

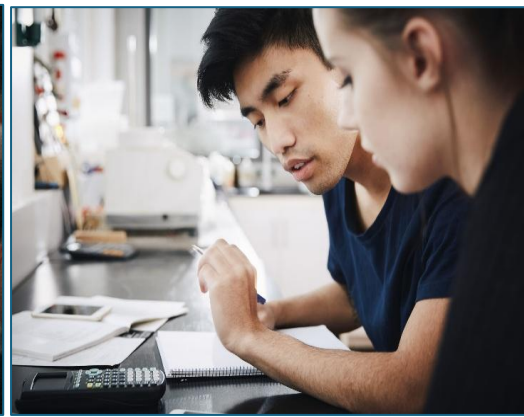
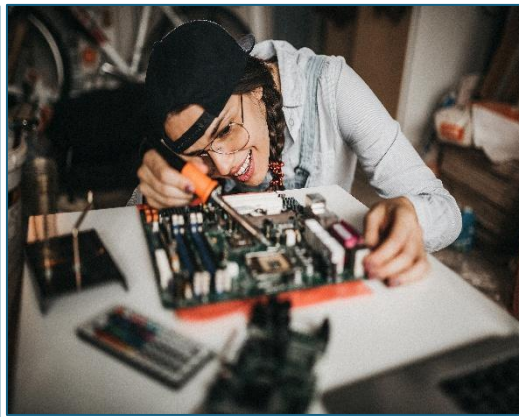
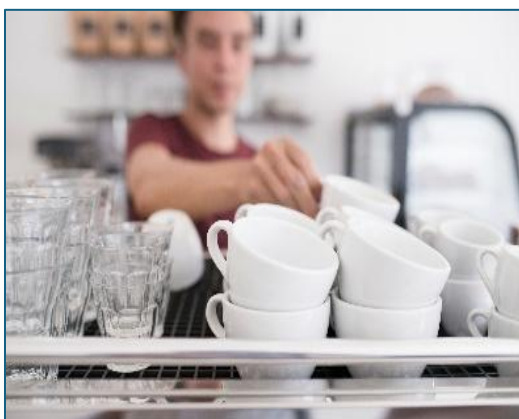
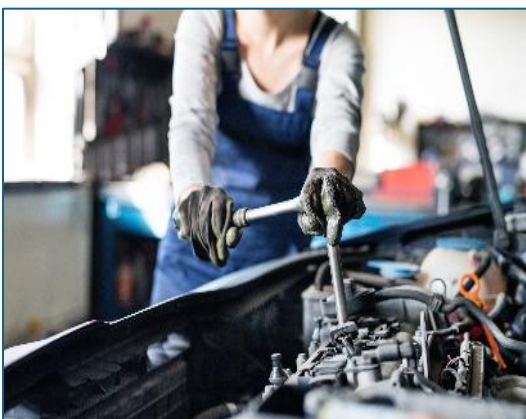
University of Bath

Evaluation Report:

Pre-Supported Internship Programme:

Imagine the Possibilities

Somerset Council



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Executive Summary

The 2025-26 Pre-Supported Internship Programme effectively supported progression towards education, employment and training (EET) for a cohort of 50 young people facing complex barriers to engagement and very restricted progression options. The programme's focus on relationships, identity and connection across eight social domains, enabled the young people to develop the confidence, skills and sense of belonging required to take steps toward their future pathways.

Effective oversight and co-ordinated support

The programme structure was pivotal to the programme's impact. The allocation of a Project Manager within the council facilitated effective collaboration and maintained a holistic overview for this cohort of vulnerable young people with complex needs. Three strands of support - advocacy and mentoring, education and skills and bespoke support - helped young people build belonging in a growing number of contexts, building their resilience and networks of connection.

Embedding research frameworks within the programme's support model gave a robust, holistic framework for understanding and responding to the complex barriers faced by the cohort. Shared use of the University of Bath's Connected Belonging model and Pathway to Change by all partners supported a flexible, personalised approach and shared reflection.

Supporting individual identity development and social connection

Support for individual identity was a key factor in the programme's positive impact. Personalised relational work, combined with enjoyable, tailored and genuinely accessible learning experiences, enabled young people to see themselves as capable learners and potential workers, addressing deep-seated effects of prior educational disruption. Building trust, recognising strengths, and nurturing self-confidence helped young people reconnect with their own interests and aspirations—often for the first time in years.

Gradual, supported engagement with peers and community settings were also central to the impact. Supported visits to cafés, farms, libraries, youth groups or volunteer placements helped young people build comfort in new environments, widen their social networks, and practise navigating real world spaces. For many, this included overcoming fear of leaving the house, sensory challenges, or previous negative interactions in community settings. These experiences strengthened peer identity, social inclusion identity and local community identity, all of which are pivotal for readiness for EET.

Building belonging and removing barriers

An emphasis on place attachment and community identity helped young people build familiarity and confidence in a growing range of safe, meaningful settings. As well as providing essential stepping stones toward sustained engagement in learning, earning or training, this builds belonging for future success when their programme ends.

Advocates and Tutors use the Connected Belonging framework to design ‘warm’ transitions, accessible learning / work experiences and personalised pathways, ensuring young people experience success early and often. By identifying needs across all domains—not just learning—programme staff addressed emotional, social, practical and environmental barriers simultaneously. This careful sequencing and pacing of support was vital for those who have experienced trauma, exclusion or multiple placement moves.

Nurturing active participation towards motivating futures

Overall, the programme enables progression by helping young people feel known, valued, connected and capable. The support helped them start to take ownership of their lives as active participants who can imagine—and pursue—realistic, motivating futures.

Introduction: The Pre-Supported Internship Programme

Somerset’s Pre-Supported Internship Programme is a flexible programme for young people aged 16+ who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET. It gives each young person the extra help they need to address or remove the barriers to progression and learning that are currently preventing them from moving forward in their lives.

It specifically caters for young people who are not yet ready for further education or employment. The cohort had extremely narrow progression options, having been declined by all other providers who said they could not meet need, They also needed more time and personalised support to identify and prepare for their next steps.

The programme’s focus is on achieving engagement in their next steps, whether that be education or work. It helps them feel ready by building their trust in the programme staff who then help them build confidence, learn new skills and access new places.

Following personalised contact with the young person and family at the start, the team develop a personalised support plan which builds on the young person’s strengths and connects them back into the community. They identify the support necessary to remove barriers to engagement. This progresses at the young person’s pace to eventually also include bespoke, purposeful practical activities, workplace experiences and support to develop work and life skills shaped by their personalised plan.

Case Study 1: Maya

	Gender	NC Year	SEND	FSM	Previous Placement	Ethnicity	Below 50% Attendance Flag	DTS Start	DTS Current	Distance Travelled	No of Risk Flags	Planned destination
Maya	F	14	SEMH, ASC	Yes	EOTAS	White British	N	1	4	3	10	Training Provider / Pre SIP Year 2

Additional Details

Interviews highlighted challenges impacting engagement in EET for Maya which are not made explicit by the data tables. These are:

- A recent autism diagnosis (late diagnosis)
- Online grooming
- Mum very ill, being cared for at home
- Chaotic home environment
- Time spent living with foster carers in the past
- Turbulence, has moved around
- Learning challenges: struggles to filter out distractions and concentrate

Survey Responses

	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School / Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
Advocate	7	1	2	6	8	5	4	3
Maya	1	3	8	5	6	2	7	4
Tutor	1	8	3	4	5	7	6	2

Individual Identity Support

“It’s what I need to know to figure out what I want to do in my life and figure out what goals to work towards.”

Maya identified support for her individual sense of identity as being most significant to her progression. Support to build her self-confidence meant she was “capable” of doing things she wanted. She viewed individual identity as “so high” in comparison to other social identities

because in other social settings, “everything else falls into place, my role naturally develops, but how I feel about myself doesn’t.”

Maya pointed to group work around life skills as one way her individual identity development had been supported, because it helped her learn to raise her point of view and get involved. In mainstream school she described herself as always quiet in group work, feeling like her opinion was not important. Being able to be herself in a group was a new experience for her, enabled by not being rushed into it, with almost a year of one-on-one engagement until she felt ready.

Being part of planning a group bowling trip with other young people supported in the same organisation was similarly viewed by Maya as bolstering her sense of individual identity. Never having bowled before, she felt unsure if she would be able to bowl but said that “sometime building confidence is being ok with being bad.” Trying new things was linked to personal growth, specifically “things I wouldn’t traditionally challenge myself to do, like working with tools.” She felt it was “nice to be pushed out of my comfort zone, not pushed, but to be given the option, it’s opened my mind to try new things more.”

Finally, her Advocate accompanying her into new/different churches to play the organ, helped her expand on a skill and passion she already had. For Maya the time and opportunity to work on this existing interest was closely linked to developing her individual identity.

Maya’s SS&L Tutor also rated individual identity support as most significant to her progression, noting that her individuality was very apparent from the outset because of the way she dresses, her speech patterns and strong personal interest in writing and singing songs. When it came to learning, she had no interest at all in functional skills and none at all in Maths. The programme’s flexible, personalised approach allowed her Tutor to discover her enjoyment of and talent for Literary Criticism which unlocked her engagement in learning.

In contrast, Maya’s Advocate rated support for Individual Identity as currently being a relatively low priority as “it’s not something she needs; she’s already at that point and recognises she’s a great person.” A year previously, the support had been more squarely focused on building up a relationship, finding out interests and developing a trusting connection. Now, the emphasis had shifted to “helping her develop a pathway.” One example of successful support for Maya’s individual identity was conversations in the car, while driving between appointments, where sitting side by side rather than looking at each other enabled better communication. Another was following her lead, accompanying her on walks in the fresh air and activities that she suggested.

Her Tutor’s descriptions of support for Maya emphasised how responding to her individual identity and set of interests built her trust in him. Focusing learning on literary criticism which she was interested in and good at, strengthened her sense of her skills and abilities but also enabled more in-depth conversation, enabling them to get to know each other and for her to

open up. For instance, the literary conversations prompted her to talk about a friend who was away at University and to bounce ideas from her SS&L sessions off her.

Maya saw developing her individual identity as an ongoing thread running through the support, her Advocate distinguished between this and 'pathway support' which is more squarely focused on moving towards next steps. The deeply personal nature of her pathway and its connection to her individual identity is summed up by Maya when she said, "It's what I need to know to figure out what I want to do in my life and figure out what goals to work towards." She too recognised a significant shift in her sense of personal direction through the Pre-supported internship programme and how her individual identity might connect with a path forwards: "I didn't, probably even a year ago, I had no idea where I was going, but in the last couple of months, I've started to get, develop, more of an idea because of all the support that I've had. As I think if I didn't have as much support then I would be struggling a lot more."

Overall, the comments highlight that while her individual identity was well-established in terms of being in touch with her unique sense of self (a distinctive personal style, way of talking, interests and hobbies), her feelings about herself, her sense of being able to be herself in social settings and of having a viable pathway forwards were crucial areas for support.

Peer Identity Support

"At school...I felt a lot more connected to the teachers than the students."

Maya's Advocate rated this as the most significant area of support for her progression. When she first met Maya, she was at home and seeing nobody. A year later, her Advocate introduced group work to boost her confidence around new people. With Maya starting to volunteer and expressing an interest in the idea of one day supporting younger children in the organisation's youth clubs, the Advocate inferred that she wanted to be a more social person and focussed support in this direction.

This chimes with Maya's identification of support into group work as leading to a breakthrough, enabling her to meet and mix with new people, which Maya related to developing her sense of individual identity in a group. Maya rated support for her sense of connection with peers as third most important. She said:

"for a lot of years, especially since I left mainstream school, haven't really known anyone close to me who's my age. It's always just been that I'm friends with my parents' friends ...I think it's important to me to try and, you know, talk to people my age and get a bit more in touch with that. Because I think sometimes I start sounding like I'm in my 40s. So, yeah, finding my place, I suppose, somewhere I belong, I guess, because I never really felt like that at school. I felt a lot more connected to the teachers than the students."

