


Please cite the Published Version

Russell, Lisa , Thompson, Ron, Davey, Katherine and Bishop, Jo (2024) Mapping the provision of NEET early interventions in England (MINE). Project Report. Manchester Metropolitan University. (Unpublished)

Publisher: Manchester Metropolitan University

Version: Published Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/638162/>

Usage rights:  In Copyright

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

The Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant Annual Report

Applicant: Professor Lisa Russell

ID/Ref: RPG-2021-144

Project title: Mapping the provision of NEET early interventions in England (MINE)

Report submission date: November 2024

The grant overview:

This longitudinal research project aims to improve understandings of early intervention programmes for young people aged 14-16 considered vulnerable to becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). The project started on 22nd November 2021 and is now due to be completed on the 16th May 2026. The project moved to The Manchester Metropolitan University with effect from the 15th July 2024.

Size of budget: £357,704

Names of those undertaking research and extent of their commitment:

Professor Lisa Russell – 0.2FTE (replacement teaching funded by the Leverhulme Trust). Moved from The University of Huddersfield to The Manchester Metropolitan University 17th June 2024.

Dr Katherine Davey – 1.0 FTE (funded by the Leverhulme Trust). Moved from The University of Huddersfield to The Manchester Metropolitan University 15th July 2024.

Dr Ron Thompson – 0.2 FTE (funded by The University of Huddersfield, due to retire 30th November 2024).

Dr Jo Bishop – 0.2FTE (funded by The University of Huddersfield).

Research activity completed to date:

The project is on track, Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the fieldwork has now been completed as indicated in the two previous annual reports.

Phase 2 Fieldwork: Gather school-level data Sept 22-Aug 24)

Work done during this second phase focused on data gathered at the school/organisation level within six case study locations (five based on local authorities and one concerned with home-educated young people across 12 authorities). In practice it incorporated 19 sites in total as the intention was to track the young people as they moved. Phase 2 included 81 young people located across six ethnographic case study sites located across England, named here according to the nature of their location:

1. **Northern Urban** – interviews with 20 young people, 5 professionals; 19 lifecycle maps; 17 cardboard cut-out images and Year 11 follow-up interviews; 25 participant observations. Hours in the field: 75 hours 05 minutes in-person, 6 hours 5 minutes virtual (3 settings).
2. **Northwest Urban** – 38 interviews with 16 young people, 6 professionals; 16 lifecycle maps; 14 cardboard cut-out images and Year 11 follow up

interviews; 14 participant observations. 7 photographs. Hours in the field: 56 hours 45 minutes in-person, 6 hours virtual (5 settings & LA).

3. **Midlands Rural/Urban** – interviews with 17 young people, 12 professionals; 10 lifecycle maps; 11 cardboard cut-out images and Year 11 follow-up interviews; 13 participant observations. Hours in the field: 109 hours 05 minutes in-person, 8 hours virtual (7 settings & LA).
 4. **London Borough** – interviews with 2 professionals, 15 young people; 10 lifecycle maps; 10 cardboard cut-out images and 11 Year 11 follow-up interviews; 9 participant observations. Hours in the field: 69 hours 05 minutes in-person, 2 hours 45 minutes virtual (6 settings).
 5. **Northeast Urban** – interviews with 7 young people, 5 professionals; 7 lifecycle maps; 7 cardboard cut-out images and Year 11 follow-up interview; 4 participant observations. Hours in the field: 23 hours 25 minutes in-person, 3 hours 45 minutes virtual (3 settings & LA).
 6. **EHE** (not geographically specific) – interviews with 11 professionals, 6 young people and 10 family members; 4 lifecycle maps; 3 participant observations. Hours in the field: 44 hours 45 minutes in-person, 11 hours 15 minutes virtual (across 12 LAs).
- Overall, the main corpus of data collected includes:
 - 159 interviews with 81 young people aged 14-16 (18 currently EHE across the case study sites).
 - 66 young people lifecycle maps.
 - 62 cardboard cut-out ‘current and future self’ images.
 - 39 professional interviews with 41 professionals.
 - 10 EHE family members interviews with 9 family members.
 - Total time spent in the field: 416 hours.
 - 378 hours 10 minutes (in-person).
 - 37 hours 50 minutes spent in field (virtual).
 - 68 participant observations.
 - 24 education settings – including: mainstream secondary schools, pupil referral units, 14-16 FE college provision, adult community education settings, social emotional mental health school, careers providers.
 - Coding frames have been devised using the qualitative analysis software NVivo for the transcripts of Year 10 and Year 11 young people interviews, the EHE young people, and the professional interviews. All Year 10 young people interview data has been transcribed and analysed. All EHE young people, family and professional data has also been transcribed and analysed. The Year 11 young people interview data has been transcribed and is currently being analysed. 17 Year 11 young people and 6 professional interviews have been coded. Analysis is ongoing.
 - The project website has been updated and moved to MMU (see [Mapping Interventions for NEET Young People in England \(MINE\) | MMU](#)).
 - The project twitter account remains active.
 - The third MINE project newsletter has been distributed to key contacts/stakeholder. [MINE Research Newsletter Nov.2024.pdf](#)

- Advisory Board Meetings have taken place 15th January 2024 and 1st July 2024 with a fifth scheduled for 20th January 2025.

