

Effective Transition Fund: Dorset

Fund summary

The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) launched the £2 million Effective Transitions Fund (ETF) to deliver targeted support and build the evidence base on effective careers education for disadvantaged young people at points of transition. The Fund was delivered over two years via 10 Careers Hubs¹ across England to disadvantaged young people in Year 10 and 11, to enable them to transition to and sustain engagement in a high quality post-16 destination. The Effective Transitions Fund set out to deliver careers and transitions support in addition to the careers provision that schools would have been providing to their pupils.

The groups targeted by the Fund were (in order of prevalence):

- In receipt of Free Schools Meals (FSM) (mandatory criterion)
- At risk of under achieving / mildly disengaged
- Special educational needs or disability (SEND) or Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- Low attendance
- Low self esteem
- Gender
- Excluded from school or at risk of exclusion
- Ethnicity

The national picture

Evidence drawn from existing literature and comparable national data highlighted the need for the additional targeted support and also indicated that the outcomes far exceed what might otherwise be expected for these groups.

- 42.9% of young people eligible for FSM will attain a standard pass (Grade 4) in GCSE maths and English language compared to 71.6% of non-eligible young people.²
- Pupils eligible for FSM are 4.1 percentage points less likely to sustain an education destination than their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Pupils who have SEND are less likely to sustain an education, employment, and apprenticeship destination than pupils who do not have SEND (88.9% vs 94.6% respectively).³
- 82.6% of all young people sustain their education, apprenticeship or employment destinations.⁴

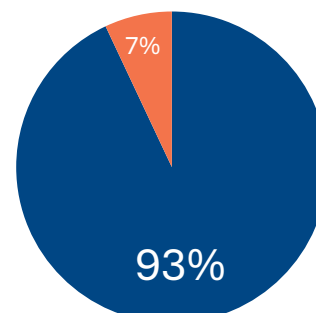
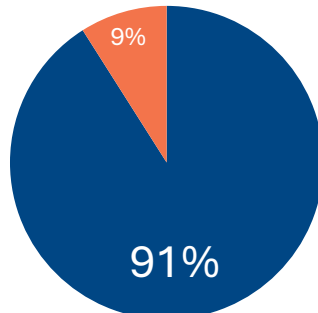
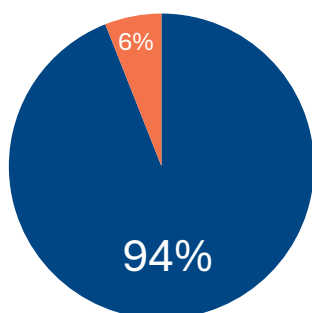
Fund-level key findings

Over 1,000 pupils, experiencing multiple disadvantage received tailored careers support and coaching between 2021 and 2023. The destinations of the whole cohort were tracked at three time points:⁵

September 2023: 882 pupils tracked

November 2023: 922 pupils tracked

Spring 2024: 906 pupils tracked



■ Entered post-16 destination ■ Other

■ In post-16 destination ■ Other

■ In the same post-16 destination ■ Other

The Dorset project: The Dorset Marvels

The Dorset project focused on young people with the greatest risk of exclusion as they cited DfE research which found that this group was four times more likely to become not engaged with education, employment or training (NEET). They identified young people in deprived areas of the county whose risk factors included antisocial behaviour towards teachers; bringing banned substances into school; needing alternative learning environments; experiencing vulnerabilities due to abuse, neglect or mental ill health; disengaged from school and low attendance. The young people could be in mainstream or special education needs (SEN) specialist schools and be at risk of exclusion or have experienced exclusion from their school and were then in pupil referral units.

Due to the complex additional support needs that this cohort had, the activities of this project centred on the delivery of fortnightly careers adviser meetings, delivered by well-qualified staff. The frequency of these meetings, and that over time they were delivered outside of the school settings and with flexible timings was a key feature of this model of support.

Activities

Pupils accessed 1-2-1 and group activities, which included:



Tailored 1-2-1 coaching and identification of goals, which extended into Year 12 to support students through the transition gap. Level 6 qualified careers advisors were used for these 1-2-1 sessions, which aimed to take place once a fortnight for one hour.



Personal development sessions covering motivation, confidence, and aspirations.



Digital skills sessions, which covered money management/life skills.



Post-16 provider encounters to raise aspirations and knowledge of post-16 routes and to help maintain engagement in school and on the project.



Employer encounters and work-related learning/employment skills offered insights into the world of work and role models.



Ongoing work experience placements, including a one-week paid placement in Year 11, to deepen their understanding and knowledge of the workplace and sector and build confidence over time.



General careers information to offer insights into the local labour market.

Reported impacts

From an initial 104 pupils starting on the programme, records showed that 101 completed the programme. Project staff described the effort that had gone in early on in the project to establish their own relationships with the pupils on the project, separate from school. As a result of this they were able to sustain the relationships over the summer and into the post-16 destinations, which helped to achieve this high retention rate.

Participants and leavers were tracked to find out where they went to after year 11, and how they felt about these destinations.

- 95.7% of 93 pupils tracked in September 2023 entered a post-16 destination
- 81.2% of the 101 tracked in November 2023 were in post-16 education, employment or training
- 83.8% of the 99 tracked pupils in Spring 2024 sustained their education and training
- 86.7% of endline survey respondents were happy with their choice of post-16 destination
- 100% of endline survey respondents were happy with their main subjects/courses
- 100% of endline survey respondents were happy with their college or training provider

¹ Nine of the 10 were part of Careers Hubs at the start.