Having only recently received an autism diagnosis, she will have navigated her secondary education without these needs being recognised. She recognised that being in an Advocate

support organisation with other young people, working one-on-one initially, but being introduced to them later, has been an important part of her progress. She related it to meeting “people who struggled like me,” and explained that at school “when I would try and make friends...it just felt like they knew something that I didn’t, and they just knew their way in life. And I was just like; how did you do that? I feel really stupid.”

Both Maya and her Advocate agreed that the slow pace of this introduction was key to success. Unlike at school, she wasn’t just “thrown into a group.” She built trust in the staff first, then another student and then “worked my way up to doing things in groups and talking to other students.”

Local Community Connection & Place Attachment Support

“volunteering...helps me have something to do, and feel a bit better about myself, like I’m making a difference or something.”

A year ago, Maya was at home and not engaging with anyone outside the home. She rated support for community connection as the second most important factor in supporting her progression. She is currently volunteering in a charity shop, which she describes as “the first thing like a job I’ve done.”

Maya identified that support to ask for a sheet to volunteer at the shop was really important. She explained “I wouldn’t have looked at it before support. I would have assumed I’m not capable,” and “I would have been terrified to walk in and ask.” She saw this role as helping her to meet people where she lives, and identified “helping out where I can, feeling like I’m making a difference,” as reasons why it has made such a difference to her. This echoes her Advocate’s view of support for citizenship identity as being highly important. Initial confidence building to apply for a volunteer position enabled development of a civic identity and sense of purpose.

Her Advocate saw going into the organisation’s centre as providing a mini community which helped to build this kind of connection. After trust was built with the Advocate, they introduced some sessions with a colleague, splitting support to ‘mix it up a bit.’ Working alongside other young people in the same building but not having to interact with them, learning about other activities the organisation hosts, like youth clubs etc, before starting to interact with other young people there enabled early-stage community building before branching out. Maya recognised this too, explaining that “it started one on one, helped me build trust in Emma and Nick, so I could feel confident to go into a group and figure out how to work alongside other people – that’s something I’ve always struggled with.”

The reciprocal, give and take nature of support within the group, seemed to be important in building a lived sense of ‘community’ identity. Maya described that in trying new things, it depended “who has an idea first. The other day I had the idea to look for antlers in the forest. Another day another student had the idea to go bowling. We just work together to help each other out.” Support for these group work skills within the organisation helped Maya develop the skills needed to function in ‘communities,’ alongside others.

Place attachment was rated highly by Maya, her Advocate and Tutor. Her Advocate saw the organisation's centre as providing a "safe space" for Maya. With a lot going on at home, where her Mum is ill and housework is not always done, her Advocate felt Maya often needs a break from the environment. Having other places she feels welcome and able to go to offers a support network of people to turn to and places to be. On a recent occasion Maya had 'popped in,' outside of her usual hours, for a chat. Her Advocate sees the number of places and connections that Maya can now access as a reason for her successful progression. Weekly organ lessons, the charity shop volunteering, her placement at Somerset Skills and Learning and support from two other organisations means she has "a lot of connections around her and people she can turn to." Unlike some young people where "the Advocate is the only connection they have as they don't leave the house." Maya is now able to draw on this different support to move forwards.

Her SS&L Tutor rated place attachment as second most significant in her progression. This related both to barriers the programme could help her overcome and seeds of interest for an onward pathway. In a very practical way, Maya's access to 'places' was constrained by a lack of transport. She relied on her stepfather to go anywhere, and when he injured his back, her access to places to build new attachments and belonging, was severely constrained. The transport provided on the programme was vital support to overcome a structural barrier to progression. Her Tutor also described her love of rural locations.

Conversations during learning sessions revealed a dream to move away from the area, and a love of rural locations, such as Exmoor and Dartmoor. Outings with her Advocate to look for antlers or go for walks in the fresh air. The programme enabled Maya to explore and connect with this aspect of herself to discover environments in which she thrives and which are good for her wellbeing: critical considerations in envisaging a happy, healthy future as she seeks to build a life outside the home, a place in which she was largely confined until quite recently.

School Or Work Identity Support

"I don't have an identity there"

Maya's Advocate and Tutor rated support for School or Work identity as second and third most important respectively. Her Advocate felt this area needed support because of the gaps in her education and because she would need an education to do the kinds of work she had shown an interest in. Her Tutor recognised that she did not see herself as capable and needed support to recognise her abilities and strengths as a learner.

To do this, both the Advocate and Tutor described helping her access and engage in learning and identify how she learns best. They both recognised that she couldn't cope with homework and engaged most successfully with face-to-face support. They recognised her difficulties focusing when there is any form of noise or distraction and how these prevented her processing the information. Having received an ASC diagnosis so late, these needs had not been acknowledged or met during education. Identifying and overcoming these barriers to

engaging in learning have been critical to Maya's progression. The programme's flexibility to personalise the learning provision, progressing at a pace, and with content that best suits Maya made this possible.

Maya rated school or work identity as low as she feels, "I don't have an identity there." She explained that she doesn't go to school and doesn't have a job. She is interested in potentially being a singer or musician and, although she has released songs on YouTube and has many followers, she didn't appear to view this as part of her work identity. Her volunteering role is what she considers to be the closest to "work," and is important in giving her a feeling that she is "making a difference." For Maya, a School or Work identity seemed to be an abstract concept which didn't fit with what she is doing. She explained "I'll connect to other people through doing the things that I love is my idea." This emphasises how the programme has helped her progress towards EET, despite a deep sense of disconnection from the worlds of learning and work arising from her educational history. Her description of how quiet she was in group work at school and of wondering how her peer group at school just knew how to do things she didn't suggest that this disconnection has been present for many years. The programme's focus on first connecting with Maya as an individual, in what she enjoys and engages with, has enabled her to experience the support as being for her 'individual identity' while also helping to address the fact that she does not see herself as capable and has no sense of school or work identity.

Programme Structure

The programme combines three strands of support:

- **Mentoring and Advocacy** takes the form of weekly support from an experienced Advocate from one of five established local organisations. They are the first point of contact and remain supporting the young person throughout the Pre-SIP. This stability means they get to know the young person well and establish a trusting relationship. This stability, familiarity and trust enable them to connect the young person to other elements and experiences as and when they are ready to engage with them, planning next steps and providing advice and guidance at the rate at a pace suitable for each young person..
- **Education and Skills** is provided by Somerset Skills and Learning (SS&L). This can include literacy and numeracy, alongside employability skills and digital skills at a level to suit the young person. SS&L hold the Annual Review for the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and are the main contact throughout the programme. Safeguarding throughout the programme is overseen by the DSL at SS&L who links with all partners as and when required to ensure ongoing safeguarding for this group of vulnerable young people.
- **Bespoke Support** can be added based on the young person’s individual educational needs and goals. This could be practical or academic and link to their career plans, or could be a bespoke intervention to help remove initial barriers for a young person to be able to move forward - for instance Neuro-Linguistic Programming coaching to help with fears and anxiety or joining a small craft group to grown the number of young people the individual is comfortable to be around.

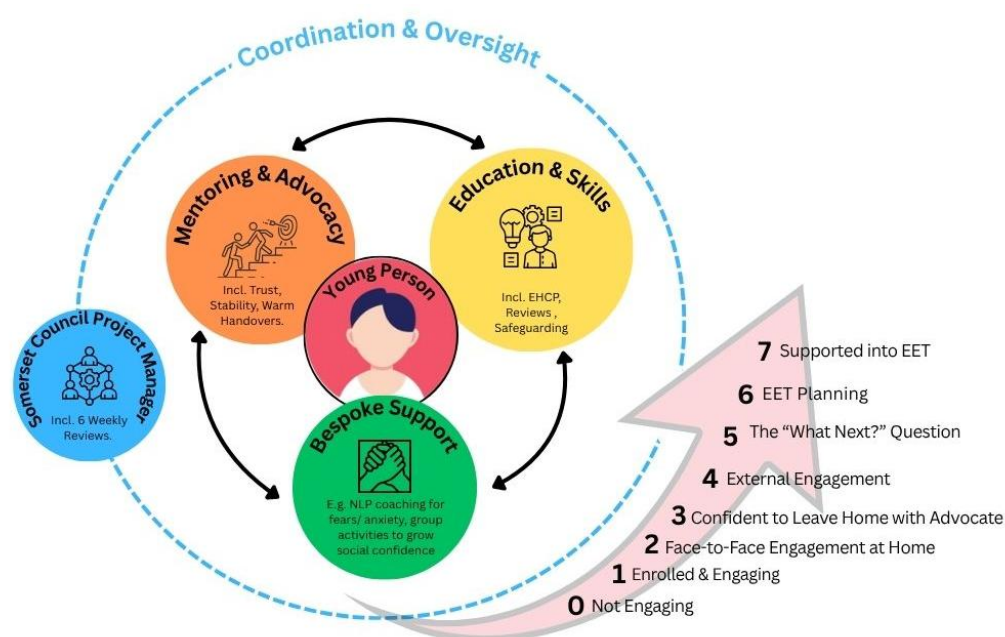


Figure 1: A diagram of the Pre-Supported Internship Programme structure.

The Council Project Manager provides oversight and coordinates the partnership collaboration via progress reviews with all partners, including:

- monthly meetings with each Advocate Project Lead
- monthly meetings with each individual Advocate
- six-weekly management meetings with all Advocate leads and with SS&L Lead to assess joint progress and look at overarching themes
- half-termly meetings with all Advocates and Leads for a group briefing and update, focused on what is required at that stage of the programme. This can include guest speakers.
- internal links with Virtual School

This ensures a holistic overview of complex, evolving situations for vulnerable young people, offering the level of coordination required for effective collaborations to support their progression.

Open channels of communication between all parties ensures issues can be addressed in a timely manner, offering a more robust level of support and tracking than other post-16 provision or EOTAS packages

Distance Travelled Scale (DTS)

The Pre-Supported Internship Programme uses Somerset’s Distance Travelled Scale to (1) determine the entry level and need (2) ascertain where on the journey the young person needs support and therefore what intervention is needed (3) track each young person’s progression towards education, employment and training. Informed by research from the University of Bath, this offers a robust way to capture progression for young people who are NEET, not attending any educational setting or rarely leave home.

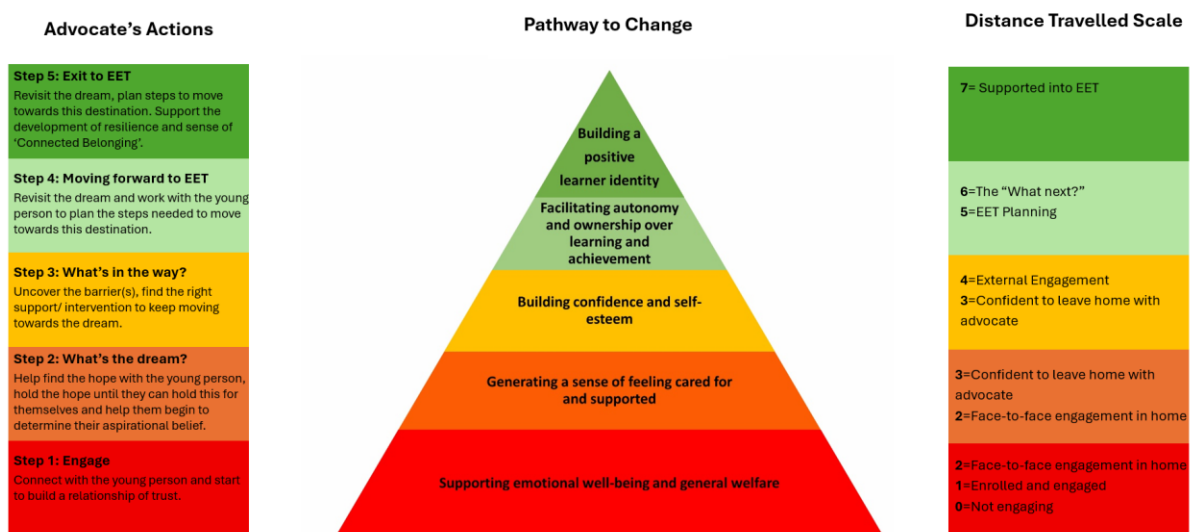


Figure 2: The Distance Travelled Scale used to monitor engagement and progression on the programme

The Programme's Model of Support

The programme is shaped by research evidence about what works in re-engaging young people including:

- The principles of **Connected Belonging** (Brown et al. 2025)
- The importance of a **trusted adult** in tackling NEET (YFF, 2025)
- The **mechanisms of effective interventions** to tackle NEET (Brown et al, 2022)
- The need to base intervention actions on a **holistic view of risk** (Brown et al, 2021)

Advocates from the five organisations supporting young people on the programme received training in Connected Belonging. They used this framework to consider and respond to each young persons' needs.

