Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

# Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: guidance on early identification

Guidance on the early identification of young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) or becoming homeless.

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# Introduction

This guidance focuses on the early identification of young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) or becoming homeless. It aims to provide greater consistency in the early identification of young people on a national level while maintaining flexibility around processes in place in local areas.

This guidance will contribute towards achieving our **national milestones**, specifically the milestone of at least 90% of 16 to 24 year olds being in education, employment, or training by 2050.

The updated **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework** ('the Framework'), published in 2022, brought the prevention of youth homelessness within the scope of the Framework. **A consultation** undertaken as part of this update highlighted a need to also update guidance on the early identification of young people at risk of disengagement.

There is **evidence of the link between NEET and youth homelessness**, and in a sample of homeless people in Wales **other research has shown that 59% first became homeless before the age of 21**. Further, 78% of the sample had been homeless more than 3 times, showing that after someone has become homeless once, it is likely to reoccur. This strengthens the argument for strong recovery prevention initiatives.

We are aware that local partnerships use a wide range of indicators to identify young people at risk of becoming NEET or homeless (information on Framework partnerships can be found in the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: handbook**). This guidance does not provide an exhaustive list of all possible indicators but identifies key indicators that will be applicable across Wales (which include attendance, school exclusions, eligibility for free school meals, additional learning needs, progression in learning, disability and

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involvement of children's services). The guidance also suggests additional indicators that local partnerships may wish to consider. Local partnerships should also take into account that some children and young people will present with multiple indicators, which may denote significant vulnerability and support needs.

We recognise the long-lasting impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on our children and young people, and that in many cases it has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities.

The guidance has been developed with existing stakeholders, in particular the Early Identification Guidance Working Group which included representatives from:

- local authorities, including engagement and progression co-ordinators (EPCs) and youth homelessness co-ordinators (YHCs)
- the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

The working group highlighted the need for this guidance to be underpinned by supporting research wherever possible.

We also looked at **Scottish Government guidance on the prevention of homelessness**, which identified a range of risk indicators including behaviour, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and literacy and numeracy difficulties. Physical or mental health issues were also identified as a risk indicator for homelessness, particularly if deteriorating or where there is a lack of self-care.

The principal objective of the early identification strand of the Framework is to ensure local authorities and their partners can accurately and systematically identify those young people who are at risk of disengaging from education, employment and training or who are at risk of homelessness. For young people below the age of 16, the early identification system should also be used by the EPC and YHC as they engage with partners to co-ordinate support and

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interventions to minimise the ongoing risk of disengagement or homelessness. Systematic early identification of young people who are at risk, allied with co-ordinated support and effective interventions, will build their resilience and capacity so they can progress successfully at 16.

## Sources of information

The sources of information that should be fed into early identification processes can be broadly grouped as:

- data
- input from practitioners
- input from children and young people

# Data

Early identification should start with a data-driven assessment, based on the indicators agreed by local authorities and supported by partners. Establishing a data-led system will allow a systematic approach to be created to identify all those young people who fall within the parameters defined by a local authority. This data can then be assessed by EPCs and YHCs and other practitioners who work for partner organisations. This will provide the necessary 'sense check', to introduce additional understanding not captured by a data-led model, and to support discussions on the prioritisation and most appropriate provision.

Data can be extremely useful as part of an initial screening process, as it provides an indicator of risk to identify young people who need additional support. Using this data to identify risk is part of the wider drive for focused and effective use of data within the school system to improve outcomes for our learners. Local authorities may use management information systems which

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capture indicators and can speed up the process of early identification.

Data indicators also allow for more consistency in identification across local authorities, which was one of the themes that emerged from the 2021 consultation on the Framework.

## Case study: Data analysis exercise to assist in early identification in Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire Youth Services carry out an annual data analysis exercise on young people aged 17 to 24 who present as homeless. This identifies the main causes of homelessness retrospectively, and cross-references those presenting with the youth service's own management information system (MIS). This allows the youth service to understand which young people are already known to them, and why.

The process has developed over time, and Pembrokeshire now cross-references this information with a number of the local authority's MIS in order to be able to track an individual's prior engagement and history with education, social care and youth justice services. Additional monitoring elements include school exclusions, additional learning needs (ALN), those known to social care (while in school), previously looked after by the local authority, if the individual was eligible for free school meals and if they were known to youth justice services.

The exercise enables the local authority to track the interactions and contact between these young people and a range of professionals prior to them presenting as homeless. This information is then used proactively to inform and shape early identification processes, identify potential collaborative working arrangements and target resources effectively.

