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NEET Prevention: Keeping Students Engaged at Key Stage 4

Final case study report

**National Foundation for Educational
Research (NFER)**



NEET Prevention: Keeping Students Engaged at Key Stage 4

Final case study report

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1 The case for action

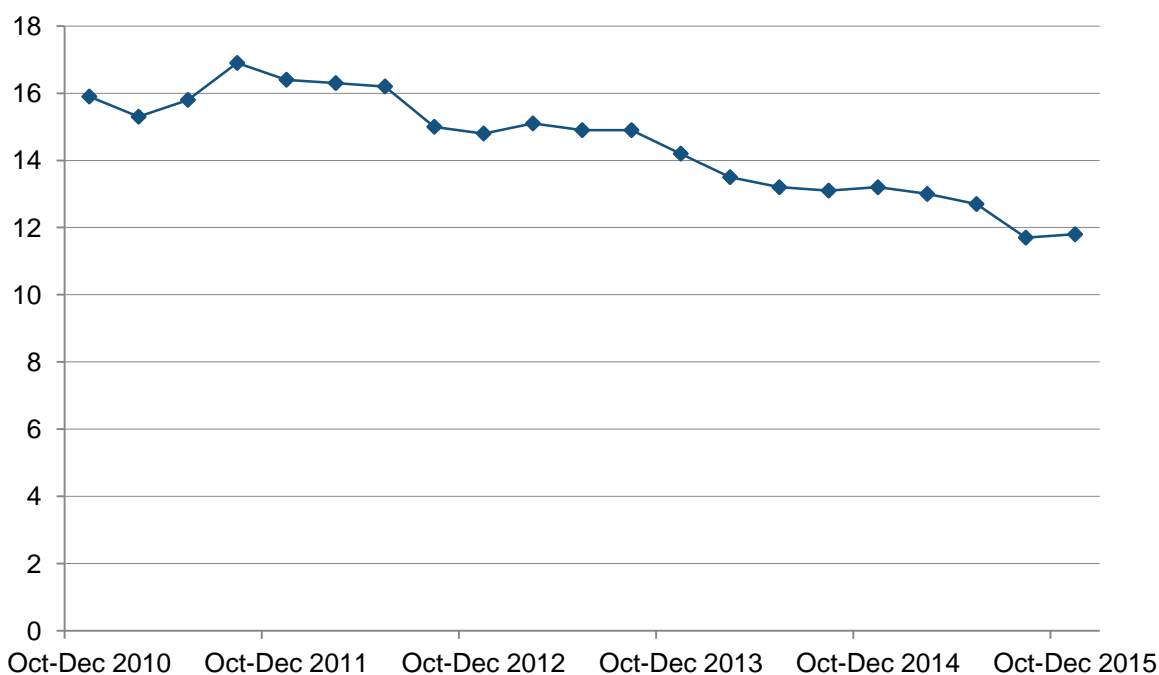
In February 2016 the Department for Education made a commitment that all young people should be prepared for adult life:

All 19-year-olds complete school or college with the skills and character to contribute to the UK's society and economy and are able to access high-quality work or study options

Single departmental plan: 2015 to 2020¹

In light of this commitment, it is heartening to see that the number of 16 to 24 year old young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has been consistently falling in recent years, from 14.9 per cent in October to December 2012 to 11.6 per cent in October to December 2015 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.1: People aged from 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training as a percentage of all people aged from 16 to 24, seasonally adjusted, in the UK



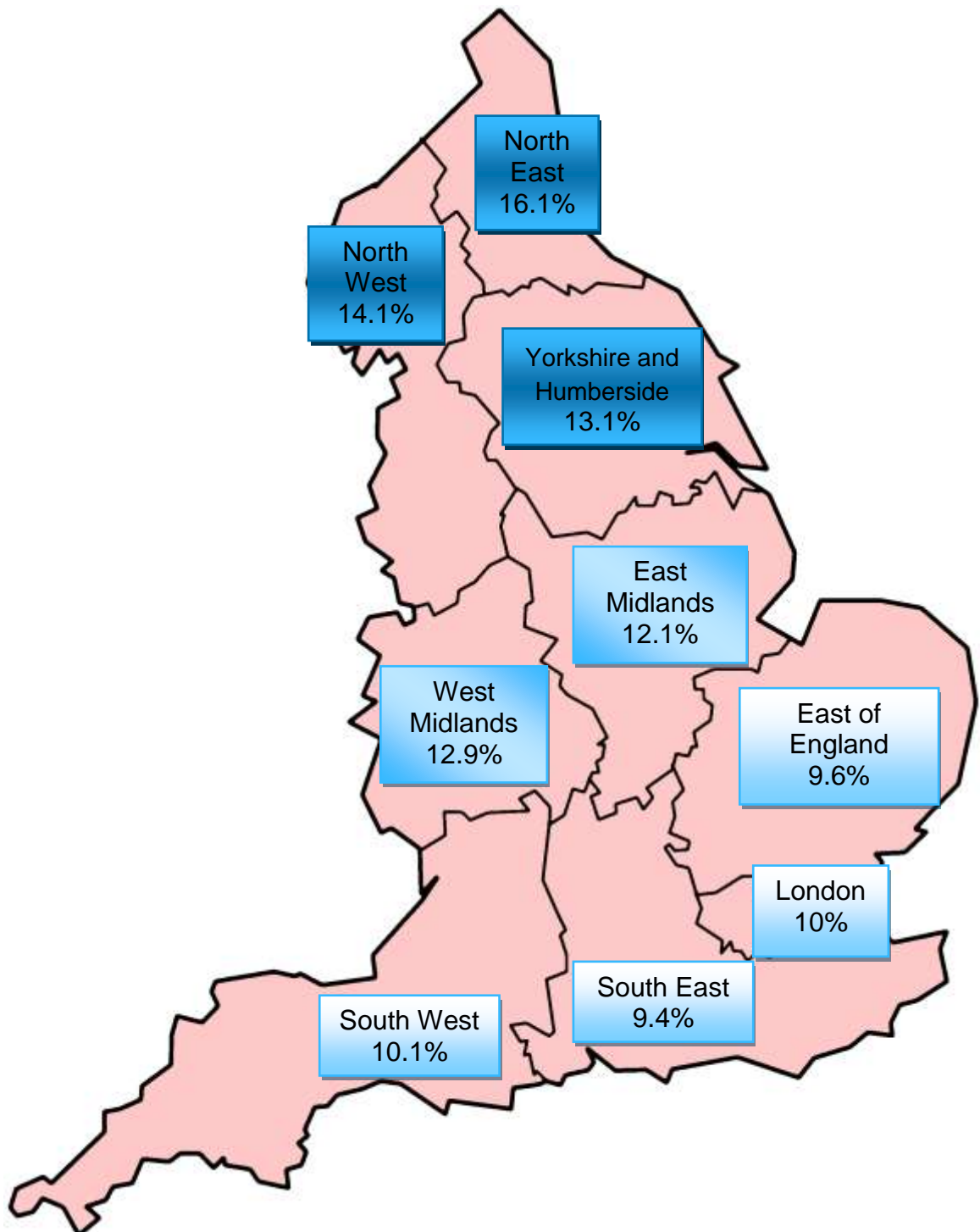
Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics February 2016²

However the number of young people who are NEET is still too high, and particularly so in the north of England (see Figure 2).

