

Research Briefing

10 July 2026

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Youth Guarantee

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Summary

- 1 Components of the Youth Guarantee
- 2 Trailblazer areas

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Summary

In November 2024, the UK Government published the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) which contained various initiatives to support more people into work. As part of the white paper, the government said it will [establish a Youth Guarantee](#). This was in response to an increase in the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Through this guarantee, the government will ensure that young people have access to further learning, help to get a job or an apprenticeship, and this support will be available across Great Britain.

On the 16 March 2026 the government [announced further components](#) to the Youth Guarantee, and referred to these as a “New Deal” for young people.

Trailblazer areas

The government has put in place ‘trailblazer’ areas to trial the new initiatives contained in the white paper, including [eight areas that will trial the Youth Guarantee](#). These are in the following mayoral authorities: Liverpool City Region, West Midlands, Tees Valley, East Midlands, West of England, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and two in London.

The trailblazers [were initially due to run for 12 months](#) from Spring 2025, with [£45 million provided in 2025/26](#) for them. It was announced in August 2025 that the trailblazer scheme [would be extended by another year](#) with further funding of £45 million.

The trials will aim to identify young people most at risk of becoming NEET, and to support them into education, training or work. [Various proposals will be tested](#) with the aim of maximising participation in the Youth Guarantee. The learning from these trials will then be used [to help with the future development](#) of the Youth Guarantee.

Youth Guarantee components

In the [Autumn Budget 2025](#) the government announced funding of £820 million for the Youth Guarantee over the spending review period (the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29). This was part of a £1.5 billion funding package to cover employment and skills support, which included £725 million for apprenticeships.

In March 2026, the government [announced an additional £1 billion of funding](#) in employment and skills support over the spending review period.

This funding will pay for a jobs guarantee scheme, a jobs grant, workplace experience and training, increased employment support and grants for employers who take on young apprentices.

Jobs Guarantee

This provides six months of paid work to eligible 18 to 24-year-olds who have been receiving Universal Credit for 18 months without earning or learning. The government [has said this will provide](#) employment for 90,000 young people over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29.

An initial [first phase of the guarantee](#) was expected to provide over 1,000 starts in a six month period, and was rolled out in the following six areas in April 2026: Birmingham and Solihull, East Midlands, Greater Manchester, Hertfordshire and Essex, Central & East Scotland and Southwest and Southeast Wales.

Following this the guarantee will be [rolled out across the rest of Great Britain](#) from November 2026.

Youth Jobs Grant

The government announced the introduction of a [Youth Jobs Grant](#) in March 2026 as part of the expansion of the Youth Guarantee. It launched on 30 June 2026.

This will provide a grant of £3,000 to employers for every young person they take on who is aged 18 to 24 and who has been on Universal Credit and been looking for work for six months. The government expect 60,000 young people to be taken on by businesses over the next three years as result of this grant.

Youth Hubs and the Youth Guarantee Gateway

Youth hubs offer support for up to six months from a youth hub work coach.

In September 2025, the government said it will provide £25 million to “almost double” the number of youth hubs to [“over 200 places across England, Scotland and Wales in the next three years.”](#) In December 2025, the government said youth hubs [“will be expanded to every local area of Great Britain”](#), meaning there would be over 360 hubs.

In January 2026, [there were 114 full opened youth hubs](#), which was 14 more than in January 2025.

In June 2026, the DWP [announced the areas](#) in which 178 hubs will open in the next two years. Of these, 153 are in England, 18 are in Scotland and 7 are in Wales. A further 20 hubs opened between March 2026 and June 2026 (15 in England, 1 in Scotland and 4 in Wales).

The Youth Guarantee Gateway will provide Universal Credit claimants aged 16 to 24 with a “dedicated support session”, followed by four additional weeks of intensive support. The government has said that [around 900,000 young people](#) will be offered this support over the three years.

Workplace experience and training

The [government intends to create](#) up to 150,000 additional work experience placements for young people and up to 145,000 additional places on the [Sector based work academy programme](#) (SWAP) over the three years. This programme is available to Universal Credit claimants and provides pre-employment training, work experience and potentially a job interview.

Apprenticeships

Various changes have been made to the apprenticeship system to encourage employers to take on young apprentices.

This includes the introduction of foundation apprenticeships, which the government described as an [“important first step”](#) towards the Youth Guarantee. Employers will [receive an incentive](#) of up to £2,000 for new starters on foundation apprenticeships.

Additionally, from August 2026, the [government has said that](#) it will cover the full cost of apprenticeships for 16 to 24-year-olds for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

The government has also announced that SMEs who take on new apprentices aged 16 to 24 will [receive an apprenticeship incentive](#) of £2,000. This will be available from October 2026.

1 Components of the Youth Guarantee

This section explains the various components of the Youth Guarantee.