Embedding Connected Belonging in the Programme's Support Model

The programme was designed to embed principles of Connected Belonging right from the start. As the programme caters to a very wide range of young people who face very diverse challenges, the Connected Belonging model offers a suitably holistic framework.

At the start of the process, the Council Project Manager personally connects with the young person and their family. This helps build understanding and insight into the young person's situation, interests and needs, ensuring that each person is well known, not viewed through spreadsheet data or referral forms. The Project Manager sustains oversight throughout the programme via monthly case meetings and communication with partner organisations. This is key to building a holistic and growing understanding of the young person across the team and offers a foundational connection on which the programme can build.

Advocacy and Mentoring

The choice of Advocate is made based on knowledge of the young person. Connection is built at a pace that is manageable for the individual, whether they are ready to engage with their Advocate directly, through a parent, on the phone, in person, in their home or outside, respecting the strong sense of security many feel to their homes/bedrooms.

The programme recognises that for progress towards EET, connection to a trusted adult alone is essential not sufficient. Barriers to progression may relate to any of the 8 Connected Belonging Domains. The Advocate's personalised support addresses thought patterns, behaviours, habits, experiences and feelings to strengthen the young person's sense of identity or connectedness in whichever domains are most important at that stage. The Advocate carefully plans transitions and warm handovers to a growing range of experiences, relationships and settings to maximise the young person's chance of successful progression.

Education

SS&L's educational provision also follows Connected Belonging principles. Developing their sense of School or Work identity does not happen in isolation. They may support Peer Identity

through building up to working with others, or Place Attachment by holding sessions in a different venue which is more accessible, tolerable or conducive to learning for the individual.

Connecting the young person on the programme to new community settings, new venues, new peer groups, new learning opportunities, through their Tutor and Advocate gradually builds the young person's number of connections and sense of belonging in new places and groups. This recognises that these connections and feelings of belonging are assets or resources that some young people acquire during their compulsory education or day to day lives, while for others, a lack of these constrains their opportunities to move forward in their lives.

Bespoke Support

To build a personalised, accessible progression pathway, the programme's flexible approach means it can respond to the specific barriers facing individuals. Examples of bespoke support include coaching with an NLP professional to overcome anxieties and fears preventing the young person from engaging or enrolment into small activity sessions to grow the number of peers the young person is comfortable being among.

Connected Belonging

Connected Belonging is a wellbeing framework. It highlights the importance of young people's identity development and relationships in the different social domains of their lives in building their sense of belonging. Their sense of identity and connectedness in each of these domains may either support a sense of belonging by providing resources such as trust and validation or be a source of insecurity or challenge that the young person needs help with.

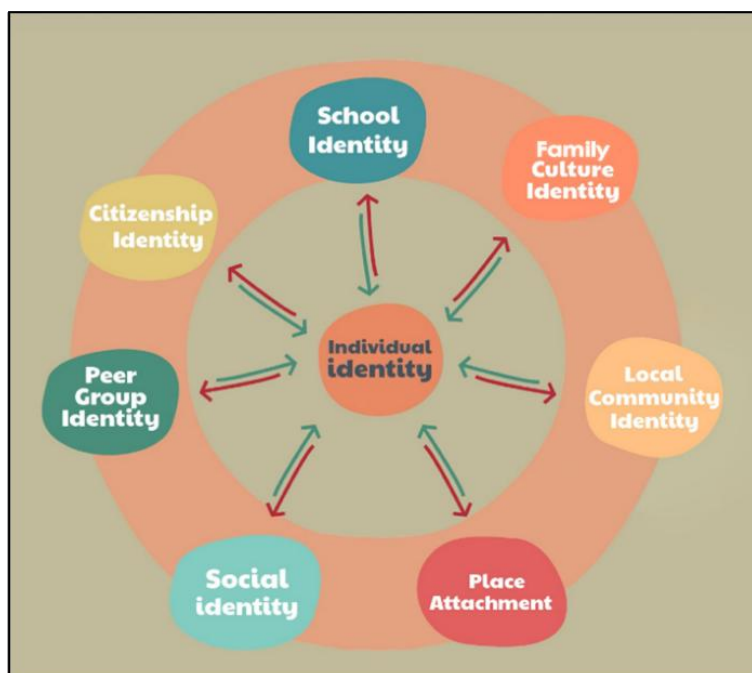


Figure 5: The Connected Belonging Model illustrating how wellbeing and belonging are shaped by connectedness and identity across the different domains of young person's life.

Relating the Connected Belonging Domains to Programme Support

For the evaluation, Young people, Advocates and Tutors used the framework to reflect on the programme's success factors. Via a brief survey, they each ranked the Connected Belonging domains according to how important they felt it had been in supporting progression, with the domain they felt was most important was ranked in position 1 and the domain they felt was least important ranked in position 8. An explanation as to how the eight domains relate to the support provided by the programme was articulated to all partners, as follows:

Individual Identity sits at the heart of the model. It is about the young person's ability to accept themselves for who they are. Support focuses on helping them recognise their unique skills, interests and qualities.

School/Work Identity focuses on developing a positive identity as a learner. Support focuses on building a sense of belonging and connections in learning, training or work settings.

Peer Identity relates to young people's relationships with other young people of a similar age. Support focuses on building friendships, growing social confidence and helping young people deal with any difficulties or challenges with their peers.

Local Community identity focus on helping young people feel a part of the area where they live. Support focuses on building their connections with local organisations, groups and business, as well as building confidence being out and about in the local area.

Social Identity recognises that specific identity and belonging challenges arise as a result of being part of different social groups. For instance, a young person's health and abilities, gender or sexual identity and social experiences may lead to specific barriers that the individual will benefit from support to overcome.

Citizenship Identity focus on helping young people find their place in the wider world. Support focuses on building their sense of being a national and/or global citizen as well as building the skills needed to help and support others or take positive action on issues that are important to the young person.

Family/Cultural Identity recognises the importance of young people's family values and feeling about their sense of self within their family unit. Support focuses on helping the young person build a deeper understanding of their cultural background and the barriers/opportunities this may bring.

Place Attachment is about helping young people find places or spaces here they feel safe, calm and 'at home,' as well as recognising the places where they don't. Support may focus on building confidence to go to new places

To support Programme Staff and Learners to complete to the evaluation survey, a simple diagram explaining how Connected Belonging relates to the programme activities was produced (see Figure 6) and embedded in the survey.

The Connected Belonging Domains

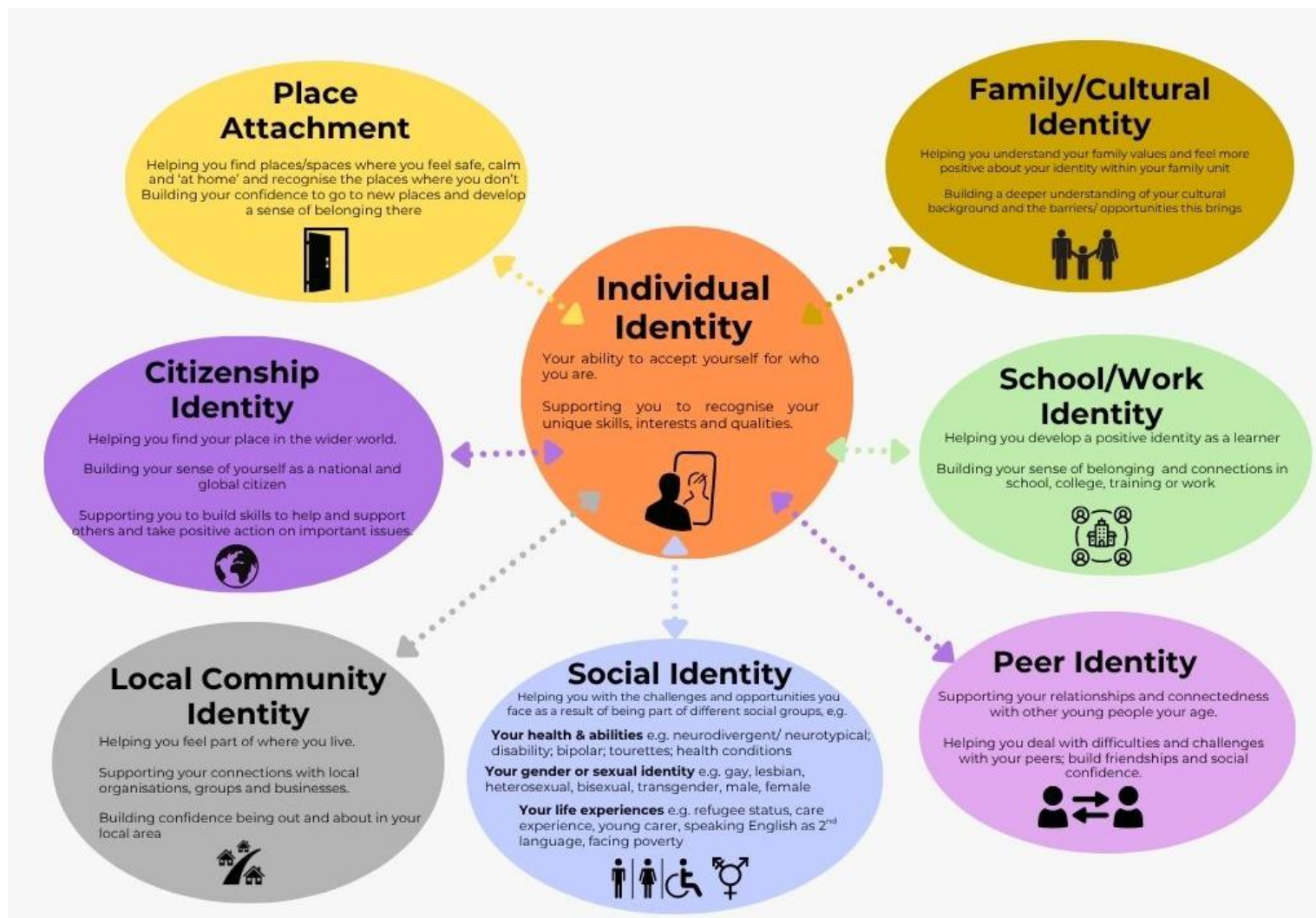


Figure 6: A Diagrammatic Overview of Ways in Which the Pre-Supported Internship Programme May Support Young People's Sense of Connected Belonging Across the 8 Social Domains of Their Lives

Case Study 2: Andrew

	Gender	NC Year	SEND	FSM	Previous Placement	Ethnicity	Below 50% Attendance Flag	DTS Start	DTS Current	Distance Travelled	No of Risk Flags	Planned destination
Andrew	M	12	SEMH, ASC	Yes	ASD Base	White British	N	0	6	6	12	FE College

Additional Details

Interviews highlighted challenges impacting engagement in EET for Andrew which are not made explicit by the data tables. These are:

- Transgender. Recently officially changed name. Identifies as male
- Moving between lots of provisions
- Family challenges
- Isolated, rural location
- Assault and harassment experiences

Survey Responses

	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School / Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
Advocate	1	2	5	4	6	7	8	3
Andrew	3	6	1	4	8	2	5	7
Tutor	3	1	2	4	8	5	6	7

School or Work Identity Support

“I was out of school and had no, like, no possibilities for future education at all, none whatsoever.”

Andrew rated his support for his school or work identity as being the most significant factor in his progression. He described his Advocate’s support to explore options, visit possible settings and “helping me access SS&L” as effectively unlocking access. As well as being able to “just talk through things,” he valued the fact that he had provision opportunities “offered to me and then went through the process of testing them out and then going to them.”

