



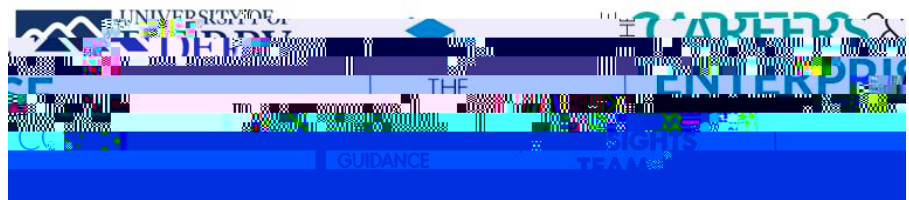
Effective Transitions Fund evaluation

Findings report

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The Behavioural Insights Team

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young people and is in line with the 93.9% of all young people.⁵ Looking forward to the potential future effect of this transition rate, the most recent national data shows that 82.6% of young people who complete 16-

which closely defined what each project was designed to achieve in terms of improved pupil outcomes.

The data provided indicators as to why young people sustained their destinations:

Around 90% were happy with their choice of post-16 destination.

Over 90% were happy with their main subjects/courses.

Over 90% were happy with their college or training provider.

Importantly, there was no statistical difference between different groups of young people in their level of happiness with their destination.

The evaluation analysed data from the surveys with young people, destinations data and interview data. This showed the importance of targeted and sustained interventions with

Interpersonal conflicts and challenging group dynamics were also encountered in delivery. T

were sufficiently interesting and engaging for a diverse group of young people with different interests and ambitions.

Pupils in the projects often faced

Additional activities to support mental health and anxiety ensure that pupils are supported in a holistic way.

Persistence and integrity

Relationships between careers coaches and pupils are central to the successes of the projects and develop over time requiring consistency in who delivers the support to pupils.

Coaches demonstrated values, skills and experience that offer a client-centred approach.

Supporting the transition

Going the extra mile to ensure pupils are enabled to successfully transition into post-16 destinations by providing additional support on exam results day or overcoming barriers in the early phase of the post-16 destination.

1 Background

1.1

been so since 2022 (Office for National Statistics, 2024), meaning that NEET prevention has become a more prevalent issue.

1.1.2 The participating cohort

The cohort of young people taking part in the projects was mixed and typically reflected the ethnic makeup of the local areas. At the start of the Fund, 74.9% of participants were white. As one project was targeted by gender (male) and ethnicity, and another project targeted males, compared to one project targeting females only, this resulted in more males participating in the Fund than females 59.6% and 39.5%.

Many young people faced additional barriers, such as English as an additional language (7.6

2

Project snapshot

The ETF project in East Sussex sat within the Local Authority, which meant that the project could draw on additional data analysis and compare the progression rates of the ETF cohort with a comparable cohort that had not taken part in the project. The NEET rate for the ETF group was 9% compared to 24% of the comparable cohort.*

2.2.2 Sustained destination data

Sustained engagement in EET destinations was recorded six months into the equivalent of Year 12. This showed that 91.7% of the pupils with their status recorded, were in an EET destination and 8.3% were recorded as either NEET or destination unknown, with records for 889 young people. Over 9 in 10 participants (92.9%) were recorded as still being in the same EET destination in March as they were at the midpoint in November/December.

The most recent figures available show that 87.8% of disadvantaged pupils (compared to 93.9% of all young people) sustained their education, apprenticeship or employment destinations (Official Statistics, 2024b), meaning that the ETF cohort compares

2.3 Differences by underlying characteristics

The analysis also looked at whether there were any differences in outcomes by the different cohort characteristics – gender, SEND or EHCP, English as an additional language and attendance rates.

Gender gaps in GCSEs are a long-term trend, with females generally outperforming males (DfE, 2023). When looking at the differences by gender in the ETF cohort, males were overrepresented at entry level and entry-level 3 attainment and underrepresented at

of conducting projects like these with schools and young people, some projects found that

Table 3.2 Activities, planned and delivered (up to and including summer break 2023)

	2021- 2022 Planned	2021- 2022 Delivered	2021- 2022 %	2022- 2023 Planned	2022- 2023 Delivered	2022- 2023 %	Total delivered
Tailored one-to-one coaching/mentoring/careers adviser support session	1926	1815	94.2	5559	4069	73.2	5884
Identification of goals and development needs (action plan)	1144	646	56.5	3269	2192	67.1	2838
Post-16 encounters (eg college visits)	437	265	60.4	898			

Not only did these sessions provide an opportunity for young people to delve into topics of their interest, but sessions could be highly personalised and flexible. The flexibility of one-to-one sessions can be considered a key means to personalise the experience, achieve outcomes, build impactful relationships and was highly effective across all projects. The ability to be flexible in delivery enabled the coaches/mentors/advisers to adapt their approaches and delivery to suit the needs of each young person they engaged with.

kids to have. And I'd want my kids to be really, really pushed. And given something

Headteacher

For some projects, such as Hertfordshire, during examination periods, the mentors often discussing careers. For other projects such as in Leicester and Leicestershire and the North East that worked with SEND cohorts, it was the ability to adapt the frequency of one-to-one sessions and their duration, to acknowledge the impact that this can have on the young person.