1.1 Jobs Guarantee

In the Autumn Budget 2025, the government announced that the Youth Guarantee would include six-month paid work placements for eligible 18 to 21-year-old Universal Credit claimants if they had been looking for work for 18 months. These placements were intended to be a “first step into sustained employment”.¹

In March 2026, the government announced that the Jobs Guarantee will be widened to provide placements for eligible Universal Credit claimants aged between 18 and 24.²

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will subsidise the wages of these young people, and also provide support to assist them in their placement and help them find sustained employment.³

The government has said the job guarantee scheme will provide employment for 90,000 young people over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29.⁴ The initial proposal to provide jobs for young people aged 18 to 21 was intended to support 55,000 young people, with the expansion to young people aged 18 to 24 expected to support an additional 35,000 young people.⁵

In December 2025, the government said a first phase of the guarantee would begin in Spring 2026 and would involve over 1,000 placements in “areas with some of the highest need in Great Britain” from Spring 2026. This phase was rolled out in the following six areas in April 2026: Birmingham and Solihull, East Midlands, Greater Manchester, Hertfordshire and Essex, Central and East Scotland and Southwest and Southeast Wales.⁶

¹ HM Treasury, [Autumn Budget 2025](#), 28 November 2025

² DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

³ DWP, [Almost a million young people to benefit from expanded support, new training, and work experience opportunities](#), 10 December 2025

⁴ DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

⁵ [PQ 104742](#), 15 January 2026

⁶ DWP, [Almost a million young people to benefit from expanded support, new training, and work experience opportunities](#), 10 December 2025

Following this the guarantee will be rolled out across the rest of Great Britain from November 2026.⁷

Phase One

Grant guidance was published at the end of January 2026 for organisations to apply for funding to deliver the ‘phase one’ job placements in the six areas.⁸ These organisations have been referred to as ‘Delivery Organisations’ in the guidance.⁹ In April 2026 the DWP announced the organisations that were selected to be the Delivery Organisation for each area.¹⁰

In the first phase, the DWP has said it will refer around 1,200 young people to these delivery organisations, with the following number of referrals in each area:

- Birmingham and Solihull: 275 referrals
- East Midlands: 200 referrals
- Greater Manchester: 275 referrals
- Hertfordshire and Essex : 150 referrals
- Central and East Scotland: 150 referrals
- Southwest and Southeast Wales: 150 referrals.¹¹

The individuals will be referred to the delivery organisations between April and October 2026, and are expected to start their job placements between May and October 2026. This means all the phase one jobs should have finished by the end of April 2027. The placement would either end after six months, or earlier if the participant moves into paid employment outside of the scheme. Participants will be matched with new placements if they leave their initial job placement within the first four months.¹²

National Rollout

Grant guidance for the national rollout was published in June 2026. In November 2026 the scheme will be rolled out across the whole of Great Britain and will run until November 2028, meaning that jobs will need to be

⁷ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

⁸ Examples of organisations that the DWP has said may apply include specialist employment support organisations; charities, non-profits, and social enterprises; local authorities and Major Strategic Authorities (MSAs)

