverse effects of mental ill-health.

Research shows that young people with mental health difficulties (mild or severe) were more likely to have lower educational attainment²⁶ and have employment rates between 25 and 39 percentage points lower than their peers.²⁷

Key findings

- Support may have been tied to a particular education provider, such as Mental Health Support Teams working in schools or colleges, meaning new sources of support were required during and after each transition point.
- Some government-funded support was not available everywhere, such as Early Mental Health Support Hubs that provided mental health and well-being services to young people aged 11-25 in community centres, only 70 were operating in 2024.
- Support to transition into employment included individual placement support schemes, Jobcentre Disability Employment Advisers, health adjustment passports and Access to Work. However, all of these required a person to disclose their mental ill-health which some people were reluctant to do when moving into employment. One expert adviser highlighted the workplace Mental Health Charter, a social

²⁶ Source: www.ucl.ac.uk/brain-sciences/news/2019/feb/study-links-poor-mental-health-educational-outcomes Accessed June 2025.

²⁷ Source: www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/MMH-No-One-Left-Behind-Report-WEB-1.pdf Page 14. Accessed June 2025.

movement to change the way people think and act about mental health challenges as an example of good practice for employers.

Mental ill-health and intersectionality

Mental ill-health was classed as a disability and a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, if disclosed, education providers and employers must make reasonable adjustments. While this chapter reports support specifically aimed at 14- to 30-year-olds with experience of mental ill-health, it is important to note that many young people who accessed this support may also have had experience of the criminal justice system, experience of the care system, and/or special educational needs and disabilities. All these groups had higher than average rates of mental ill-health.

“Mental health problems are very common among people in contact with the criminal justice system, with the amount of people affected ranging from 39% in police custody up to 90% in prison.” (NICE, 2017²⁸)

There was a higher prevalence of mental ill-health among care-experienced young people compared with the general population (45% of looked after children aged five to 15, compared to 10% of the general population of the same age).²⁹ And between 25% and 40% of people with learning disabilities also experienced mental health problems.³⁰

Government funded support

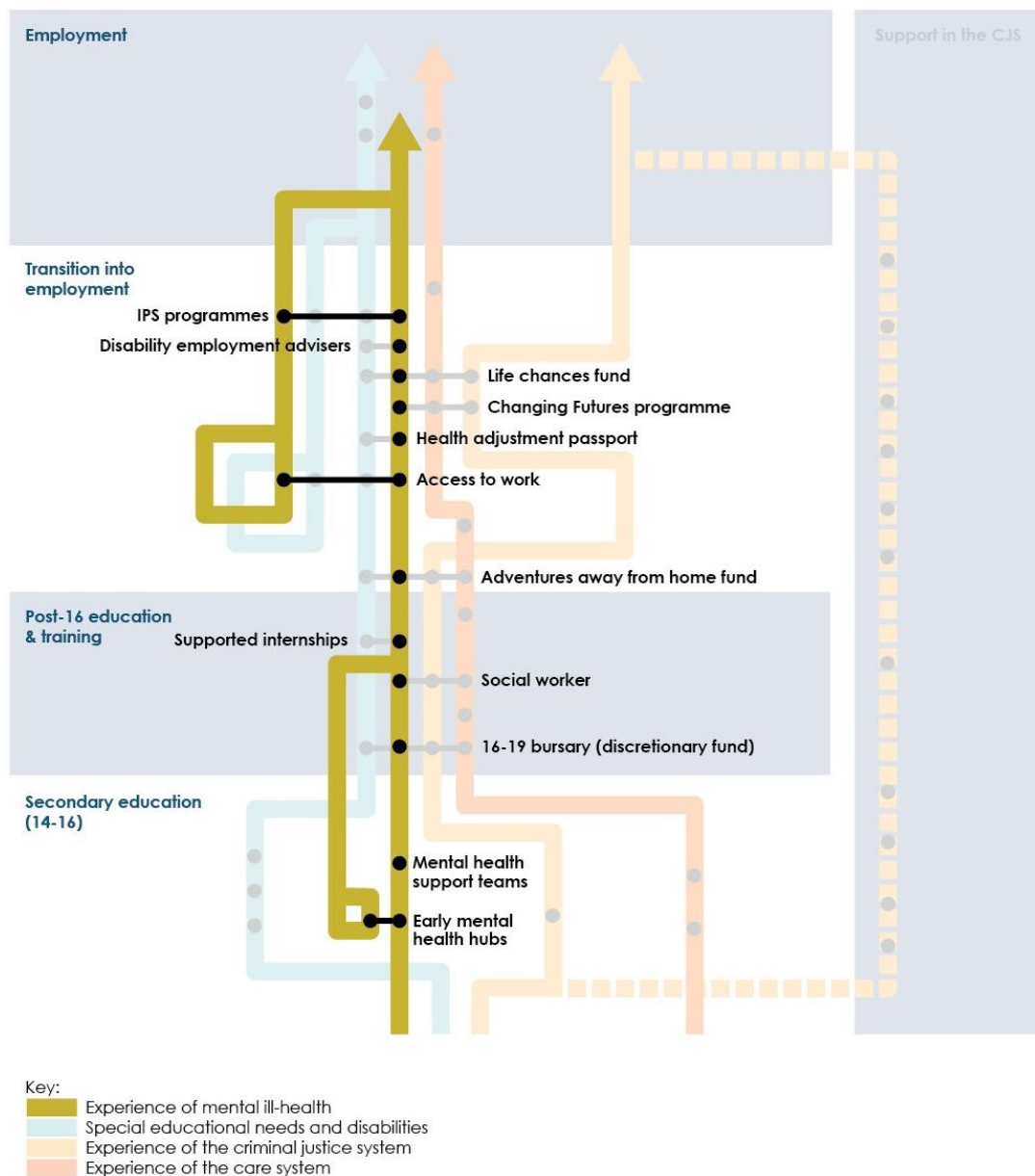
Below, and in Figure 6, we highlight the government funded support available **specifically** to young people with experience of mental ill-health that was intended to support them through education and training into employment. This does not include government funded support that focuses primarily on someone's mental health, such as GPs or child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). See the section 'Mapping' in Chapter 1 for more information on how this support was identified.

²⁸ Source: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng66/resources/mental-health-of-adults-in-contact-with-the-criminal-justice-system-pdf-1837577120965 Accessed June 2025.

²⁹ Source: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng205/resources/lookedafter-children-and-young-people-pdf-66143716414405 Accessed June 2025.

³⁰ Source: www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/learning-disabilities/help-information/learning-disability-statistics-/187699 Accessed June 2025.

Figure 6: Support available to young people with experience of mental ill-health as they transitioned through education and training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Supporting teenagers with mental ill-health

GPs and the NHS were often the first point of contact for young people experiencing mental ill-health, which may have triggered referrals to other support such as the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) or adult mental health service (AMHS) for people aged 18 and above. However, demand for these services was increasing

and waiting times could be high.³¹ Not everyone met the threshold for NHS mental-health services and may instead have accessed other services such as **Early Mental Health Support Hubs**. These were community-based centres designed to provide accessible mental health and well-being services to young people aged 11-25. They supported young people experiencing worry, anxiety, or stress and provided a physical location and space when problems first emerged. Therefore, support was available without a formal diagnosis from a health professional. In 2024, there were around 70 early mental health support hubs across the country, operated by a range of local services including volunteer organisations, NHS trusts and local authorities.³²

Schools and colleges could offer support for mental ill-health at their discretion, such as resilience and wellbeing workshops, have school-based mental health teams and/or counsellors. **Mental Health Support Teams** (MHSTs) in education settings delivered support for mild-to-moderate mental health issues and worked with mental health leads within education providers to develop whole school or college approaches to support learners' mental health and referred learners to external provision if needed. These provisions were also early intervention and not reliant on formal diagnosis of mental ill-health. Though not available nationally in 2024, the availability of MHSTs was expanding. In 2018/19 58 MHST 'trailblazers' were funded and in 2024 it was estimated there were 500 operating.³³ Local authority and **social worker** support was triggered if safe-guarding concerns were raised from behaviour at an education provider.

Post-16 education and training

Further education providers used the **16-19 'discretionary bursary'** of up to £1,200 for learners to provide financial support for transport, meals, books and equipment, to encourage continued engagement with education. Young people aged 16-to-24-years, with mental ill-health and an EHCP were eligible for **supported internships**, work-based study programmes that aimed to support young people into employment. Mental ill-health diagnoses may not have been required to access these provisions, depending on other personal characteristics and circumstances, such as reason for EHCP.

Supporting transitions into employment

In addition to the support outlined above, young people with experience of mental ill-health may have accessed government-funded programmes designed to support positive outcomes among groups of disadvantaged young. These included access programmes and provision funded through the **Adventures Away from Home Fund**, the

³¹ Young Minds, a youth mental health charity, states that in 2023/24, 910,567 young people were referred to CAMHS, with 64% not receiving treatment within four weeks.

³² Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-for-early-support-hubs> Accessed June 2025.

³³ Source: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/> Accessed July 2025.

Life Chances Fund, and the **Changing Futures Fund**³⁴ although they were only available in some areas (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' in Chapter 2).

For support with applying for jobs and accessing additional support in employment, people with mental ill-health could use a **health adjustment passport** to help communicate their needs in a structured way and may have been eligible for financial support through **Access to Work**. See Chapter 3 for more information about these services.

Support for people looking for work

People with mental ill-health who were on benefits and looking for work were generally supported by **Disability Employment Advisers** (DEAs) employed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). DEAs were specially trained Work Coaches based in Jobcentre Plus that helped jobseekers with health conditions and disabilities look for work and refer to specialist support such as Access to Work, work psychologists, or advocate for reasonable adjustments for the jobseeker. DEAs also advised other Work Coaches of specialist provision and support they could refer and signpost people to. DEAs and Work Coaches could refer some people to mental health support if that person discloses having mental health problems, regardless of diagnosis or GP confirmation.³⁵

For people in and out of work with severe and enduring mental health problems, **individual placement and support** (IPS) schemes offered support to both the individual and the employer for as long as they needed. In 2024 DWP and DHSC funded six local authorities in England to take part in **Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care** (IPSPC) schemes.

In employment

As mentioned above, a **health adjustment passport** and **Access to Work** could support both employees and those looking for work. See Chapter 3 for more information.

Figure 7 below summarises the government funded support that aided education-to-employment transitions for people with experience of mental ill-health, by different stages in this journey.

Figure 7: Support available to help young people with experience of mental ill-health move through education and training into employment (England, 2024)

³⁴ The Adventures Away from Home Fund and the Changing Futures Fund ended in March 2024 and March 2025 respectively.

³⁵ An exception to this might be in relation to people referred for a Work Capability Assessment, which determined their required level of work-search activity.

Targeted support	Secondary education (14 to 16)	Post-16 education	Transitions into employment	In employment
Early Mental Health Support Hubs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mental health support teams	Yes	Yes	-	-
Social workers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
16 to 19 bursary (discretionary fund)	-	Yes	-	-
Supported internships	-	-	Yes	-
Adventures Away from Home Fund ¹	Yes	Yes	-	-
Life chances fund	Yes	Yes	-	-
Changes Futures Programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Individual placement support schemes	-	-	Yes	-
Disability Employment Advisers	-	-	Yes	-
Health adjustment passport	-	-	Yes	Yes
Access to work	-	-	Yes	Yes

1. For 11- to 18-year-olds. Fund ended March 2024.

In addition to government-funded support, many employers offered wellbeing and mental health support, through external providers. This was highlighted by one member of the project's Youth Advisory Group who reported positive benefits from engaging with their employer's free counselling service for staff. In addition, an expert adviser highlighted the workplace **Mental Health Charter** and awards as an example of good practice for employers. The Mental Health Charter was a social movement to change the way people think and act about mental health challenges, supporting employers to make a public commitment to support their staff's mental health, develop action plans, empower mental health champions and attend training and networking events.

