

Career Connect Analysis:

Stemming the tide: highlighting the increasing risk of NEET among school leavers

Background and purpose of the research

With a recent rise in the number of young people that are not in education, employment or training ('NEET'), this analysis looks at the increasing pressures faced by local authorities and their partners who provide professional careers guidance to young people at a critical point in their lives.

Risk of NEET and recent increases in the number of NEET young people

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure that young people have an education, employment, or training (EET) destination at 16 years of age. All authorities have programmes to support young people into EET between the ages of 16-18, or 16-24 for young people who have a special educational need or disability (SEND) and an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Evidence shows that some young people are at greater risk of becoming NEET than others. Our recent paper (['Mapping the future: navigating place-based risks of youth unemployment'](#)) shows that young people who are SEND, young people engaged with youth justice services, and care experienced young people are over-represented among NEET young people¹. Published data suggests that this is a common picture across England². Young people at greater risk of becoming NEET require additional support to stay on pathways towards good quality employment, further/higher education, and training.

At the time of writing the number of young people in England and Wales that are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has increased from 631,000 (9.3%) in April-June 2021, to 794,000 (11.6%) in April-June 2023³.

With this increase in NEET, this analysis looks at the profile of young people leaving school in two local authority areas in northern England between 2019-2022.

It focuses on:

- The number and percentage of school leavers that are SEND and have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Young people engaged with youth justice services
- Young people with care experience.

We chose these three groups as they are part of standard reporting across all local authorities. There is much longer list of risk of NEET indicators (RONI) that authorities collect, but there are differences between authorities in which indicators are collected and their definitions.

¹ *Mapping the future: navigating place-based risks of youth unemployment*. Career Connect Research and Evaluation, July 2023 (<https://careerconnect.org.uk/research/addressing-youth-unemployment/>)

² *NEET: Young people, Not in Education, Employment, or Training*. A. Powell, House of Commons Library, 2021

³ *Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), UK: August 2023*. Office for National Statistics, 2023.

Our findings:

There has been a sharp increase in the percentage of young people leaving school who are SEND, and/or have care experience.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of school leavers across the two areas between 2019-2022 that were in one of the three groups: SEND young people, young people engaged with youth justice services, and young people with care experience.

Between 2019 and 2022, there has been:

- an increase of almost 5% of young people in each school leaver cohort that are SEND (7.9% in 2019 to 12.3% in 2022)
- a 1.6% increase in the number of young people that are care experienced (1.1% in 2019 to 2.8% in 2022)
- a 1% reduction in the proportion of young people that are engaged with youth justice services (4.2% in 2019 to 3.2% in 2022).