Out of the 236 homelessness presentations in 2022 to 2023:

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- 53 (28%) experienced school exclusions
- 137 (74%) were known to social care in school
- 70 (38%) had additional learning needs
- 27 (14.5%) were young people looked after by the local authority
- 20 (11%) were eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- 66 (35%) were known to the youth justice team

To note: from the 236 presentations, 45 could not be traced through education and social care systems, and 5 were repeat presentations in the same year. This left 186 presentations, from which number the percentages were calculated. Also, some eFSM data had not migrated to the new system.

## Data sharing

As illustrated in the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook**, data sharing is integral to the delivery of the Framework, enabling local partnerships to monitor the progression of young people at risk of becoming NEET or homeless. Timeliness and accuracy of data sharing is critical, to ensure no young person slips through the net, allowing:

- young people in need of immediate support to be identified and offered help
- Careers Wales and the local authority to quickly identify young people in Tiers 1 and 2 of the Careers Wales 5-tier model of engagement, with Careers Wales working closely with the EPCs
- school leavers to make a smooth transition to post-16 destinations

The use of data-sharing protocols should be utilised to share information with partners and implement effective support.

The Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) is a tool to help organisations across sectors share personal information effectively and lawfully. The **WASPI website** includes guidance to help organisations determine

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what type of data-sharing agreement is required in specific circumstances. WASPI agreements will either be:

- data disclosure agreements (DDA) where personal data is to be disclosed (that is passed one way) from one data controller to another for a specific purpose

or

- information sharing protocols (ISP) which record practices involving the regular, reciprocal sharing (that is information flowing back and forth between organisations) of personal information between data controllers.

EPCs and YHCs will draw together multi-agency local partnerships under the Framework. When personal data is being shared within these partnerships, this should be underpinned by a WASPI agreement, and comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (or UK GDPR).

It is important that WASPI agreements are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they reflect all the partners involved.

**Careers Wales's privacy notice** explains how Careers Wales (as a data controller) complies with UK GDPR and applies to all Careers Wales services, including face-to-face interviews, group sessions, telephone discussions, web and social media contact (except the Working Wales service, which has its own privacy statements).

**Guidance is also available for schools on managing school data and compliance with UK GDPR**. For the transfer of data from schools to happen, appropriate data-sharing arrangements must be in place, in line with the guidance. Learners, parents and carers must be informed about what happens with their data before it is collected and recorded.

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## Case study: Early identification process – Merthyr Tydfil

Merthyr Tydfil's Engagement, Progression and Co-ordination Team use an early identification toolkit to identify the most vulnerable young people at risk of disengaging from education, employment and training and at risk of homelessness.

As part of the early identification process an ISP has been developed to support the regular sharing of personal information for the Framework.

The ISP is intended to help practitioners understand what information can be shared between the listed partners for the stated purposes. It also provides assurance that the partners have considered the requirements of data protection legislation.

Pre-16 local partnership meetings are chaired by the EPC. Partners include:

- lead workers from Inspire to Achieve
- representatives from each school's senior management team, further education and the youth offending service
- the educated other than at school (EOTAS) lead officer
- Careers Wales advisers
- learning coaches

At each monthly review meeting for secondary schools, the special school and PRU, personal information is shared with organisations. This allows the partnership to provide a seamless and effective service, which is co-ordinated, coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the individual.

Young people are monitored throughout secondary school and recategorised where necessary to red or amber risk. This includes those identified as at risk of homelessness who are referred to the mental health and homelessness team.

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This process enables the appropriate level of support to be put in place to achieve the intended outcomes for the individual.

During Years 10 and 11, young people who face barriers to entering employment, education and training, are highlighted as ‘high risk NEET’, offered transitional support, and their progress discussed in meetings. Those young people at high risk of becoming NEET (and the wider group of young people rated as red and amber) will continue to be monitored, on leaving school, via the Engagement, Progression and Co-ordination Team’s monthly post-16 lead worker meetings.

# Key data indicators

The following key data indicators should be used by all local authorities to feed into early identification systems. Information has been provided to explain the importance of these indicators in this context.

## School attendance

**Research** commissioned by the Welsh Government found that poor attendance is one of the key warning signals of disengaging. Other research has shown that ‘compared to those who were rarely or never absent from school, those with frequent absences from school were 7.5 times more likely to report lived experience of homelessness’.