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020>

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/february2016#total-young-people-who-were-neet>

Figure 1.2: Percentage of 16 to 24 year olds NEET by region (October to December 2015)



Source: Percentage of 16-24 year olds NEET by region³

In February 2016 Sir Michael Wilshaw underlined these geographical disparities in England:

...overall there is a significant discrepancy in [educational] performance between North and South.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/neet-statistics-quarterly-brief-october-to-december-2015>

The fact that we still have a considerable number of young people who are NEET (and particularly in the north of England) is not new and should not be overlooked especially when we reflect on our country's wider productivity challenge.

In February 2016 the House of Commons Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) Select Committee endorsed the Government's 2015 productivity plan⁵:

The Government is right to be concerned by the lack of productivity growth in the United Kingdom

**Select Committee's report on the Productivity Plan (2016)⁶
point 6**

And, as well as calling for more specific actions and accountability measures, the BIS committee pointed out that the solution needs a long-term plan (not a short term fix) and that the skills and education of our young people are integral:

...productivity is a complicated economic concept which requires long-term investment.... 'On a number of the things that are probably relevant, including skills and education, you are not going to get results tomorrow, because we are talking about the education of people from the very earliest ages through to when they leave school'. [Lord O'Neill of Gatley]

**Select Committee's report on the Productivity Plan 2016⁷
point 7**

This highlights the importance of engagement in education and skills from a young age. Moreover, the Institute of Health Equity emphasised the importance of preventing young people from becoming NEET:

Strategies implemented before the age of 16 that are designed to prevent young people from becoming NEET are likely to be the most effective way of reducing local NEET levels.

Allen, 2014, p.19

There is, therefore, a compelling case to engage young people in learning, and enable them to see the value of learning to their futures, before they are 16 years old. To do this we need to identify effective methods to encourage and motivate young people, at risk of becoming disengaged from learning, at an earlier age. The evidence in this report identifies some interesting support programmes that appear to work to re-engage young people at risk. It is essential that we invest more to further develop these approaches so that we successfully re-engage young people in learning and reduce the considerable number who are currently NEET.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/sir-michael-wilshaw-speech-at-ippr>

⁵

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf

⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmbis/466/46603.htm>

⁷ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmbis/466/46603.htm>

2 This report

This study has run from 2012 to 2016 and examines the perceived impact of school-based programmes that support students in Key Stage 4 (KS4) who are at risk of temporary disconnection from learning in schools in challenging circumstances. Its aim was to identify programmes that demonstrate promise of positive impact, and which therefore warrant further development and evaluation.

This report is the final in a series of publications that focus on the impact of the support programmes in five schools.⁸

- The first report (Kettlewell *et al.*, 2014) was published in February 2014 and provided an overview of nine case studies alongside the attitudes and views of students prior to starting the support programme.
- The second interim report (Stevens *et al.*, 2014) was published in November 2014 and provided an update. It identified how the programmes were implemented in practice, teachers' perceptions of successes and challenges, and the views of students in the first year of involvement in the programme.
- Alongside this second report we published practical tips for implementing support strategies, such as these, in schools. This draws on the findings from across the case studies and identifies key successes and enablers, and how to overcome barriers to implementation. This can be found at <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IMPE03>

This final case-study report assesses the impact of five support programmes on re-engaging young people at risk of disconnection from learning (but who do not face multiple and/or complex barriers) and considers the cost-effectiveness of the programmes where possible. We selected the five case studies to ensure a range of types of support programmes were included. This assessment is based on a mixed research methodology outlined in Appendix B.

Finally, we have drawn out the elements of the support strategies that show the greatest promise (see section 4), discussed ways forward, and have suggested how the programmes could be tested through more robust evaluation methodologies (see section 6).

⁸ Please see Appendix A for a summary of the methodology.

3 Overall findings

The young people taking part in these support programmes were identified by their schools at the end of Year 9 to be at risk of disengaging from education. Our survey conducted in 2013 suggested that in many respects the young people were very similar to the national average, but in comparison they were not as happy in general, not feeling positive, and nor were they as positive about their future (see Appendix A / section 4.1 for details).

By the end of KS4 the evidence suggests that both attainment and engagement in learning had improved. In summary, the key findings, in terms of the impact on young people, include:

- The young people's attitudes to school improved over time, although at this exploratory stage of the research process we cannot know whether this was due to the support programmes or to a natural change over time.
- In three of the five schools, project leads reported that KS4 attainment was better than expected. Additionally project leads observed that some students sat exams when they otherwise might have left school entirely.
- Out of the 41 students followed from 2013 through to 2015, 33 were still engaged in learning in autumn 2015⁹ despite having been identified by their school as at risk of disengaging from education at the end of Year 9.
- Young people (and the project leads) believed that they had gained a variety of key skills that had helped them to remain in learning and prepared them for the world of work. Most notably:
 - seeing the relevance of their school work to the world of work
 - improved attitudes to school (endorsed by longitudinal tracking data)
 - improved attendance (endorsed by longitudinal tracking data)
 - improved confidence and skills in communicating with others
 - improved teamwork.

Although the support programmes were different (see section 4) there were key elements that appeared to be common to all approaches and contributed to their perceived success (see Figure 3).

⁹ It is also possible that some of the remaining eight could be positively engaged but they did not respond to follow up calls.

Figure 3.1: Key elements common to support programmes

Key elements	Ways contributed to perceived success
Mentoring	Although practiced in diverse ways, by different adults, mentoring and counselling are clearly important to young people. It could be for some of these young people that a consistent relationship with a responsible adult enabled them to keep on track. However, for some young people if the mentoring was too overt there was evidence to suggest that it might cease to be beneficial.
A consistent, dedicated project lead	Linked to the mentoring role was the presence of a member of staff (invariably the project lead) who was accessible, approachable and to whom the young people could relate to. This was a time consuming role.
Group support	The mutual interest and support from other similar young people appeared to enhance school engagement.
Relevance to the world of work	The evidence suggests that when young people could relate to the world of work and the next steps of their journey they found it easier to understand the relevance of their school work.
Flexibility	Young people reported that they liked having more control over their work and flexibility to see their project lead and/or mentor when they needed.