Links to policy and legislation

The support available to people with experience of mental ill-health as they transition through education and training into employment was underpinned by government legislation and policy papers. Below we highlight some of the key acts, plans and recent policy papers affecting this landscape of support:

- The Equality Act 2010:** Disability was defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the ability to undertake daily activities and was one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act. Education providers were required to make reasonable adjustments to

prevent disabled young people from being placed at substantial disadvantage. Likewise, in employment, the Equality Act ensured that transitional experiences such as work experience placements, apprenticeships, and **supported internships** did not discriminate against disabled people. The Act also ensured that workplace rights were in place to protect against discrimination and harassment.

- **Transforming Support: Health and Disability White Paper, DWP 2023:** This white paper outlined the government's intention to help disabled people and people with a mental health condition, get into work and ensured there was the right support for them to stay and succeed. It specifically mentioned **Access to Work** as an example of support to enter and maintain employment.
- **Health and Social Care Act 2012:** this legislation gave local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups a role in mental health service provision, facilitating **Early Mental Health Support Hubs** to provide mental health support in community settings.
- **The NHS Long-Term Plan 2019:** this paper highlighted the importance of integrating employment support with health services, particularly for those with severe mental ill-health. It also advocated for the expansion of **IPS** services within community mental health settings and outlined the plan to fund and roll out **Mental Health Support Teams** in schools and colleges.

Complexities in the support landscape

The need for a diagnosis: Some of the support available for people experiencing mental ill-health, particularly during later stages in the education-to-employment journey, required a diagnosis prior to access. This included Supported Internships, Access to Work and IPS schemes.

Long waiting lists for NHS mental health services: as one expert adviser noted, there were significant waiting times for children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS/CAMHS) meaning many young people were left without support or were reliant on family/carers support to source alternative support.

Transitions in education and support at age 18: Young people were likely to transition between mental health support (CAMHS to AMHS) at the same time as they transitioned out of compulsory education and training. The combination of the two made age 18 a particularly challenging time for people with experience of mental ill-health.

Stigma associated with mental ill-health: mental ill-health was classed as a disability and protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. **Health adjustment passports** were (and still are) a practical tool for outlining personal needs to potential employers, however some people were not aware of these or were apprehensive to disclose mental ill-health to an employer. This was noted by an expert adviser who suggested

flexible working practices could be used to support people with mental ill-health in the workplace.

Scale of mental health issues facing young people: mental health problems have become increasingly common among young people in England, reaching historically high levels in recent years. A reported one in five children and young people aged 8-25 had a probable mental health condition in 2023, a figure that has been rising since 2017.³⁶ Under-resourced workforces are a key sticking point, CAMHS has the highest psychiatrist vacancy rate of any psychiatric speciality meaning fewer clinical teams to assess and treat an ever-growing caseload.³⁷ Additionally, one of the fundamental issues underlining all the above was the requirement for budget constraints. Mental health support has historically been underfunded compared to the level of need and this is only exacerbated in the current fiscal climate. As spending growth from government has not kept pace with the surge in demand, young people have been left without adequate support systems,³⁸ with a trifecta of increased demand, and decreased staffing and decreased funding levels.

Gaps in support

Support in secondary education: one expert adviser noted that teenagers could benefit from more support being available to increase attendance and performance in GCSEs, particularly English and maths which were important for future education and employment opportunities.

Support for education and employment transitions: GCSEs and transitions into and out of post-16 education and training were highlighted by expert advisers as key transition points that many people with mental ill-health could benefit from more support with.

Support in employment: while government funded support such as **IPS** and **Access to Work** was available to people in employment with mental ill-health, no other targeted government-funded mental health support for employees was identified. See Chapter 7 for more information about the wider landscape of support in two local authorities.

³⁶ Source: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/mental-health-statistics>
Accessed August 2025

³⁷ Source: <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/latest-news/detail/2024/11/28/children-s-mental-health-crisis-deepens--severe-shortage-of-psychiatrists-to-meet-growing-demand> Accessed August 2025

³⁸ Source: <https://www.centreforyounglives.org.uk/news-centre/future-minds-campaign-launches-with-new-research-warning-the-trillion-pound-cost-of-failing-to-tackle-the-childrens-and-young-peoples-mental-health-crisis-is-holding-back-governments-growth-plans>
Accessed August 2025

5. Supporting young people with experience of the care system

Experience of the care system, or 'care experienced' is a broad term. For this research, care experienced young people were defined as those with experience of one or more of: foster care, residential children's homes, being adopted (including through kinship care) and/or of leaving the care system (defined as someone who has previously been looked after by a local authority for 14 weeks or more).

The support identified throughout this chapter should be considered in the context of rising numbers of people entering the care system,³⁹ coupled with funding cuts incurred on public services.⁴⁰ This chapter does not comment on the successes or challenges associated with delivery and/or access to the support, and instead focuses on discussing the support that should be available to people with experience of the care system.

Key findings

- **Government-funded support was delivered by local authorities:** Corporate parenting responsibilities placed on local authorities through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 required local authorities to organise and manage the provision of social workers and personal advisers and set up virtual schools to monitor care leavers' progression and attainment. They were also required to offer suitable financial and accommodation support to reduce cliff-edges in support and facilitate stable transitions into independence.
- **Support varied between local authorities:** The lived experience of support varied between areas, with one expert adviser describing it as a 'postcode lottery'.
- **Notable prevalence of housing support:** There were multiple accommodation arrangements available, which were intended to provide care experienced people with a comfortable, safe space, and stability in individuals' transitions into independent living and employment. Financial support was offered to purchase furniture and other home goods.

³⁹ Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2024#releaseHeadlines-charts> Accessed August 2025.

⁴⁰ Source: <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/What-is-the-outlook-for-English-councils-funding.pdf> Accessed August 2025.

- **Targeted programmes increased opportunity:** In recognition of the challenges care experienced people faced during education and early adulthood, targeted programmes and covenants offered a variety of opportunities specifically for care experienced people. These aimed to build their confidence and employability skills.
- **Cliff-edge at age 18:** Expert advisers noted that some care leavers were not ready to enter employment at 18 and needed ongoing emotional and practical support beyond 18 years old.

Care experience and intersectionality

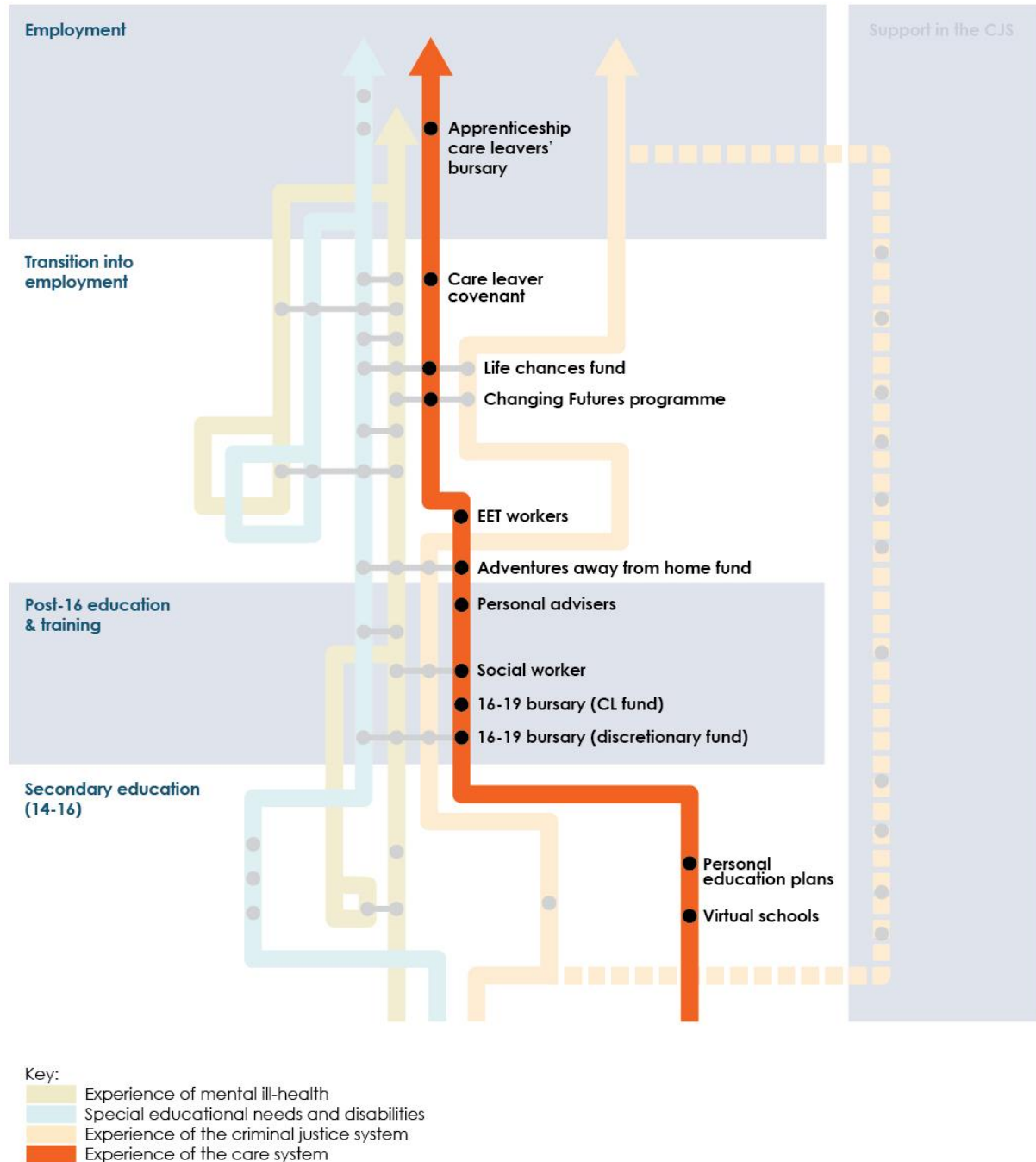
While this chapter discusses the support targeted towards care experienced people, there were often intersecting characteristics within this group that made them eligible for other types of support. For example, care experienced people had:

- **A higher risk of involvement in the criminal justice system:** ONS data showed that over half (52%) of care experienced people had been convicted of a criminal offence by the academic year they turn 24.⁷
- **An increased prevalence of mental ill-health:** Between the ages of 5 and 15, it was estimated that between 45% and 72% of care-experienced young people experienced mental-ill health. In comparison, 10% of their non-care experienced counterparts experience mental ill-health.⁸

Government funded support

Below, and in Figure 8 we highlight the government funded support that was intended to **specifically** support care experienced young people through education and training into employment. See the section 'Mapping' in Chapter 1 for more information on how this support was identified.

Figure 8: Support available to care experienced young people as they transitioned through education and training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Support in secondary education

Until the age of 18, care experienced people should have an appointed **social worker** to support them and their family/foster carer(s)/legal guardian(s) with their journey through primary and secondary education. Between the ages of 4 and 18, it was a statutory requirement for care experienced people to have a **Personal Education Plan**

(PEP). This was developed collaboratively by their social worker, legal guardian(s) and education provider(s). The PEP formed part of an individual's care plan and was designed to support stability in their education, set academic and developmental goals, and encourage aspirations. The document was reviewed termly and aimed to ensure that provision remained appropriate, progress was being made, and appropriate plans were in place if progress was not as expected.

Virtual Schools were closely linked to PEPs and were formed of teams embedded into local authorities that worked with care experienced people's schools. The role of the Virtual School was to ensure that care experienced people were supported to reach their full potential and had appropriate plans in place to successfully transition into adulthood. While the composition of a Virtual School differed between local authorities, all had a 'Virtual School Head' who was accountable for maintaining an up-to-date roll of care experienced children in the local authority area. Using this, they were responsible for identifying appropriate schools for care experienced people and supported them to enrol, as well as informing schools that they had a care experienced person enrolled.