As regards emotionally based school avoidance, learners are anxious about attending school, to the extent they may try to avoid going as a way to manage their anxiety. In such cases, schools may agree to modified attendance or a reduced timetable for learners as a short-term measure (although the aim would be to re-engage learners with provision). There is evidence that mental health

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issues are closely linked to risk of becoming NEET, and that there is also a relationship between homelessness and mental health issues.

Reduced hours or part-time timetables, as part of a pastoral plan, can help learners re-integrate into a school after a long absence or be a means of preventing further absence. However, they have the overall effect of reducing time in school for learners, with a possible negative impact on their progress and well-being. This should generally be a short-term measure, with the intention of returning to full-time education as soon as feasible, and not used as a means of managing behavioural issues.

## School exclusions

**Research** commissioned by the Welsh Government found that poor behaviour is one of the key signs of disengaging and that exclusions data is often a proxy indicator for challenging behaviour. In addition, knowledge of young people's circumstances and practitioner input helps identify young people with challenging behaviour.

**Guidance from Centrepoint** identifies exclusion as one of the causes of youth homelessness. **Research** reports that school exclusion is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including long periods of unemployment, poor mental and physical health, and involvement in crime and homelessness. It found that those who are most likely to be excluded from school are also likely to be the most vulnerable in society – they are 4 times more likely to have grown up in poverty, 7 times more likely to have a special educational need and 10 times more likely to have a mental health issue.

Local authorities should give consideration to the frequency and duration of the exclusion periods in deciding the risk rating for individuals. **Guidance is available on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units (PRUs)**.

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## Eligible for free school meals (eFSM)

There is evidence that childhood poverty can increase both the **risk of NEET** and the **risk of youth homelessness**. eFSM is widely used as a proxy indicator for deprivation.

Some local authorities therefore use eFSM as a risk indicator. Other local authorities with a high incidence of deprivation have taken the decision to give more prominence to alternative indicators to enrich their understanding of the needs of young people in their communities.

## Additional learning needs (ALN)

A learner aged between 0 and 25 has ALN if they have a learning difficulty or disability (whether it arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision. Information and guidance on the definition and how it is applied is contained in **chapter 2 of the ALN Code for Wales**. The ALN Code also explains in detail young people's rights under the ALN system.

Data on ALN is collected annually via the **Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)**.

Some local authorities use ALN as an indicator for risk of NEET. In addition, learning difficulties or disabilities, which may include neurodevelopmental conditions like autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), can have an impact on a learner's behaviour, and behaviour is an important indicator for risk of NEET. (It is also worth noting that not all children who are neurodivergent will have ALN.) There is also strong **evidence** suggesting adults with autism are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness and that autism is a likely risk factor for becoming homeless.

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# Input from practitioners

Not all indicators are data-based. Data indicators need to be supplemented by practitioner input. Discussions between practitioners can build a holistic picture of the individual and their situation, which can change quickly. Practitioner input can highlight:

- changes to family circumstances
- indicators of challenging behaviour
- changes in support requirements

and is vital in ensuring effective support can be provided at the right time.

Practitioner input is essential to ensure that the initial cohort flagged by the data-driven process is accurate and appropriate. Practitioner input should also ensure that up-to-date information on young people in need of support is introduced into the early identification system, including when the data system hasn't flagged young people who are at risk. In schools, heads of year can be critical to this process, due to their knowledge of learners.

Local authorities should give consideration to how practitioner input can be captured and evidenced within their early identification processes.

# Other key indicators

The following key indicators should be used by local authorities as part of their early identification systems. Information has been provided to explain the importance of these indicators in this context. These indicators may be supported by data, although this is dependent on local information-gathering processes and therefore should be supported by practitioner input.

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## Progression in learning (attainment)

**Research commissioned by the Welsh Government identified attainment as an indicator for risk of NEET**.

Attainment also has links to the risk of youth homelessness, as there is **evidence of young people who are homeless lacking literacy and numeracy skills**. Low attainment can contribute to youth homelessness where young people lack the qualifications needed to secure employment that pays a living wage.

**Guidance is available on national data collection from schools** (local authorities currently receive end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessment data via this collection). However, this collection and associated assessment arrangements are only relevant to learners under the 2008 Curriculum and will no longer be in place once Year 9 cohorts are under the Curriculum for Wales (from September 2024). Under the Curriculum for Wales, schools will also hold their own data on individual learners' attainment and progression in learning. In light of this, practitioner input is therefore crucial in order to help identify learners who are not progressing in learning at the rate expected for them.

## Disability

Disabled young people are far more likely to be NEET than young people that are not disabled, as evidenced in the **quarterly Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) statistics**, which includes data on the disability status of young people who are NEET.