Next Phase of the research plans

Phase 3 Fieldwork: Gather post-school data Sept 24-Aug 25)

Phase 3 incorporates gathering post-school data to investigate how the young people experience their first year of their post-school transitions.

Data collection is ongoing and thus far includes:

- Interviews with 11 young people following their post-16 transition.
- Approximately 17 hours 25 minutes of in-person fieldwork.
- Text messages, emails and phone calls with the young people, professionals and parents.

Summary of initial findings:

Mainstream secondary education is not working for a significant number of young people.

- There is evidence of a progressive disengagement from school, with most of the young people reporting positive experiences of primary school but viewing secondary school very negatively.

Finley (Year 10) – The Transition to Secondary School

Finley was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome during primary school. After he completed his primary education in Year 6, he progressed to a mainstream secondary school. Here, in his words, Finley *‘went to hell for a year’*. Finley was heavily bullied throughout Year 7 and describes how *‘every day I felt like I was going to die’*. He came out as bi-sexual, which contributed to the bullying. His mental health suffered, and he was suicidal.

In Year 8, Finley says he *‘lost it’* during an incident school and was permanently excluded. He says being out of this mainstream school environment was *‘an amazing feeling’*. He spent two years at an alternative provision for pupils with social and emotional needs before getting a place at a Special School. Unlike in mainstream school, Finley feels that he was *‘actually accepted and people liked me for who I was’*.

- Common difficulties the young people experience include bullying, mental health issues and (un-)diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND]. These difficulties are often linked to the young people experiencing broken trajectories through the education system, including missing, changing or leaving secondary school. For some young people, these difficulties worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ellis (Year 10) - Returning to School after Lockdown

Ellis's mental health deteriorated significantly after their return to mainstream school following the COVID-19 lockdowns and whilst on a two-year waiting list for an ADHD and autism assessment. They describe how:

[...] it got to that point my demeanour had completely changed. I had just stopped caring about what teachers were saying, and even though I respected them I just stopped caring. Because at that point I'd lost so much education that in my mind there was no point forward. And so I would walk out of lessons a lot, yell at teachers a lot, and just go to sleep in lesson.

Due to their behaviour, the school moved Ellis temporarily into an on-site alternative provision. Here, Ellis was required to engage in self-directed learning and unable to socialise with peers. Although this was intended by the school to facilitate Ellis's reintegration into the main school environment, Ellis describes their experience as a 'punishment'. In Year 10, they were fearful about handling the stress of re-adjusting to the mainstream school environment again.

Broken trajectories have a considerable impact on young people's learning.

- Some young people have missed considerable periods of their education whilst they are between schools (e.g. following exclusion) or not attending due to exclusion or truancy.
- Some are aware of the impact this may have on the high-stakes exams they are due to take in Year 11:

'[...] once you get kicked out you're now officially behind, because you're not getting the support you would get in school. And then, now when it comes to me doing my GCSEs I don't get the grades that I want.' (Rhiannon, Year 11).

- The curriculum (subject options, exam board, schemes of work) is different in each educational setting that young people attend. This means that young people have to drop some subjects or take up new ones. As Hannah (Year 10) describes when she moved into a Pupil Referral Unit:

"They don't do health and social here and they don't do, they don't do health and social, food tech or geography here'.

- The curriculum in Pupil Referral Units or Alternative Education settings is sometimes

narrower than the curriculum in mainstream school.

- It is harder to move in and out of provisions and interventions as a young person reaches Year 11, as curriculum content can vary from one setting to the next. This limits the time and space left available for the young person to catch up on any curriculum content they may have missed previously.
- Among the young people with experience of permanent exclusion, there is a sense of frustration at their broken trajectories.

A fragmented careers provision and advice landscape.

- Overall, the formal careers provision available to young people is varied, with different local authorities and settings operating differently: some 'buy in' advice while other settings take a more individualised approach.
- Professionals often express concerns that not enough resources are allocated to career provision.