Project leads found it very difficult to provide data on the cost effectiveness of their support programmes. However, four of the five schools provided their views. For example, three said that the interventions were more cost-effective than previous support programmes. Two project leads also observed that they had provided considerable voluntary time (for example in their lunchtimes and after school) to the support programme.

4 The case studies

Each case study is presented individually and provides an update of the support programme delivered in Year 11 and an outline of the perceived impact and cost effectiveness of the programme. The type of support programmes being run in each case-study school can be summarised as:

Employer or business-focused support

- Case study one: Extended employer work experience
- Case study two: Social enterprise qualification

Pastoral or academic-focused support

- Case study three: City Year
- Case study four: Do Something Different

Combined approaches

- Case study five: Raising the Participation Age project

For more in-depth information on the context of the programmes and the characteristics of the students involved, please see the baseline case study report:

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IMPE01> and the interim report:

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/IMPE02>

Case study one: Extended employer work experience

	School & contact	Great Barr School Mr B Hunt. acepedagogy@gmail.com
	Notes	Co-educational secondary school and a specialist science and mathematics college
	LA	Birmingham
	LA NEET rate	7.2 per cent of young people (end of 2014 ¹⁰)
	Activity unknown	17.3 per cent of young people in the LA

Summary

There is evidence to suggest that the support programme achieved impact on the young people in terms of their ongoing engagement in learning (having been identified at risk of becoming NEET previously). The young people and the programme lead largely attributed this to:

- the specialised structure of the curriculum that focused on core subjects and allowed time for extensive work experience
- the support students received during the work experience
- key members of staff who provided mentoring and teaching to the group and organised suitable, relevant work experience.

Furthermore, the programme lead reported that the programme was more cost effective than previous interventions.

What is the programme of support?

The school developed a programme of support which included a weekly schedule of academic learning, offsite vocational qualifications and work experience.

Programme aim:

To keep the students engaged in education so that their opportunities are maximised and they are able to continue in education post-16, enter college, employment with training or undertake an apprenticeship.

The programme is delivered in Years 10 and 11 and 20 students started the Year 10 programme in September 2013. The diagram below shows the structure of provision for the 2013/14 academic year¹¹.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>

Monday and Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students worked in school on GCSE English and mathematics, BTEC science and work skills.
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students worked off-site on other vocational qualifications such as catering and media
Thursday and Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students undertook work experience placements, off-site.

There was a dedicated team delivering the programme, consisting of a full time Head of Foundation Learning, a full time teacher and teaching assistant, subject specialists who worked in school and a work-based learning team of four staff who organised the off-site vocational qualifications and the work placements.

Support programme 2015 update:

Originally the programme structure was two days in school and three days work placement¹². In the 2014/2015 academic year this structure was adapted in several ways.

- Work experience was reduced to one day and four days in school.
- One of the school days was further adapted to be a “continental” school day with an earlier start and finish, during which students focused on retail business. These changes were made in order to fulfil the requirement for young people to meet the progress 8 requirements.
- The programme was then changed further in the summer term so that students were in school five days a week and then completed a full week of work experience.

A key aspect of this programme was building on the evidence base year-on-year in order to change and adapt to differing circumstances and to evolve to provide improved support. The school plans to continue with the programme and has further ideas to improve and tailor the provision. Some of these ideas, based on what worked in the first two years, include: taking a more student-led approach; having a team of four core resident staff who deliver all teaching modules; students remaining in school five days a week with one “continental” day; students having more flexibility to pursue additional subjects for which they show aptitude; and students completing two optional GCSEs within the first academic year, allowing them the opportunity to pursue a second round of two options in Year 11.

¹¹ The Year 11 provision was similar except that two days were spent in school and three days on work placement.

¹² See Appendix B for more details of the support programme

What is the perceived impact at the end of the programme?

The programme lead reported that in the final year of the support programme the students had a more positive attitude to learning, that their time keeping had improved, and that their attendance had improved. Attendance data showed that attendance rose from 80.6 per cent in 2013, to 86 per cent in autumn 2014 and again to 89 per cent in spring 2015. In addition to these improvements he also reported that the students have developed skills in talking to people who are not their peers, and that they have gained patience and maturity. Speaking about the key aspects of the work experience programme that contribute to these impacts he commented: *'I think it is the opening of horizons for these young people and [that] they can go and see other people and their working conditions'*.

The school reported that they had a very good response from the young people to the way the programme was set out originally and teaching staff gained 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted observations for their teaching that demonstrated how engaged the students were.

When the programme changed and the students were in school more they reported enjoying the increased social contact with peers but their behaviour declined. In addition the change made it harder to maintain a large pool of engaged employers because the students were with them less often and the school had fewer opportunities to build on the relationships. Many students progressed to take up a business-related course which followed directly on from the business retail course and was directly linked to their work placement. In the November after completing their GCSEs the vast majority of students were engaged in their intended destination. Given that these young people were identified at the end of Year 9 as at risk of becoming NEET, this suggests a high impact of the programme. The programme lead emphasised: *'if it wasn't for the support programme they may not have been here until the end of year 11'*. The structure of the programme was key for some students. It allowed them to complete course work in Year 10, and even complete full courses by the end of year 10, so that students' results did not all rest on exams at the end of Year 11.

The students reported that the work experience was valuable in allowing them to discover what they might want to pursue as a career. One student said: *'it has helped me grow as a person and helped me to mature in a work-based environment'* whilst another reported: *'It has helped me to work with other people and speak to customers with confidence'*. They also appreciated the extra opportunities and support that they were offered: for example one student commented that the programme: *'helped me realise school is key and education is a thing that will help you move forward'*.

The majority of the pupils agreed with the following statements that the programme:


- 'helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses'
- 'encouraged me to find out more about what I could do after Year 11'
- 'helped me to understand the world of work better'
- 'helped me to develop skills' (such as *'team work'* and *'people skills'*).

The programme lead reported that the KS4 attainment was viewed as very good for this particular cohort: *'The best results we've had since the programme has been running'*. In November 2015 thirteen of the eighteen pupils on this support programme were still engaged in learning.

Cost effectiveness:

Before this programme the school was spending over £250,000 per annum on alternative provisions and there were no clear outcomes. This particular support programme costs less than £150,000 per annum and the school believes that the evidence suggests that it is more effective than previous interventions.