The Young Person's Guarantee National Conversation found that young disabled people faced significant barriers to remaining in or entering education, employment or training. It also found that disabled young people felt the least

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informed when it came to the options available to them, particularly after Year 11, and disabled 16 to 18-year-olds felt the least prepared for subsequent education or training. Feeling uninformed or unprepared may become a barrier to that person remaining in education or training, or even progressing to employment. Separately, support workers noted limited support for disabled young people once they finished college, with parents and carers not always aware of available choices.

## Children's services involvement

This encompasses any child that is known to children's services, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers, children on the edge of care, and children under the (formal or informal) guardianship of another family member.

There is **evidence of a large gap in attainment between children looked after by the local authority and other learners** at all stages of education, critically at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11), which impacts on their opportunities for progression.

Among homeless youth populations, **research** shows a very large proportion of homeless young people have been involved in the child welfare system. **UK research** has also found that one-third of care leavers became homeless in the first 2 years immediately after they left care, and a **separate study** found 24% of homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives. The **'Don't let me fall through the cracks' study by the End Youth Homelessness Cymru coalition** examined why young, care-experienced people are more at risk of becoming homeless and vulnerably housed than their non-care experienced peers.

In view of this evidence it is critical that EPCs and YHCs have strong links with children's services within their local authorities. Children's services officials can share information on the children and young people known to their service and

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be represented at the Framework's multi-agency meetings, as they can contribute to developing the holistic picture of the child or young person's situation.

# Additional indicators

Local authorities can also consider the following additional indicators to further identify those at risk of disengaging or becoming homeless. These indicators might encompass data-based indicators and practitioner input indicators. Some of the below additional indicators have been informed by information provided by local authorities regarding their own early identification systems.

## Behaviour

Behaviour is an important indicator for risk of NEET according to **research** commissioned by the Welsh Government.

It can also indicate the risk of youth homelessness, as evidenced in **guidance on the Centrepoint website** on the causes of youth homelessness.

As noted above, exclusions data can help identify young people with challenging behaviour. We also recognise the important role of practitioner input and partnership working between organisations to identify children and young people with challenging behaviour.

Detailed knowledge of young people's circumstances by practitioners can help identify:

- the number of times a young person has moved schools, for example in a managed move

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- children and young people who have offended, for example through anti-social behaviour, offending behaviour, gang crime, exploitation, county lines drug dealing, carrying weapons, serious crime, harmful sexual behaviour
- social isolation, arguments with friends, bullying
- drug, solvent or alcohol issues
- running away from home (from parents or carers) or from residential care
- relationship breakdown between parents or carers and their children

## Adverse childhood experiences and trauma

Exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma can have a long-term impact on children's life outcomes, including their health, educational attainment and economic prosperity. ACEs include:

- verbal, physical or sexual abuse of a child or young person
- emotional or physical neglect
- bereavement or incapacity of a carer
- parental separation or relationship breakdown
- mental illness in the household
- domestic violence in the household
- drug or alcohol abuse in the household
- parental incarceration

Feedback from the **consultation on the Framework** in 2021 showed a real concern around the negative impact ACEs can have on young people's life chances. While there was support for considering ACEs as part of a broader set of indicators used by local partnerships, the Welsh Government has made clear that counting or scoring an individual's ACEs should not be used to determine:

- risk
- whether or not to offer an intervention
- the type of intervention offered

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Additionally, there is also **evidence of prevalence of ACEs** in the homeless population.

Practitioners should consider how they respond to those who have experienced trauma and adversity in all its forms (including the lived experiences of asylum seekers and refugees). This means acknowledging the existence of trauma and adversity, understanding its impact, operating in ways that avoid retraumatisation, and recognising and supporting the strengths of an individual to overcome the impact of trauma. The **Trauma-Informed Wales Framework**, co-produced by ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales, supports a consistent approach to trauma-informed services in Wales, promoting compassionate, empathic and supportive relationships, services and interventions.

## Elective home education (EHE)

The **consultation on the Framework** in 2021 identified participants' concerns about their ability to track and support the growing number of learners who are in elective home education, particularly in view of the increase in the number of families opting for home education since the pandemic.

**Welsh Government statutory guidance on EHE** is clear that the decision to home educate should be a positive choice.

The Welsh Government has worked with local authorities to agree a wider package of support, which will afford consistency of offer from local authorities to EHE families and their children.