² Department for Education (DfE). Key stage 4 performance, 2022-2023, [custom table 1](#) and [custom table 2](#) created April 2024.

³ Official Statistics. *Academic year 2021/22: Key stage 4 destination measures*. GOV.UK. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-destination-measures> February 2024.

⁴ Official Statistics. *Academic year 2021/22: 16-18 destination measures*. GOV.UK. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/16-18-destination-measures> February 2024

⁵ At each timepoint different young people are included, depending on whether they could be contacted at that time

Lessons about delivery

The ETF project in Dorset focused on working with young people who were at the greatest risk of becoming NEET due to being excluded or at risk of exclusion from school. Working with each student holistically as an individual providing intensive career counselling was an important part of the programme, which was informed by the COM-B model.

The project was delivered in mainstream schools and alternative education settings (pupil referral units and SEND schools/centres) and feedback from project staff highlighted the added value of working in alternative settings. They had more flexibility in how they worked in those settings, so it was easier for the team to embed themselves and tailor the support to student needs. The project filled a gap in some of these settings, which did not have access to a qualified careers adviser, and helped to build links with local employers to facilitate careers talks and workplace visits. Interviewees in these settings spoke of how the project had helped identify new progression routes for their students that staff were not previously aware of and had a positive impact on the value students placed on their education as a means of pursuing next steps.

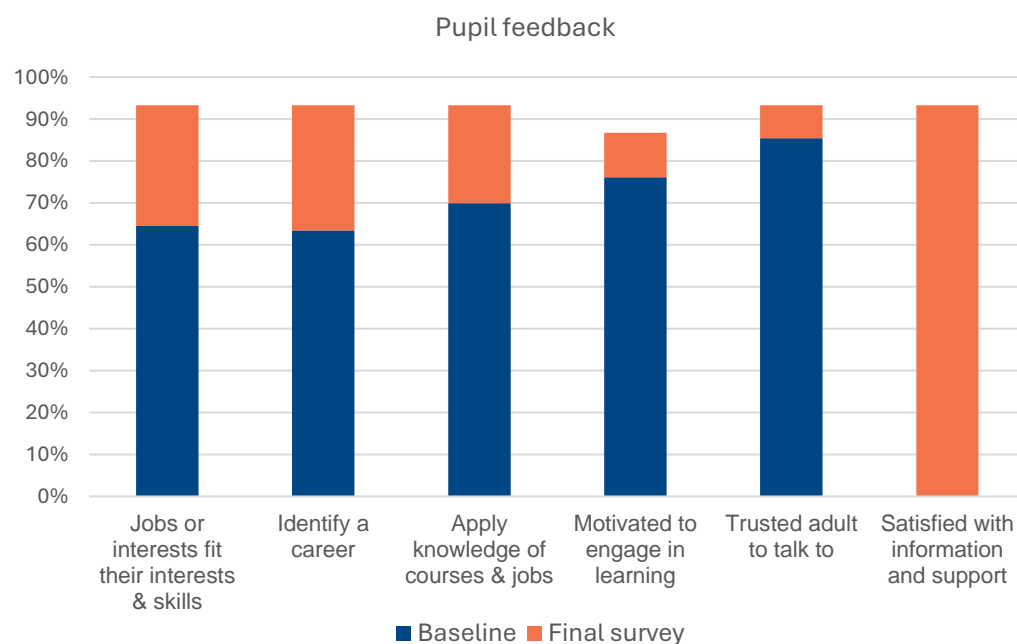
To provide an integrated approach for pupils in all settings, careers advisers set up WhatsApp groups with the young person, the careers adviser and their parent. This helped to provide the support for young people when they were transitioning to their post-16 destination as the young person could contact someone directly.

In addition, the careers advisers met some young people outside of the school environment – those who had become disengaged or who were struggling with school. This helped provide support in a neutral setting and helped them to explore solutions to re-engaging with school. Careers advisers also changed their approach to the career sessions, as they recognised that a full-length careers session was not always suitable. Instead, they held shorter meetings more often, to establish a relationship with the young person and to build up trust. Supporting students through brokerage and advocacy was also an important element of providing a holistic approach based around the young person's defined needs.

The Careers Hub has taken the learning about the how to support young people and their families that are not engaging with school or considering home education and developed a new programme of support – Continued Education & Achievement (CEA). In further impacts of the project, they have found that the schools are now better meeting Gatsby Benchmark 8, and the Hub is creating new programmes of support to build on the success of the Effective Transitions Fund Marvels project.

Reported impact by young people

In the final young person survey, pupils self-reported careers and education measures increased over time. In particular, the pupils in this area had low scores in the baseline survey and scores showed an increased from around two-thirds responding positively to the baseline questions, to over nine in ten at the endline survey.



93.3% of pupils had an idea about which jobs or interests fit their interests and skills – up from 64.5% at baseline

93.3% of pupils could identify a career that would allow them to live the life they want to lead – up from 63.4% at baseline

93.3% of pupils were confident that they could apply knowledge of courses and jobs to their own situation – up from 69.9% at baseline

86.7% of pupils reported that they were motivated to engage in learning – up from 76.1% at baseline

93.3% of endline survey respondents believed they had a trusted adult to talk to about their future plans – up from 85.4% at baseline

93.3% were satisfied with the information and support provided by the project.