⁹ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

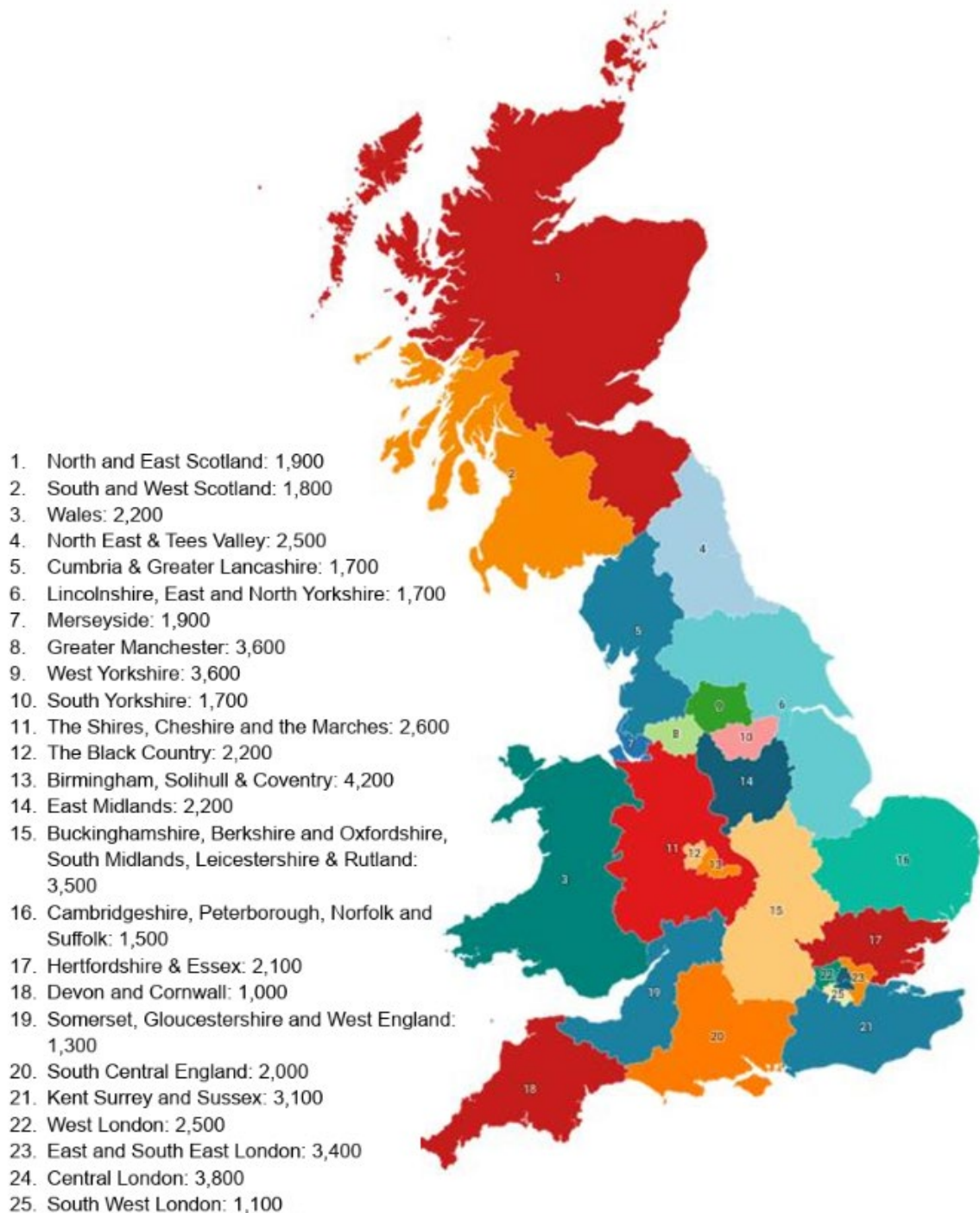
¹⁰ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee](#), 29 April 2026

¹¹ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

¹² DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

started by May 2028. There is the option of a further one-year extension however.¹³

The DWP has broken Great Britain into [25 delivery areas](#) (PDF), and a delivery organisation will be appointed to run the scheme in each area. The map below shows these areas and an estimated number of jobs for each area.¹⁴ The successful organisations will be announced in September 2026.¹⁵



¹³ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

¹⁴ DWP, [National Rollout: Area Map](#), 9 June 2026

¹⁵ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

Funding for the placements

The DWP will subsidise the wages of Job Guarantee placements. They will provide reimbursement to the employer for up to 25 hours a week of wages at the relevant [national minimum wage rate](#) for up to 6 months from the start of employment. Associated Employer National Insurance Contributions and employer minimum pension contributions will also be reimbursed where appropriate.¹⁶

Employers will also be eligible for up to £250 per participant for costs incurred by employers in relation to a participant commencing a job under the scheme, such as the costs of the basic equipment needed for the job or uniform costs.¹⁷

Employers of any size in Great Britain are eligible for funding, but there will be a limit on the number of funded jobs that an employer can have at any one time based on the size of the employer.¹⁸

The DWP will provide delivery organisations with between £2,150 and £2,650 per participant for the costs involved in delivering the scheme. This will include funding to provide the support and training that will be provided to each participant, to source job placements and match participants to these jobs and to cover administrative costs.¹⁹ In Phase One, this was broken down into up to £400 per participant for administration costs, and up to £2,250 for the other delivery costs.²⁰

Eligibility for the placements

A young person will only be able to start a Job Guarantee placement if they have been referred on to the scheme by the DWP. To be eligible, a young person has to be a Universal Credit claimant aged between 18 and 24, in the Intensive Work Search regime, and have either “been out of work and education for the last 18 months, or have minimal work history (have completed less than 50 hours of paid work) over the last 18 months”.²¹

The grant guidance says the eligibility criteria could be amended to allow more participants if there was spare capacity.²²

Job requirements

The jobs that are funded as part of the scheme can either be new or existing jobs, but existing employees or contractors cannot be displaced, dismissed, or have their hours reduced as a result of a Job Guarantee placement. The

¹⁶ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

¹⁷ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

¹⁸ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

¹⁹ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²⁰ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

²¹ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²² DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

jobs are expected to be for a minimum of 25 hours per week, but the DWP has said there are some cases in which the funded employment will be for less than 25 hours. This could be the case, for example, if the participant has caring responsibilities.²³

Apprenticeships are eligible for the scheme, although as with other jobs, the scheme will only provide reimbursement to the employer for up to 25 hours a week of wages paid at the [apprenticeship minimum wage](#). Employers who receive Job Guarantee funding for an apprentice can also receive an apprenticeship grant (see section 1.6).²⁴

The grant guidance explains the jobs must be “equivalent to a job not funded by the Jobs Guarantee and must not involve significant classroom or online training beyond that provided to regular employees”.²⁵