He was very clear that, without support from his Advocate and Tutor, he would not have been able to progress. He explained, “that wouldn’t have been an option for me” because “I was out of school and had no, like, no possibilities for future education at all, none whatsoever.”

His SS&L Tutor rated this area of support as second most important. While Andrew was “very focused on college,” he had low qualifications and did not appear to be ready to put in the work required to get those. Identifying a specific course that he really wanted to do was key in unlocking his motivation. Alongside this, engaging Andrew in enjoyable informal learning experiences which allowed his Tutor to carefully observe his responses, skills and abilities helped build the connection and rapport needed to be able to progress the learning further.

Though the Advocate did not rate support for school or work identity as highly as Andrew and his Tutor, his descriptions of the impact of support chime closely with them. He too emphasised the structural barriers restricting access to opportunities to be able to develop a school or work identity, and a process of working alongside Andrew to unpick and resolve these. He pinpointed a “light bulb moment” for Andrew, when he found an FE creative arts course that he “really wanted to do.” However, “every college was like, we can’t meet needs, we can’t meet needs. That’s why it was really important for me to look at the short-term goals in the EHCP and go, that’s what we need to achieve Andrew, those four things. If we can demonstrate that we can now do those things, they can’t say no.”

For Andrew, the contents of the EHCP and a lack of provision to work on short term goals created a barrier to progression and led to him becoming NEET. Practical support for school or work identity through the Advocate was therefore a critical re-engagement route. One example cited was that “college wasn’t an option leaving secondary school because the EHCP wouldn’t allow for that because it said he couldn’t do small group work.” His Advocate looked “at the EHCP as a whole” and considered ways they could meet the short terms goals to open up the possibility of college, “part of that was, actually, let’s look at part 4 in there. Can we interact with an alternative provision?” They identified a local farm-based option with arts and crafts elements,” through which Andrew could both pursue his interest and build his group work skills so that this could not be used as a reason to reject his application to his desired course.

Two key details were that Andrew has “never even seen his EHCP,” which the Advocate explained is a common scenario, and that he “was moved from different provision to different provision, so it wasn’t steady... I think they ended up in an ASD base.” These link closely to challenges with a school or work identity. Firstly, it is through the processes of updating the EHCP that the individual’s strengths, areas of challenge and need are reflected. His disconnection from this means his understanding of his abilities, challenges and needs may be underdeveloped. Secondly, the number of moves between provisions is likely to have had a negative impact on his ability to develop his school or work identity. Close work with his

Advocate to understand the contents and implications of their EHCP, enabled Andrew's sense of autonomy and ownership over his future pathway by exploring his school identity in a concrete way which relates to his interests and ambitions.

Andrew described what he was doing now and the ways these activities would help him move towards his goals, indicating a sound sense of school or work identity. He explained, "I'm doing SS and L functional skills for maths and English, because my GCSEs are a mess, I'm not going to lie. And Makers Place is like; it's a little farm... and they do arts and crafts and stuff like that. That's helping me because I want to hopefully do some kind of art and design in college."

Andrew hopes to start at college in September and is working towards this with his Advocate. He explained that he is "looking mostly at one in Yeovil," while his final comment, that this would be "putting all my eggs in one basket," suggests that his past experience of not being accepted by settings means he still feels hesitant as to whether a progression pathway for him will be forthcoming.

Local Community Identity Support

"Being stuck in a house with nothing to do for months isn't that nice."

Andrew rated building his local community identity with his Advocate as the second most significant area of support in his progressions. The two examples he gave of ways this was support were weekly supported visits to cafes/town and going into the Somerset Skills and Learning base. "(We) meet once a week to go for coffee or go do something in town."

Andrew identified two reasons why support in this area was essential for him; his previous NEET status and the fact he lives in a rural location, isolated from many opportunities to connect with others. He described there being "not much" to access and described himself as having a "really high fear and paranoia of leaving the house," which outings with his Advocate have helped with. He emphasised that "being stuck in a house with nothing to do for months isn't that nice," implying that the isolation had directly led to this disconnection from the outside world and need for support to re-engage. The things he pinpointed as making it possible for him to go into those community settings were his sense of emotional safety and comfort. He said "I feel like I'm...comfortable and safe expressing myself, not pretending to be something else. That's important anywhere and I felt fine here and in both of my alternative provisions, so I think that's been done pretty well." This highlights the importance of the Advocate's role in building trust with Andrew to the point he felt safe to go into other settings, and in identifying other settings, or communities, in which Andrew would feel equally safe and welcome.

While the Advocate rated Local Community identity among the bottom two in terms of priorities, his interview clarified that this was in part because of the 'local' aspect. Building

involvement within communities and community settings was a key priority, but due to Andrew's relatively remote location, there was no immediately 'local community' to connect to. The Advocate commented:

“obviously community was a bit further down for this one, ... I think what we needed to do was work on, because he's a very outgoing person anyway, that actually I think if we worked on self and then and then obviously the peer stuff, that actually the community would come naturally once having an environment to build it themselves. So ideally we want this young person to, miles away from where they live,...be building a community that's pretty far from the house for someone that doesn't drive, you know, and that young person will be getting public transport.”

Developing a local community identity here was constrained by location, transport and trauma resulting from previous isolation, but was supported through visits to cafes, Alternative provision settings and the Somerset Skills and Learning setting.

Individual Identity Support

“what they needed to do was really get an identity of themselves and actually who they are as a person”

Andrew rated individual identity support as third most important in supporting his progression. He explained that past experiences of not being accepted had led to his need of support in this area. For example, “I get a lot of shit for being myself, dressing the way I do and stuff,” and “I've had some experience with harassment and assault in the past, some of the recent past, which didn't help with that, I think its agoraphobia, where it's like a fear of going outside. I think that helped build that.”

Andrew is transgender and had recently changed his name at the time of interview. He linked his sense of individual identity to his sense of local community identity, acknowledging that “that's probably a community thing as well, to be honest...Being able to get out even with company has been helpful with that, so that kind of ties into both of them to be honest.” Feeling able to be himself, in an increasing number of places, is an important way in which the programme has supported his progression.

The centrality of this aspect of support was emphasised by the Advocate, who rated this as the most important aspect of support for Andrew's progression. He described the provision's motto as being “you can unapologetically be yourself,” echoing Andrew's recognition of the fact he could be himself at the provisions as being central to developing his school or work identity. Examples of how this was supported were through conversation and discussion. Getting to know the young person, exploring their feelings about past experiences and supporting them to

explore different ways of thinking about themselves and their lives were seen to be crucial starting points. The Advocate described the importance of moving beyond unhelpful labels:

“someone who’s neurodiverse, or autistic, or has anger problems, we actually find that sometimes those labels aren’t helpful because actually who you are is you. Andrew has transitioned and being in (previous provision) with other neurodiverse or autistic children....was kind of a victim of being labelled in my opinion, ...this young person was pigeonholed, so actually what they needed to do was really get an identity of themselves and actually who they are as a person.”

Examples of how this was approached was asking “what was it like working for you at school...how did it make you feel...about identifying the way that we feel and the way we react in the world.” They used ‘scenarios’ and ‘simple models of the brain’ to explore where anxiety comes from to deepen their understanding of themselves and address “what is this belief that I hold within myself?” For Andrew this process worked quickly. While some young people “take longer to come out of their shell” in Andrew’s case he was “first session, really talkative, you know, shared a lot, so straight away the second session was right, what’s the dream? What do you want to do? Well, I’d really like to do this. Ok how are we going to get there. ...we got in a real short space from one to three.”

Andrew’s Tutor also rated this area highly, as the third most significant area. Careful observation during sessions at SS&L helped him recognise Andrew’s strong sense of self, particularly how he is “very confident to do his own thing. ” Recognising that his individuality was particularly important for him enabled him to tailor provision to account for this. To begin to introduce group work, his Tutor selected the game Hero Quest, an accessible, scenario-based role-playing board game. This activity highlighted Andrew’s skill in “thinking outside the box.” Rather than fighting goblins as most people would, Andrew befriended it.

The Advocate explained that Andrew “wasn’t ever really given the chance of being able to work in “mainstream appropriate,” environment, constraining his pathway forwards. The programme enabled progression to engagement with EET by providing support for individual identity which was grounded in a personally relevant pathway. This involved practical support to address structural barriers, emotional support around their fears, hopes and dreams and adequate time to identify Andrew’s strength and motivation.

Peer Identity Support

“Andrew's quite an outgoing person anyway, it's just that he needed to be shown the way.”

The Advocate identified peer identity as the second most significant area of support for progression with Andrew. Again, this need was seen to result from his experiences in previous educational settings, of being NEET and of living in a relatively remote location. The Advocate

explained that the ASD base, Andrew's previous provision, was short staffed when he was there and he was "taught one-to-one, the EHCP said couldn't do small group work and stuff." Once individual identity work was underway, advocacy turned to "let's look for a peer group" and, for Andrew to demonstrating that "you can do small group work and actually you're quite isolated, you live further away than most of the people did from your school and you don't really talk to them anymore outside so, let's get you in a peer group where actually you're interacting with other people because at the moment it's just me and you." The programme also enabled him to then start connecting with other young people at the alternative provision.

In Andrew's case, this process didn't take too long "because Andrew's quite an outgoing person anyway, it's just that he needed to be shown the way." Choosing the provision carefully so it is well matched to the individual's interests and peer group were important considerations. The Advocate explained, "I wouldn't say that let's chuck you in a group where everyone's kind of 40, because that wouldn't work. But the age differences of maybe actually having someone that's three, four years older than you, that may have travelled a similar sort of path," is beneficial. What was seen to be most important was being among peers with "similar interests."

His Tutor rated support for Andrew's peer identity as most significant in his progression. Careful observation of Andrew highlighted early on that he was "very aware of how people see them." The effort that he put into his appearance and the way he adorned his clothes indicated for the Tutor that this was an area for support. To support him into the group work with peers, which his Advocate noted was key to unlocking access to college, structured, fun, informal learning activities enabled progression. Selecting the game Hero Quest enabled Andrew to engage in a shared activity while continuing to forge a distinct and unique individual identity for instance.

Place Attachment Support

["if you can't walk in a coffee shop and sit there, how are you going to be able to go into an environment where there's 15 students in your class?"](#)

The Advocate rated place attachment as the third most significant factor in supporting Andrew's progression. While for most young people he works with, this would be rated "pretty much nearer the bottom... place was different for Andrew because actually... being transgender as well, not really feeling that they could fit, knowing the background of some of the trauma for the young person as well, there was just kind of a lack of confidence really of being able to go to certain places, so like coffee shops and stuff like that." To support in this area, they did work around "taking positive risk," which involved "critical thinking with Andrew" Asking why he didn't like certain places, why do you feel like that in there, is it 100% true or not?" this lack of places Andrew was confident to attend "was a barrier to being able to move forwards, because actually if you can't walk in a coffee shop and sit there, how are you going to be able to go into an environment where there's 15 students in your class?"

Support to move out of a comfort zone and visit new places was a key step in unlocking progression for Andrew. His Advocate felt that “it usually comes down to, and especially in young people, procrastination and little bit of ambivalence as well just to, you know, keep doing something despite your better judgement.”

While Andrew rated place attachment support as one of the two least important areas of support, he rated support for Local Community Identity as second most important, and his descriptions of this support closely match his Advocate’s description of place attachment. Going into cafes, going to SS&L and his alternative provision were crucial steps towards reengagement for him.

Cohort Details

Cohort Background

- The **50** young people had **very narrow choice of progression options** .
- **12** were classified as already **NEET**.
- Only **2** young people in the cohort started the programme **being able to engage face-to-face** with an Advocate in the home.
- 29 were in National Curriculum Year 12
- 4 were in National Curriculum Year 13
- 14 were in National Curriculum Year 14
- 3 were in National Curriculum Year 15
- 1 was in National Curriculum Year 16

Further information on the cohort can be seen in Figure 4.