Local authorities are unable to pass on family details to external organisations such as Careers Wales, unless those families explicitly agree for their details to be shared. Good practice is for local authority EHE officers to write to individual families and ask if they are in agreement for their details to be passed to

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Careers Wales. If not, local authority officers will provide families with Careers Wales contact details so the home-educating families can make contact themselves.

Communication between local authority EPCs and EHE officers is important in ensuring home-educated children are fully supported.

Local authorities may broker support for young people who are home-educated, to ensure these young people can be signposted to additional support that is available to them from relevant services.

## English as an additional language

This is used by some local authorities as an indicator of risk of NEET, as children and young people who are not first language English may have gaps in language knowledge that are barriers to them accessing the curriculum and integrating into the school community. There is **evidence** that English as an additional language can intersect with race, gender and low socio-economic levels, leading to ethnic minorities being marginalised in school settings.

This would not apply to those children and young people whose first language is Welsh.

## Ethnicity

The **quarterly Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) statistics** include data on the ethnicity of young people who are NEET. In the 3-year period ending June 2023, young White people aged 16 to 24 were more likely to be NEET (13.8%) than young Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people aged 16 to 24 (7.5%).

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The **Welsh Government's Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic** provides more detailed breakdowns on different groups of Year 11 learners going into post-16 learning.

## Education other than at school (EOTAS)

This indicator is used by some local authorities as an indicator of risk of NEET. Children and young people in EOTAS, and in particular in PRUs, are some of our most vulnerable learners. These children and young people can find themselves in negative patterns of behaviour that impact on their learning and, as a result, have less than positive learning outcomes.

## Families of service personnel

This is used by some local authorities as an indicator of risk of NEET, in view of the unique situation of service children.

## Mental and physical health

There is **evidence** that mental health issues are closely linked to risk of NEET.

There is also a **link** between homelessness and mental health problems.

Health referrals or use of local authority counselling are used by some local authorities to identify health issues including poor emotional and mental well-being.

The **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook** includes a section that signposts support for mental health and well-being.

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## Case study: early identification and support of mental health issues

‘Jase’ was a Year 7 learner and identified as red on the local authority’s early identification toolkit, for low self-esteem, depression and mental health issues. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Jase continued to experience mental health issues.

This impacted upon his attendance, and a referral to the mental health and homelessness team for support was made.

During a conversation with his youth worker, Jase opened up and disclosed suicidal ideation. Following interventions from the youth service mental health and homelessness team, Jase was given coping strategies which helped him to manage his emotions in a safe and secure way.

The youth worker offered Jase the opportunity to attend some out of school activities, which improved his confidence and self-belief. Jase also lacked confidence with body image, so additional support and a workshop were provided. Jase found inspiration from this and started to go to the gym. Jase’s school attendance has increased, and he is now doing well in school.

## Housing

**Research** has shown, in a sample of homeless people in Wales, 59% first became homeless before the age of 21. Some local authorities also use housing issues as an indicator of risk of NEET. This could include looking at the number of home moves or whether a young person has moved in with other family members informally as this can often break down at short notice. Obtaining data from local authority housing officials on children and young people living in temporary accommodation is also critical. Living in **temporary accommodation**

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can have a harmful impact on children and their families. It is far more than a housing problem, it impacts on health, education and child development.

## LGBTQ+ young people

One **research paper** shows that:

- LGBTQ+ young people are 4 times more likely to become homeless than their peers
- intolerance in the home is a key trigger for homelessness among LGBTQ+ young people
- LGBTQ+ young people are at increased risk of harm when homeless than their non-LGBTQ+ peers

For trans young people specifically, experience of domestic abuse was cited as fundamental in playing a causal role in their homelessness.

Moreover, a UK-wide study in 2015 found that 24% of homeless young people identified as LGBT.

We recognise the need to respect the privacy of young people and also the need not to make any assumptions about identity. Some young people will not have come out to anyone whereas others will be comfortable in publicly discussing their LGBTQ+ identity. Practitioners should be led by the young person as to whether they highlight that their LGBTQ+ identity may be a possible risk indicator.

The **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales** sets out an overarching vision to improve the lives of, and outcomes for, LGBTQ+ people.

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## Pregnancy and being a young parent

A **report in 2010 examined NEET characteristics** and how government can work effectively to help them. This showed the chances of being NEET was increased by 2.8 times where young people were pregnant or a young parent. This is supported by **later research that cited childcare** as being 1 of the 2 key obstacles to reducing the number of young people who are NEET in the UK.

The **Childcare Offer for Wales** provides help with childcare costs for eligible parents and carers of 3 to 4-year-olds.

## Refugees and asylum seekers

Some local authorities use refugee or asylum seeker status as an indicator of risk of NEET.