The guidance also explains that participants should be placed with employers who are “within the local area”. For the national rollout, participants “will be expected to take up a suitable job within a 90-minute travel radius of their home (unless a lower travel radius has been agreed by DWP)”, and this could be outside the delivery area in which the participant lives.²⁶

Delivery organisations will need to ensure there is a wide range of roles to meet participants’ different needs, and will be responsible for ensuring that participants are matched with appropriate jobs. They will also be expected to have regular contact with the employer to resolve any issues related to the placement.²⁷

The role of delivery organisations

Delivery organisations will be responsible for sourcing the jobs that are made available as part of the scheme. They will be expected to ensure the jobs offered are “of sufficient quality” and offer “meaningful employment”. They will also be responsible for matching participants to suitable jobs.²⁸

As explained above, delivery organisations will be expected to provide support to participants to help them prepare for and succeed in their job placement, and to support them to move into sustained employment at the end of the placement.²⁹

This support should be tailored to individual needs, but may include:

- Up to two weeks of pre-employment training and mentoring.

²³ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²⁴ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²⁵ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

²⁶ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²⁷ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

²⁸ DWP, [National Rollout: Grant Guidance](#), 9 June 2026

²⁹ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

- Support to both stay in the role and develop in the job. This could include on the job training, one-to-one mentoring, peer mentoring and support to re-engage for participants who have left their job early or who have disengaged.
- The support to help them find sustained employment after the placement could include support to put together a CV or interview preparation.³⁰

Delivery organisations will also help participants overcome potential barriers to work.

1.2 Youth Jobs Grant

The government announced the introduction of a Youth Jobs Grant in March 2026 as part of the expansion of the Youth Guarantee.³¹ It launched on 30 June 2026.³²

A grant of £3,000 will be available to employers in Great Britain if they take on an eligible young person. Young people aged 18 to 24 are eligible if they have been out of work and receiving Universal Credit for six months, and are not eligible for the Jobs Guarantee.³³

The entirety of the grant will only be paid if the young person is employed for at least 16 weeks and they work at least 300 hours.³⁴

The government expects 60,000 young people to be taken on by businesses over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29 as result of this grant. It will close to new vacancies in October 2028.³⁵

Eligibility requirements

Employers of any size in Great Britain are eligible for the grant as long as they have been trading for at least six months.³⁶

Eligible employers will submit their vacancies to the DWP who will check the vacancies are eligible. For the vacancies that are accepted, the DWP will identify and refer suitable candidates, and the employer can then select their preferred candidate.³⁷

³⁰ DWP, [Jobs Guarantee Grant Guidance](#), 17 February 2026

³¹ DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

³² DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant](#), 30 June 2026

³³ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

³⁴ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

³⁵ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

³⁶ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

³⁷ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

Vacancies need to meet the scheme's minimum term requirement that they offer paid work for at least 25 hours per week and last at least 16 weeks. They need to be comparable to other roles the employer offers, and cannot displace, or reduce the working hours of, existing staff.³⁸

There is a maximum number of vacancies that can be funded depending on the size of the employer:

- Employers with 0-3 employees can only have 1 funded employee
- Employers with 4-9 employees can have 2 funded employees
- Employers with 10 or more employees can have 20% of their employees funded.³⁹

When a young person leaves their funded role, the employer can apply for a grant for a new young person to replace them.

An employer can apply for a Youth Jobs Grant for jobs filled as apprenticeships, and an employer can receive both an apprenticeship grant (see section 1.6) and the Youth Jobs Grant for the same employee.⁴⁰

Funding of the grant

The grant will be paid in two payments.

An initial payment of £1,800 is paid after 6 weeks of employment as long as the young person has worked at least 50 hours.

If the 50 hours threshold is not met, then the payment would be paid after 10 weeks if they have worked at least 100 hours.

The second payment of £1,200 is paid after 18 weeks as long as the young person has worked at least 300 hours. If this is not met then it will be paid after 22 weeks if they have met this number of hours. If, at that point, the young person has not worked at least 300 hours then the second payment would not be made.

This means that the grant will still be paid even if the young person does not meet the minimum term requirement.⁴¹

³⁸ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Terms and Conditions version 1.0](#), 30 June 2026

³⁹ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Grant guidance](#), 30 June 2026

⁴⁰ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Employer frequently asked questions](#), 30 June 2026

⁴¹ DWP, [Youth Jobs Grant: Terms and Conditions version 1.0](#), 30 June 2026

1.3

Youth Hubs and the Youth Guarantee Gateway

Youth hubs are part of the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Youth Offer which aims to provide extra help to find work to Universal Credit claimants aged 16 to 24.⁴²

Youth hubs offer support for up to six months from a youth hub work coach. The work coach will have a "primary focus of addressing key barriers that are currently preventing claimants from finding and keeping employment", and they will work with external partners to provide support to the claimants.⁴³