Project snapshot

Leicester and Leicestershire originally planned to carry out termly one-to-one careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG) sessions with the young people in the project. Once the project took off and the CEIAG sessions started to take place it soon became apparent that the young people often struggled to focus and deal with one longer session. To tackle this, the Careers Advisers felt that it was more appropriate to adapt these sessions and as such they were typically delivered at least twice per pupil per term. This increased time with Careers Advisers was a key facilitator to pupils devising and following a plan for their post-16 destinations, and also enabled the Careers Advisers to better adapt and modify the sessions to

Careers Adviser

Building relationships and having consistency was an important factor in being able to deliver the programme of support. Being able to build trust and have a confidante for young people to talk to about their worries or concerns in terms of their post-16 decisions was key. This was recognised by a young person on the fund programme who explained:

Pupil

Employer encounters/visits that worked well were interactive and engaging for the young people, for example, one project had an employer run speed networking sessions with the aim of increasing the confidence of the young people. The delivery staff from across the projects also saw increased awareness of post-16 options by the young people. It was also impactful when young people encountered employers who were similar to them, came from the same area, had similar issues and challenges but became successful despite the barriers they had experienced.

Cornerstones employers. And it felt very important to me to link it to the

Employer

Project snapshot

supporting their mental health concerns during this period.

3.2.7 Parental engagement

Parental engagement has been mixed across the 10 projects, although only planned into the design of two of the projects. What worked well was to embed parental engagement from the very outset which led to some positive relationship building and parents feeding back to the delivery team positive messages about their children. For some parents, it was a novel experience to have a positive conversation with project workers about their young person. This also helped to reinforce the benefits of the projects as parents were encouraging their child to be involved and to maximise the opportunity the project offered.

regularly through the term. The young people are talking at home about their targets

Project worker

Where parental engagement had been low in projects intending to achieve this, the projects had resorted to calling the parent/carer of each young person to reach out directly and in some cases, this had positive results. Strategies that worked focussed on modes of flexible communication and adopting a strengths-based approach. This meant parents/carers had regular contact and the discussions focussed on what their young person had done well. The London project for example was able to build positive relationships with many parents through contacting them at times that were more suitable to them such as in the evenings.

3.2.8 'Keep in touch' meetings

project worker support.

This was more likely to be reported by young people with higher attendance rates (over 80% attendance in Year 9 compared with an attendance rate of 79% and under), suggesting a relationship between being able to attend school more frequently and being able to continue with their career goals.

4.6 Linking survey measures and outcomes

Analysis revealed that some survey measures were predictors of the outcome measures. A model that combined learner satisfaction with their destination and a tendency to score positively on job focussed survey questions was a statistically significant predictor of initial EET status (September 2023):-2(ig.)3(-8ca)-3(n)-3(t)6(p)-3(red)-4(i)]TJETQq0.000008871 0 595.32 8

5 Barriers to progress

Despite the positive destinations data and positive self

disadvantage, or in the individual, such as undiagnosed SEND or worsening mental health and anxiety.

Additionally, young people with identified SEND or an EHCP, often experienced illnesses and hospital visits which took priority and reduced attendance on the project. The North East project found that it was more difficult to keep young people in specialist schools engaged because some pupils were frequently off school with a variety of different health and wellbeing needs.

In some cases, schools had safeguarding concerns for young people, which meant they were unable to be released for activities away from school premises.

5.1.4 Transportation

engagement, and the integrity of the project staff in delivering what they promised to young people. These combined with the longevity of the projects and the skills and expertise of the project delivery staff contributed to developing relationships with young people that have changed their lives.

Holistic approaches

Holistic approaches were adopted to support the young people within their own contexts. The project workers were able to respond to emotional difficulties that young people brought to sessions and were accepting of them. They provided the support the young person needed at that time, for example for pupils who were not attending school they helped them focus on the future and plan for what they could do next *it was important*. This future focus was highly important and helped the young people to plan their next step, apply for college and to achieve a successful transition. For pupils with SEND, a key issue was being able to explain their needs. This, for some, was the key for a successful transition. If they could not explain what they needed, they would be less likely to achieve in their new post-16 environment.

Integrity was central to establishing trusting relationships with the young people. Project workers endeavoured, and in the main succeeded, in doing what they said they would do, and young people trusted them to deliver. This resulted in young people feeling they had someone on their side, someone who cared about their future. Interviewees highlighted the importance for young people of having careers coaches who keep their word, follow through and do what they said they would.

Careers Coach

The young person survey analysis shows that there was a statistically significant improvement in the scores for the questions about coach support:

Feeling listened to and supported when considering their future.

Feeling that they had a trusted adult that they could talk to about their future plans (e.g. coach).

The careers worker survey also found increases in these questions over time.¹⁶ In addition, there were many anecdotes of pupils contacting project workers on results day, admitting they needed more help as they had not got their first choice or calling to tell them they had missed their bus to college and were worried they would be in trouble if they arrived late. These all demonstrated an important relationship had been established.