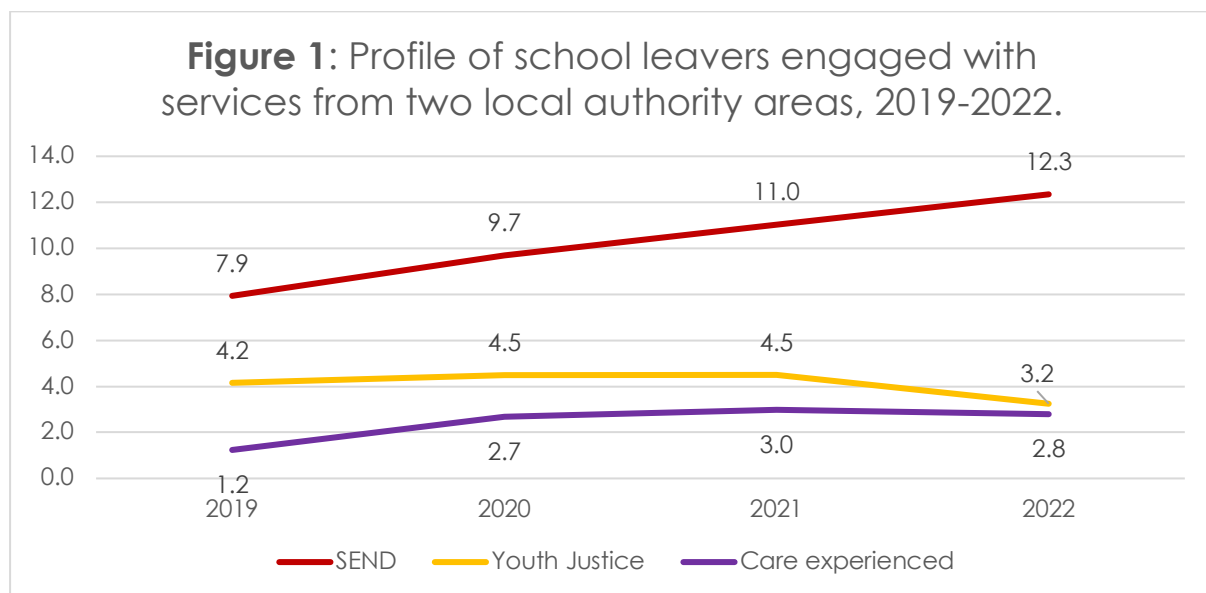


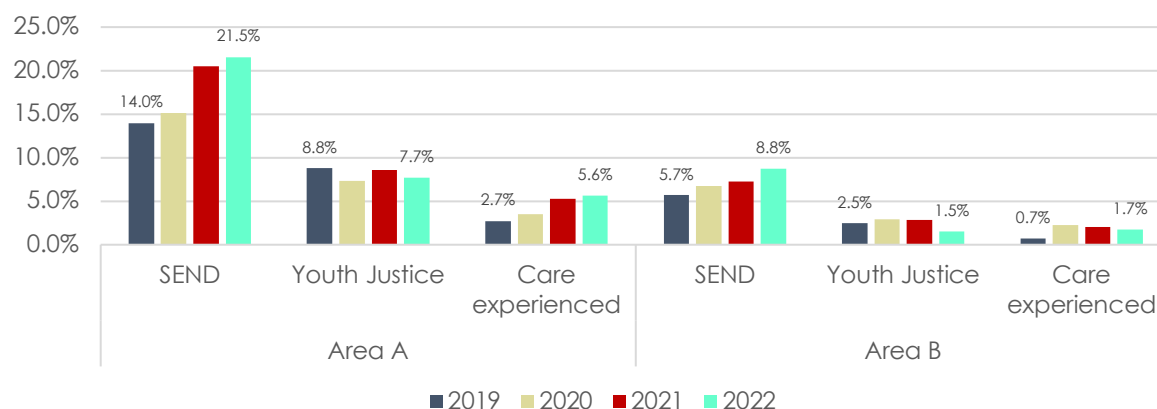
Figure 2 shows this data by individual local authority. Although the trends are similar across the two areas, there are major differences in the magnitude of the changes between 2019 and 2022.

The proportion of SEND young people in Area A increased from 14% in 2019 to 21.5% in 2022, compared with an increase from 5.7% to 8.8% in Area B.

Area A saw a small decrease in the proportion of young people engaged with youth justice services, from 8.8% in 2019 to 7.7% in 2022. This compares with Area B which saw a small reduction from 2.5% in 2019 to 1.5% in 2022.

The proportion of care experienced young people in Area A increased from 2.7% to 5.6%, compared with an increase from 0.7% to 1.7% in Area B.

Figure 2: Profile of school leavers (aged 16) across all three local authority areas combined, 2019-2022, by each local authority area.



Increased support needs, reduced resources, and long-lasting consequences

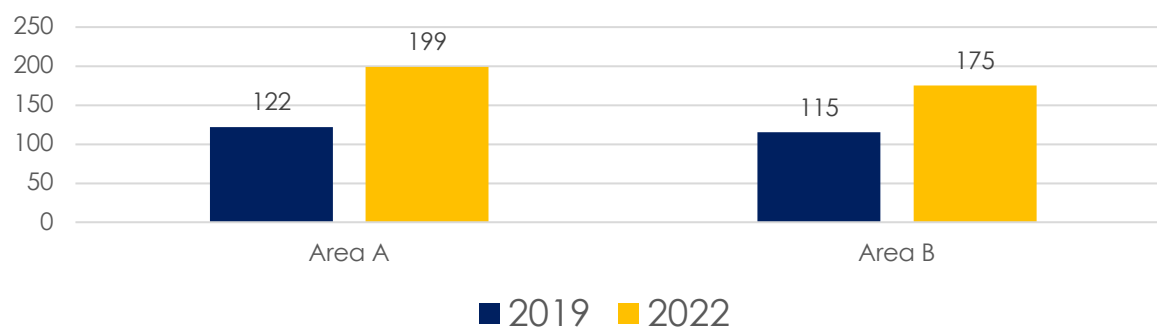
The total number of young people leaving school at 16 who are in one of three categories at higher risk of NEET, **increased by 63% in Area A and by 52% in Area B.**

Figure 3 shows that, in Area A, this translates into an additional 77 school leavers requiring intensive support in 2022 compared with 2019. In Area B, this is an additional 60 school leavers requiring intensive support.

We know that many of these young people will require continued support until they are 18 years old, or 24 years old for SEND young people. This is a conservative estimate as we know that high risk of NEET goes beyond these three categories.

These numbers cumulate each year, up to age 24 for those young people who are SEND and up to age 18 for other young people. This means large increases in the total number of young people requiring support at any one time.