Personal Advisers

When a care experienced person turned 16, they were allocated a dedicated **Personal Adviser** by their local authority who worked with them and their social worker to support the transition out of care. Personal adviser responsibilities were wide ranging and included assessing an individual's ongoing needs, providing advice and guidance around education, employment and training, supporting access to safe, reasonable accommodation, and access to health and wellbeing services. At the outset of the relationship, Personal Advisers worked with individuals to develop a 'pathway plan'. This outlined the young person's goals, support needed to achieve them, and was reviewed regularly to ensure it remained relevant to an individual's changing needs and circumstances. Until 2017, care experienced people could access a Personal Adviser until they reached 21. However, The Children and Social Act 2017 extended this, introducing a new duty on local authorities to offer and provide Personal Adviser support to all care leavers until they reach 25 if they want the support.

Challenges in extending personal adviser support

Shannon (not her real name), a care experienced expert by lived experience, shared her challenges accessing personal adviser support beyond her 21st birthday. Shannon described the financial and emotional instability she experienced throughout her childhood and adolescence, as well as experiences of homelessness in early adulthood, and explained that she felt that her social workers and personal adviser were paramount during this time for helping her identify and access relevant support. However, when Shannon turned 21, she felt that support and communication from her personal adviser ended almost immediately, and she was not aware that she could have requested the support to continue until she turned 25. This lack of communication was not limited to her personal adviser. Shannon felt that her local authority was disinclined to promote the option of ongoing support.

One of Shannon's friends had their request to extend their personal adviser's support extended beyond the age of 21 declined by their local authority. A third party suggested Shannon's friend contact the Children's Commissioner for support. The Children's Commissioner liaised with the local authority and was successful in getting the personal adviser support extended beyond age 21.

From this experience, Shannon highlighted the limited awareness care experienced people have of the support available to them and called for better communication from personal advisers and local authorities to ensure care experienced people received appropriate support that they were legally entitled to.

Support beyond secondary education

Education, employment and training support

Some local authorities offered **education, employment and training (EET) support** for care experienced people. This support included one-to-one support, as well as targeted work experience programmes and was intended to support care experienced young people as they transitioned into work by offering employability skills support and access to targeted opportunities. EET workers worked with care experienced people between the ages of 16 and 25. The focus of an EET worker's support ranged from personal support and skills development, for example building confidence and motivation, and improving wellbeing and timekeeping, to support with identifying, applying for and

sustaining EET opportunities. EET worker support was not available nationwide and aimed to meet local needs within existing support structures. Therefore, the extent of the provision and an EET workers' remit varied by the local authority area.

EET workers: Newham and Blackpool

Blackpool Council and Newham Borough Council are two examples of how EET worker support is organised and provided differently. In Blackpool, EET workers offer dedicated one-to-one support to a caseload of up to 30 care experienced people at any given time. They work closely with individuals and their personal advisers to tailor support and identify relevant opportunities.

In contrast, EET workers in Newham are embedded into the Borough Council's Virtual School and support the monitoring of individuals' progress and attainment into adulthood. In partnership with other local organisations, Newham's EET workers provide weekly in-person workshops on a variety of topics, including money management, CV writing, further and higher education applications and wellbeing.

Beyond one-to-one, personalised EET support, care leavers could have accessed targeted opportunities through the **Care Leaver Covenant**. The covenant was established as part of the UK Government's 'Keep on Caring' policy and was funded by the Department for Education (DfE).⁴¹ Signatories of the covenant offered a range of opportunities for care experienced people, including work experience placements, internships, apprenticeships, employment opportunities and financial guidance. An example of this was the Civil Service Care Leaver's Internship Scheme that offered care experienced people aged 18 to 30 an 18-month paid internship in a central government department or agency, to build confidence, independence and work experience.

Financial support

To support sustained engagement in education and employment, care experienced people could access bursaries to fund travel, clothing and other expenses incurred through their studies or employment.

As with other reference groups, care experienced people could access the **16 to 19 bursary (discretionary fund)** (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' section in Chapter 2) and the **16-19 bursary (care leavers' fund)**. This strand of the 16 to 19 bursary was available for four vulnerable' groups, including: young

⁴¹ www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a808389ed915d74e622ee47/Care-Leaver-Strategy.pdf Accessed June 2025.

people in care, young care leavers, young people in receipt of income support or an equivalent, and young people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Employment Support Allowance, or Universal Credit. The care leavers' fund offered a fixed rate of £1,200 per academic year.

A similar fixed rate bursary was available for care leavers under the age of 25 who were engaged in an apprenticeship. The **Apprenticeships Care Leavers' Bursary** provided a one-off payment of £3,000 to support people to sustain work. The bursary was paid to the employer, who then paid it to the individual.

Programmes of support

In addition to the support outlined above, care experienced people were often a target group for large government funded programmes designed to support positive outcomes among marginalised groups. As with other reference groups, care experienced people could access programmes and provision funded through the **Adventures Away from Home Fund**, the **Life Chances Fund**⁴², and the **Changing Futures Fund** (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' in Chapter 2).

Housing, health and benefits

Beyond support related directly to employment, education and training, and the transitions in between, care experienced young people could access a range of support intended to provide stable accommodation, improved health and wellbeing, and financial stability.

Housing

Housing support for care experienced people aimed to provide and increase stability in people's accommodation to facilitate smooth transitions into independent living. **Staying Put** and **Staying Close** arrangements allowed people to remain living with their foster families (staying put) or be moved within proximity of their foster families (staying close) after they turned 18, retaining access to their support networks as they built independence and avoiding a cliff-edge of support after foster care.

For those moving into independent living, **Shared Accommodation Rate Exemptions** allowed care experienced people to access their local authorities full one-bed rate of local housing assistance until they turned 25. This enabled access to self-contained accommodation instead of the reduced shared accommodation rate which covered the cost of renting a room in shared accommodation. The exemption aimed to provide care experienced people time to find work and build support networks, while avoiding sudden changes to housing circumstances during a key transitional period. Those

⁴² The Adventures Away from Home Fund and the Changing Futures Fund ended in March 2024 and March 2025 respectively.

moving into their first home could also access the **Setting up Home Grant**⁴³ which supported the purchase of furniture and white goods, as well as utility bills, safety equipment and home insurance. Statutory guidance published in 2023 suggested that this payment should be £3,000 at minimum.

Finally, for those not ready to make the transition into independent living, **Supported Accommodation** offered a secure, staffed accommodation for people to build the confidence and skills to move into independent accommodation.

Health

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and DfE set out eight core principles schools and further education providers should enact to protect children and young people's mental health. The **Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing** principles guidance outlined how headteachers, senior leadership teams, SENCOs and school nurses could support good mental health amongst their students.

The **Pioneer Project**, geographically limited to the South West of England, offered social, emotional and mental wellbeing support to young people experiencing disadvantage, including care leavers. Through one-to-one and group support, the Pioneer Project aimed to support people to become more confident and build positive outlooks on their futures.

Benefits

Particularly for those moving into independent living, a care experienced individuals' 18th birthday marked a key transition period as they navigated entering the world of work, benefits and independence. As with others aged 18 and over⁴⁴ who were not in work, care experienced people who were unemployed were eligible for **Universal Credit**. To reduce financial uncertainty during their transition into independence, care experienced people could make a pre-claim appointment at the Jobcentre up to 28 days before their 18th birthday. This appointment ensured they have the correct documentation required to make a claim and offered time to source documents they did not have, ahead of their claim.

Each Jobcentre should have had a care leaver **single point of contact** (SPOC) who worked closely with their local authority's leaving care team to support people's transitions from care and build an understanding of the needs of care experienced people and the local support landscape. SPOCs shared this information with colleagues as required to ensure care experienced people received relevant support. Should a

⁴³ Formerly the Care Leavers' Grant.

⁴⁴ In exceptional circumstances, 16–17-year-olds may be eligible to claim Universal Credit. This includes people who do not live with their parents and are not under local authority care.

care experienced individual be under consideration for a sanction, the care leaver SPOC should be informed. They liaised with the local authority to identify if a sanction would increase vulnerability to debt and arrears, in which case a sanction would be waived.

Beyond Universal Credit, care experienced people may have accessed **discretionary council tax reductions**. With the understanding that care experienced people were more likely to be out of employment, education or training and living independently than their same-aged peers, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government⁴⁵ approved the extension of discretionary council tax reductions to care experienced residents in 2021. This approval allowed local authorities to reduce council tax for care experienced residents on assessment of their personal circumstances to ensure making payments did increase their vulnerability to debt or arrears.

Support summary table

An overview of support available for care experienced people is displayed in Figure 9 below, organised by the life stage during which the support could have been accessed.

Figure 9: Support available for care experienced children and young people by phase to education to employment transitions

Targeted support	Secondary education (14 to 16)	Post-16 education	Transitions into employment	In employment
Social Workers	Yes	-	-	-
Adventures Away from Home Fund ¹	Yes	Yes	-	-
Virtual schools	Yes	Yes	-	-
Personal Education Plans	Yes	Yes	-	-
Life Chances Fund ²	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
16-19 Bursary fund (discretionary fund)	-	Yes	-	-
16-19 Bursary fund (care leavers' fund)	-	Yes	-	-
Personal advisers	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
Changing Futures Programme	-	-	Yes	-
Care Leaver Covenant	-	-	Yes	-
Education, employment and training (EET) workers ³	-	-	Yes	-

⁴⁵ Known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities at the time of approval.

Apprenticeships Care Leavers' Bursary ⁴	-	-	-	Yes
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1. For 11–18-year-olds. Ended March 2025.
2. For 11–18-year-olds. Fund ended March 2024.
3. Localised support, not available across whole of England. The nature of this support may vary by area.
4. For under 25-year-olds.

Source: IES, 2025

Links to legislation

Much of the support available for care experienced people was underpinned by four key pieces of legislation:

- **Children's (Leaving Care) Act 2000:** mandated that local authorities provided their care experienced residents with one-to-one support from a designated personal adviser.
- **Education Act 2002:** introduced governmental powers to make financial assistance available to individuals in education. Following this, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was introduced, which became the the16-19 bursaries in 2012.
- **Education and Skills Act 2008:** introduced the raised participation age, which saw a legal requirement for people to stay in education or training until their 18th birthday.
- **Children and Social Work Act 2017:** introduced corporate parenting principles, which required local authorities to act in the best interests of care experienced people and promote their welfare. The act outlined local authorities' responsibility to publish accessible information about services for care experienced people and extended the provision of personal advisers through to age 25.
- **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017:** mandated that local authorities take reasonable steps to prevent people from becoming homeless.

Complexities and gaps in the support landscape

This research identified the complexities of the system people navigated, often on their own. The most prominent was the varying availability of support between local authority areas. Local authorities' corporate parenting responsibilities has produced a system wherein the support available to care experienced people depends on the area they live in. This can either limit or extend the support people received, generating varied outcomes for care experienced people across England. The fragmented system this generated caused confusion among some care experienced young people who were

not experienced in seeking out support, or who had regularly changed foster care arrangements. This reduced their ability to identify the support available to them, and to confidently access the support.

“The support is extremely patchy – a real ‘postcode lottery’” (Expert feedback)

There was a notable reduction in the availability and intensity of support once a care experienced individual reached the age of 18. Expert advisers highlighted the ‘cliff-edge’ of support at 18 and queried the immediacy of ‘adulthood’ at this age, noting that personal advisers cannot reasonably be responsible for providing EET, health, housing and benefit guidance. The instability of care experienced people’s lives throughout their formative and education years often resulted in lower educational attainment and fewer social and professional connections than their non-care experienced peers, potentially limiting their post-18 options. Consequently, expert advisers suggested that continued intensive support with a gradual and non-linear timeline was required to support individuals as they learn independence. This has the potential to ensure adequate support is accessed at the appropriate time in an individual’s transition from education to employment, which is particularly important for those with intersecting support needs.