Case study two: Social enterprise qualification (SEQ)

	School & contact	Forest High School Karen Rodgers Karen.Rodgers@foresthg.org.uk
	Notes	Forest E-ACT academy was recently renamed as the Forest High School and is a co-educational sponsored academy and no longer part of the E-ACT academy chain.
	LA	Gloucester
	LA NEET rate	4.5 per cent of young people (end of 2014 ¹³)
	Activity unknown	13 per cent of young people in the LA

Summary

The support programme in the form of the Social Enterprise Qualification (SEQ) was believed to have achieved impact as eight of the ten young people, identified at risk of becoming NEET were engaged in learning in the December after completion of their GCSEs. They were reported to have developed social, communication and transferable skills and could see the relevance of their school work to the outside world. Key to the success of this programme was:

- the group element which built team-working skills, and fostered new friendships and social support
- the availability of the programme when the young people needed it most
- the covert mentoring
- the exposure to using school subjects in real life events
- the building of relationships between the programme lead and the students
- the time provided by the programme lead for the young people
- a good community awareness which was needed to complete a relevant local project for the qualification.

Additionally the programme lead believed the SEQ was a cost effective way to engage these young people at risk of disengagement in comparison to previous interventions.

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>

What is the programme of support?

Programme aim:

To encourage students to participate and get involved in their community. To be more thoughtful about issues and the world generally.

Students in Year 10 worked towards achieving a Social Enterprise Qualification (SEQ)¹⁴. The SEQ was delivered over the course of one or two years.

Eighteen Year 10 students worked in groups to identify an issue and then set up a social enterprise to generate money to help solve or improve the identified issue.

Students worked towards either SEQ Bronze or Silver awards. The Bronze award (QCF Level 1 award) requires 30 hours of guided learning and the Silver (QCF Level 2), 60 hours of guided learning and 20 hours of independent learning.

The SEQ was run by a mentor, who is the school's Resource Centre Manager. Other members of staff were sometimes involved and supported a particular skill, for example if the students wanted to make a particular product.

The school's partner organisation, Real Ideas Organisation (RIO) provided initial training and ongoing support to the mentor, including a help desk and online resources. RIO also organised events for those participating in the SEQ. There was an initial one-off fee for each mentor which was £150 plus VAT. For each student participating, the costs were £20 for the bronze award and £25 for silver.

Support programme 2015 update:

Historically the school provided the SEQ as an open qualification for young people in any year group but restricted it to Years 10 and 11 in order to take part in this research. Over the last year they have stopped offering the gold award to young people as it was viewed as too time-consuming and have concentrated on the silver award.

The programme lead reported that there had been a good response from the young people to the programme. The young people were apprehensive at first about the amount of work but were eager and keen. The programme lead felt that the students enjoyed the practical work more than the written work and that they have improved their social skills and widened their friendships circles by working in groups. She reported that the group work and subsequent team building were some of the best parts of the programme and appeared to contribute to increased self belief: *"I think the [group work and team working] opened their eyes to seeing that if they put work in they get something positive out of it....and seeing that*

Example of a social enterprise

Students made items to sell using recycled materials, and researched the issue of littering and learning about social enterprise more generally. They produced a portfolio detailing their work. Students met up at least once a week in lunchtimes and break times. In the last academic year (2014-15), there was dedicated time in the school timetable for this activity.

¹⁴ Usually, there are no restrictions on which year groups are involved in the programme. For the purposes of this study, the school selected a Year 10 group.

they are capable of achieving something as well because quite a lot of them didn't have a lot of self belief".

The young people themselves reported that they: *"enjoyed working together as a team"*. The partner, the Real Ideas (the organisation who run and moderate Social enterprise), mentor who provided support to the school, reported that the programme is flexible, adaptable and accessible. For example, students submitted work in a variety of ways including videos, blogs, and audio files and so the format of delivery did not always rely on academic or written work. There was also flexibility in terms of submission dates so that young people could submit when the team was ready: *"So it lends itself to being very adaptable from a delivery perspective"*. The programme lead noted that another key positive aspect was that sessions were held in lunchtime so were not viewed as a lesson.

What is the perceived impact at the end of the programme?

The programme lead reported that students' attendance has improved (from 92.4 per cent in autumn 2013 to 94 per cent in the summer of 2014) and that a few have achieved 100 per cent attendance.

One crucial impact, reported by the programme lead, has been the students' ability to see the relevance of school to the outside world and this has improved their engagement in school work: *"Some of the comments they make about being able to see how maths is used in real life has changed their attitudes to what they are doing."* Indeed one young person observed: *'It [the SEQ] helped me to see why we need English and Maths in the future'*

The programme lead also observed that in Year 11 they worked harder as they learned that effort can lead to greater achievement. Additionally students were reported to have acquired transferable skills that they can use in real life: *"It's not just natural maturation – it's more than that. They develop self-belief. One girl said: 'Oh my goodness Miss, look what I can do!'"*. One young person reported that the programme: *'has helped my confidence and speaking and listening skills'* and another reported that he: *'enjoyed working with other people and completing tasks.'*

A key aspect of the success of the programme was believed to be the availability of the SEQ programme to young people if and when they struggled in class. The programme lead explained that if the young person felt they were having a 'bad day' then they could come to her and do some SEQ work. This prevented the young person leaving the premises entirely: *"Some would walk out of school if it were not for SEQ"*

The programme lead believed that this programme is more effective than others they have tried because: *"what's clever about this programme is that you are teaching and mentoring at the same time – it's sort of mentoring by stealth – the young people don't realise it's mentoring. Mentoring on its own can seem like a chore [to the young people]"*.

The majority of the pupils agreed with the following statements that the programme:

- 'helped me feel more positive about learning'
- 'helped me to see the relevance of Maths to my future'
- 'helped me to see the relevance of English to my future'
- 'helped me feel more confident about what I can do after Year 11'


- 'encouraged me to find out more about what I could do after Year 11'
- 'helped me to understand the world of work better'.

The programme lead reported that the young people performed better than expected in their KS4 exams. Eight out of the ten young people from this programme were still engaged in learning in December after completing their GCSEs. The programme lead felt that they were engaged '*against the odds*' and believed the programme has positively impacted on their levels of engagement.

Cost effectiveness:

The cost to the school was minimal because the support was reliant on the programme lead's time. The programme lead officially reported that she used less than 5 per cent of her time for the programme but she said that she provided a lot of extra support on a voluntary basis during lunchtime and after school. Initially it costs approximately £200 to train the SEQ mentor and £25 per student to sit the silver SEQ award. Previously the school had used other qualifications such as ASDAN but this qualification was believed to be more expensive than the SEQ award.