National Curriculum Year	Progress against Distance Travelled Scale							Number of YPs	NCY Breakdown
	Didn't engage	1 step	2 steps	3 steps	4 steps	5 steps	6 steps		
Y12/13 Cohort	3 9%	3 9%	5 16%	5 16%	8 25%	7 22%	2 3%	32	29 x Y12 3 x Y13
Y12/13 Cohort Cumulative	-	91%	82%	66%	50%	25%	3%		
Y14-16 Cohort	-	1 6%	3 17%	6 33%	4 28%	3 17%	-	18	14 x Y14 3 x Y15 1 x Y16
Y14-16 Cohort Cumulative	-	100%	94%	77%	44%	17%	-		
Whole Cohort	3 (6%)	4 8%	8 16%	11 22%	12 24%	10 20%	2 4%	50	
Whole Cohort Cumulative	-	94%	86%	70%	48%	24%	4%		

Figure 3: Progression against Distance Travelled Scale for young people in different curriculum years.

The 50 young people on the programme face multiple, complex and diverse barriers to engagement. They were:

- all considered to be '**hard to place**' having been declined by all other providers or outside of education or work for some time.
- all in the category of being '**furthest from the labour market**' at the start of the programme.
- predominantly White-British, with only 2 young people from different ethnic groups.
- all categorised as 'Very High Risk of NEET' on Somerset Transform platform, each having between 2 and 15 flagged risk markers.

In addition to their **SEND needs**, the cohort also includes:

- a high incidence of **socio-economic disadvantage**: **32** eligible for **Free School Meals (FSM)**
- **7** who are designated **Child Looked After (CLA)**
- **5** who have a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**
- **4 YPs** who are **transgender**

Of the 3 young people who did not engage on the programme, one was a Child Looked After and became pregnant, one moved out of county and the third decline all contact and support.

Educational History

Sixteen of the cohort were flagged for **attendance below 50%**

Fifteen young people were previously in a **mainstream** education setting:

- **5** in further education (FE)
- **10** in mainstream secondary school

Fifteen young people were previously in **specialist education settings**:

- **6** in specialist school for learners with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)
- **6** in special school
- **2** in residential special school
- **1** in a specialist base supporting autistic learners (ASD base)

Twenty had previous experience of **educational marginalisation**:

- **11** were **NEET**
- **7** previously received **Education Other than at School (EOTAS)** or classified as **Electively Home Educated (EHE)**
- **3** were attending a **Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)**

Cohort Information (Part 1 of 2)

Identifier	Gender	NCY	SEN Need	CLA	PEP	FSM	Ethnicity	Previous Provision 24-25	Total Flags on Transform	Current Flags	Flagged attendance < 50%	Flagged Very High NEET Likelihood	NEET 24-25	Number of Factors (including EOTAS EHE NEET)	Engagement with Advocate	Engagement with Tutor	Bespoke Intervention to Date	Starting Position	Current Position	Distance Travelled
SW-5475	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	PRU	2	2		Y		3		No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	0 - Not Engaging	0
SW-6126	F	13	ASC	CLA	Yes	Yes	W	FE College	15	8	Y	Y		3		No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	0 - Not Engaging	0
SW-6234	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	7	2		Y		2		No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	0 - Not Engaging	0
SW-5606	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	Mainstream Secondary	12	4	Y	Y		1	Y	Yes (Home)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	1
SW-6142	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	Special School	8	3	Y	Y		1	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	2 - Face to face Engagement at Home	1
SW-6302	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	Mx OTH	SMEH Special	15	6		Y		3	Y	Yes (Home)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	1
SW-6587	M	14	SEMH	No	No	No	W	NEET	8	3		Y	NEET	2	Y	No	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	1
SW-3672	F	14	SEMH	No	No	No	W	NEET	7	3		Y	NEET	2	Y	Yes (Home)	Y	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	4 - External Engagement	2
SW-6075	M(tg)	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	2		Y	Y		3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-6158	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	8	8	Y	Y		2	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-6264	F	12	SEMH	CLA	Yes	Yes	W	EOTAS	15	9		Y	EOTAS	5	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-6506	F	12	SEMH	CLA	Yes	Yes	W	Special School	15	8	Y	Y		4	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	2
SW-6575	M	14	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	EOTAS	10	2		Y	EOTAS	3	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-6583	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Special School	8	3		Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-6585	F	15	SEMH	CLA	No	Yes	W	NEET	10	2		Y	NEET	4	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	2
SW-2997	M	14	SLCD	No	No	Yes	W	NEET	7	2		Y	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-4622	F	14	SLCD	No	No	Yes	W	FE College	9	2	Y	Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-5600	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	Mainstream Secondary	2	2		Y		1	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-5662	F	14	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	EOTAS	10	2		Y	EOTAS	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-5724	E	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	PRU	15	6	Y	Y		3	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-5847	M	14	SEMH	CLA	No	Yes	W	Special Residential	15	4		Y		3	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	3
SW-6117	M	16	MLD	No	No	Yes	W	NEET	15	5		Y	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	2 - F2F Engagement at Home	5 - The What Next Question	3
SW-6232	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	10	4		Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3

Cohort Information (Part 2 of 2)

Identifier	Gender	NCY	SEN Need	CLA	PEP	FSM	Ethnicity	Previous Provision 24-25	Total Flags on Transform	Current Flags	Flagged attendance < 50%	Flagged Very High NEET Likelihood	NEET 24-25	Number of Factors (including EOTAS EHE NEET)	Engagement with Advocate	Engagement with Tutor	Bespoke Intervention to Date	Starting Position	Current Position	Distance Travelled
SW-6281	F	12	SEMH	Yes	Yes	No	W	Mainstream Secondary	11	3	Y	Y		2	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	3
SW-6582	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	SMEH Special	8	2		Y		2	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	3 - Confident to leave home with advocate	3
SW-6586	M	15	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	NEET	No data	No data		No data	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	4 - External Engagement	3
SW-3158	M	14	ASC	No	No	Yes	W	NEET	9	3		Y	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-4151	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	FE College	15	7		Y		2	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	4 - External Engagement	4
SW-4254	F	12	ASC	No	No	Yes	W	Special School	No data	No data		No data		2	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-4270	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	EOTAS	12	3		Y	EOTAS	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-5336	M	14	SLCD	No	No	No	W	NEET	12	2		Y	NEET	2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-5827	M	15	ASC	No	No	No	W	EOTAS	No data	No data		No data	EOTAS	2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	4 - External Engagement	4
SW-6159	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	11	2	Y	Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-6296	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	SMEH Special	15	7	Y	Y		1	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	4 - External Engagement	4
SW-6308	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	SMEH Special	8	2		Y		1	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-6404	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	Special School	14	5	Y	Y	on attend	1	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	4 - External Engagement	4
SW-6576	F	13	Phy Dis	No	No	Yes	W	NEET	12	2		Y	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-6588	M	14	PMLD	No	No	No	W	FE College	No data	No data		No data		1	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	5 - The What Next Question	4
SW-2011	M	14	ASC	No	No	No	W	NEET	No Data	No data		No data	NEET	2	Y	Yes (Home)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	6-EET Planning	5
SW-6123	F	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	PRU	13	4	Y	Y		2	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	5 - The What Next Question	5
SW-6246	M	12	SEMH	CLA	Yes	No	W	Mainstream Secondary	5	10	Y	Y		3	Y	No	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	6 - EET Planning	5
SW-6303	M	12	SEMH	No	No	No	W	SMEH Special	12	3		Y		1	Y	Yes (Online)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	5 - The What Next Question	5
SW-6307	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	SMEH Special	15	4		Y		2	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	5 - The What Next Question	5
SW-6326	F(tg)	13	MLD	No	No	Yes	W	Special Residential -EOTAS	14	5		Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	0-Not engaging	5 - The What Next Question	5
SW-6513	M (tg)	12	None	No	No	Yes	Mx OTH	EHE	10	3		Y	EHE	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	6 - EET Planning	5
SW-6579	M	14	SLD	No	No	No	W	NEET	7	2	Y	Y	NEET	2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	6 - EET Planning	5
SW-6580	F	14	ASC	No	No	Yes	W	Special School	5	8		Y		2	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	5 - The What Next Question	5
SW-6584	M	13	SLD	No	No	Yes	W	FE-NEET	11	3		Y	NEET	3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	1 - Enrolled and Engaged	6 - EET Planning	5
SW-5789	M	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	ASD Base	12	3		Y		3	Y	Yes (Centre)	Y	0 - Not Engaging	6 - EET Planning	6
SW-5892	F	12	SEMH	No	No	Yes	W	Mainstream Secondary	8	2	Y	Y		2	Y	No	Y	0 - Not Engaging	6 - EET Planning	6

Figure 4: Full Cohort Information for the Pilot PreSupported Internship Programme

Progression Rates

Progression reported here is at the midpoint, during the second term of the programme's year of support. It is measured using the programme's Distance Travelled Scale (DTS): an evidence-informed scale which draws on both research evidence (Brown et al, 2022) about steps to re-engagement and professional experience (see Figure 2). The scale is sufficiently nuanced to capture progression of those furthest from engagement in EET. The seven steps include:

- 1- Not Engaging
- 2- Enrolled and Engaged
- 3- Face-to-face engagement in the home
- 4- Confident to leave home with Advocate
- 5- External engagement
- 6- The 'What Next?' question
- 7- EET planning
- 8- Supported into EET

Key results

At the mid-point of the year of support for these 50 young people

- The programme had a **94% retention rate**
- **30/50** were engaged with **external provisions** brokered by the Pre-SIP team.
- Almost **half of the cohort** had made **4 steps of progress** towards EET.
- Almost a **quarter** had made **5 steps of progress** of the programme's seven steps.
- The early steps (engagement, building trust and confidence) take the longest
- The final two steps typically happen quite rapidly

In the Year 12/13 cohort:

- over **half** had made **4 steps of progress** towards EET.
- a **quarter** had made **5 steps of progress**.
- **3** young people did not engage, thereby making no progress.
- **2** young people had completed the programme's **6 steps**.

In the Year 14-16 cohort:

- there was a **100%** retention rate
- **three quarters** had made **3 steps progress** towards EET.
- **Just under half** had made **4 steps of progress** towards EET.

Fuller details of the specific progression steps of each young person on the programme can be examined in figure

The 94% retention rate at mid-point in this programme represents a very strong progression rate for these learners who face diverse barriers to progression. The level of sustained engagement is very high for a cohort considered to be furthest from the labour market and who had no other options for progression. The Year 12s had all been declined by other providers on the basis that they could not meet need. Most of the Year 13s had been 'lost' in the system and had not engaged for some time. The programme has been as successful in supporting progression for older cohorts as it has been for those in national curriculum year 12.

Very few young people failed to engage. The three young people who did not engage were facing significant welfare and wellbeing challenges or highly disruptive events in their personal lives. For instance, one was a care leaver who was also pregnant, who relocated to a different county and subsequently faced a barring order for assault. Another moved out of area and had their EHCP transferred. A third entered a secure unit, meaning they were no longer directly accessible to the Programme team.

Having used the DTS for some time to monitor and evaluate progression for young people who are NEET or at high risk of NEET, the programme team have developed insights into typical rates of progression. Experience shows that the earlier steps on the DTS take the longest. Securing engagement, getting to know the young person, building trust and confidence take time. By contrast, once these are in place and the young person is engaged externally and has explored the "What Next?" question, the final two steps into EET typically happen quickly. Given that the evaluation happened at the mid-point of the year of support means this progression rate is extremely strong, with 70% of the whole cohort being halfway through the seven steps to progression.

Instances where progress was slower were discussed with the programme team. In all cases the young person faced underlying attachment challenges or involvement with multiple professionals due to care experience; turbulence and moves in and out of the area; or challenging home circumstances influencing their living arrangements or priorities.

Case Study 3: Neil

	Gender	NC Year	SEND	FSM	Previous Placement	Ethnicity	Below 50% Attendance Flag	DTS Start	DTS Current	Distance Travelled	No of Risk Flags	Planned destination
Neil	M	14	SLD, ASC	No	NEET	White British	Y	0	5	5	7	FE College

Additional Details

Interviews highlighted challenges impacting engagement in EET for Neil which are not made explicit by the data tables. These are:

- Juvenile Arthritis – physical health challenges
- Recent ASC diagnosis
- Experiences of bullying

	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School / Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
Advocate	1	6	2	4	8	5	7	3
Neil	1	4	2	3	8	7	6	5
Tutor	1	6	2	3	7	4	5	8

Individual Identity Support

“I mean, I’ve known why I have issues, but I thought it was a problem in myself...but I’m learning..”