In September 2025, the government said it will provide £25 million to "almost double" the number of youth hubs to "over 200 places across England, Scotland and Wales in the next three years."⁴⁴ In December 2025, it said youth hubs "will be expanded to every local area of Great Britain", meaning there would be over 360 hubs by 2029.⁴⁵

In January 2026, there were 114 youth hubs, which was 14 more than in January 2025.⁴⁶

In June 2026, the DWP announced the areas in which 178 hubs will open in the next two years. Of these, 153 are in England, 18 are in Scotland and 7 are in Wales. A further 20 hubs opened between March 2026 and June 2026 (15 in England, 1 in Scotland and 4 in Wales).⁴⁷

The DWP has said that the hubs will provide similar employment support to that provided by 'youth points' in the Netherlands which put a "strong emphasis on early intervention, local accountability and active engagement". The Netherlands has one of the world's lowest NEET rates.⁴⁸

⁴² DWP, [Help to find work for Universal Credit claimants aged 16 to 24](#), 28 March 2024

⁴³ The DWP deposit Universal Credit guidance in the House of Commons Library every six months (which can be [accessed via the Rightsnet website](#)), and the most recent guidance was deposited on 24 November 2025. The latest version of the chapter on the [DWP Youth Offer \(PDF\)](#) covers Youth Hubs.

⁴⁴ DWP, [Football clubs partner with Government to help young people into work](#), 24 September 2025

⁴⁵ DWP, [Almost a million young people to benefit from expanded support, new training, and work experience opportunities](#), 6 December 2025

⁴⁶ [PQ 110842](#), 11 February 2026

⁴⁷ DWP, [Almost 180 more Youth Hubs to help young people build skills and find jobs](#), 15 June 2026

⁴⁸ DWP, [UK to roll out Dutch-style employment support across Britain](#), 12 June 2026

Youth Guarantee Gateway

The Youth Guarantee Gateway will provide Universal Credit claimants aged 16 to 24 with a “dedicated support session”, followed by four additional weeks of intensive support.⁴⁹

The government has said that around 900,000 young people will be offered this support over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29, and that the support could be delivered at a youth hub.⁵⁰

1.4

Workplace experience and training

The government intends to create up to 150,000 additional work experience placements for young people and up to 145,000 additional places on the Sector based work academy programme over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29.⁵¹

Jobcentre Plus work coaches will organise [work experience placements](#) that last between one and eight weeks for Jobseeker’s Allowance or Universal Credit claimants.⁵²

Participants will continue to receive their benefits while they are on these placements, and Jobcentre Plus will cover travel and childcare costs if necessary.

The [sector-based work academy programme](#) (SWAPs) is in place in England and Scotland and provides employment placements for people receiving benefits who are ready for work. These placements can last up to six weeks and provide pre-employment training, a work experience placement and potentially a job interview.⁵³

The DWP has reported that almost 100,000 SWAPs were started in 2025/26 and that 25,000 of these were started by young people aged 16 to 24.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ DWP, [Almost a million young people to benefit from expanded support, new training, and work experience opportunities](#), 10 December 2025

⁵⁰ [PQ 98436](#), 16 December 2026

⁵¹ [PQ 98436](#), 16 December 2026

⁵² Gov.uk, [Help with moving from benefits to work](#) (accessed 18/03/2026)

⁵³ UK Government, [Sector-based work academy programme \(SWAPs\)](#) (accessed 27 February 2026)

⁵⁴ DWP, [Employment lifeline for young people across the country as Government offers 300,000 new work experience and training placements](#), 29 May 2026

1.5

Guaranteed college or further education (FE) provider place

In the October 2025 [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#), the government said it will automatically allocate a young person a place at a local college or FE provider if they do not have a post-16 study plan when they leave school at age 16 or 17.⁵⁵

This guarantee will be tested in “a series of pilots” before the approach is rolled out across England. The young person will also be provided with the support they need to remain in education or training.⁵⁶

All young people who turn 16 or 17 in an academic year are “entitled to an offer (including a conditional offer) of a suitable place, by the end of September, to continue in education or training the following year” under the ‘September Guarantee’.⁵⁷

The white paper also explains other ways in which the government aims to ensure more young people stay in post-16 education. The Library briefing [The post-16 education and skills white paper](#) describes these proposals.

1.6

Apprenticeships

The government intends to create 50,000 more apprenticeships over the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29, and has made various changes to the apprenticeship system to encourage young people to start apprenticeships. These changes are summarised in this section and explained in more detail in the Library briefing [NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training](#).