With consideration of the instability and trauma that care experienced people may have experienced, a key gap identified in the support for this group was the limited availability of emotional and mental health support. While expert advisers highlighted the successes of personal advisers’ holistic approach to support, they felt personal advisers cannot appropriately replicate the role of ‘family’ in offering day-to-day guidance and support. Despite this, some care experienced people were not ready to move into employment, education or training at age 18 and may have required intensive, ongoing emotional support to reduce further instability.

“For many, help managing their emotions and wellbeing should be seen as a greater priority than simply moving from NEET to EET... The alternative is often poor decisions that can lead to greater instability and poor health” (Expert adviser)

One member of the Youth Advisory Group explained that they did not like having to repeatedly declare they had been in care. So, when they applied for an apprenticeship, they decided not to declare their care experience in case this resulted in any negative consequences. However, as a result they were unaware of, and did not receive, additional support that might be available for care leavers on apprenticeships.

6. Supporting young people with experience of the criminal justice system

For the purposes of this work, people with experience of the criminal justice system were defined as people with cautions, convictions, civil injunctions, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Community Protection Notices or Knife Crime Prevention Orders.

An important consideration for the reading of this chapter is the complexities in untangling experience of the criminal justice system, witness and victim statuses. Often people with experience of the criminal justice system are also victims and/or witnesses, and the systemic harm they experience throughout their engagement with the justice system goes unrecognised. This chapter focusses on support for young people as defined above, and does not include support for victims or witnesses specifically.

Despite falling significantly between 2014 and 2022, the number of young people receiving cautions or sentences remains stubbornly high.⁴⁶ Furthermore, funding to youth services has decreased, which organisations such as the National Youth Association attribute to a rise in young people's risk of entering the criminal justice system.⁴⁷ While this chapter does not comment on the successes or challenges associated with delivery and/or access to the support, and instead focuses on discussing the support that should be available to people with experience of the criminal justice system, it is important to consider the funding landscape and its implications on access and availability of support.

Key findings

- Much of the support available to someone with experience of the criminal justice system related to their age and the nature of the contact, such as whether an arrest led to a caution or a charge, if charges resulted in a conviction or not and so on.

⁴⁶ Source:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/chris.strevens/viz/ChildrenCautionedorSentencedDashboard/Dashboard12> Accessed August 2025.

⁴⁷ Source: <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/NYA-Report-The-social-cost-of-youth-work-cuts-E28093-Preventing-youth-offending-through-youth-work.pdf> Accessed August 2025.

- In 2024, government-funded early intervention support included community-based programmes such as the Changing Futures Programme, projects funded through the Life Chances Fund, and the Ministry of Justice's Turnaround Programme.
- Gaps in support identified through expert review included support for flexible lengths of time as opposed to 'fixed length' support, and support that allowed people multiple chances to engage rather than disengagement preventing future re-engagement.
- Complexities in navigating education to employment journeys for people with experience of the criminal justice system included employment and training restrictions due to the type of offence committed.

Criminal justice system experience and intersectionality

The intersection, or convergence, of individual experiences, such as experiences with mental ill-health, experience of the care system, additional learning needs, substance use, unstable families and being the victim of a crime or abuse, raised the chances of a young person being engaged in offending behaviours and entering the justice system.⁴⁸ In particular:

- **Experiences of care and offending behaviour:** ONS statistics from December 2022 showed more than half (52%) of looked after children were convicted of a criminal offence by the academic year in which they turned 24 years old.⁷ Children in care were more likely to receive a non-custodial convictions (e.g. a fine, community service or probation) than their peers, with 37% receiving one compared with 12% of children who were not in care, and 15% of children in care received an immediate custodial sentence compared with 1% of children who were not in care.
- **Experience of the criminal justice system and mental ill-health:** According to a guideline on the mental health of adults in the criminal justice system published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in 2017, mental ill-health was common, with 90% of adults in prison and 39% of adults in police custody having experienced mental health problems.⁸

⁴⁸ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/turnaround-programme>. Accessed June 2025.

Government-funded support

Journeys through the criminal justice system

Much of the support available to someone with experience of the criminal justice system related to the age of the person and the nature of the contact, severity of the behaviour, whether an arrest led to a caution or a charge, and if charges resulted in a conviction. In general, support was categorised based on the following three age groups: children (ages 10 to 17 years), young adults (ages 18 – 24 years) and older adults (age 25 years and above). Figure 10 below illustrates the justice agencies that oversaw support for people at each stage.

Figure 10: Principal justice agencies for 14- to 30-year-olds (England, 2024).

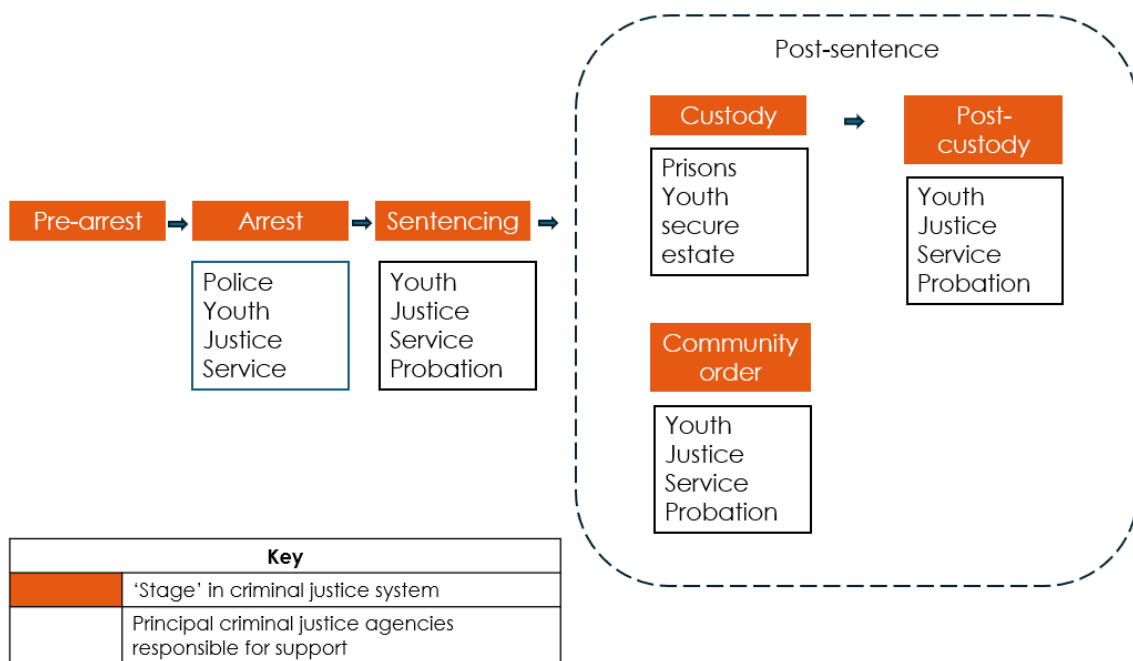


Figure 11: Support available to 14- to 30-year-olds with experience of the justice system as they transitioned through education and training into employment (England, 2024)

Source: IES, 2025.

Below and in Figure 11 we summarise the support available in 2024, following the journey through the stages of the criminal justice system. Please note, these stages do not reflect the education to employment transition stages used in other chapters of this report as contact with the criminal justice system, with its public protection function, supersedes education, training and employment. Also, it should be noted that not all individuals involved in the criminal justice system journey through each of these stages; involvement

could end at each and any of the stages. See the section 'Mapping' in Chapter 1 for more information on how this support was identified.

Pre-arrest and 'at risk of involvement'

Depending on where someone lived, they may have received support through community-based programmes such as the **Changing Futures Programme** or projects funded through the **Life Chances Fund**. These aimed to improve outcomes for a variety of marginalised young people, including those at risk of offending (see the section 'Targeted support available to a range of young people' in Chapter 2).

An early intervention programme developed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) was the **Turnaround Programme**. This programme was developed to specifically target individuals at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Police and their partners could refer a range of people to the Turnaround Programme, including people involved in repeated antisocial behaviour (ASB), that received Community Protection Warnings/Notices (CPW/Ns), Community Protection Orders (CPOs), Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), Civil Orders for ASB, or were cautioned (see box below). One expert adviser was very positive about the success of interventions such as the Turnaround Programme, which included a mentor or built a trusted relationship with the child/young person to journey with them to achieve successful outcomes. In relation to the Turnaround Programme, they explained:

“The support workers have advocated for children who have been excluded from school for prolonged periods in PRUs, not only be accepted back into mainstream education but who have gone on to obtain qualifications. These children have become ambassadors speaking at events to share their own stories to inspectors and local officials.” (Expert adviser)

Turnaround Programme

The Turnaround programme is a £71m year multi-year early intervention programme led by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The aim of the programme is to support Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in England and Wales to reduce entry into the criminal justice system (CJS) earlier by supporting up to 20,500 young people on the cusp of the CJS that they do not already work with. Delivery began in 2022 and is expected to last until March 2026. The programme aims to address underlying challenges, such as mental ill-health, substance misuse and educational challenges and offers tailored support, mentoring, counselling, and family support services.

Arrest

At the time of arrest, which may have resulted being charged with an offence or cautioned, people were supported by **police**. When people aged 10-to-17-years-old were cautioned, they were referred to the local **Youth Justice Service**.⁴⁹ Support at this stage included the completion of a screening assessment, undertaken by the Youth Justice Service to determine factors related to their offence (e.g. substance misuse, problems at home) and provide recommendations for relevant reparative or rehabilitative activities. The Youth Justice Service monitored the young person to ensure that they engaged with these conditions (with non-compliance often leading to prosecution).

For adults aged 18 and over, receiving first-time cautions, no follow-up interventions were required. Conditional cautions included conditions (e.g. treatment, compensation, apology), and non-compliance with these may have resulted in prosecution.

Sentencing

If someone aged 10 to 17 was charged with an offence, they went to court for sentencing and were supported by the **Youth Justice Service**. Adults (aged 18 and over) were supported by **probation**. Both agencies were responsible for preparing the pre-sentence reports that include their background, circumstances, risk and protective factors used by magistrates and judges to inform sentencing decisions.

⁴⁹ Previously called Youth Offending Team.

Post-sentencing

Principal justice agencies that oversaw support for individuals in custody included **prisons** (for those aged 18 and over) and the Youth Secure Estate for 10–17-year-olds (**Young Offender Institution, secure children's home, secure school, or secure training centre**). Following release from custody, 10-17-year-olds were supported by **youth justice services**. Adults were supported by **probation**.

Individuals aged 10-17 who received a community order were supervised/supported by the **Youth Justice Service**. Adults were supervised/supported by **probation**.

Support in custody (up to age 17)

The **Youth Custody Service** aimed to reduce reoffending by addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour and equipping young people with essential skills. It oversaw Young Offender Institutions, secure training centres, and secure children's homes, provided secure detention with a strong emphasis on education, vocational training, and therapeutic interventions.