6 Key lessons

Key lessons can be drawn from the success of the projects and the high level of sustained post-16 destinations. Many of these are inter-related and the importance of the relationships between the young people and project staff cannot be underestimated.

6.1 Project Preparation

While the project incubation period was welcomed by many projects, others felt it distracted them from getting started. However, shaping a theory of change helped to deliver successful, well thought through projects and changed how they now plan new projects. Lessons here focus on the importance of having identified schools, preferably ones where relationships exist. Projects and funders should not underestimate the amount of time required to ensure that the required data protection agreements and memoranda of understanding are put in place. It was essential to ensure that schools understood the data they were expected to provide and the relevant timelines.

6.2 Building support networks in schools

Support from senior leaders was a key requirement for projects to function well. In addition, -
person to work with the project who could make sure pupils were where they needed to be, had dedicated space and supported data provision was essential. Working with pastoral staff, SENCOs, and as part of interagency teams contributed to a more holistic approach. Therefore, ensuring that all staff who had pupils on the project were aware of it and understood the commitment enhanced the experience for pupils and reduced duplication of resource for careers workers.

6.3 Responding to young people's needs

Flexibility was a key requirement: both from CEC through the commissioning process and the projects being able to respond to the needs of the pupils and the environment. A flexible mindset from the start contributed to organic developments and ensured that review and reflection were central to project success.

The specific needs of the pupils have become evident as the projects have evolved. Young people with SEND have complex needs which needed further consideration, resulting in changes in length of time of coaching sessions and work-related activities. The bitesize approach has worked well and ensured pupils are not overwhelmed. Other needs around mental health, anxiety about transition and post COVID-19 socialisation, all necessitated additional activities to build confidence and resilience. In addition, the

careers coaches introduced new sessions, and brought in guest speakers to hold interest for their cohorts, increasing relevance and delivering increased awareness of future career paths which boosted motivation.

opposed to their perceived needs have been addressed as they have been identified. This has been exemplified in the realism that careers coaches brought to the conversations with young people, who in the large majority have sustained EET destinations, yet they are studying at a lower level than they anticipated and in some cases at different provider types. Importantly, they are happy with these destinations.

6.4 Persistence and integrity (having the right people)

Relationships between careers coaches and young people have been central to the success of the Effective Transitions Fund. The longitudinal nature of the project allowed careers workers who were in post for the duration to build trusting relationships over time. The role of a trusted adult was exemplified as someone who cared about the young

were a positive role model, provided holistic support based on the young person and persistently attempted to meet the young where they were. Careers workers were not seen as school staff, which raised their profile with young people and

developed a deeper understanding of local industries and an enhanced knowledge of careers generally. There were unintended impacts for employers who developed relationships with the local community, a talent pipeline, and a better understanding of the needs of local young people. This was particularly evident with employers working with SEND schools and young people. The ETF projects presented as many benefits for employers as for the young people, which will support sustainable employer relationships for the Careers Hubs.

6.7 Working with parents

and positive reinforcement by parents can be both powerful and undermining. For many projects, working with parents was a challenge, with an underestimation of the complexity of building positive relationships. Despite the progress made, there is still learning to be achieved about the most effective way to engage with parents on projects such as this.

Where projects were more successful in engaging parents, it was due to building relationships with parents from the start. Being able to contact them directly (rather than schools communicating on their behalf) helped, as did identifying appropriate modes of communication. Telephone and WhatsApp were most effective, emails were not, and contacting them in the evenings helped. Positive relationships helped the project through positive reinforcement by parents, and also helped when collecting final destination data.

trust with pupils over time. Statistical testing of the survey results and outcomes data show little if any variation by pupil characteristics, showing that this tailoring has been impactful.

The evaluation of the Fund aimed to add to the evidence base about how young people can be more effectively supported. Following on from research from the Behavioural Insight Team, which recommended a methodological framework for evaluating such career support interventions, the evaluation was based on programme theory and utilised theory of change in the approach. Overall, the evidence shows that the causal pathways in the theory of change are an effective guide to the operation of the fund and that there is confidence in the predictive power of the theory. The strongest mechanisms from the young person survey data are those that relate to coach support and the young people having a job focus. Some new mechanisms have also emerged – the integrity of the coach (keeping their word), improvements in behaviour, and engaged school staff.

For funders, project leads and delivery teams, the lessons drawn out from this research will enable young people to be supported effectively. CEC is currently working with JPMorganChase on a second iteration of the Effective Transitions Fund and many of these findings have already been incorporated into the planning for the next wave of delivery.

7 References

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Inclusive Terminology

The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences as well as of disability. IES seeks to be a learning organisation; as such we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts. We

descriptor wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, we are aligned with Race

except white British. RDU does not use the terms BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) or BME (black and minority ethnic) as these terms emphasise certain ethnic groups and exclude others. It also recommends not capitalising ethnic groups, (such as 'black' or 'white') unless that group's name includes a geographic place. More broadly, we understand that while individuals may have impairments it is society that disables them, hence we refer to disabled people. Not all people identify with male or female and we reflect their self-descriptions in our work and use the term non-binary should abbreviation be necessary. We value neurodiversity. Where possible we descriptors rather than impose categories upon them.

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