In February 2026, the government announced it intends to pilot a “university clearance-style system” to encourage more young people to start apprenticeships. ‘Near miss’ applicants who fail to secure their top choice apprenticeship will be “re-directed to similar opportunities in their area”. The system would also include an online platform which will include outcomes data for people who have already completed apprenticeships to help young people choose the most helpful apprenticeships for their future career.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ DfE/DWP/DSIT, [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#), 20 October 2025, p43

⁵⁶ DfE/DWP/DSIT, [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#), 20 October 2025, p43

⁵⁷ DfE, [Participation of young people: education, employment and training](#), 4 April 2024

⁵⁸ DWP, [Government vows to “unlock opportunities for young people across the country” ahead of National Apprenticeship Week](#), 8 February 2026

Foundation apprenticeships

The government described the introduction of foundation apprenticeships as an “important first step” towards the Youth Guarantee, in the Post-16 education and skills white paper.⁵⁹

Foundation apprenticeships are intended to support young people to progress into further work-based learning and sustained employment, and to “provide a route into apprenticeships for young people who have not been able to benefit from apprenticeships up to this point”.⁶⁰

They are only available to young people aged 16 to 21, or people aged 22 to 24 who have a local authority Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, have previously been in care, or are a prisoner or prison leaver.⁶¹

Employers will receive an incentive of up to £2,000 for new starters on foundation apprenticeships. They will be paid £667 if the apprentice is still participating in the apprenticeship 90 days after their start date and another £667 if they are still participating 242 days after the start date. They will be paid a further £666 if, within six months of finishing the foundation apprenticeship, the apprentice starts a new non-foundation apprenticeship with the same employer.⁶²

The following seven foundation apprenticeships, which all have a typical duration of eight months, were approved at the end of April 2025 for starts from August 2025:

- building service engineering
- engineering and manufacturing
- finishing trades
- hardware, network and infrastructure
- health and social care
- onsite trades
- software and data⁶³

In March 2026, the government announced a further foundation apprenticeship in hospitality and retail from April 2026.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ DFE/DWP/DSIT, [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#), 21 November 2025

⁶⁰ [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education \(Transfer of Functions etc\) Bill \[HL\]](#), 22 October 2024

⁶¹ DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026, para 160

⁶² DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026, para 133.2

⁶³ Skills England, [Apprenticeship finder](#) (accessed 30 May 2025)

⁶⁴ DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

Level 7 apprenticeships

In May 2025, the government announced that funding for level 7 apprenticeships will only be provided to new apprentices aged 16 to 21 from January 2026.⁶⁵ Level 7 apprenticeships are advanced, master's degree-equivalent programs that combine full-time employment with high-level academic study. The government has said the savings from removing level 7 apprenticeships funding for people aged 22 or over will fund foundation apprenticeships.

The Library briefing [Skills policy in England](#) provides further information on the decision to remove funding for most level 7 apprenticeships.

Funding for apprenticeships involving young people

The government has announced funding changes for employers who do not [pay the apprenticeship levy](#). Employers pay the levy if they have an annual pay bill (the amount it pays its employees) of over £3 million a year. Therefore, the companies that do not pay the levy will be mostly small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 250 employees.

The government has said it will cover the “full cost of apprenticeships” for 16 to 24-year-olds who are employed by SMEs⁶⁶, and that SMEs will be paid an incentive to take on new young apprentices.⁶⁷

From the start of the next academic year in August 2026, the government will fully fund eligible apprenticeships for employers who do not [pay the apprenticeship levy](#).⁶⁸ This means the government will pay the entire cost of training and assessment for these apprenticeships, as long as this cost doesn't exceed the [maximum level of funding for that apprenticeship](#).⁶⁹

Apprenticeships for non-levy paying employers involving apprentices aged 16 to 18 were fully funded prior to this being implemented, so this change will expand this policy to include apprentices who are aged 19 to 24. Non-levy paying employers currently pay 5% of the training and assessment costs of these apprenticeships.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ DfE, [Next generation of builders and carers set to rebuild Britain](#), 27 May 2025

⁶⁶ DWP, [50,000 more young people to benefit from apprenticeships as Government unveils new skills reforms to get Britain working](#), 10 December 2025

⁶⁷ DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

⁶⁸ DWP, [50,000 more young people to benefit from apprenticeships as Government unveils new skills reforms to get Britain working](#), 10 December 2025

⁶⁹ [PQ 97674](#), 5 December 2025

⁷⁰ DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026

The government has also announced that non-levy paying employers who take on new apprentices aged 16 to 24 will receive an apprenticeship incentive of £2,000.⁷¹ This will be available from October 2026.⁷²

This will be paid in two instalments, with half paid after 90 days and the other half paid after a year.⁷³

This will be in addition to a grant of £1,000 which is paid to every employer who takes on apprentices aged 16 to 18 (or 19 to 24 if they have previously been, or are, in care, or who have an EHC plan).⁷⁴

⁷¹ DWP, [Major employment drive to help unlock 200,000 new jobs and apprenticeships for next generation](#), 16 March 2026

⁷² DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026, para 133.2

⁷³ DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026, para 137

⁷⁴ DWP, [Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027](#), 15 June 2026, para 125