- **Education in Young Offender Institutions** in 2024 included at least 15 hours of education per week for 15 to 18-year-olds. This education could have included day release for attending education or work in the community. An 'allocations board' (or a similarly named body) in YOIs assigned young people to courses or work activities, based on the individuals' educational attainment, interests and future career/study goals. Course pathways would typically be provided by education teams in YOIs, which provided children with courses tied to specific careers such as catering or construction.
- **Secure training Centres** were typically smaller than Young Offender Institutions, split into 'units' of five to eight 12-17-year-olds. People were provided with 30 hours of education and training a week, following a school day timetable.
- **Secure children's homes** were for young people in custody aged 10 to 17 referred by the Youth Custody Service. Each home supported its residents to engage in learning through formal on-site education, housing between 10 and 38 young people, who were given 30 hours of education and training a week, following a school day timetable.
- The **Oasis Restore Secure School** in Rochester was the first secure school in England providing housing for 12 to 18-year-olds on remand or sentenced to custody. Key elements of the secure school included education and healthcare to support young people and help to prevent reoffending. It had a capacity up to 49 girls and boys. When released from the secure school, people were encouraged to continue their education or to enter employment. The secure school was still running in 2025, registered as an academy and a secure children's home, inspected by Ofsted.

However, several YOI inspection reports published within the 12 months prior to this research identify purposeful activities (i.e. education activities to reduce re-offending) to be 'not sufficiently good'.^{50,51,52} Common inspection findings identify that staff caseloads are often too high to provide regular and meaningful one-to-one support, teaching staff shortages result in frequent class cancellations, and commissioned rehabilitative services (see the section 'Support in the community after custody' below) staff do not always regularly attend YOIs.

Support in custody (age 18 and over)

In custody, people could be supported by a range of people commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Key workers worked on a one-to-one basis with people in prison to develop constructive, motivational relationships supporting people to make appropriate choices, take responsibility for their own development and to identify and resolve issues and concerns for themselves. Key workers typically worked with approximately six individuals and spent up to 45 minutes per week with each person. Key workers worked in partnership with **prison offender managers** and **community offender managers** to support people to work towards goals set on their sentence or resettlement plans. Key workers might also have supported people to develop a progression plan, which was a voluntary tool to help people identify targets aimed at helping them feel safe in custody, and future aspirations.

Prison offender managers worked with people while they were in prison to develop their sentence plan and work towards the goals set within this.⁵³ The sentence plan included objectives that an individual decided they needed to achieve to reduce the risk of reoffending when back in the community. These might have included changes in behaviours related to their offence, or how they tackle challenges with drugs and alcohol, or improving education and employability. Objectives were reviewed at regular intervals throughout a sentence, and during periods of change (e.g. transfers, achievement of goals, approaching parole or due for release).

⁵⁰ Source: <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2025/04/Foston-Hall-web-2025-2.pdf> Accessed August 2025.

⁵¹ Source: <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2025/02/La-Moye-web-2025.pdf> Accessed August 2025.

⁵² Source: <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/19/2024/12/Wetherby-IRP-web-2024.pdf> Accessed August 2025.

⁵³ Source: <https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/31-Offender-Management-and-Sentence-Planning-info-sheet.pdf>. Accessed June 2025.

Probation officers supervised and supported people serving community sentences or released into the community from prison. Part of this role was to build relationships with people to help them achieve outcomes and make positive changes to their lives, including supporting them to access education, employment and/or housing support.

In prison, people have Individual Learning Plans that include **prison education**. Typically, courses were intended to enable people to learn new skills, such as using computers, basic maths, reading and writing, woodworking, engineering or gardening. Courses often included qualifications that employers recognise, such as GCSEs or national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

Timpson training

One example of prison education in 2024 was the prison training academies created by the shoe repair and key cutting firm Timpson under the direction of Sir James Timpson who has a long-standing interest in supporting people post custody. These took place within prisons and provided practical training on all the services the company provides (except key cutting). Timpson staff would also often meet with people who took part in the training academies on the day of their release, to introduce them to their new colleagues, give them a uniform and lunch and help them settle into their new home.

Support in the community after custody

Community support programmes included the Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) Evolution programme, and commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS). As a part of probation, **commissioned rehabilitative services** were intended to provide flexible, responsive services to enable individuals to lead crime free lives. In 2024, they were delivered by organisations at local and regional levels intended to provide tailored support to address criminogenic needs. Ingeus, for example, delivered services in partnership with the probation service, covering four areas of support needs: accommodation; personal wellbeing; finance, benefits and debt; as well as dependency and recovery. Additionally, Ingeus offered an education, training and employment programme for 21 to 24-year-olds, in three regions in England.

The **CFO Evolution** programme was commissioned by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to support education and rehabilitation in the community following custody. It provided vocational training and education, life skills and development, employment support, to help rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

While there were only two support services identified for this stage, commissioned rehabilitative services covered a wide range of support types that for other marginalised groups were offered by multiple support organisations.

Links to policy

Two main pieces of legislation, the **Offender Management Act 2007** and the **Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014**, laid the foundation for the support that was available for young people with experience of the criminal justice system in 2024. The Offender Management Act 2007 was the primary legislation that established the first framework for offender management, including the responsibilities of probation and prison services in managing offenders in both custody and the community. The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model, launched in 2018 under the Offender Management Act 2007, emphasised the key worker role within prisons and beyond release.

The **Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014** introduced reforms, which emphasised supervision and support for those serving short-term sentences, laying the groundwork for integrating the Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) into probation services. Specific support linked to the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 include the CRS, Creating Future Opportunities (CFO) Evolution, prison education (for those aged 18 years and older), Prison Offender Managers and Probation Officers.

Gaps in support

The focus of this work on national-level support with government funding, inherently restricted the type of support included in this chapter. However, reflecting on the support mapped and expert feedback, a few gaps emerged in government-funded support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system in 2024. These are discussed below, and are intended to be emerging findings to aid future work. Additionally, there is potential for exploring how support is typically utilised in practice in further research.

- **Flexible length support:** some support was time limited in that it was available for a fixed period, such as probation support linked to a statutory order. However, one expert adviser highlighted the importance of having support that can be flexibly in length to accommodate different personal circumstances and needs.

“Child[ren] and young people are not always ready when you think they are. Therefore, programmes that limited [sic] interventions to ‘6 weeks’ or forces workers to close the case after 3 non-contacts can be frustrating... it is heart breaking for me when a child/young person is coming to the end of their time on supervision, and it feels like they must be abandoned [by] their

entire network of support because everything is linked to them as an 'offender' under supervision.” (Expert adviser)

- **Multiple chances to access support:** one expert adviser highlighted the importance of support to allow people to re-engage with programmes more than once, to increase the chances of someone achieving the desired outcome in the long-term.

Complexities in the support landscape

Below we outline **some** of the complexities in moving through education and training into employment, for young people with experience of the criminal justice system. The complexities reflect those that emerged during this project, and there may be others.

Employment restrictions: The nature of a person's offence can place restrictions on the type of employment someone can enter, especially when the offence relates to theft or sexual offending. For example, convictions for theft may prevent someone from working in security services or jobs involving cash, and convictions for sexual offences will likely prevent someone from working with children or near schools. Additionally, individuals sometimes need to deal with official restrictions such as driving bans that limit the type of work they can do, and work will need to fit around ongoing probation appointments. People with community orders or electronic tags may have their movements restricted, which prevents them working in some areas or roles that involve travel such as delivery or lorry drivers. As one young person explained, there are ongoing implications from being in the criminal justice system:

“Most people want to put this chapter behind them but have to keep disclosing; it's a black stain on [their] name.” (Youth Advisory Group member)

Training restrictions: One expert adviser explained how the type of offence, such as sexual offences or domestic violence, may limit what education, training and skills support people can access. They noted how voluntary and community sector organisations providing training or support must be mindful of the nature of the offences and consequently may not be able to include some people in group activities

Housing and supported accommodation post-custody: An expert adviser felt that more housing support, in addition to probation houses and bail hostels, should be available to help people, especially young people, source appropriate housing when they leave YOIs or prison.

7. Support available in County Durham and Newcastle

To supplement the national-level support review, IES conducted a review of support for marginalised young people in two local authorities in the North East of England. This chapter summarises the support available as young people transition through education and training into employment. It included government and non-government funded support available to young people living in County Durham and Newcastle as of May 2025, with the review itself conducted between April-May 2025.

Key findings

- Most support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, experience of mental ill-health and experience of the care system was provided through local authorities in County Durham and Newcastle.
- The number of support organisations in the two local authorities varied. For example, in County Durham only one charity that supported young people with special educational needs was identified and no non-government funded support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system was identified at the time of the searches in April/May 2025. However, it was not possible to ascertain from this whether none/a smaller number of support mechanisms reflected gaps in support or a more streamlined support offer.
- Overall, people aged 16-25 appeared to have more support for transitions through education and training into employment than 25- to 30-year-olds.

County Durham and Newcastle

To map available support in local authority areas, County Durham and Newcastle were chosen because this complemented other work being undertaken within Youth Futures, including a UKRI Fellowship exploring [what is good work?](#). As with the national review, the focus was on support targeted at the four groups of interest, however this local snapshot captured all relevant support, regardless of funding source, providing a comprehensive overview of the support landscape available to these young people. Details about the approach and methods of the support mapping are provided in the separate technical report.

This chapter summarises two types of support; support targeted specifically at young people with special educational needs and disabilities, experience of the care system, mental ill-health and/or experience of the criminal justice system; and support available

to help all 14- to 30-year-olds as they transitioned through education and training into employment.

Newcastle local authority covered the largest city in the North East of England and was predominantly urban. **County Durham** local authority was more rural and formed part of the larger ceremonial county of Durham, together with boroughs of Darlington, Hartlepool, and the part of Stockton-on-Tees north of the river Tees.

Targeted support for 14- to 30-year-olds

Support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Most of the support for people with special educational needs and disabilities as they transitioned through education appeared to be delivered by the local authorities, particularly in County Durham. This included the **Local Offer** and **Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Services** (SENDIASS). Access to this support was typically dependent on the young person having an EHC Plan, or a specific special educational needs diagnosis, such as autism or ADHD.

The **Local Offer** provided support up to the age of 25. However, support for transition into further education or employment appeared to begin at a younger age for people in Newcastle than in County Durham. In Newcastle, young people were entitled to multi-agency support to put together **Preparation for Adulthood** objectives, from the age of 13. This allowed the young person to think about what kind of support they needed and ensured support was in place as they reached education transition points at age 16 and 18. County Durham offered this type of support through their DurhamWorks and DurhamEnable programmes, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and DWP, respectively.

DurhamWorks and DurhamEnable

DurhamWorks is a dedicated programme for people aged 16–24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). It offers one-to-one support, assistance in identifying career goals, help in gaining skills and qualifications, support in finding work experience and aid in securing employment, volunteering, further learning or training. They also subsidise initial travel and clothing costs when a young person enters employment through the programme.

DurhamEnable is a supported employment service for individuals aged 18 and over with special educational needs and disabilities or mental ill-health. It provides one-to-one job coaching to help people find and maintain employment, offering personalised support to overcome barriers to work. The service also works with employers, to support them with recruitment and training.

When a person reached 16, there were also third sector organisations providing support for specific special educational needs and disabilities. The **North East Autism Society (NEAS)** operated across County Durham and Newcastle to provide opportunities such as job coaching and workplace support. This was the only targeted third sector support identified in County Durham. **Empower Works NE** was a part of NEAS's offer, which included wellbeing support and tailored employability support for unemployed individuals aged 18 and over living in Newcastle. The Empower Works NE programme was designed for autistic and neurodivergent people, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and individuals experiencing mental ill-health. Additionally, NEAS offered **Diversity NE**, which included personalised support to help individuals in Newcastle with autism and learning difficulties find jobs, and **Progress NE**, which offered neurodivergent individuals as well as those with learning difficulties, disabilities or mental ill-health in Newcastle with help searching and applying for jobs and preparing for job interviews.

Also in Newcastle, organisations such as **Journey Enterprises**, the **Percy Hedley Foundation** and **Project Choice** (delivered by the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) supported young people from the age of 16 with autism or learning difficulties. These organisations worked with local employers to offer job opportunities to young people. They also provided job coaches to give young people tailored support.