Neil, his Advocate and Tutor all saw support for his individual identity as the most important factor in his progression. They all saw need for support to have been exacerbated by an extended time spent NEET and by his physical and learning disabilities.

His Advocate described their support for this in terms of building on his interest in animals, working on his self-confidence and encouraging him to push himself a little in various ways. Neil’s individual identity, specifically his love of animals, was both a hook for engagement and a starting point in unpicking challenges.

His Tutor described making space for conversation and how, when this was given, Neil quickly opened up. She prioritised finding new things that he liked doing, as at that point his interests

were “only doing gaming and his dogs.” Taking Neil to a Lego-building café and the library were two examples of ways she helped him explore new interests and activities.

Having been NEET for some time, the Advocate explained that Neil had “spent a lot of time prior to this really isolated, really not out of the home at all, not even out of the bedroom.” This had had a very negative impact on both his sense of identity: “he’d really kind of lost that sense of who he was because of the isolation... it was quite embedded as he’d had years of that...you know you really haven’t had anything around you really to kind of like help you identify that individual identity because he’s been stripped of a lot of experiences being closed in to the home.”

Neil echoed this: “they give me more confidence going out more, give me more motivation to go out and do different things every day and learning new skills,” and “they’ve given me that like identity of who you are.” Visits to farms, doing enrichment at a welfare sanctuary and building on his home responsibilities of caring for many pets was the focus for developing his individual identity through his passions and strengths.

His Tutor also related his individual identity development to a “lack of friends.” She explained that when Neil started opening up, he “spoke about being a people pleaser and fitting in, doing things to have friends and to feel part of something.” She used conversations to encourage him to “work on you being great, whoever you are,” recognising the need to build his sense of identity in his own right.

Support for his identity as a young person with learning difficulties was also a foundational aspect of support. Neil explained, “so I mean, I’ve known why I have issues, but I thought it was a problem in myself....but I’m learning..” He specifically related this to his literacy abilities and confidence: “Ellie helped me out a lot because I always thought for writing, I had awful spelling and I look really bad at spelling. I didn’t like reading in front of people, I struggled actually like reading out, but she like helped me out with when I was spelling wrong and to be more confident about like reading out in front of her.” Rather than relating this to his school or work identity, for Neil this is part and parcel of his sense of self, self-confidence and self-esteem. Support from his Advocate and Tutor led to Neil feeling that he was “being accepted,” and helped him overcome his low self-esteem in this area.

Finally, support for his individual identity related to his physical disabilities and health condition. The Advocate addressed this through his passion and interest in animals to support his “whole kind of acceptance of himself” to recognise his capabilities, strengths and qualities. This was described as “finding a way that could be a positive and not be a barrier to the things he wants to do...not seeing that just as negatives.” His arthritis had been exacerbated by the isolation and lack of activity, so it then “became a negative association to

who he was individually” but through the support he started “talking about oh, I like the outdoors, I do enjoy being out.”

His Advocate described what this support looked like in practice. For example, “he does have to walk to his Tutoring session, but there’s been that accommodation of like, well, lets meet you at the door and we’ll walk together.” The importance of “pushing him a little, physically,” was a way to help him progress beyond his comfort zone to increase his physical health and build confidence in his physical abilities.

School or Work Identity Support

“I actually love learning like cooking and stuff.”

Neil, his Tutor and Advocate rated School or Work identity as the second most significant area of support for his progress towards engagement in EET. Examples which Neil gave of this support were learning cooking, working on cars and woodwork; “I know a few things about like cooking and all that, but she (Advocate) taught me a lot more.” He also described how talking to his Tutor during practical sessions in the workshop helped him explore a growing interest in mechanics and try out woodworking projects. This was really positive for him; “it was good, I actually love learning like cooking and stuff.” His Advocate also identified that the opportunity to be a practical learner was important in Neil’s progression.

At SS&L, his Tutor focused on making clear that “no question is a stupid question,” and on “establishing good connection.” Being able to personalise and learn at his pace, ensuring he felt safe to revisit literacy learning was key to engagement and progression. They could focus on “KS1 level” skills, sounding out each letter” and building his confidence doing that. “Not being 30 in a room and falling behind,” supported quick engagement, with Neil quickly asking questions and showing an inquisitive side.

His Advocate described how “a lot of conversations would come from him and sort of circle back to his own education, his own experiences of school and the negative things, and how he hadn’t had a chance to do those things.” For instance, he describes “a little art project that I did at school once, a school trip here, and oh, I did some bushcraft once.” He was still “making those links and...clearly there’d been some gaps.” He had reported negative school experiences; the environment often wasn’t right. He described a woodworking project in Year 8 that he never got to finish, so the workshop sessions became an opportunity to turn that into a positive, “doing a woodworking project that he actually saw from start to finish.” Working through those things together his supporting provisions helped him gain confidence in his ability to learn new things. Being within a provision where he could see the arts and craft areas, the tech areas and outdoor learning opportunities, meant that “there was all that on the doorstep for him.”

His Tutor described how the Library had been a positive place for developing his sense of School or Work identity, being able to pick up and look at books, with no pressure or expectation that he would take one out. Mindful of preparing Neil for progression in September, where he would access a new setting, she also introduced learning in a small social group, particularly introducing “someone who he will see in September” to support a good transition by building his sense of safety learning amongst other people rather than purely one on one.

Progression in this area could be seen through an increase in ownership, with Neil starting to make suggestions and ask for what he needs. His Advocate explained “he’s now gone from, you know, picking a suggestion of mine to actually giving his own suggestions.” His Tutor described his growing inquisitiveness and willingness to ask when he didn’t understand something.

Social Inclusion Identity Support

“not really accepted”

Neil and his Tutor rated support for his social inclusion identity third. Neil explained this was because he was born with juvenile arthritis. At school, he was “not really accepted” and his Advocate reported that “he felt sometimes he had to hide it or be made fun of because of it.” Addressing these gaps and lost learning opportunities and creating opportunities for new learning experiences helped Neil open up to new possibilities and find new ways of doing things. This involved carefully balancing pushing him out of his comfort zone with adequately supporting his mobility support needs, something that was enabled through the flexibility of the programme. Having transport to help Neil access different settings without physical harm, pain or exhaustion was key. His Advocate commented that “being able to pick him up and take him to places has meant that he hasn’t got to struggle with the arthritis...like the world’s our oyster kind of thing.’

His Tutor echoed this, explaining how a recent autism diagnosis, on top of the arthritis, meant Neil “doesn’t feel like he fits in” and was dealing with these different “labels.” This meant supporting him in “accepting himself” was seen to go beyond support for individual identity, to dealing with his sense of acceptance of these ‘labels or diagnoses as he negotiated a sense of his identity in work and learning settings and dealt with the impact of previous experiences of bullying and exclusion.

Place Attachment Support

“He very much needed to have the kind of transition visit and a site visit to see is there somewhere that I’m okay with.”

Neil’s Advocate rated place attachment as the third most significant aspect of support for his progression. She explained that “knowing how safe his home environment was to him” and that he’d had “negative experience of going to places where he hasn’t felt safe,” supporting him to

visit new places would require careful preparation if it wasn't to backfire and make him "put those barriers back up."

Neil "wouldn't want to be sort of too out of his comfort zone." This was enabled by "transition visits" and "site visits" to see "if this is somewhere that I'm okay with if I'm then going to be coming here once a week for six weeks." Knowing "I'm okay here, I've met some people, I feel comfortable," were key parts of progression planning through the programme. He struggles with public toilets, particularly "the hand dryers and the noise and the sensory overload" and "it stops him going to places" because of nerves and anxiety. To be able to widen his horizons and enable him to be open to the learning, ensuring he was comfortable in the physical space was a priority.

Young People’s Survey Responses

26/32 Young People ranked support for **individual identity** (see Figure 6 for definitions) in the three most significant support factors in their progression. 17 ranked it the **top** support area. This pattern is reflected in the Case Study young people who all rated this domain in the top three. There was greater diversity of response across all other categories but averages suggest that young people rank three other domains as second most significant areas of support: **peer identity**, **school or work identity** and **social inclusion identity**. While **local community identity and family identity** were ranked joint third by young people on average, **place attachment** and **citizenship identity** support were the least significant for young people.

Young People’s Survey Responses Overview

Young Person Survey Rankings								
	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School/Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
1st	17	2	6	3	2	0	0	3
2nd	5	1	5	8	5	4	3	2
3rd	4	12	4	4	4	2	0	3
4th	1	7	8	6	3	3	2	2
5th	3	2	7	5	5	2	3	4
6th	0	4	1	4	6	10	2	4
7th	1	3	0	0	4	8	12	2
8th	1	1	4	4	2	1	8	10

Young People’s Average Ranking: Whole Cohort

	Individual	School or work	Peer	Social	Community	Family	Place	Citizenship
Cohort	2	4	4	4	5	5	6	6

Case Study Young People’s Rankings

The names used in this report are pseudonym’s to protect the individual’s identities.

	Individual	School or work	Peer	Social	Community	Citizenship	Place	Family
Maya	1	8	2	5	2	7	4	6
Andrew	3	1	6	4	2	5	7	8
Neil	1	2	4	3	7	6	5	8
Matthew	3	1	4	5	7	2	8	6
Average	2	3	4	4	5	5	6	7

Advocate's Survey Responses

Advocates also ranked support for **individual identity** as the most significant area of support for young people's progression. In describing and explaining how the programme had supported the progression of these four young people, seven of the eight domains were discussed. 21/45 ranked it top. 37/45 ranked it in the top 3.

The main difference between Advocate's and Young People's rankings is the stronger emphasis Advocates highlighted the importance of **place attachment**. While this domain receives a wide range of rankings across all Advocates, the average rating, and the ratings for the case young people suggest it is one of three top priorities.

Advocate's Survey Response Overview

Advocate Survey Rankings								
	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School/Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
1st	21	5	5	5	1	1	0	5
2nd	8	6	5	3	9	2	1	8
3rd	8	11	4	5	3	2	1	7
4th	1	8	6	6	2	10	4	3
5th	1	2	14	3	5	10	2	6
6th	1	6	5	6	6	4	9	2
7th	3	0	0	11	5	8	8	3
8th	2	4	1	0	9	2	13	9

Advocate's Average Rankings: Whole Cohort

	Individual	School or work	Place	Peer	Social	Family	Community	Citizenship
Cohort	2	4	4	4	5	5	5	7

Advocate's Rankings for Case Young People

	School or work	Place	Peer	Individual	Social	Community	Citizenship	Family
Advocate 1	2	3	1	7	6	5	4	8
Advocate 2	5	3	2	1	4	7	8	6
Advocate 3	2	3	6	1	4	5	7	8
Advocate 4	1	2	4	7	3	5	8	6
Average	3	3	3	4	4	6	7	7

Tutor's Survey Responses

Tutor's Survey rankings also indicate the importance of **individual identity** support for young people's progression. 15/31 responses rank it top while 28/31 rank it in the top three.

The key difference between Tutor's survey responses and those of the other two groups is a lower emphasis on **local community identity** and a higher ranking of support for **school or work identity**. They also rank support for **Citizenship identity** more highly on average than both other groups.