2

Trailblazer areas

The [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) announced that the Youth Guarantee would be trialled in eight mayoral authorities from spring 2025. These authorities are referred to in the white paper as Youth Guarantee ‘trailblazers’. The aim of the trailblazers is to identify the young people who are most at risk of becoming NEET, and to test various proposals to support them into education, training or work. The learning from these trailblazers will then help with the future development of the Youth Guarantee.⁷⁵

The trailblazers were initially due to run for twelve months from Spring 2025, with £45 million provided in 2025/26 for them.⁷⁶ It was announced in August 2025 that the trailblazer scheme would be extended by another year with further funding of £45 million.⁷⁷

The trailblazers will be in the following eight mayoral authorities, with each trailblazer receiving £5 million in 2025/26:

- Liverpool City Region
- West Midlands
- Tees Valley
- East Midlands
- West of England
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- two in London.⁷⁸

This section highlights some of the Youth Guarantee trailblazer activities that have taken place in each area, but may not include all activities.

⁷⁵ DWP/HMT/DfE, [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), 26 November 2024, para 120

⁷⁶ [PQ 35801](#), 12 March 2025

⁷⁷ DWP, [Thousands more young people to get training and work support as Government extends £45 million scheme](#), 21 August 2025

⁷⁸ DWP, [Biggest employment reforms in a generation unveiled to Get Britain Working again](#), 26 November 2024

2.1

Liverpool City Region

The Liverpool City Region trial launched on the 23 May 2025. The region received £5 million of funding to work with those aged 18 to 21 who are most at risk of becoming NEET. They will receive support including “work and training opportunities, free travel passes, mental health support and money advice”.⁷⁹

In March 2026 the combined authority said that 50 projects were in place which were targeting 2,000 young people.⁸⁰

In October 2025, Liverpool City Region also announced a ‘YouthPath’ initiative.⁸¹ This initiative, which was a partnership between the combined authority and the national charity [Movement to Work](#), supports young people aged 16 to 30 who are NEET. It aims to provide “meaningful employment pathways” for these young people, which could be work experience, apprenticeships or job opportunities.⁸²

2.2

West Midlands

The West Midlands Combined Authority has said it will use its £5 million trailblazer funding to focus on three “core interventions”:⁸³

- Intervention 1: Enabling young people to engage with employers through subsidised work experience and upskilling
- Intervention 2: Connecting them to training via pre-apprenticeship programmes with mentoring and guaranteed interviews
- Intervention 3: Supporting seamless transitions to reduce NEET risk, particularly in underserved communities

The combined authority has said that £4 million would be allocated to the seven local authorities within the combined authority for them to deliver the first and third intervention, while the remaining £1 million would focus on the second intervention. Each local authority has [set out its own proposals](#).⁸⁴

⁷⁹ DWP, [Thousands of young people set to benefit from new support into work and training](#), 23 May 2025

⁸⁰ Liverpool City Region, [Young people tell of life-changing £5m programme that’s delivering dream jobs and hope](#), 23 March 2026

⁸¹ Liverpool City Region, [YouthPath initiative launched to tackle youth unemployment across Liverpool City Region](#), 16 October 2025

⁸² Movement to Work, [YouthPath](#) (accessed 29 April 2026)

⁸³ West Midlands Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer](#) (accessed 29 April 2026)

⁸⁴ West Midlands Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer](#) (accessed 29 April 2026)

In February 2026, the combined authority reported it has supported more than 800 unemployed young people.⁸⁵

The West Midlands Combined Authority has also set up a [YouthPath](#) initiative with the charity [Movement to Work](#), which launched in April 2025. This includes a commitment to create 20,000 opportunities with West Midlands employers for young people aged 16 to 30 who are NEET.⁸⁶

2.3

Tees Valley

The Tees Valley included work placements as part of its trial which ran from spring 2025 until the end of March 2026. Young people aged 18 to 21 who were NEET were eligible to apply, with participants allocated a key worker who organised a work placement for the young person. This could be an unpaid work taster or a paid work placement lasting for three or six months, paid at the National Minimum Wage rate. The key worker also continued to provide support during the work placement.⁸⁷

The paid work placements were subsidised by the combined authority.⁸⁸

In September 2025 the combined authority reported that more than 700 people, and almost 180 businesses, had signed up for placements.⁸⁹

The work placements were expected to start by October 2025.⁹⁰

2.4

East Midlands

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) trial was approved in March 2025. The EMCCA said it would use its £5 million to offer young people at risk of becoming NEET “tailored programmes that give them the skills and support they need to succeed”, focusing on:

- the transition from school or college into work

⁸⁵ West Midlands Combined Authority, [Hundreds of unemployed young people supported by £5m Youth Trailblazer fund](#), 23 February 2026

⁸⁶ Youth Employment UK, [New YouthPath Scheme for West Midlands Young People](#), 16 April 2025

⁸⁷ Tees Valley Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer – FAQs \(for applicants\)](#) (accessed 30 April 2026)