The **Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary Plan** also recognises the vulnerability of new refugees to homelessness.

## Young carers

**Evidence published by Public Health Wales** shows that young carers are less likely to be in full-time education, are more likely to have lower educational attainment levels, experience worse mental well-being and be at a higher risk of disengaging from learning.

The roll out of the national Young Carers ID card across all 22 local authority areas allows young carers to receive recognition and support. It should also help local authorities and young carer service providers support young carers to access their rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014,

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and the **Charter for Unpaid Carers** which explains the rights and principles of unpaid carers.

## Input from children and young people

The Framework partnerships should consider how the existing pastoral systems in formal educational and youth settings will allow children and young people to self-refer when they need help, taking a **no wrong door** approach. When children and young people disclose information to a practitioner about their circumstances, where appropriate this disclosure can trigger early identification processes and referral to appropriate support under the Framework.

The partnerships should consider how they ensure children and young people's participation in developing and improving self-referral processes. This should include asking open questions to gain feedback on what really matters from the child or young person's perspective.

From discussions with local authorities, we know in some instances that young people are often more comfortable in disclosing information to youth workers they have built trusting relationships with and felt they would be listened to without judgement.

Suggestions from young people for improving engagement and the self-referral process included using young people's advisory groups and collaborative design workshops, as well as making use of digital technology (including online meetings, websites, using QR codes to signpost sources of support, and 'chatbots'). Also suggested were well-being hubs into which young people can self-refer, information and awareness-raising sessions, and training and support.

The effective participation of children and young people requires establishing a cycle whereby children and young people are asked for their views, have their

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views considered and are kept updated on what action has been taken as a result of their feedback.

# Weighting of indicators

Some local authorities allocate weighting to indicators to determine the level of support needed, as demonstrated in the case study below and the case study on Monmouthshire's early identification tool (see **annex**).

## Case study: weighting early identification indicators in Merthyr Tydfil

Merthyr Tydfil's Engagement, Progression and Co-ordination Team had recognised their early identification processes were not detecting all young people who became NEET. To address this, the EPCs refined their early identification tool, assigning more weighting to certain data indicators, to make their early identification tool more sensitive and accurate.

This included automatically allocating a red risk score to children and young people who had:

- no information available (learners new to the local authority)
- attendance below 65%
- a permanent exclusion
- exclusion trends of 10 days or more
- an alternative curriculum
- 3 or more school moves

EPCs worked with their MIS team to ensure these thresholds were automated within their identification systems. They are now able to run their own reports

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and are not reliant on the MIS team to do it on their behalf. This is particularly helpful from February to April of each year when EPCs need to identify, as quickly as possible, learners in Year 11 whose risk rating may have slipped unexpectedly into amber or red.

Children and young people identified through this automated process are discussed at pre-16 local partnership meetings, which has helped build up a more holistic view of each individual. The practitioner input at these meetings also enables individuals at risk of youth homelessness to be identified.

The changes to the early identification tool and the new weightings have resulted in the local authority having more accurate ‘at risk’ ratings.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality describes how personal characteristics (for example race, class, gender) ‘intersect’ with one another and overlap. **Prof. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who coined the term, describes it** as ‘a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking’. In terms of identifying young people at risk of being NEET or homeless, EPCs and YHCs should consider whether multiple, co-occurring risk indicators mean an individual’s overall risk is exacerbated.

## The role of learning providers

Learning providers have a key role to play in the early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET or homeless. They include schools, PRUs,

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further education colleges, work-based learning providers and community employability programmes, contracted providers delivering the Jobs Growth Wales+ programme, as well as the voluntary sector (including voluntary youth work organisations).

The regular contact that learning providers have with children and young people means they are well-placed to identify risk factors at an early stage. They often have in-depth knowledge of individuals' circumstances that can be gathered early and shared, as appropriate, within the local partnership to highlight which young people require support, either by sharing appropriate data or through proactive practitioner input.

Roles and responsibilities of learning providers and other organisations involved in the delivery of the Framework are outlined in the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook**.

## Case study: How input from the school helped identify additional issues

'Jo', a Year 10 learner, was identified through the local authority's early identification processes as being at risk of becoming NEET and homeless (with respective red and amber flags). The school provided practitioner input that identified additional periods of non-attendance and exclusions, which hadn't been part of the local authority's initial risk assessment. The school also identified other behavioural risk indicators, namely being reactive and avoiding lessons. This additional information increased Jo's 'at risk' scores.