'the provision varies from school to school, because there's no set standard. There's just the benchmarks, and that's why I can't be like 'I need more time', because there's no standard established time it requires. (Head of Careers and Teacher, Secondary School – allocated one period a week for careers provision).

- There is evidence of young people having access to careers fairs, one-to-one advice from careers advisors, career lessons and support from subject and form tutors. However, for many the advice has been limited or fractured.

Hannah (Year 10) – Missing Opportunities for Advice

The Pupil Referral unit Hannah attended offered a weekly careers lesson. However, Hannah was on a reduced timetable so had not attended this. When asked if she had received any careers advice in school, she replied:

'I was supposed to, but yeah in the lesson called careers, but because I don't do afternoons I'm never in that lesson, because it's in the afternoons.'

- Some young people had experience of work, paid or otherwise.
- A significant number had not had the opportunity to complete work experience or placements through their education setting, sometimes because their setting did not offer this. Sometimes the young people's broken trajectories meant they had missed work experience opportunities or had not been able to make the necessary arrangements.

- By Year 11, most of the young people were keen to find paid part-time or voluntary work. Lack of experience and their age seems to be a key barrier for the young people in finding work. A small number of the young people have experience of initiating their own opportunities to make money through self-employment, for example they have had their own artwork commissioned, have designed games and operate streaming content.

The rise of the Elective Home Educated population

- The Elective Home Educated (EHE) population is growing. Professionals working with this population indicate that the number of families deregistering children from school has escalated since the onset of COVID-19. Our original focus was not on the EHE cohort, but our emerging findings suggest that this population are changing in size and nature, and at present there appears to be very little known/published on the topic.
- The largest cohort are from Years 9, 10 and 11 and some evidence suggests that some young people are encouraged to de-register from their mainstream school setting and 'elect' to become home educated.
- Schools and wider services (e.g. CAHMS) are under-resourced to meet the needs of these young people, including those who are persistently absent, have (un)diagnosed SEND or poor mental health.

Most of them [schools] are really trying, and I think the genuine thing is that we haven't got provision that works for these learners anywhere, and we are doing the best we can to mop up, because we've got some advantages over schools, in terms of our size and our approach. But ultimately there isn't, the need isn't being met, and that's, I think, only going to continue to be a problem. (Local Authority, Education Service Manager).

- Families and young people lose trust in formal education systems often because of their needs not being met.
- For many families, taking their child out of mainstream school is not an active choice, but rather a forced decision and deemed a last resort.
- Local Authority representatives feel that, with the growth in the EHE population, there are now not enough professionals working specifically for/with the EHE cohort.

List of research events where findings have been presented:

- Time spent in a multi-sited, national-based ethnography when understanding NEET interventions in England. (6th -7th June 2024) at Rethinking critical ethnography: interconnections between doing ethnography and transformation in educational contexts at The University of Zaragoza.

- How times have changed – re-thinking how time is theorised, spent and understood in a multi-sited, national-based ethnography. (2nd-4th September 2024) at The Oxford Ethnography and Education Conference at New College, Oxford University.
- Playing the Game? Young People ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET and their investment in education. (3rd – 5th September) at the Journal of Youth Studies Conference at Ulster University, Belfast.
- Mapping Interventions for young people ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET in England. (16th-17th Oct 2024). Indie Education Conference, Hobart, Australia.
- Managing ethics when doing ethnographies: working with the elective home educated and those vulnerable to becoming NEET. (8th November 2024) at The European Educational Research Association Network-19 Ethnography.
- ‘Labouring to Learn’: NEET young peoples’ educational experiences of resilience, resistance and rejection. (20th November 2024) at The Institute for Childrens Future Institute Launch at The Manchester Metropolitan University.

List of publications:

- Mental health and its implications for young people vulnerable to becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Russell, L., Thompson, R., Pike, J. & Bishop, J., 24 Jan 2023, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment Report: The Impact of Mental Ill Health on Young People Accessing the Labour Market and Quality Work, October 2022 - January 2023. Youth Employment UK, p. 48-55.

List of publications (sent for review):

- Improving educational outcomes for young people vulnerable to becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET). *Evidence submitted to the Select Committee* Improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children.
- Time spent in a multi-sited, national-based ethnography when understanding NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) interventions in England sent to *Ethnography*.
- Playing the Game? Young People ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and their investment in education sent to *Journal of Youth Studies*.

List of publications (currently in preparation):

- Predicting educational exclusion: a literature review of risk factors associated with early leaving from education. Target journal - European Educational Research Journal.
- No Other Choice: The rise in (non-)Elective Home Education in England. Target journal – Sociology.