Case study three: City Year Mentoring

	School	Ark Boulton Academy (formerly Golden Hillock)
	Notes	Golden Hillock school changed to be a sponsored academy called Ark Boulton Academy in September 2015
	LA	Birmingham
	LA NEET rate	7.2 per cent of young people (end of 2014 ¹⁵)
	Activity unknown	17.3 per cent of young people in the LA
<p>Summary</p> <p>This support programme was seen to be effective at engaging young people at risk of disengaging and was believed to provide wider benefit to all students. Key aspects of this support programme included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-to-one mentoring • flexibility that allows the young person to come to the mentor when they need the support • targeted interventions on particular aspects of behaviour • a focus on life skills • a focus on student-led learning. 		

What is the programme of support?

City Year is a youth and education charity which offers graduate volunteer mentors to state schools in disadvantaged areas.

Programme aim:
To raise the attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly in English and mathematics

Outline of the programme.

- City Year volunteers work full-time in the school and are assigned for one year.

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>

- Each volunteer mentors up to five students and supports each mentee several times a week within lessons. They also meet their students outside of class time to discuss the learners' personal targets and support needs.
- Their role includes helping to explain classroom English for the learners and supporting the learners to meet school expectations on conduct and uniform.
- The volunteers keep records of the mentoring sessions and actions, and discuss these with staff.

City Year has arranged coffee mornings at the school for mentees' parents, giving parents the opportunity to discuss their children's progress, learn more about the support on offer, and get advice on helping their children to learn. They have also introduced other initiatives which benefit the wider school community including a breakfast club, and an after school club for girls in Years 9-11.

City Year volunteers have a two-week externally delivered training programme over the summer before the start of the volunteers' first term in the school. Volunteers are managed by a team leader (a member of City Year staff) who is based in the school. Volunteers spend four weekdays in school and one day at City Year where they receive training.

The cost to the school of partnering with City Year for a year depends on the number of volunteers assigned to the school, which is negotiable.

Support programme 2015 update

In academic year 2014 to 2015 the City Year Mentors (CYMs) received more curriculum-based training in English and mathematics so that they could provide academic support to young people in addition to emotional support and guidance. There has been a mixed response to the nature of individual mentoring in this school: for example one young person really liked the one-to one aspect but another did not like being singled out. The programme lead reported that another one of the four young people receiving mentoring in this cohort, was not happy with the programme in Year 10 but responded much better to it in Year 11 after she started to engage with the mentor more.

In Year 11 the CYMs developed ways to step back and allow the young people to come to them when ready. The programme lead reported that one of the key aspects of this mentoring programme is that the mentors are not teachers. This enables CYMs to play a different role for the young person as the informality was perceived to make the mentors approachable: *'It's just one-to one talking, making them feel like there is somebody there but who they can also respect and has some sort of authority – it's that unique balance'*. The young people reported that they enjoyed the extra help they received in class from the mentors. However they did also mention that they would like to have had the opportunity to take part in trips outside of school and to have more careers guidance within the school. The programme lead observed that the programme could be improved by informing the teachers on the exact and unique role of the CYMs in the classroom. This would prevent the mentors being mistaken for extra Teaching Assistants there to assist the whole class rather than being targeted mentors attached to a particular student.

City Year plan to change the programme in the next academic year so that there is a permanent CYM in each school as a point of reference. They think this will help to develop a

better relationship with the school and will provide a better indication of the impact they are achieving over several years.

What is the perceived impact at the end of the programme?

The programme lead reported that the young people had developed increased confidence and social skills. Part of the programme included a strand on social and emotional learning. The programme lead reported that this worked very well and especially helped young people with emotional difficulties to learn to control their emotions and to be able to show more respect for others. For example the programme lead noted that for one student: *'all his teachers have noticed he has become really respectful'*.

The programme lead also reported improvements in punctuality, and general behaviour. Data showed that the number of times the pupils were late for class dropped from an average of three times per term in autumn 2013 to 1.25 times per term in summer 2014. She explained that when the young people misbehaved they would ask to spend time with the mentor to: *'talk it through and calm down'*. This prevented their behaviour deteriorating. She reported that teachers observed a change in the students' behaviour since they had support from CYMs.

There was also perceived to be a school-wide benefit where the CYMs helped with school duties, and with supporting general behaviour. Staff feedback was positive and indicated that teachers requested more CYMs – ideally one in each class.

The students reported that they liked having: *'someone to talk to'* and appreciated the CYMs and how they: *'try their best to help students'*.

Three students completed the survey. Of these two felt that the programme had: 'helped me feel more positive about learning' whilst the third neither agreed/nor disagreed.

Two of the three agreed that the programme:


- 'helped me to participate more in lessons'
- 'helped me to see the relevance of Maths to my future'
- 'helped me to see the relevance of English to my future'
- 'helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses'
- 'helped me to feel more confident about what I can achieve at school'.

However the third student strongly disagreed with the above statements.

Cost effectiveness

The school did not provide any information on the cost effectiveness of this support programme.

Case study four: ‘Do Something Different’ (DSD)

	School & contact	Kings Lynn Academy: Amanda Holmes ran the DSD programme at Kings Lynn Academy. The School contact is Elanor Westbury Elanor.Westbury@kingslynnacademy.co.uk
	Notes	Kings Lynn Academy is a sponsored academy.
	LA	Norfolk
	LA NEET rate	4.5 per cent of young people (end of 2014 ¹⁶)
	Activity unknown	6.6 per cent of young people in the LA

Summary

The impact of the Do Something Different (DSD) support programme was evident as all the young people undertaking the programme were engaged in learning in the autumn after the completion of their GCSEs. Key to the success of this programme was:

- the group element where students discussed and reflected upon their individual “dos” for that week and also used the time to discuss their plans for the future, their required grades, and to provide each other with emotional support
- the new behaviours the young people were asked to try so that their behavioural repertoire developed and so too did their coping skills
- the online nature of the intervention so that the power was with the young person
- the mentoring support from the programme lead who guided the sessions using key ingredients of humour, making sure she communicated with students’ at their own level, and allowing the session to be student-led.

The programme lead believed the DSD programme was cost effective as the evidence suggested the programme was effective in reengaging young people and the costing mechanism was transparent so there were no hidden costs.

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>

What is the programme of support?

Programme aim:
To boost confidence and self esteem, and to ultimately encourage more positive behaviour and attitudes.

Kings Lynn Academy is one of eleven infant, primary and secondary schools in West Norfolk that are part of the Learning Catalyst initiative. This has been running since 2006 to engage parents and families in achieving goals related to (among others) health, literacy and numeracy, training and employment. The approach involves a range of whole-school and group based activities which aim to increase confidence and self-esteem and raise aspirations.

Kings Lynn Academy has implemented the 'Do Something Different' (DSD) online programme, which was initially developed by psychologists at the University of Hertfordshire.