NEET and homelessness prevention workers worked with Jo to help her identify and disclose other personal factors that impacted on her and her family. Jo was struggling with her sexuality, her mother was experiencing legal problems, which had put the family into a precarious financial position, the family was facing eviction and Jo had limited to no contact with her father.

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With the agreement of the school a collaborative support plan was developed. The plan covered advocacy, mentoring, a vocational qualification, accommodation-awareness training and training on homelessness, and pastoral and emotional well-being support (which included anger management and self-harm management). The local authority was also able to work with its Youth Engagement and Progression Framework partner organisations to access:

- additional support
- a young person's counsellor
- a housing support worker for Jo's mother, to help her navigate their upcoming eviction process

As a result of this intervention, Jo was able to complete Year 11 at school, sit her examinations, and achieve her vocational qualification, with additional support being provided for her transition into further education. Jo and her mother are now in private rented accommodation and her mother's legal issues have been resolved.

The local authority's processes in Jo's case are outlined below.

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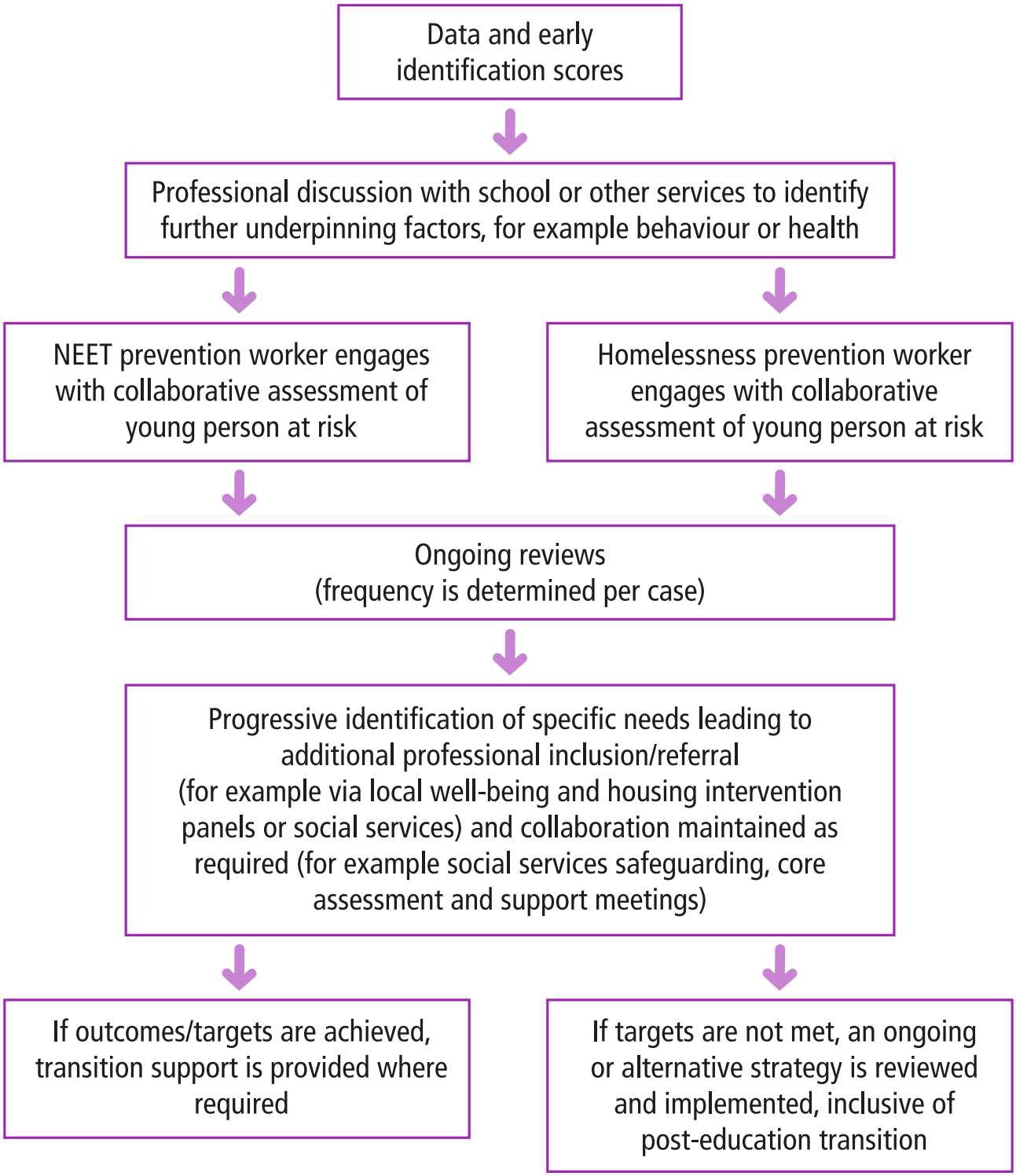


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# Multi-agency working

The implementation of the Framework, and the early identification and tracking strands in particular, requires significant stakeholder buy-in and joined-up working. Those local authorities that have already successfully implemented an early identification system will have strategic and stakeholder steering groups in place to progress discussions on topics such as data-sharing agreements, refining their indicators and thresholds and caseload management.