Figure 3: Number of school leavers requiring support and are SEND, engaged with YJ services, or care experienced, 2019-2022



These substantial increases in the number of young school leavers requiring intensive support places a significant strain on authorities and their partners, as they seek to ensure that all young people leave school with an education, employment, or training destination. Furthermore, we see from these two authorities that there is not an even distribution. Average increases across multiple authorities can mask substantial differences between them and some authorities will carry a requirement for heavy support and the resource issues that go with this.

Although this analysis looks at two authorities, we also see some of these trends in national data. In 2023, 389,171 pupils in schools in England had an EHCP, an increase of 9.5% from 2022. 1,183,384 young people were in receipt of SEN support without an EHCP, an increase of 4.7% from 2022⁴.

This comes at a time when spending power for authorities is estimated to be 10.2% lower in 2022 than in 2010, even allowing for an increase in grants to deal with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Institute for Government attributes this fall in spending power to reductions in central government grants. These grants reduced by 40% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, from £46.5bn to £28.0bn (2023/24 prices)⁵.

Further, a recent report from the University of Derby⁶ estimates that we currently spend **£68 per young person**, per year of delivery of career guidance, **a substantial reduction from the equivalent figure in 2009 (adjusted for inflation) of £159**.

While the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a welcome addition to the funding landscape, the overall amounts invested are substantially lower than the European Social Fund, which ceases in 2023. Young people and skills are part of a wider range of competing priorities for funding.

⁴ *Special Education Needs in England, Academic Year 2022/23. Department for Education, 2023*

⁵ *Local Government Funding in England. Institute for Government, July 2023*

⁶ *Investing in Careers: what is careers guidance worth? Hooley. T, Percy. C, Neary. S, University of Derby, 2023.*

We can add to this picture the growing number of young people that are outside of mainstream education – either ‘electively’ home educating, in alternative provision, or through persistent absenteeism - and who are receiving at best partial careers information advice and guidance before they turn 16 years of age⁷.

NEET rates have remained between 10%-12.5% for the past 8 years⁸, but the triple pressure of a rising number of young people requiring intensive support, the growing number of young people outside of mainstream education, and reduced investment in careers support for young people, risks leaving local authorities overwhelmed.

We know that time spent NEET between ages 16-24 has a “scarring effect” on young people, which is linked to poorer health and employment outcomes throughout their lifetimes.⁹.

Increases in NEET numbers now are creating vulnerabilities and inequalities for many years to come.

⁷ *Shining a light on home education: five things we learned from new Department for Education (DfE) data.* Career Connect Research and Evaluation, 2023; *Out of sight and out of mind: shining a spotlight on home education in England.* Centre for Social Justice, November 2022; *Lost and not found: how severe absence became endemic in England’s schools.* Centre for Social Justice, March 2023.

⁸ *Young people not in education employment of training (NEET), UK: August 2023.* Office for National Statistics, 2023.

⁹ *The long-term NEET population.* Impetus Research Briefing, 2019.

References

1. *Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), UK: August 2023*. Office for National Statistics, 2023.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/august2023>
2. *Mapping the future: navigating place-based risks of youth unemployment*. Career Connect (a) Research and Evaluation, July 2023. <https://careerconnect.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CAREER-CONNECT-Research-and-Evaluation-Mapping-The-Future-July-23.pdf>
3. *NEET: Young people, Not in Education, Employment, or Training*. A. Powell, House of Commons Library, 2021. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06705/>
4. *Special Education Needs in England, Academic Year 2022/23*. Department for Education, 2023 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>
5. *Local Government Funding in England*. Institute for Government, July 2023. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/local-government-funding-england#:~:text=Local%20authority%20'spending%20power'%20%E2%80%93,%25%20below%202009%2F10%20levels>
6. *Investing in Careers: what is careers guidance worth?* Hooley. T, Percy. C, Neary. S, University of Derby, 2023.
https://adventuresincareerdevelopment.files.wordpress.com/2023/07/91271-investing-in-careers-report-final2_edit.pdf
7. *Shining a light on home education: five things we learned from new Department for Education (DfE) data*. Career Connect Research and Evaluation, August 2023.
<https://careerconnect.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Shining-a-light-on-home-education-FINAL-1.pdf>
8. *Out of sight and out of mind: shining a spotlight on home education in England*. Centre for Social Justice, November 2022. <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CSJ-Home-education-report.pdf>
9. *Lost and not found: how severe absence became endemic in England's schools*. Centre for Social Justice, March 2023. https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CSJ-Lost_and_Not_Found.pdf
10. *Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), UK: August 2023*. Office for National Statistics, 2023.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/august2023>
11. *The long-term NEET population*. Impetus Research Briefing, 2019.
<https://www.impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/Youth-Jobs-Gap-The-Long-Term-NEET-Population.pdf>