Gaps in support

- **Third sector support in County Durham:** only one charity was identified as supporting education to employment transitions for young people with special educational needs and disabilities in County Durham. This may not necessarily have been a gap

in support and instead have reflected a comprehensive support offer from them and the local authority combined. Further research is needed to understand this more.

- **The need for diagnosis of special educational needs:** Analysis of the support available suggested potential difficulties accessing support for people with undiagnosed special educational needs.

Support for young people with experience of the care system

Education, employment, and transition support for care leavers was broadly similar across County Durham and Newcastle, although the age at which a young person could access this support varied between the two areas. When a young person reached 16 in County Durham, and 18 in Newcastle, there was a clearly outlined programme of support from the local authority. Local authority support was given through a Pathway Plan.

The **Pathway Plan** was a bespoke map of what support a young person requires when they leave care. It also highlighted the young person's goals, and the steps needed to get there. For education and employment, there was access to training, internships, and employment opportunities. Young people could also access the **Apprenticeship Bursary** through their plan to support them taking up an apprenticeship. Support was also provided to develop CVs, and interview skills, with a guaranteed job interview. The Pathway Plan was supposed to be reviewed every six months to make sure the young person has the correct type and amount of support.

Young people in Newcastle were supported by a **Leaving Care Support Officer** (LCSO) from age 18 to 25. With the Leaving Care Support Officer, the young person created a Pathway Plan, which was part of Newcastle's Care Leavers Local Offer, and could access a local authority **education, employment and training (EET) worker**. In addition, **Your Housing Newcastle** worked with children's services and other partners to prepare care leavers aged 16 and 17 for independent living and to manage tenancies effectively. **Open Doors – Beyond Barriers** also provided 16- to 24-year-olds in Newcastle with one-to-one support for entering employment for those who had caring responsibilities, disabilities or health conditions and who were also economically inactive and/or socially excluded. **Working for Carers (NTCarers)** offered support with finding employment, maintaining a job and accessing education, training and volunteering opportunities to unpaid carers aged 16 and older in Newcastle.

Young care experienced people in County Durham were supported on the Pathway Plan by their social worker when they reached 16. At 18, they moved on to having a **young person's adviser**, who worked with them until aged 25. County Durham did not offer access to an EET worker, but the programme provided access to DurhamWorks for additional support. Care leavers also had access to a **Sessional Employment Programme**, which provided paid work experience and an employment coordinator who worked with the young person's adviser. The local authority also ran a **peer**

mentoring programme for care leavers, where they could volunteer to be matched up to someone just leaving the system and offer support. Peer mentors were offered support with CVs and DBS checks, as well as access to support from Durham's care leavers service.

There was a small amount of third sector support for care leavers in Newcastle.

Headliners in Newcastle provided targeted support for young people aged 16–25, to facilitate their transition from education into work.⁵⁴ The **Tyne on Your Side** project offered a comprehensive programme combining media skills development with employability training. Care leavers could also access to the **Brian Roycroft Fund**, which provided one-off grants of £1,000 for care leavers aged 16-25 to support care leavers transition into employment, through funding driving lessons or training courses. Barnardo's also provided supported accommodation and tailored employability support for care-experienced individuals via **Barnardo's Works North East**, helping them gain the skills, mentoring and work placements critical for transitioning into employment.

Gaps in support

Support cliff-edge at age 25: Care experienced young people appeared to reach a support 'cliff edge' when they reached 25. There was limited evidence of support provided to this group after this age.

Support for young people with experience of mental ill-health

There was limited targeted education, employment and transition support for this group of young people within Newcastle. Barnardo's provided targeted social and emotional wellbeing support aimed at helping individuals in Newcastle with mental ill-health transition from education to work. The **Barnardo's Young People & Families Team** delivered support to address barriers to employment, alongside training that prepared 16- to 29-year-olds for employment and further education. Support offered from **Groundwork Northern Directions** included Youth Coaches for 16- to 24-year-olds in Newcastle to help overcome various barriers, such as mental ill-health, to improve skills and confidence in relation to entering employment. Additionally, as mentioned above, Empower Works NE and Progress NE, as a part of the North East Autism Society (NEAS), included employability support for those with mental ill-health (in addition to individuals with autism and/or learning difficulties) in Newcastle.

In County Durham, almost all support for people with mental ill-health was for those aged 18 and over, and was provided through the local authority:

⁵⁴ People with special educational needs and disabilities could also access this support.

- Through DurhamEnable adults aged 18 and over could access **Durham HELP**, which offers mental health support for jobseekers and supports people with mental health conditions to get into employment.
- Adults aged 18 and over could access the **Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance**. This Alliance was formed of different charities and organisations that offered support directly or signposted people to other support. For example, the **St Margaret's Centre** was an activity and training hub offering work experience and volunteering, and the charity **Waythrough** provided mental health support and help finding employment.

Gaps in support

The limited number of support interventions identified for young people with experience of mental ill-health, particularly in Newcastle, may have reflected the research's inclusion criteria which required an 'education-to-employment aspect' to the support. Services focused solely on a person's mental health were deemed out of scope for this research.

A lack of support for people under the age of 18: much of the support offered to people with experience of mental ill-health was for those over 18. Suggesting there may have been a lack of support for younger people, particularly to support GCSEs and transitions into post-16 education. Unlike support for people with other experiences or characteristics, there was no obvious cliff-edge to the support when a person reached 25.

Support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system

As reported in the previous chapter Supporting young people with experience of the criminal justice system, government funded support was provided through the local authorities' **Youth Justice Teams**, the **probation service** and **commissioned rehabilitative services**, such as the Ingeus Academy. The **Ingeus Academy** offered volunteer peer mentoring to young people with experience of the criminal justice system, who were also encouraged to apply for permanent employment with Ingeus when new vacancies arose.

No other support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system in County Durham was identified from the web searches. In contrast, third sector support made up most of the support available to young people in Newcastle. This was typically focused on post-conviction support such as **The Skill Mill** (see box below) or support with CVs and advice on how to disclose a criminal record to potential employers. There was also mentoring support available from **Trailblazers** for men aged 18-35.

The Skill Mill

The Skill Mill is a social enterprise in Newcastle and other UK locations that offers paid, six-month work placements to 16–18-year-olds who have offended. People are referred via Youth Justice Teams and work in small teams on practical projects such as environmental maintenance, watercourse clearance, and horticulture, gaining AQA Level 2 Employability Skills and other nationally-recognised qualifications. Work placements are delivered alongside mentoring and counselling, with team leaders drawing on youth-justice experience to support participants in building confidence, and resilience. The Skill Mill prioritises the transition into longer-term education, training, or employment.

Gaps in support

A lack of support in County Durham: non-government funded support was **not** identified in the desk research for young people with experience of the criminal justice system in County Durham. This may be an indication of varying levels of support in different areas, as several non-government funded support were identified in Newcastle local authority.

Support for all 14- to 30-year-olds

Education-to-employment support available to all young people in County Durham and Newcastle was typically aimed at ages 16-25, with support tailored to specific groups of young people in each local authority. For example, **Citizens Advice** had branches in Newcastle and County Durham, which offered a range of support including one-on-one careers guidance for young people aged 16-24. In County Durham, young people could be referred to Citizens Advice by their GP if their mental health was affected by their disability, caring responsibilities, or financial issues. Newcastle Citizens Advice offered specialist support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system. Additionally, **WISE** offered relational mentoring to help economically inactive individuals aged 16 and over in Newcastle enter employment or training. Relational mentoring included one-to-one support to build skills needed for employment, improve motivation and wellbeing and help with searching for jobs and CV writing. **JET North** and the **Talent Pool & Pathways Programme**, led by Newcastle City Council as a part of the

North of Tyne UK Social Prosperity Fund programme, provided individuals with referrals into training and career pathways, including childcare, construction, care work and green jobs.

Although most education-to-employment support for all young people in County Durham and Newcastle was provided by third sector support, both local authorities also had organisations and support available for people in need of support with independent living and housing – in Newcastle, this was specialised towards those with mental ill-health and care leavers.

The number of support providers in each local authority varied. Newcastle had more organisations offering support, from the age 11 up to 25, and provided grants of up to £3,000 to local organisations delivering services such as CV workshops, benefits and job application guidance and employability coaching through the **Reeds Grassroots Fund**. Durham had two key programmes, **DurhamWorks** and **DurhamEnable** (see box above).

Gaps in support

A lack of support after age 25: There was no local authority support identified for young people after the age of 25 and a lot of third sector support also did not continue beyond 25. This suggests that people aged 25 and above not already in employment would have either had to find their own support to move into employment or may have accessed support via the Jobcentre if they were claiming Universal Credit.

8. Conclusions

This study set out to map the landscape of support available to marginalised young people as they move through education and into employment. It focused on four reference groups, situating their support within the wider 'universal offer' for 14- to 30-year-olds. The aim was to provide a clear picture of the availability and variation in support. This chapter provides a summary discussion of key findings and recommendations for further research.

Key findings

Complex landscape of support

IES identified 80 different support mechanisms available to young people in the reference groups as they transition through education and training into employment. While it is unlikely that any individual would be eligible for all this provision, the figure begins to highlight the complexity of the support landscape in England that young people aged 14- to 30, along with their families and carers, must navigate and which support services must effectively signpost to. These 80 support mechanisms were limited to support with an element of government funding and therefore exclude the plethora of support that do not include government funding.

Some people had multiple experiences that required additional support, such as experience of the care system and mental ill-health, or experience of the criminal justice system, and care and mental ill-health. Therefore, the lived experience was more complicated than we have presented in the single-themed chapters, and we recommend further research to better explore the lived experiences of navigating this complex support landscape.

Another complicating factor was short-term funding and short-term initiatives that are a perennial issue in this space. Three government funds used to provide local support, Life Chances Fund, Changing Futures Programme and the Adventures Away from Home Fund were available for at least part of 2024 but had all ended by mid-2025. In addition, increasing demand for special education needs and mental health support within the context of local authority budget constraints will further complicate the delivery of support. Some examples of this have been highlighted in this report, but drilling into these issues further will require additional research.

Third sector support varied by area

Replicating the support mapping work in two local authorities (County Durham and Newcastle) illustrated the balance of government funded and third sector education-to-employment support for marginalised young people in these areas. IES listed almost 80

support mechanisms for the two local authorities, as many as were found nationally, illustrating the complexity of the support landscape once different funding streams were considered.

The support was not evenly spread across the reference groups and life stages, and the total number of support organisations in the two local authorities varied. Local authorities provided most support for people with special educational needs and disabilities, mental ill-health and care experienced young people. Charity and community support varied by area and it is unclear from mapping the support alone, whether fewer support organisations reflected gaps in support or a more streamlined, comprehensive, local support offer. In County Durham in April/May 2025 no non-government funded support for young people with experience of the criminal justice system and only one charity supporting people with special educational needs was identified (alongside local-government-funded provision). This suggests possible equity issues with variation by geography, socio-economic background and other characteristics used in this report. It also points to the possibility that some areas could be delivering promising models that could be scaled or replicated elsewhere. However, it was not possible to ascertain from this research whether the lack of non-government funded support reflected genuine gaps or a more streamlined and comprehensive support offer by the local authorities and probation. Overall, people in these areas aged 16-25 had more support for transitions through education and training into employment than 25- to 30-year-olds.

Atypical journeys made it harder to access support

Support discussed in this report was presented in a linear way, as if the journey through education and training into employment was unidirectional. This approach enabled clearer presentation of the support available at different stages. In practice, however, the journey towards employment, particularly for some groups of reference, were non-linear with varying durations to complete education, and/or periods of unemployment.

This research highlighted the additional challenges of accessing support when on an atypical journey (i.e. not going seamlessly through education and into employment). For example, a neurodivergent learner might disengage from further education and therefore lose the associated support, or a care leaver in their mid-20's might need support with housing, finance or mental health after contact with their personal adviser has ended. Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) face additional barriers compared to their peers in education, employment or training (EET). Furthermore, there are additional challenges faced by young people who do not have five or more GCSEs or Level 2 English and maths, as these are key to education progression and employment.