There are a number of variants of the programme; the students do the 'Teen' version which is aligned with the Academy's aim of improving health and wellbeing (including self esteem, mood and anxiety), and increasing attainment.

The programme includes:

- An initial assessment of the young person's behavioural habits. This informs the selection of a range of 'Do' tasks suited to the young person.
- Three 'Do' tasks were sent by email or text to the participant about three times a week for six weeks.
- Students developed strategies to help them succeed in the future.

Eight Year 10 students took part in the course over six weeks during the summer term 2014 and repeated the programme during the following autumn term.

The course was coordinated by a member of the school support staff who was trained as a DSD coach and worked on other Learning Catalyst initiatives; a teaching assistant was also involved in delivery. These staff supported students while on the course and ran catch-up sessions every three to four weeks after the six-week programme. They provided opportunities for reflection on progress and reminded students of the principles they learned during the course.

Support programme 2015 update

The 'Do Something Different' (DSD) online programme, aligned with the Academy's aim of improving health and wellbeing (including self esteem, mood and anxiety), and increasing attainment, continues to be run as planned in 2015. The school found that the flexibility of

What are 'Do' tasks?

'Do' tasks are suggested simple actions sent to the students for them to try for one day (for example, sitting in a different chair in class or trying not to complain about anything for a day).

'Do' tasks help students explore their behaviour, encourage them to try things outside their 'comfort zone' and offer them tools to deal with situations in a more positive way.

the format meant that no changes were needed. Looking ahead they plan to continue to run it next year and the only change that might be made is including more talk and discussion in the group sessions, allowing these sessions to be more student led, and to take into account student feedback.

Students reported that they enjoyed the programme because they really enjoyed completing their “dos” as these were totally different from their usual routine. The programme lead added that these new behaviours could be used as transferable skills in situations where students might be anxious or frustrated thus increasing their behavioural repertoire and coping skills. Both staff and students reported that the group element was key. The programme lead stated that without it: *“I don’t think it would work, because they do come in, they do talk, they are open....they were helping each other by the end”*. The partner, one of the DSD founders who worked closely with the school to run DSD, supported this view: *“the group sessions are critical”* and added that additionally the online nature of the sessions was very important as it enforced the notion that the young person were in control. Moreover the students reported that the group element developed their social and communication skills as they spoke to people they would not normally socialize with and they felt that this enhanced their confidence. They also believed that the group discussions helped them to see the importance of getting good grades.

What is the perceived impact at the end of the programme?

The programme lead reported that the students’ attitudes, attendance and behaviour all changed for the better. Average attendance increased from 89 per cent in autumn 2014 to 90 per cent in spring 2015. She also observed an increase in their confidence to speak in class: *‘There was one young lady – she wouldn’t say anything. She’d put her head down. She wouldn’t speak. By the end of the programme she was giving her bit; she was joining the conversation’*. She reported that some of the young people attended extra revision sessions. The students developed improved self esteem and aspirations; the programme lead reported: *“By the end of the programme they all knew what they wanted to do. They knew they had to get 5Cs or above”*. The partner, DSD, collected survey data before and after participation for all individuals enrolled on their programme and reported that the results (across all individuals that took part in DSD – not just this cohort) showed that the programme contributed to reductions in stress, increases in happiness, confidence and engagement and a reduction in the probability of exclusion for young people.

The young people were very positive about the programme. One student reported: *‘Being involved in Do Something Different helped me to feel more positive and to be able to feel comfortable talking to more people. I enjoyed having the opportunity to try something which was different which also allowed me to learn about my strengths and weaknesses’*. Another student felt: *‘Being involved in Do Something Different has given me the confidence to speak about my opinions’* and a third student stated: *‘In do something different I have enjoyed doing activities I wouldn’t normally do. By doing new activities I have learned so much about myself and others’*.

The majority of the pupils agreed with the following statements that the programme:

- ‘helped me feel more positive about learning’
- ‘helped me to participate more in lessons’

- 'helped me to see the relevance of maths to my future'
- 'helped me to see the relevance of English to my future'
- 'helped me to understand my strengths and weaknesses'
- 'helped me to feel more confident about what I can achieve at school'.
- 'helped me feel more confident about what I can do after Year 11'
- 'encouraged me to find out more about what I could do after Year 11'
- 'helped me to understand the world of work better'
- 'helped me to develop skills' (such as '*confidence*' and '*speaking skills*').

The programme lead reported that all of the students met or exceeded their expected GCSE results, and all seven started college in the autumn.

Cost effectiveness

For this particular school the DSD programme was free because the cost of the programme was covered by King's Lynn Borough Council and the programme lead was already a trained learning catalyst with DSD. If another school wanted to purchase the programme then the cost would be £75 per student and the cost to train a programme lead would be £1500 for a training session for up to 15 delegates which worked out as £100 per delegate. So as an example a cohort the same size as the one in Kings Lynn consisting of 7 pupils would cost £525 for the programme and an extra £100 if the programme lead needed training. The programme lead believed the course was very cost effective as once you have bought it you do not need to buy any other materials and there are no extra or hidden costs.

Case study five: Raising the Participation Age project

	School & contact	Rushden Academy: Joanna Holmes j.holmes@rushden.northants.sch.uk
	Notes	Rushden is a sponsored academy
	LA	Northamptonshire
	LA NEET rate	5 per cent of young people (end of 2014 ¹⁷)
	Activity unknown	5.3 per cent of young people in the LA

Summary

This support programme was identified as impacting positively on the participants as five out of six were engaged in learning in the December after completion of their GCSEs. Key to the success of this programme was:

- motivating and nurturing young people through mentoring and pastoral care from a 'consistent worker so young people know who to come to if they need some extra help'
- small targeted groups where participants received additional support from each other
- young people acquiring diverse experiences outside school that enabled them to see the relevance of school work to their education and/or training post-16
- partnership work with external organisations.

Once collaborative partnerships with local external bodies were established the cost of this programme was perceived to be minimal.

What is the programme of support?

The school is part of a consortium with five other schools in East Northamptonshire, all of which are participating in this project.

Programme aim:

To support students' continued engagement in learning to raise attainment and help students reach their full potential, and to prevent students becoming NEET post-16.

The programme involves:

- assertive (academic) mentoring
- targeted careers guidance and support with CV writing from an external provider

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>

- a variety of trips, including a skills show/workshop day, further education (FE) taster days, and away-day team activities (for some activities, students join students from the other schools participating in the project)
- tailored work experience opportunities.