Tutor's Survey Responses Overview

Eng & Maths Tutor Survey Rankings								
	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School/Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
1st	15	5	3	1	0	0	3	3
2nd	7	4	4	2	0	0	5	8
3rd	6	5	9	6	1	0	0	2
4th	1	6	7	10	1	2	0	1
5th	0	4	4	6	9	2	3	0
6th	0	3	1	1	10	5	5	1
7th	2	0	0	3	5	10	4	3
8th	0	1	0	0	2	6	7	10

Tutor's Average Rankings: Whole Cohort

	Individual	School or work	Social	Peer	Place	Citizenship	Family	Community
Tutor	2	3	4	4	5	5	6	7

Tutor's Rankings for Case Young People

	Individual	School or work	Social	Peer	Community	Citizenship	Place	Family
Tutor 1	1	3	4	8	7	6	2	5
Tutor 2	3	2	4	1	5	6	7	8
Tutor 3	1	2	3	6	4	5	8	7
Average	2	2	4	5	5	6	6	7

Qualitative Evaluation Introduction

The experiences of four young people from the programme are included throughout this report (See pages x, y, z and a). They were selected for interview by the Programme team to reflect the diversity of the cohort, offering insights into the progression pathways of individuals from different age groups, who face different challenges and who have received supported from different Advocate organisations.

Case Study Cohort

	Gender	NC Year	SEND	FSM	Previous Placement	Ethnicity	Below 50% Attendance Flag	DTS Start	DTS Current	Distance Travelled	No of Risk Flags	Planned destination
Maya	F	14	SEMH, ASC	Yes	EOTAS	White British	N	1	4	3	10	Training Provider / Pre SIP Year 2
Andrew	M	12	SEMH, ASC	Yes	ASD Base	White British	N	0	6	6	12	FE College
Neil	M	14	SLD, ASC	No	NEET	White British	Y	0	5	5	7	FE College
Matthew	M	12	SEMH	No	NEET	White British	Y	0	4	4	15	FE College

Figure 7: Overview of Cohort Information for Case Study Young People.

The interview focused on their three highest ranked domains. It asked them about:

- examples of things that were done to support their journey (for each of their top 3)?
- how and why it was important in helping them progress towards EET?

Case Study 4: Matthew

	Gender	NC Year	SEND	FSM	Previous Placement	Ethnicity	Below 50% Attendance Flag	DTS Start	DTS Current	Distance Travelled	No of Risk Flags	Planned destination
Matthew	M	12	SEMH	No	NEET	White British	Y	0	4	4	15	FE College

Additional Details

Interviews highlighted challenges impacting engagement in EET for Matthew which are not made explicit by the data tables. These are:

- Youth Offending Team Involvement
- Criminal Behaviour Orders in place

Survey Responses

Matthew has not yet engaged with his SS&L so there are no Tutor survey responses.

	Individual Identity	Peer Identity	School / Work Identity	Social Inclusion Identity	Family Culture Identity	Local Community Identity	Citizenship Identity	Place Attachment
Advocate	7	4	1	3	6	5	8	2
Matthew	3	4	1	5	6	7	2	8
Tutor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

School or Work Identity Support

“there’s a lot of self-doubt, a lot of thinking, well, I wasn’t very good at school.”

Both Matthew and his Advocate rated support for his school or work identity as the most important aspect of support currently. His Advocate explained that he had a negative experience of school and has not had any experience of work due to involvement with the police, so developing ‘a positive experience of having aspirations’ is actually the priority, building towards positive experiences of school and work.

Work-experience based support has involved Matthew doing some mechanics experience in a workshop and some DJing experience, to be able to give him “a positive experience with learning in an informal setting.” His Youth Offending Team worker shared Matthew’s interest in mechanics and this has been the initial step.

While the aim is to try to engage with an hour a week of maths and English, his Advocate explained that this is “quite a big deal” due to “a lot of self-doubt, a lot of thinking, well, I wasn’t very good at school.” An initial visit was arranged to try to “show that there's other life paths than the one that they're currently on”

While Matthew agreed that support for his school and work identity was important to his progression, he was not convinced that support at Somerset Skills and Learning was for him. After having gone there to “look around,” he said he felt that “Nah, thanks I’m good.” Support to visit different learning settings with his Advocate is ongoing as he does not want to engage with SS&L.

Citizenship Identity Support

Matthew ranked support for his citizenship identity as second most important to his progression. He felt that having someone to talk to about that stuff, about his place in society, was the main thing that was helpful here. Before his Advocate and youth offending team support he didn’t have anyone to talk to about things like this. He felt the door was shut to him going into certain shops and that “there’s not point me wishing about it, I’m not getting back in.” He did like going out to eat at McDonalds with his Advocate and gave this as an example of activities supporting his sense of citizenship identity.

While his Advocate rated support for citizenship identity as the least important support factor currently, while hoping it will become very important work in the future. She explained that “because of the seriousness of the police involvement at the current time...it’s had to become a lower priority just simply because of the kind of day-to-day needs.” In her interview, she described her support as doing “emotional work and then going to get food” with being taken to get food as something he responds well too. In this way, the support perhaps represents the closest possibility the young person has for ‘typical’ citizen-related behaviour given the restrictions under which they are operating.

Individual Identity Support

Matthew rated support for individual identity as the third most important aspect of support for their progression. The example he gave to illustrate this was going to the workshop, a provision where he can get experience of doing mechanics on motorbikes and where he enjoys fixing things. In this way, Matthew links work to give him experiences of work in an area he has expressed interest with developing his sense of individual identity. This opportunity, described by the Advocate as ‘positive experiences of having aspirations,’ is linked to his personal development. It is interesting that he related this to individual identity rather than school or work identity. His comment that it was good because he was “not just sitting there,” demonstrated his appreciation for the practical nature of the experience, and perhaps does not

connect to 'school' or 'learning' in his view due to associations of learning with more academic, static experiences.

Matthew's Advocate again rated individual identity as having not played a highly important role yet in his progression. Where Matthew focused on a practical experience, his Advocate felt that exploration of this area would need to come later and was not something Matthew appeared ready for or to want. She explained that he is "slightly unwilling" to explore this, that he is "very happy with his individual identity, doesn't want to be challenged, expresses like happiness of who they are and happiness also of how they're perceived" Being able to "move inward" was seen as something that needed to come later after "challenging these kind of outside things." Challenges around being out safely in public and dealing with the practicalities of his situation and building a trusting relationship needed to take priority. She described how the previous week, the young person said, "I'm very happy with who I am, I'm very happy that when I walk outside people are afraid," highlighting the challenge of supporting these interconnected social and individual identities.

Place Attachment Support

"going into places rather than just doing drive-throughs"

The Advocate rated place attachment as the second most important area of her support for Matthew. She acknowledged that although it is so important, she is extremely limited on the support she can offer due to Matthew's criminal history. This means "there are a lot of places I can't take this young person. due to being banned or to having to avoid other young people." While it is partly done by the youth offending team, and the person is "very well known in their local area," the support needs to focus, not on building their confidence, which is very high, but on building "more productive confidence perhaps" and "because it's quite complex, isn't something that I do solely and directly in my work."

Echoing Matthew's comments about going to McDonalds, his Advocate recognised "being taken to getting food" and working up to "going into places rather than just doing drive-throughs" as key activities in this area. The avoidance of going into locations for Matthew is driven, not by social anxiety but, his Advocate suggested, because he "perhaps understands some of the consequences of their actions." Going into a couple of places and on walks around the local area were important ways the Advocate felt they could demonstrate that "actually, you don't have to always walk around with this reputation, you can just walk around with a worker and just go on a little walk, which I actually don't know if this young person has ever done."

Social Inclusion Identity Support

“it's so vital for this young person at the minute to see how they are seen by others and in the kind of wider community context.”

Matthew's Advocate rated this area third because “it's so vital for this young person at the minute to see how they are seen by others and in the kind of wider community context.” Having had “threats made against them” and being “not well liked in the local community” means he “often has offences by association, so has quite negative perception of peers and the local community.” Work in this area is focusing on looking at the emotions around this and how people are seeing him. Encouraging reflection on “is that accurate? How could we go about and change that? Like, does this person feel safe to have friends? What type of friends do they feel safe to have? So, a lot of the work we've been doing around social and peer identity has been emotional conversations.”

Given the limitations in being able to access places and settings, most of the support is conversational. The Advocate explained that Matthew “kind of like happily labels himself as someone who's involved in crime. So actually, challenging those labels that either the community have put on, or peers have put on and actually saying.”

Discussion: Survey Responses

The diversity of challenges, needs, interests and available local settings is reflected by the differing rankings by survey respondents. However, when considering the average ranking of to each domain by each of the three groups of respondents, some patterns do emerge.

Notably, there is consistency across all three groups as regards the domain where support is most important for progression. All three groups ranked support for **individual identity** highest.

There is also consistency between young people and Tutors as to other domains that have been most significant in supporting progression through the programme:

- **School or Work Identity**
- **Peer Identity**
- **Social Identity**

Advocates also ranked Individual Identity, Peer Identity and School or Work Identity in their most significant areas of support. However, on average, they placed greater emphasis on **Place Attachment**: a domain that was ranked 7th by young people and Tutors.

This difference may reflect the different remits of the Advocates and Tutors. Place attachment is important in relation to the Tutors work, because they have to adapt to whether the young person learns best at the centre, at home, online or in another setting. However, for Advocates, whose remit involves supporting the young person to access a wider range of different settings, visiting cafes, the SS&L centre, alternative provisions, and placements, supporting young people's place attachment may be a more immediate priority.

Their focus on **Place Attachment** may then stem from their understanding of the specific access, sensory and safeguarding needs of the individual young people. As the adults to whom the responsibility falls to connect these disengaged young people to new settings, the material aspects of this may be a more pressing consideration or better understood.

Young people, the survey data suggests, may be more focused on the relational aspects, on the people within those spaces and places. This may be because they feel they need more support with this; that they are not used to others accommodating their needs within the places they go; or just be an abstract concept that is more relatable to adults than adolescents.

The top ranked domains tend to reflect the more immediate, less abstract social domains for young people. Their sense of who they are, their connection to other young people their age, and their self-concept as a learner, either in previous or new settings, are concrete and immediately relevant. Social Inclusion Identity is somewhat more abstract but may be especially pertinent for those who have faced marginalisation due to their health and abilities, gender identity or socio-economic background for instance.

Civic identities, such as **Local Community Identity** or **Citizenship Identity** by contrast are more abstract. For young people who have not yet been able to take steps Post-16, this

perhaps reflects a form of arrested development. For adolescents who have been at home for extended periods; who have not had any volunteering or work experience; or who have lacked the confidence, transport, finances, skills or support to access events, opportunities or clubs, these more distant identity domains.

To be able to take steps towards these, survey data indicates that support for more proximal identity domains is necessary. While some young people may gain a strong sense of peer identity or school or work identity through the course of their education, barriers and challenges faced by this group of young people may prevent them from gaining this.

The high number of risk flags for the young people in this cohort highlights the diverse forms of marginalisation and experiences of exclusion they may face. Late diagnosis of special educational needs, not having their needs met in their educational settings, financial disadvantage, school exclusion, gender identity challenges, care experience and neurodivergence mean support for **social inclusion identity** is unsurprisingly highly ranked.

The relatively low focus on **family culture identity** on average is perhaps more surprising. It may reflect the young people being at a point where they are establishing their independence from the family unit. The programme's structure means the Project Manager undertakes a significant amount of family liaison at the start of the programme, liaising closely with families to engage and understand the young person. This low ranking may reflect the fact that the evaluation was undertaken at the mid-point of the year of support. With young people now having progressed in terms of leaving the house and engaging with support, this aspect may not be at the forefront of their minds.

To gain a deeper insight into what support for these different domains looked like, and why it made such a difference for the young people in supporting their progression, online interviews with four case young people, their Advocates and Tutors were conducted. Data from these interviews is presented on the following pages.

Discussion: How Did Support for Connected Belonging Enable Progression?

The interviews highlighted how well the Connected Belonging approach was shared and embedded across the work of the different partners. This, alongside the Distance Travelled Scale, supports the programme's flexibility by providing a consistent, shared ethos across the partner organisations, enabling delivery of a highly personalised, bespoke provision to meet the complex and diverse needs of vulnerable young people.

In describing and explaining how the programme had supported the progression of these four young people, seven of the eight domains were discussed and are explored in below.

The significance of support for **individual identity** in enabling progression was explored in all interviews, but young people, Advocates and Tutors emphasised slightly different aspects of this. Advocates often described the conversational work, getting to know the young person, finding out their interests and then building on those. Similarly, Tutors emphasised their observational and conversational work in getting to know each young person, describing diverse ways they personalised the learning. From focusing on literary criticism rather than functional skills (a Maths and English qualification) or introducing engaging projects such as focusing on post-apocalyptic worlds to lending laptops to those who struggled to engage in person or finding more conducive venues for learning in instances where classroom-like environments triggered difficult emotions for young people.