Challenges in accessing support

This research mapped the education-to-employment support available in 2024 in detail, and in doing so highlighted some of the issues people faced when accessing the

support that go beyond availability. Challenges accessing support ranged from the macro level (whether government funded support is available in the area), meso level (whether the support is known about), and the micro level (disclosing personal information to gain access to support).

Availability of support in the local area: Government-funded support was sometimes only available in certain areas, such as local projects funded through the Changing Futures Programme or the Life Chances Fund, and Mental Health Support Teams in some schools and early mental health support hubs in some local communities. Local authority support to care experienced young people, and people with special educational needs and disabilities was provided through their 'local offer' and varied by area as local authorities were able to tailor support to meet their local needs. One expert adviser described support for care experienced young people as 'postcode lottery', likely reflecting the challenges some local authorities are having to meet the increased demand for some support.

Being in 'the know': For all young people, having a family member, someone providing familial support, a peer, grassroot groups, a trusted support worker, or a staff member at school or college they connect with, can be vital to knowing what support was available and getting that information in a timely way. For example, Youth Advisory Group members highlighted contrasting knowledge about the possibility of extended personal adviser support and were not aware of health adjustment passports or Access to Work. Formal or informal 'navigators' can help young people join up different strands of support in this complex system.

Needing a diagnoses: Other support was dependent on a diagnosis, such as education, health and care plans (EHCPs) needing confirmation of special educational needs or disabilities.

Lengthy application processes: Education, health and care (EHC) assessments and plans, and Access to Work, were two support mechanisms highlighted as having lengthy application processes and waiting times in some areas, delaying access to support, likely due to increased demand and budget constraints.

Disclosing personal information: Some support was reliant on disclosing personal information that a person may not want to disclose. There were several examples of this from members of the Youth Advisory Group, including a care leaver who potentially missed out on additional support during their apprenticeship as they chose not to disclose they were a care leaver on the application form. The lack of information about **why** they needed to declare care experience was stated as a barrier to disclosing personal information. This highlighted the importance of organisations being clear about why they are collecting certain information such as care experience, neurodivergence, other special educational needs, disabilities or mental ill-health.

Gaps in support

The number of support mechanisms identified for the reference groups gives some indication of where there may have been gaps in support. However, this does not fully illustrate how comprehensive the support landscape was, how widely available the support was across England, how easy it was to access or whether people were on long waiting lists prior to accessing support. However, three gaps identified by this research were transitions between education providers, flexible length provision and support that could be accessed multiple times.

Supporting education transitions: Support was often tied to a particular type of education provider or education stage, such as a school, college or university. This meant support may have stopped during secondary to further education transitions, and/or new sources of support were required after each transition. Some education providers did offer support for a period after learners left to aid transitions, but not all providers will have had the resources for this.

Needing flexible length provision: Criminal justice experts raised concerns about the time-limited nature of support linked to involvement in the criminal justice system, and felt some young people needed a more flexible length or longer support.

End of support: Expert advisers in criminal justice, mental ill-health and care experience highlighted the importance of people being able to re-engage with support after it ended. For care leavers, this concern related to support often appearing to stop at age 18 or when the personal adviser support ended, despite the possibility that new challenges could emerge in any age.

Implications for this research

The findings underline that young people's journeys are shaped not only by the presence or absence of support services, but by the complexity, fragmentation and unevenness of provision. Access to support often depends on disclosure, diagnosis, or geographical location, creating systemic inequities and reinforcing the sense of a 'postcode lottery'. While there are examples of local practice and cross-sector partnerships, these were unevenly distributed and often vulnerable to short-term funding cycles. Too often, this support remained fragmented, insecure, or difficult to access. For many young people, the result was not a smooth pathway but a precarious and confusing journey through education, training and employment.

The implications for **young people** are significant. Fragmented pathways risk compounding disadvantage, particularly at key transition points such as GCSEs, leaving care or moving from youth to adult services. For **support organisations** and providers, high turnover and resource pressures undermine continuity of support and could erode relationships of trust with young people. For **policymakers**, the challenge will lie in balancing local flexibility with national consistency, ensuring that promising approaches

to support can be scaled up, while ensuring responsiveness to local needs. The Youth Guarantee Trailblazer place-based pilots⁵⁵ offer a potential model for how coordinated actions that include national strategy, local leadership and youth voice, could help overcome the complexity and fragmentation seen in this mapping work. This underscores the need for greater investment in navigation support, workforce capacity and integrated provision is essential if marginalised young people are to have fair and sustainable opportunities to progress into good work.

Going forward, there is a need to place young peoples lived experienced at the centre of policy and practice, to address gaps in provision and ensure greater stability and consistency in the support system.

Recommendations for further research

Young peoples' lived experience of the support: The Youth Advisory Group gave valuable insight to the experiences of young people using the support available to them. However, this research element was small scale with limited representation across the four types of experience. IES recommends further research exploring the lived experience of the support available to young people as they transition through education and training into employment to identify the complexity of the intersectionality of experiences and personal characteristics. In particular, more research into the issues around disclosing personal characteristics and experiences to avoid support opportunities being missed.

Local authority focused work: the support presented in this report illustrates what 'should' be available to support the reference groups as they transition through education and into employment. However, with local authority and criminal justice budget constraints and increasing demand for special educational needs diagnoses and children entering the care system, what local authorities can realistically deliver will vary by area. IES and Youth Futures recognise the need for more research to build upon the work presented here, to enable a deeper understanding of how easily and quickly support can be accessed, and the wider factors preventing education to employment support from working as it should. This could provide deeper insights in to the two spotlighted areas in this report or look to compare these two examples from the north east with another region.

Cost analysis: The support mapped for this work focused on that which contained an element of government funding. Therefore, it would be possible and beneficial to policy

⁵⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-young-people-set-to-benefit-from-new-support-into-work-and-training>

makers to conduct further analysis of the cost of the support. For example, costing the targeted support on the 'train line' infographic (Figure 3).

Further development of infographic outputs: Feedback from conference delegates at NfER's Advancing Youth Transitions Research Conference in June 2025 was positive about the usefulness of the 'train line' infographic for people working in the youth sector. Suggested amendments beyond the scope of this project included having an additional 'train line' showing support available to all young people, such as adult education and Skills Bootcamps.

More information on how to access support: This was highlighted as part of the conference delegate feedback and was a request for more information for those working in the sector around how to access support, where to go/signpost young people to access this support. IES have produced an Excel-based framework detailing 80 types of support available to 14- to 30-year-olds in England, outlining if the support was national or regional, delivery areas, funders, delivery organisations, eligibility criteria and links to further information. Sharing of this is at the discretion of Youth Futures'.

Appendix 1: Research questions

Figure 12: Research questions and methods used to answer them

RESEARCH QUESTION	SUB-QUESTION	SUPPORT MAPPING	DATA MAPPING	EXPERT REVIEW
1. What are the national, devolved, regional and local policy and support landscapes for young people (and their families) as they transition through education and training into work?	a) What policies/supports exist to support young people (and their families) that are specifically intended to support their transitions through education, and from education to work?	Yes	n/a	Yes
		Yes		Yes
	b) What are the main universal/non targeted policies and supports that indirectly support young people after they leave secondary education up to and once they start work (Other kinds of policy e.g., housing/health that are outside the main scope of the project but should be noted/acknowledged) esp. where they will have notable impacts on or interactions with transitions through education and from education to work).	Yes		Yes
		Yes		Yes
	c) What is the various welfare benefits available to all/specific young people that might support them in this journey?			
	d) What are the key transition points?			
2. What contacts do support providers and other key	a) What data is collected: where is it held, what fields are collected, who collects the data, for what purposes,	n/a	Yes	n/a

government agencies have with these young people?	and how does the collection of the data relate to the provision of support?	
	b) How frequently is data collected, accessed and used?	Yes
	c) Where is this data returned to and held, who can access it, who has ownership of it and who has responsibility for acting upon it?	Yes
	d) How well can the system track, follow up on, and support young people?	Yes Yes
	e) What issues exist in relation to coverage, loss from system, mis-recording, misidentification and other data input and quality issues.	Yes
	g) How are young people targeted for, informed about, and able to access support?	

1. A third research question of “How well does the current policy and support landscape support young people into good work outcomes (i.e. good work quality)?” was dropped part way through the project as it was agreed by both Youth Futures and IES that this would be best answered by future work that incorporates more qualitative research than was possible in this project.

2. The sub-question “What enhancements to data collection and use could be made to improve young people’s support journeys?” was dropped part way through the project as it was agreed by both Youth Futures and IES that this would be best answered by future work.

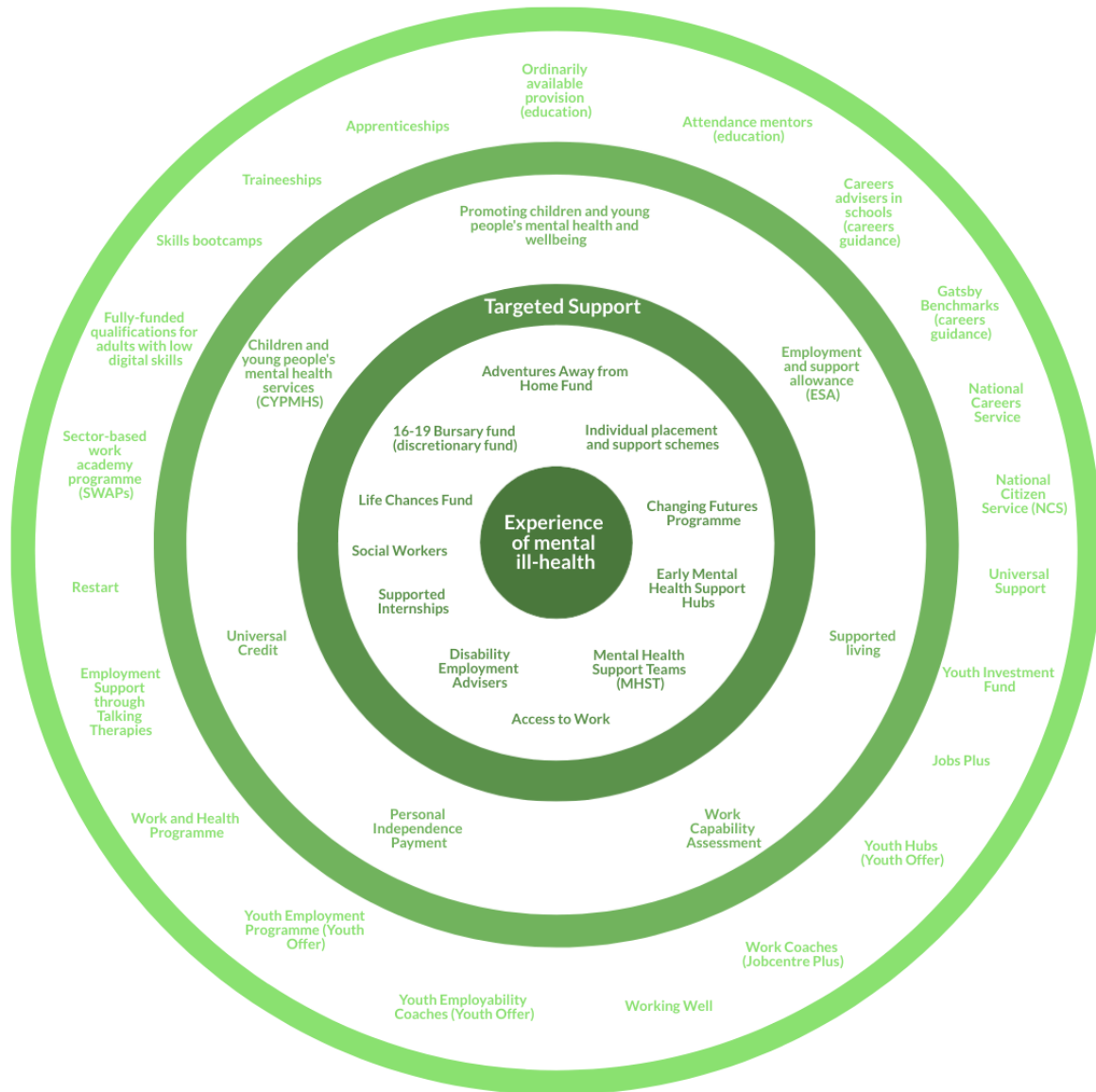
Source: IES, 2025.

