

Suffolk County Council - Post 16 Education, Employment and Training Strategy 2026-2028

This is a placeholder strategy as we work with partners to co-produce a shared Partnership strategy between April 2026 – January 2027.

Suffolk County Council's Post 16 EET strategy focuses on maximising the participation levels of young people beyond compulsory school age (up to age 18, and 25 for those with EHCPs) in Suffolk by promoting education, training or employment that prevents young people from becoming 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET).

This underpins Preparing for Adulthood (PfA), which supports young people with SEND to transition into adult life through person-centred planning. The Post 16 EET Strategy ensures participation and skill-building, while PfA expands to four life areas:

Employment – Includes supported work and higher education.

Health & Wellbeing -Continuity of healthcare and mental health support.

Independence Skills – Developing autonomy and life skills.

Community & Friendships-Social inclusion, housing, and community engagement.

Our joint partnership work aims to ensure that every child and young person is supported to fulfil their ambitions, potential and to support them all to participate in education, employment or training. This is especially important for our vulnerable young people most at risk of becoming NEET.

Success in this work ensures children and young people are set up to succeed in their future lives be that in work, in enterprise and/or by fulfilling their true potential as an active member in their communities. Positive impact results in:

✓ Improved Life Chances:

Improved life changes which mitigate the risk for young people who are NEET and at higher risk of unemployment, lower incomes, and poorer health outcomes later in life.

✓ Economic Benefits:

Engaging young people in education and skills training contributes to a stronger economy and workforce.

✓ **Societal Impact:**

Reducing the number of NEET young people helps to create a more productive and inclusive society.

The strategy models partnership working with children and young people, parents and carers, schools and settings, FE settings, training providers and employers, SCC teams in CYP and Skills, Health and the wider partnership, to identify those children and young people who are NEET or are at risk of NEET, and offering preventative support and opportunities for fulfilling work or further learning.

Key responsibilities and guidance:

- **Raising the Participation Age (RPA):**

This legislation requires young people to participate in education, employment or training until they are 18.

- **The Local Authority's Responsibilities:**

'Participation of young people in education, employment or training; statutory guidance for local authorities' April 2024 sets out the broad duties for local authorities. These are:

- To secure enough suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 or over and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained. This is a duty under section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996. To fulfil this, local authorities should have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and identify and resolve gaps in provision.
- To make available to all young people aged 13-19, and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs (SEN), support it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist them to effectively participate in education or training.

Tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage. Robust tracking also provides the local authority with information that will help to ensure that suitable education and training provision is available and that resources can be targeted effectively.

In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two RPA-related duties on local authorities with regard to 16- and 17-year-olds:

- Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16- and 17-year-olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.
- Local authorities must make arrangements, that is, maintain a tracking system, to identify 16- and 17-year-olds who are not participating in education or training⁶. Putting in place robust arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.

The strategy reflects three key pillars in our partnership work:

- Provision Sufficiency – choice and access to Education, Employment, Training and Re-engagement support.
- Prevention and intervention - Targeted preventative support for young people experiencing difficulties; supporting young people who are NEET and using the risk of NEET indicators proactively.
- Quality Careers Information, Advice and Guidance for all young people to make informed choices.
- **Provision Sufficiency:** we work in partnership with schools, settings, training providers and employers to ensure sufficiency of provision to provide choice and access for children and young people. We are also working with the Department for Education and Norfolk County Council in a close partnership to increase sufficiency and choice for post 16 options for young people.
- **Prevention and Intervention:** Risk characteristics are used to implement preventative support measures to ensure engagement with learning and transition to post-16 education, employment or training. We will take a proactive approach working together to use the risk of NEET indicators to support preventative action and effective support.
- **Quality careers information, advice and guidance:** Working in partnership we aim to ensure young people have access to various options and high-quality information and guidance. This may be education provision in school or other forms of

education, training, or apprenticeships that lead to fulfilling work. We will also implement different pathways to Education, Employment or Training to support positive re-engagement where needed. We use the Gatsby Benchmarks which provide a set of clear standards to determine the quality of careers, information, advice and guidance provided to young people in England. They have been central to Government guidance for education settings since 2018 and are embedded into work to enhance quality in Suffolk.

Children and Young People's Voice

Children and young people's voice is a vital part of our shared knowledge about the difference we are making and where we need to focus together to bring about change. Children and young people's voice will feed into our work on a formalised regular basis, linked to the Children's Outcome Framework.

Wider context

Our fulfilment of these core responsibilities is undertaken in alignment with National and local strategies and will be kept under review to ensure it reflects the national and local context.

These include the National Youth Guarantee which is a strategy that aims to improve opportunities for young people, helping them progress into further learning and fulfilling work.

In Suffolk, Get Suffolk Working and the Suffolk Economy Strategy are key enablers for our work to support young people into Education, Employment or Training.

Get Suffolk Working is Suffolk's plan to maximise the impact of actions being taken across the work, health and skills system to increase and sustain levels of economic activity and employment. This includes the work undertaken by SCC and many other key stakeholders to support young people to participate and succeed post-16. The aims include providing a clear pathway of services and interventions for children and young people to optimise health, wellbeing, life skills, attainment and work opportunities.

The Suffolk Economy Strategy acknowledges the importance of 'talent development' as a key growth enabler for young people to contribute to, and benefit from, local growth to achieve our ambitions for economic wellbeing, productive, inclusive and clean growth. Increasing participation and minimising NEET levels is a key foundation of this work.

Governance

The Post 16 EET board will monitor progress towards delivering this strategy and keep a regular oversight of the impact of our work and emerging areas for additional focus to reduce numbers of young people who are NEET. Membership and terms of reference for the Post 16 EET Board are under review, as part of the wider coproduction of the longer term strategy, to reflect the wider partnership approach to this work.

Appendix 1: The post 16 EET Strategy is underpinned by these statutory policies and guidance:

[*Participation of young people in education, employment or training \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Careers guidance and access for education and training providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[NCCIS management information requirement: 2024 to 2025 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Support for apprentices with a learning difficulty or disability - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Further and higher education, skills and vocational training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Education and Skills Act 2008 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-youth-provision>

[Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