Mentors were selected from the core staff team and the first cohort received training in assertive mentoring. Each mentor met their one student mentee formally once a term, but had ongoing informal contact with them. Mentors liaised with subject staff to help students meet agreed personal targets in lessons and monitored their students' progress.

The programme was overseen by the assistant headteacher and the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education (SMSC) Director. The overall project manager was the coordinator for the East Northants consortium, and the school had a programme lead with a background in youth work management.

Support programme 2015 update

The focus of this programme changed over the academic year 2014/15. In contrast to other schools in the consortium providing this support, Rushden Academy provided less formal mentoring and more targeted developmental skills work in Year 11. This involved more external activities and engagement from a wider variety of sources. The project lead's rationale for this focus was that the quality of assertive mentoring was inconsistent and variable and needed extra funding. However, it was clear that having established the programme in the first year, in year two the programme lead provided informal, but clearly valuable, mentoring support.

In future, it was reported to be likely that the support programme will be scaled back due to financial constraints. Although benefiting from established partnerships, such as with local FE colleges, the school felt that they will find it challenging to resource support from external agencies such as Connexions. The partner school observed that, although initially challenging to secure agreement from colleges on dates and trips, there was now concurrence over which events work and organisational strategies.

Overall, Rushden will continue the programme and plan to focus on the proven most successful elements such as work experience and the careers fair. One of the support agencies, that offered activities to develop skills and self-awareness, was keen for their input to expand to include Year 9. However they recognised that this was dependent on funding. In contrast to Rushden, another school in the consortium viewed it as a 'self-supporting programme'. They particularly valued the mentoring strand and wanted to build better connection between teachers and mentors so that more effective links can be made with literacy and numeracy.

Although the majority of young people reported liking school less than two years ago, they recognised that exam pressure could be a cause. Otherwise their attitude to school was similar to previous years and they were positive about the support programme.

Perceived impact of the support programme

There was awareness that this programme was more about wider engagement in learning and planning for the future in contrast to solely academic achievement. Although attainment at the end of KS4 for this cohort of young people who received additional support through

the raising participation project, was not as good as predicted (reflecting the overall school performance), five of the six young people (identified at risk of becoming NEET in Year 9) were still positively engaged in learning in November after completing their GCSEs.

The young people were very positive about the support programme and recognised that the activities that they took part in outside the school, such as catering and decorating team work, enabled them to see the relevance of good grades and increased their awareness of choices after school. Five of the six students agreed with the following statements that being involved in the support programme:

- 'helped me feel more confident about what I can do after Year 11'
- 'encouraged me to find out more about what I could do after Year 11'
- 'helped me to understand the world of work better'
- 'helped me to develop skills' (such as 'team skills' and 'thinking more').

They enjoyed the trips and indicated that the support they had received through this raising the participation project had enabled them to engage more in their next steps after Year 11. For example one student explained: '*it has helped me to understand that there is no going back*' and another valued: '*seeing what it is like in an apprenticeship*'.

The programme lead, external agency partner and the partner school believed that the young people had developed practical skills, a realisation about the significance of exams, and a more positive attitude to attendance and learning. Attendance data showed average attendance was 92 per cent in autumn 2013, 91.7 per cent across the 2014 academic year, and 93.7 per cent in spring 2015. They also reported that the students had developed more confidence and an awareness of life after school. One partner commented: '*...as their self-confidence goes up their hoods come down.....and giving them alternatives so they believe there is something out there for them I think is really important because they are the sort of young people that would get lost under the carpet*'. Interviewees believed the young people particularly enjoyed and benefited from:

- coming together as a group (programme lead)
- the individual focus on their ambitions and aspirations (programme lead)
- the skills days (programme lead)
- work experience (programme lead)
- the group mentoring theme/bonding as a group (programme lead and external partner)
- the business environment at the external agency. Taking the young people out of the school environment contributes to behaviour becoming more business-like. Also, they use skills, such as maths, in a business context. (external partner)
- one school at a time visiting the external agency (external agency)
- being treated like an adult at external agency (partner school)
- the job fairs and help with applications and CV writing (partner school).

Furthermore the programme lead believed that the trips to FE colleges, skills fairs and the interaction with the Connexions careers adviser worked well and benefitted the young people. She observed: '*they are seeing something for real, their life is about a school setting.....to have that taste of what it is like once you leave school and concentrate on one topic that you are interested in is good*'.

Cost effectiveness

No additional staff were employed on this support programme. £2,000 was allocated to each cohort of young people receiving this support and this was spent on travel to outside activities such as work experience and careers fairs. The programme lead provided substantial additional time for valuable informal mentoring but noted that they would employ outside individual mentors if funding permitted.

4.1 Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data

A survey was completed at three time points: baseline (upon selection at the beginning of Year 10), at the end of Year 10, and towards the end of Year 11. At the first two time points all students in Years 10 and 11 in 2013/2014 academic year on all of our initial 10 support programmes completed the survey. The final survey was completed by students on the five support programmes visited in 2015, described above, who were in Year 11 in 2015 and tracked across the two years from baseline to the November following the end of Year 11. The survey explored: attitudes to school, opinions about themselves, feelings about the future, and, at the two follow up time points, the students attitudes to the support programme.

Characteristics and views of the young people

We compared all the students' answers at the baseline point in 2013 with data from corresponding questions on a national data set¹⁸. This showed the characteristics of our young people selected for these extra sources of support and the similarities and differences between this cohort and the national average.

On many questions the young people selected for these programmes answered in a very similar manner to the national average. They had similar attitudes to school and teachers, expected behaviour at school and towards the importance of their school work. Just over half of them liked being at school, the majority of them thought teachers listened to students and explained the importance of school rules, and that teachers told them when they were doing well. The majority understood the importance of homework, and agreed it was wrong to skip school.

Their responses were also similar to the average on questions about how they felt about themselves and their lives; the majority said they liked the way they are, got on well with their family, and enjoyed life. The responses about the guidance they were given about the future were also very similar to the national average. Around half of them were happy with the help they were given by the schools to help plan for the future.

However, in comparison to the national average they were not happy in general with their lives and were not positive about the future. Only 70 per cent of them were happy most of the time in comparison to the average of 92 per cent. Similarly only 60 per cent felt positive compared to the national average of 85 per cent and fewer of them (65 per cent) felt positive about the future than the national average of 78 per cent.