Appendix 2: Target board infographics

To situate targeted support available for each of the reference groups within the wider universal support landscape, IES produced additional infographic in the style of a target board (see below). The centre ring, or target, of each illustration displays the targeted employment, education and training support available to the reference group of focus. This is surrounded by a secondary ring that includes the housing, health and benefits support available to that specific group. The final, outside ring includes universal support available to all 14–30-year-olds in England.

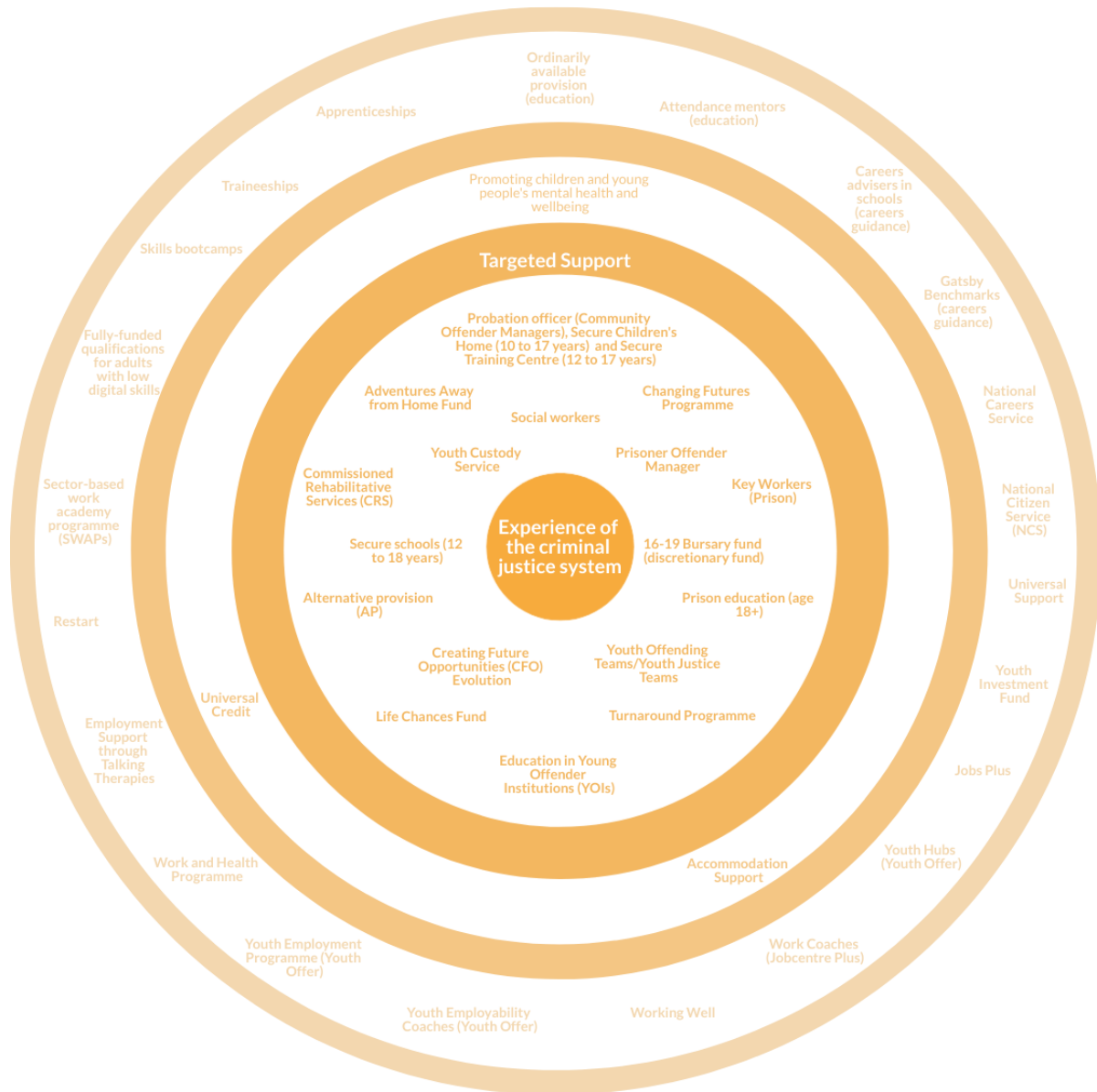
Similar to the train line infographic, it is important to note that people will not access every support mechanism within a particular infographic. Further, this infographic does not discern specific timepoints at which a particular piece of support can be accessed. Rather, these infographics are designed to display the prevalence of support available for each group across all life stages and can be used to provide an indicative insight into groups that have more limited support available.

Figure 13a: Support available to help 14–30-year-olds with experience of mental ill-health transition from education & training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Figure 13b: Support available to help 14–30-year-olds with experience of the criminal justice system transition from education & training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Figure 13d: Support available to help 14–30-year-olds with experience of the care system transition from education & training into employment (England, 2024)



Source: IES, 2025.

Appendix 3: County Durham and Newcastle support list (alphabetical)

Adult Learning Disability and Autism Team
Barnardo's Works North East
Barnardo's Young People & Families Team
Brian Roycroft Fund
Café 16 at Newcastle Cathedral
CAN Mentoring Project
Care Leavers Offer – Newcastle City Council
CFO3 – Social Inclusion Programme
Children and Young People's Service (CYPS)
Children and Young People's Community Services for Learning Disabilities and/or Autism
Children North East
Citizens Advice County Durham
Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN)
Disability North Durham County Council's Care and support for moving into adulthood
Durham County Council's SEND, Looked After and Vulnerable Group Casework Team
Durham County Council's Special Educational Needs Support
Durham Enable
Durham HELP
Durham Local Offer
Durham Mental Wellbeing Alliance
Durham SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)
Durham SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) drop-in sessions
DurhamWorks
Early Help – Children and Families Newcastle
Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans
Groundwork Northern Directions
Headliners
Ingeus Peer Mentor Academy
JET North - Talent Pool & Pathways Programme
Journey Enterprises
Junction 42 – Workout Programme
Leaving Care Support Officer (LCSO)
Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
Moving On Durham
Nacro
Neurodevelopmental Pathway (CNTW)
Newcastle City Council Bail Supervision and Support

Newcastle City Council Education and Employment Support for Care Experienced Young People
 Newcastle City Council Education, Employment and Training Support
 Newcastle City Council Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services
 Newcastle City Council support
 Newcastle City Council supported housing for young people
 Newcastle Futures
 Newcastle Homes: Young People's Service
 Newcastle Probation Service
 North East Autism Society (NEAS)
 North East Autism Society (NEAS) - Diversity NE
 North East Autism Society (NEAS) – Empower Works NE
 North East Autism Society (NEAS) - Progress NE
 Open Doors – Beyond Barriers
 PACT House
 Pathway Plan for Care Leavers
 Peer Mentors – Using your Care Experience to Help Young People
 Percy Hedley Foundation
 Recyke y'Bike
 Reeds Grassroots Fund
 Sessional Employment Programme
 Skills for People
 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Growing up in County Durham and preparing for adulthood
 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support, Assessment and Review (SEND SAR) Team
 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and our Local Offer
 St Margaret's Centre
 Streetwise Young People's Project
 Study Programmes & Supported Internships (Ages 16–24 with EHCP)
 Support Services for Young People with Autism in Newcastle
 Supported Employment Service – Newcastle City Council
 The Oswin Project
 The Skill Mill
 Trailblazers
 Turnaround Programme
 Unlock
 Waythrough support services for young people
 WISE
 Working for Carers (NTCarers)
 Young Enterprise - North East
 Young People's Service (Durham Children in Care Council)
 Young Person's Advisor (YPA)
 Your Homes Newcastle – Young People's Service Hostel
 Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP)

About the authors

Lorraine Lanceley, BSc, Senior Research Fellow, has over 15 years' experience delivering and project managing quantitative and qualitative social research for government departments (DWP, DfE) and Youth Futures Foundation. Lorraine specialises in evaluations of employment and skills programmes, including people with complex needs or disabilities, and young people not in education employment or training. In recent years at IES, Lorraine has focused on managing implementation and process evaluations (IPE), including the 3-year evaluation of ELATT's learner support model and 2-year evaluation of Cumbria Youth Alliance's Forging Futures employment programme, both funded by Youth Futures.

Alexandra 'Allie' Nancarrow, BS, MA, PhD, Research Fellow, has a range of experience relating to project management, including designing, and delivering evaluations, conducting qualitative interviews, designing and administering surveys, liaising with clients and disseminating research to a variety of audiences, including stakeholders and the public. Broadly, her main research interests include using mixed methods to investigate predictors of young people's outcomes. Since joining IES in December 2021, she has been the Project Manager for two iterations of the Youth Employment Toolkit for the Youth Futures Foundation. She has also been involved in the evaluation of complex interventions, currently including serving as the Project Manager for the evaluation of the Multiply: Family Numeracy programme for the Department for Education (DfE).

Joy Williams, BSocSc, Principal Research Fellow, has over 17 years' experience in leading large-scale research and evaluation projects. Her area of interest spans the transition of people through education and into work. This includes looking at careers guidance and support at school and in post-16, as well as training and transitions into employment for people of all ages. A central thread is understanding disadvantage, equality and diversity, for example through NEET prevention and support for young people who are NEET.

Billy Campbell, BSc, MA, Research Fellow, joined IES in 2021. Primarily through qualitative methods, his main interests include understanding the challenges experienced by young people as they transition from education to employment, and exploring how access to and the quality of support can be improved for young people who are NEET to facilitate movement into good work. Billy has been involved in several evaluations within the youth employment context, including the Youth Futures place-based, theory-informed evaluations of Cumbria Youth Alliance's Forging Futures programme and PLIAS Resettlement's Step-Up programme, the latter focusing on supporting young Londoners

with experience of, or at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system into employment.

Joseph Cook, BA, MSc, Research Fellow. Joe joined IES in 2021 and has experience undertaking literature reviews across a range of subject matter including: barriers to progression and retention in engineering, factors influencing nurses' decision making to stay or leave the nursing profession, and what works to promote employer action and behaviour change in relation to EDI.

Louisa Illidge, BSc, MSc, Research Officer, has experience in conducting qualitative research, using methods such as interviews and thematic analysis. Louisa also has experience with quantitative survey analysis. Louisa has an interest in education and wellbeing, which led her to conduct research with young people on these topics for her undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations. These interests are guiding the work she does at IES and has led her to contribute to desk research and literature reviews.

Kevin Wong is Reader in Community Justice and Associate Director, Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, Manchester Metropolitan University. He has 30 years' experience in criminal justice and broader social welfare policy and practice with extensive experience of leading multi-site evaluations across the criminal justice system involving qualitative fieldwork, quantitative data scoping, collection and analysis. He is Editor of the British Journal of Community Justice, Director of the Manchester International Crime and Justice Film Festival, and an Associate Member of the UK Ministry of Justice Corrections Services Accreditation and Advisory Panel. He has over thirty years' experience of criminal justice policy, practice and research.