⁸⁸ Tees Valley Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer – FAQ \(for employers\)](#) (accessed 30 April 2026)

⁸⁹ Tees Valley Combined Authority, [More Than 700 Young People Sign Up To Take On Trailblazer Challenge](#), 18 September 2025

⁹⁰ Tees Valley Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer – FAQs \(for applicants\)](#) (accessed 30 April 2026)

- providing tailored support to young people who need extra help
- encouraging employers to take on young people.⁹¹

Specific programmes have been set up across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire as part of the trial.⁹²

2.5

West of England

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority said it would use its “nearly £5 million of funding” to “pioneer a new approach, testing how local leadership, partnership working, and enhanced support services can improve outcomes for young people”. As part of this, it announced that every young person who took part in the scheme would get a free WESTpass giving them free bus travel until March 2026.⁹³

The combined authority said the trial will focus on three “key cohorts”:

- Rural areas of North East Somerset where people can face transport barriers - facilitating transport solutions including e-bike loans and interview opportunities;
- Areas of significant deprivation and high levels of youth unemployment in south Bristol – providing tailored one-to-one coaching and work experience taster sessions;
- In South Gloucestershire, focusing particularly on wards with high numbers of Universal Credit claimants - helping young people with special educational needs.⁹⁴

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority reported in April 2026 that over 300 young people had participated in the scheme, with 125 progressing into work, apprenticeships, volunteering, education or training opportunities.⁹⁵

The combined authority will expand the programme in 2026/27 to provide support for care leavers in North Somerset.⁹⁶

⁹¹ East Midlands Combined County Authority, [£5 million scheme to help young people find work or training](#), 12 March 2025

⁹² East Midlands Combined County Authority, [Youth Guarantee Trailblazer](#) (accessed 30 April 2026)

⁹³ West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee supporting young people into work and training](#), 12 June 2025

⁹⁴ West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, [Youth Guarantee supporting young people into work and training](#), 12 June 2025

⁹⁵ West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, [Milestone reached in skills initiative for young people](#), 30 April 2026

⁹⁶ West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, [Milestone reached in skills initiative for young people](#), 30 April 2026

2.6

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) began in April 2025, with the combined authority saying it would use its £5 million funding to:

- Provide tailored support for 18-21-year-olds to prepare for employment and access local education and training opportunities.
- Enhance collaboration between local councils, Jobcentre Plus, employers, and other key partners.
- Improve digital services and outreach to connect young people with support systems.⁹⁷

CPCA also set up a Youth Forum in January 2025 to “guide the delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer”. The forum is made up of 16 to 21-year-olds and will “consult on key aspects of the Trailblazer, including barriers to employment, digital service delivery, and designing ‘young person-friendly’ job opportunities”.⁹⁸

The combined authority announced in December 2025 that twenty organisations would receive funding as part of the trailblazer, with £1.5 million divided between these organisations.⁹⁹

Trailblazer funding is also being used for a Youth Impact Trailblazer programme which provides targeted, one-to-one support for young people without foundational life skills.¹⁰⁰

CPCA is also trying to encourage more young people to start apprenticeships by offering local employers £4,000 if they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18. This is in addition to the grants paid by the government (see section 1.6). It will also fund six-week internships for 18 to 21-year-olds.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to Champion Young Voices in Youth Guarantee Trailblazer](#), 21 January 2025

⁹⁸ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to Champion Young Voices in Youth Guarantee Trailblazer](#), 21 January 2025

⁹⁹ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [Twenty Organisations Receive Funding to Support Young People Through Youth Guarantee Trailblazer Programme](#), 11 December 2025

¹⁰⁰ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [Youth Trailblazer Initiative Offers Lifeline to Cambridgeshire’s Most Vulnerable Young Adults](#), 20 April 2026

¹⁰¹ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, [New Wave of Apprenticeships and Internships to Launch Careers for Young People in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#), 2 February 2026

2.7

London

There are two trailblazers in London:

- [Central London Forward](#) is running an employment and skills programme called [Full Potential](#) covering the twelve Central London boroughs. This programme will run until March 2027. The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the accountable body for this trailblazer.¹⁰²
- A ‘pan-London’ trailblazer which is co-ordinated and managed by the GLA.¹⁰³ Since July 2025 this trailblazer has been part of the GLA’s Supporting and Inspiring Young London programme, which has been allocated £527.8 million over a three year period.¹⁰⁴

London Councils have published further details on these trailblazers.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Central London Forward, [Trailblazer - Full Potential Programme](#) (accessed 1 May 2026)

¹⁰³ London Assembly, [MD3348 London Get Britain Working Trailblazers 2025-26](#), 22 April 2025

¹⁰⁴ London Assembly, [MD3380 Delivery Plan – Supporting and Inspiring Young London](#), 30 June 2025

¹⁰⁵ London Councils, [London Get Britain Working Trailblazers](#) (PDF), May 2025

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