

Support mechanisms and interventions are most effective in re-engaging NEET learners within Further Education FE settings in Wales?

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01. Early Identification

While frameworks like the YEPF promote early identification using data indicators such as attendance and attainment, this approach is often too narrow.

Numerical data alone fail to detect "invisible risks" such as caregiving responsibilities, trauma, or mental health struggles (Henseke & Schoon, 2025).

To be effective, early identification should combine data with pastoral insight and multi-agency input.

02. VET and Employability Interventions

VET programmes provide alternative pathways (Furlong et al., 2006), but struggle to keep pace with evolving job markets and face access barriers in rural areas.

A purely skills-based lens ignores emotional readiness, digital exclusion, and mobility issues, especially for socially disadvantaged learners (Divan et al., 2022). Therefore, they are necessary but not sufficient.

03. Mentoring and Tailored Support

Research shows mentoring boosts self-esteem, engagement, and long-term aspiration (Claro & Perelmiter, 2022).

Mentoring works best when relationships are strong, culturally relevant, and consistent.

When integrated into wider support systems, mentoring becomes key to building motivation and connection.

However, inconsistent delivery and insufficient professional training risk reducing its long-term impact.

04. Mental Health

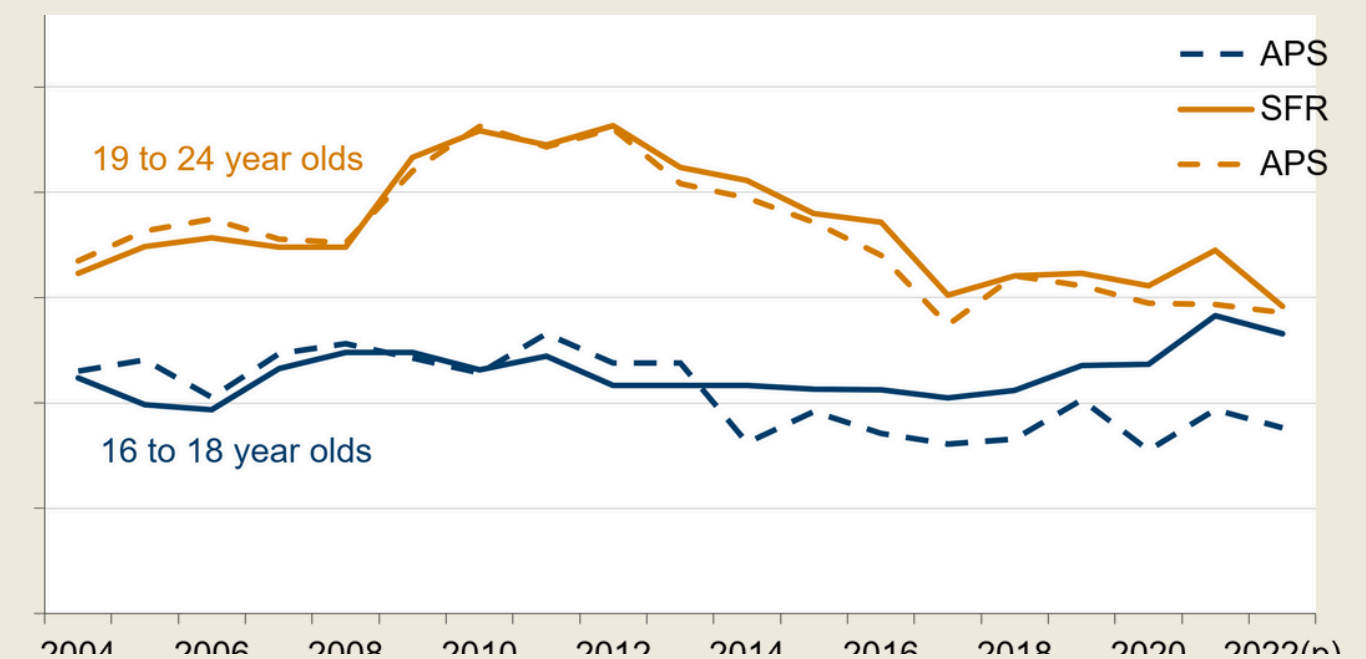
Evidence links poor mental health to both causes and consequences of NEET status (Gariepy et al., 2022).

While initiatives like the Whole School Approach show promise, mental health support remains inconsistent, especially in deprived areas (Children's Commissioner, 2021).

Emotional needs are too often externalised to other sectors, rather than embedded in FE settings.

CONTEXT

- *Definition of NEET: Young people aged 16–24 not in education, employment, or training.*
- *NEET learners (16–24) in Wales remain affected by social, economic, and educational disadvantage.*
- *In 2023, 11.2% of young people in Wales were classed as NEET (Welsh Government, 2023)*



RESEARCH GAPS

- Most interventions lack long-term evidence due to limited follow-up research (Stea et al., 2024).
- Intersectional needs—such as those of disabled or minority youth—are often overlooked (Rasalingam et al., 2021).
- Digital tools show promise but remain under-evaluated (Lehtimaki et al., 2021).

Focusing on behaviour risks ignoring the deeper structural causes of disengagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build longitudinal tracking into all intervention evaluations.
- Design intersectional, culturally relevant interventions.
- Expand digital mentoring and learning platforms, especially in remote areas.
- Embed mental health literacy and trauma-informed care into FE delivery.
- Ensure VET pathways are flexible, localised, and matched to current job market needs.
- Prioritise multi-agency collaboration that includes young people in the co-design process.

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