Changes over time

To look at any changes over time in the students' attitudes we created three summary measures from the individual questions on the questionnaire (see Appendix A for more detail). These three measures represent the pupils: Attitude to School, Emotional Wellbeing, and Confidence in the Future. We conducted an analysis that compared students' responses in the 2015 survey to those same students' responses in the 2013 survey. Across all three measures students' responses were descriptively more positive in 2015 than

¹⁸ The national data for secondary pupils is taken from the NFER School Surveys conducted between autumn 2011 and summer 2013, it is weighted to be nationally representative.

they were in 2013. So the students showed improvements in their attitudes to school, emotional wellbeing and confidence in the future over time, however it is important to note that we cannot conclude that this is due to these support programmes, it could be a range of other factors such as changes in the school or natural maturation. It would be necessary to have a larger study based on a repeated measures design with a control group and an analysis which took account of the clustered nature of the data.

5 Conclusions and ways forward

5.1 Conclusions

There is considerable evidence from this small-scale longitudinal study that the support programmes investigated in this project help to reengage young people at risk of disengagement. There is descriptive and comparative evidence that the young people were more engaged in terms of their attitudes, confidence and behaviours at the end of KS4 than at the end of KS3. Additionally their attainment at the end of KS4 was reported to be better than expected.

The factors that were common to all the support programmes and contributed to their success included: **mentoring** (albeit in diverse ways); a **consistent, dedicated project lead** with time to engage with the young people on a long term individual basis; **group support** from peers; partaking in **activities relevant to the world of work** so that participants could see the importance of the subjects they were studying at KS4; and a **flexible approach**, in terms of the availability of the project lead and the control the young people had over their work.

5.2 Ways forward

This longitudinal case-study project has provided rich data and indicative evidence of strategies that appear to contribute to reengaging young people at risk of disengaging at KS4. We now need to further develop these strategies and test them with a more robust evaluation methodology in order to establish whether they are 'good' practice in terms of reengaging young people in learning.

We suggest that a way forward would be to work with school partners to design and develop a support programme combining effective elements (see section 3) from across the multiple case studies. Such a co-produced support programme could then be introduced into schools at KS4 and subsequently independently evaluated. This journey would produce robust evidence of what works in terms of reengaging young people back into learning and sustaining that engagement.

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Appendix A: Technical notes on quantitative analysis

Characteristics

Fourteen of the questions in the survey were the same as questions asked of secondary pupils in the NFER School Surveys. The national data for secondary pupils is taken from surveys conducted between autumn 2011 and summer 2013, the data is weighted to be nationally representative. The context of the two surveys is different so although the results are not directly comparable the responses could give an indication of the characteristics of the baseline sample.

Summary Measures

In order to summarise the 35 items (Q1 to Q5) in the survey we calculated three measures which represented attitude to school, emotional wellbeing and confidence in the future. An initial factor analysis of the 126 responses from the 2013 survey followed by a reliability analysis of the resultant factors gave three possible groupings. Given that we have relatively few cases for the number of items involved, the groupings implied by the factor analysis may not be as robust as could be achieved with a larger sample. We therefore repeated the reliability analysis for intuitive groupings of items based on the structure of the questionnaire. The results were very similar and after a few items were removed or switched between groups three summary measures were obtained:

Attitude to School (Chronbach's Alpha=0.845, 12 items)

Emotional Wellbeing (Chronbach's Alpha=0.896, 7 items)

Confidence in the future (Chronbach's Alpha=0.880, 10 items)

We repeated the reliability analysis for the 2014 and the 2015 data, and found the three measures still to be reliable even for the 2015 data which only had 30 cases.

Change over time analysis

Caution should be applied in using responses over the three years to illustrate changes in attitudes over time because different pupils responded in each year: there are only 29 pupils in both the 2013 and 2015 datasets. The average difference in all three measures among these 29 pupils was positive (the pupils improved on measures of attitude to school, emotional wellbeing and confidence in the future between the two surveys). However, these differences should be treated with caution as the sample is small and differences could be due various other factors besides the programme such as other changes in the school or even just the maturation of the pupils. It would be necessary to have a larger study based on a repeated measures design with a control group and an analysis which took account of the clustered nature of the data.

Appendix B: About the research

The overall **aim of this** study is to identify, raise awareness of, and facilitate replication of support programmes where there is evidence of promising practice in reengaging young people who do not face multiple and complex barriers to learning but who are not reaching their full potential. Further, the project aimed to identify any support strategies (or key elements of strategies) that could be further developed and /or further evaluated by more robust means. The research has taken place between September 2013 and autumn/winter 2015.

The initial stages of the research comprised identifying and recruiting schools delivering targeted support programmes in KS4 where there was some evidence of perceived impact in terms of reengaging young people in learning.

The research team identified schools through local authority recommendations, professional networks and partner organisations. We carried out a screening process with the recommended schools to ensure that our target group of students were involved in the support programmes.

Figure 1 shows the different stages of this project. The research team carried out baseline visits in September and October 2013. The visits included interviews with teaching staff involved in the project, senior leaders, careers staff and delivery partners. At each school we conducted up to two group interviews with participating students. The students also completed a short survey, which explored their views about school/college, themselves and their future plans. This data formed the basis of the first case study report (Kettlewell *et al.*, 2014).

The interim report (Stevens *et al.*, 2014) built on the baseline data. It comprised the following data collection activities:

- Telephone interviews with programme leads (March/April 2014)
- Second attitudes survey of students (May-July 2014)
- Collection of tracking data on the students for each term in the 2013/14 academic year. This included data on attendance, effort and achievement. (May-July 2014)

This final report has drawn together all the data and has focussed on assessing the impact of the support programmes on young people and, where possible, the cost effectiveness of the programmes. It comprised:

- Case study visits: staff interviews, student group interviews, final attitude survey of young people (March- April 2015)
- Follow up telephone interview with project leads to collect programme costs information and student destinations data (November – December 2015).

Figure B1: Research methodology

Stage 1 (recruitment) - spring/summer 2013

- Screening and selection of case-study schools
- Recruitment of partner schools

Stage 2 (baseline) - autumn 2013

- Case-study visits: staff interviews, student group interviews
- Student attitudes survey
- Ongoing recruitment of partner schools

Case study report 1

Stage 3 (first output; first qualitative follow up) - spring 2014

- Staff telephone interviews
- Ongoing recruitment of partner schools

Stage 4 (interim data analysis) - summer 2014

- Repeat student attitudes survey
- Collect student tracking data: summer term 2013 (students in Year 9) to spring term 2014
- Analysis of student survey and tracking data
- Reporting August/September 2014

Case study report 2, Top Tips report

Stage 5 (second qualitative follow up) - spring/summer

- Case study visits: staff interviews, student group interviews
- Repeat student attitudes survey

Stage 6 (final data analysis) - autumn/winter 2015

- Collection of programme costs information
- Analysis of student destinations data

Final reporting

Stage 7 (proposed next steps in research)

- Identify promising practice suitable for robust quantitative evaluation of impact (i.e. where there is evidence that the programme supports sustained engagement)

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