Young people's accounts of support for their **individual identity** focused more on the opportunities to learn new skills and doing group work with peers. A tangible sense of 'personal growth' or 'personal development activities' came through in young people's accounts. Whether it was feeling able to be themselves during group work or at a café, or finding motivation in trying new things or skills, the examples young people gave related to being involved in activities and being themselves in social settings.

This is not to say that the conversational, emotional and preparatory work was less important, it may be that these aspects were less comfortable or easy to talk about in a short interview with an unfamiliar person. It may be that with the interviews taking place when they were further along on their journey towards employment or education, these more recent breakthroughs may have sprung to mind most readily.

What the accounts do emphasise is two fundamental ways the programme's support helped young people progress through **individual identity** development: (1) by helping them connect with and build upon their individual interests and abilities (2) by helping them feel able to be themselves in the company of others. This first strand seems to help young people find motivation to push themselves, as discussed by Matthew and Andrew's Tutors and reflected in the DTS Step 6: What's the dream? The second strand perhaps links more closely to building their sense of belonging and connection to others, supporting their ability and readiness to access more settings and provisions.

All three sets of interviews revealed that support relating more squarely to other identity domains also strengthened the young person's sense of **individual identity**. For instance, ensuring young people have successful experiences in new places was an important way that Advocates supported their progression. Matthew referenced accessing the workshop to do motorbike mechanics as a way that his **individual identity** was supported, for instance, while Maya described her engagement in group work as supporting this.

Individual identity and **peer identity** or **community identity** seemed to be closely related for young people. Supporting them to take small steps towards expanding their network of people and places were mentioned, whether to have a drink in a café or go into McDonalds instead of using the drive-through. Rather than only working directly on their 'individual identity,' through the more conversational elements, going to a new setting, speaking to a new person or trying something new acted as conduits for that growth, supporting more than one area of development.

Advocates, whose remit relates most closely to engagement in community settings and provisions, were the only group to rank **place attachment** in the top four. While all the young people spoke about the places they went to, the cafes, Somerset Skills and Learning, Maker's Place, the workshop, they didn't use this abstract notion in relation to that. Rather, they saw these experiences as building their **local community identity** or **peer identity**. For the young people these are real world connections, among other people in their local area, rather than impersonal 'places.' For Advocates, whose focus is strategic and future-oriented focus, the emphasis is on building the number of places that young people can physically go to is crucial. As many of them have been shut in at home for a long time, or have mobility, transport or safeguarding constraints on where they can physically go. This may explain why the two groups rank differing domains as more significant.

While the young people don't talk about 'safe places,' and the Advocates are hesitant about using this language, the Advocates and Tutors described practical steps they had to take to maximise the chance of a successful transition into and engagement in a new place. Whether site visits or ensuring the young person doesn't feel physically endangered after previous hostility or ensuring a familiar group of people are around them to venture into a bowling alley, the practicalities of successful engagement work demand a careful consideration of setting, place, access and safety so that the young person doesn't put barriers back up. Tutors described similar careful processes, for instance, experiencing shut down or aggressive outbursts and working closely with the young person to understand the triggers. Finding places too quiet, too school-like, too busy and distracting were all important considerations which were key in enabling the young people's engagement and progression.

The interviews highlighted the success of the programme in being able to provide the heavily scaffolded and supported next steps each of these young people needed. The Advocate's role in identifying suitable settings to build connection and belonging, negotiate access, provide

transport and company to transition have been pivotal to the engagement of all the case study young people.

In discussing support for **school and work identity**, a common thread running through each case was the work needed to undo the impact of previous negative educational experiences. Educational gaps, multiple moves, unmet educational needs, late diagnoses and low self-esteem arising from feeling unaccepted in school came up in every conversation. Whether because of learning difficulties, physical disabilities or the way they dress, each young person needed this reliable, sustained, tailored support to help them start to build a sense of individual and learner identity that has been damaged.

Whether this manifests as a refusal to engage in Maths and English support, as shame about handwriting or reading ability, or as a fear of talking in a group, a strength of this programme is in its flexibility to find safe and positive ways forward for young people who had no other options. Offering a combination of skilled advocacy, access to a learning setting when they are ready to engage, and flexibility to build in other provisions has enabled almost all of these fifty young people to make demonstrable progress towards education, employment or training.

The only area that was not mentioned was **family culture identity**: an area which is underexplored in this evaluation. As interviews were shaped by the survey rankings, this means that support for lower ranked domains was not explored in the same depth. Similarly, as a lot of this work is done by the Council Project Manager at the outset of the programme, this may also partially explain this. Tutors and Advocate interviews for Andrew highlighted that parental criticism and challenging relationships were factors impacting his progression. The supporting adults also highlighted that encouraging Neil's parents to 'let go,' having protected him and supported him through bullying and coping with his disability for so long. Finally, Maya mentioned that the survey structure forced her to rank items low that were not low. She specifically mentioned that family culture identity wasn't unimportant but that the process required that something had to be ranked lower. Turbulent family lives and CLA status were flagged by Programme staff as factors that made engagement particularly challenging and which elongated early stages of support.

Finally, the interviews emphasised the close links between school and work identity and individual identity for young people. Negative schooling experiences, difficulties accessing learning or not having needs met shaped their sense of who they were and what they were capable of. The combination of highly personalised learning provision and skilled Advocate support enables the programme to build these identity areas in multiple, sensitive and individually relevant ways. Whether this is practical, hands-on skill development, a structured introduction to being able to be with other young people in a group setting, getting back to basics with literacy skills or support for qualifications to enable entry to college, the profound impact of this learner identity support on the young people's self-concept, confidence and self-esteem is clear.

Conclusions: Success Factors

- **Flexibility:** going at the young person's pace, adding bespoke provisions, offering transport and tailoring learning opportunities
- **Oversight:** by having young people's names early, the Council Project Manager builds a vital overview of the young people from the outset. A graduated start, regular monitoring and adjustment help to build connection from the beginning.
- **Shared language and framework:** Connected Belonging and Distance Travelled Scale supporting consistency across multiple partners
- **Holistic view of risks and opportunities:** Connected Belonging model embedding consideration of full range of aspects impacting engagement and progression via an adapted tool for identifying interconnected risks to NEET (Brown et al, 2021)
- **Persistence and consistency:** Focus on connection and belonging prioritises provisions adapting to meet the young person where they are; in contrast to provisions and programmes which reject the young people as being unable to meet need or not meeting threshold criteria.
- **Building a network of connections** around the young person to help them unpick and address the multiple barriers they face
- **Building belonging** in a growing number of contexts, growing their resilience and providing them with other networks of connection to fall back on at the end of the programme.
- **Personalisation:** tailoring **pace of engagement** and **nature of the intervention** to suit the young person

Conclusions: Programme Impact and Next Steps

The Pre-Supported Internship (Pre SIP) programme offers an accessible post-16 progression pathway for learners not yet ready to progress to further education, training or work. Where prior educational provision has not prepared the individual to make their next steps, this programme offers a structured, personalised pathway.

Underpinned by research-informed frameworks, the Connected Belonging model and Distance Travelled Scale, the programme combines advocacy and personalised educational provision, enabling young people to develop a sense of belonging; a network of connections; build their skills; gain experience; work towards qualifications and identify a motivating, realistic pathway.

The high levels of engagement for learners who had no other progression options and were furthest from engagement in EET demonstrates the high value of the programme.

The accounts of young people and staff on the programme highlight the significant positive impact of the programme, not just on engagement and outcomes, but on self-esteem, confidence, social connection and sense of belonging. The training of staff in the concepts and theory of Connected

Belonging may have changed practice on the ground, and informed the practitioners' focus on how best to support these young people who were so far from any sort of engagement in EET.

Areas that might be usefully explored in future include the role played by support for family culture identity. Exploring whether this impacts particular cohorts more markedly or whether it is a stronger area of focus at the outset may be helpful. Given the high prevalence of late diagnosis and young people's school or work identity being negatively impacted by educational experiences, consideration of how young people who do not hold EHCPs could be enabled to access this valuable programme would be useful. The programme could valuably inform initiatives aiming to take the 'fight out of the system' for families and young people with additional needs. Exploring how this model of support might be enabled at an earlier stage in young people's trajectories, being made available regardless of diagnosis and EHCP status, while young people are still within statutory education is an important area to explore.

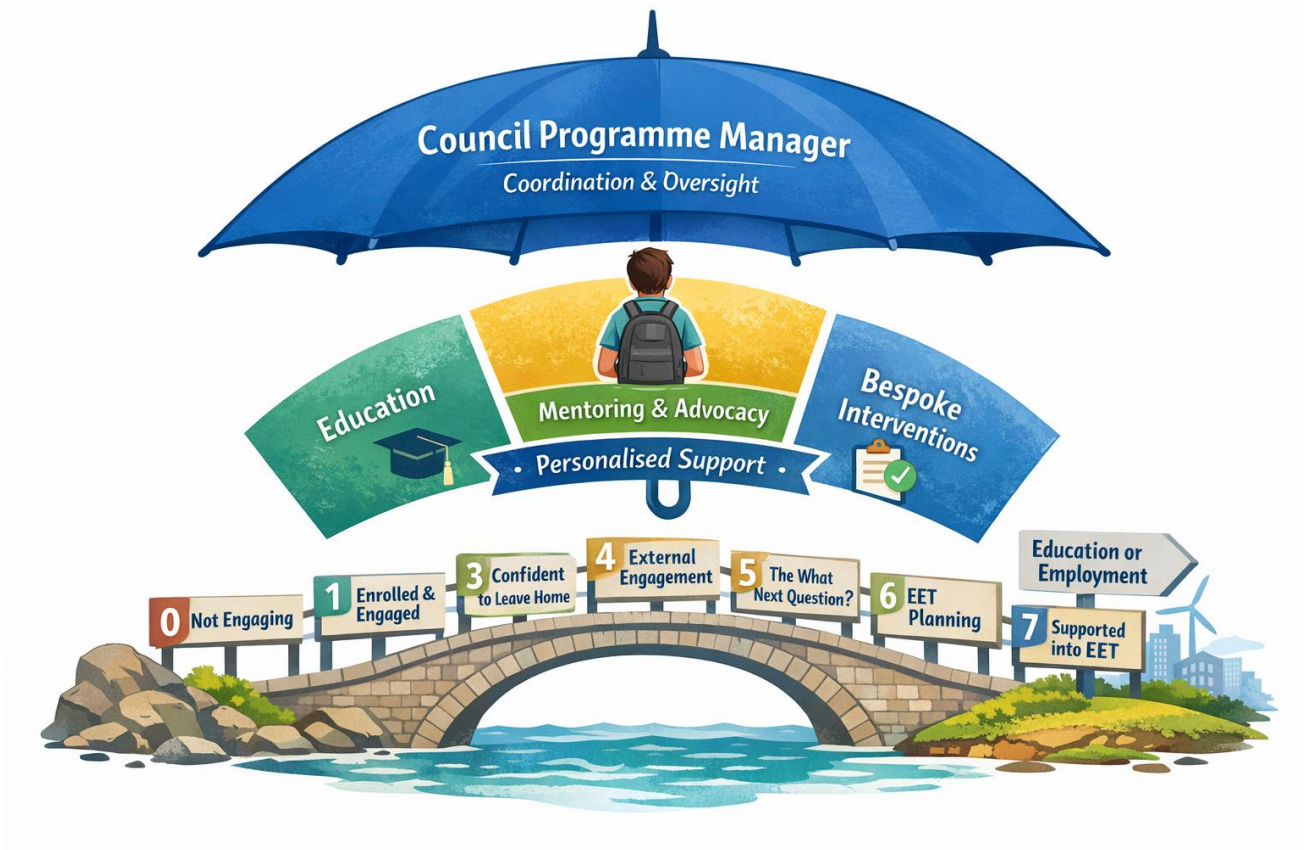
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