Regular multi-agency meetings can be used to allocate lead workers and to liaise with current lead workers on progress, building professional relationships that support the Framework.

Children and young people at risk of disengaging or becoming homeless are some of the most vulnerable members of society and often have complex and varied support needs. These needs are unlikely to be met from just one place. Therefore, collaboration through multi-agency working is needed to provide effective assistance. It is expected that this would also include input from children's services where there has been involvement. (The involvement of children's services is now a key indicator of risk.) Careers Wales, another key partner, prioritises young people whose circumstances make them more likely to become NEET for face-to-face guidance interviews, and potentially for additional support. Additional support can include specific advisers for young people who:

- have ALN
- are in elective home education
- are in EOTAS

Roles and responsibilities of all organisations involved in the delivery of the Framework are outlined in the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook**.

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Multi-agency working is in line with the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** which requires the public bodies listed in the Act to adopt the sustainable development principle and to embed the 5 ways of working (including collaboration). Integrating services helps to develop a holistic approach, ensuring that vulnerable young people are ‘on the radar’ and offered support when they need it.

## Case study: Multi-agency working in Caerphilly

The youth service’s EPC and YHC have joint meetings every school term with heads of Year 11 from each school across the local authority, and also transition meetings with heads of Year 10 in the summer term. The meetings focus on those at risk of NEET and youth homelessness.

The initial data indicators are supplemented by input from heads of Year 11, teachers, education welfare officers and Careers Wales practitioners. The dialogue with practitioners allows additional indicators to be explored, such as family relationships, social services’ involvement, behaviours or risk of exclusion. This enables a more holistic and tailored approach and ensures that support is co-ordinated and offered at the right time.

Working in a collaborative way has offered timely opportunities to discuss and raise awareness of key early indicators with practitioners across the local authority and to help them identify learners who would benefit from early intervention support.

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# Key steps in early identification

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# Key steps in early identification

Identify key stakeholders

Multi-agency meetings

Data sharing agreements in place (Information Sharing Protocols or Data Disclosure Agreements)

↓

Data-led identification of young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET or homeless by EPC and YHC

↓

Discuss young people flagged as at risk with practitioners

↓

Consider additional practitioner input to build a complete picture of whether a young person is at increased risk of becoming NEET or homeless

↓

Decision as to the most appropriate support

↓

Support put in place

↓

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# Checklist for local authorities in developing an early identification system

## 1. Ensure EPC and YHC are in place

To drive the delivery of all strands of the Framework, including the early identification strand.

## 2. Establish multi-agency arrangements

Local partnerships are in place and include the EPC and YHC and consider which additional partners should be invited.

Data sharing agreements should be in place.

## 3. Consider indicators

These indicators should include key data indicators and other key indicators as set out in this guidance. Consider which additional indicators are applicable to your area and refine them.

## 4. Agree arrangements for practitioner input

Establish arrangements for practitioner input to help the local partnership develop a holistic understanding of individuals' circumstances and appropriate support for them.

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### 5. Establish processes for reviewing caseload

Agree within the local partnership what success looks like, and the processes for changing the support offered to individuals when it is thought not to be working or when support is no longer needed for individuals.

## Checklist for learning providers in early identification

### 1. Make links with your local authority EPC and YHC

Agree how you will maintain an ongoing dialogue with them.

### 2. Familiarise yourself with the risk indicators

### 3. Provide practitioner input, including at multi-agency meetings

Some young people may not be identified by local authority early identification systems. This is where practitioner input is invaluable for identifying young people at risk. Share your knowledge to help the local partnership build up a holistic picture of the individual's circumstances. Flag urgent concerns with the EPC and YHC.

Multi-agency working is underpinned by data-sharing agreements.

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## 4. Provide timely and accurate data and information

This is critical to ensure that young people make a smooth transition into the next stage of their education and training and that young people in crisis are identified quickly and offered support.

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