



Positive Attitude Shapes Success

PASS 16-19 study programme

By Jason McDonald, Curriculum Lead (16-19 Study Programme)

The PASS programme, currently being piloted in Horsham, is designed to mobilise and engage 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The aim of the programme is to encourage and equip young people to aspire to employment, further qualifications, and active citizenship within one academic year.

Increased NEET

According to the [Office for National Statistics'](#) labour market data, the number of young people who are NEET is the highest it has been in a decade, and the number continues to rise:



Figure 1: The percentage of young people (16-24) who are not in education, employment or training

Historically, the number of NEET or unknown school leavers (aged 16-17) in West Sussex has been higher than the national and regional figures. In 2023, [9.5% of school leavers were NEET](#) or unknown, which is a 3.5% increase on the previous year. This data suggests that interventions are needed at the end of key stage 4, to ensure that school leavers in West Sussex are enabled and inspired to access appropriate post-16 provision.

Youth Employment's [Youth Voice Census](#) reveals national trends in the rise of young people who are NEET, with some of the key indicators including:

- **Mental health crisis:** anxiety peaks at key transition points for young people, including the end of key stage 4
- **Community disconnection:** only half of young people reported that they felt a sense of belonging in their local community
- **Disruption to education:** the long-lasting impacts of the pandemic have left some young people feeling unprepared for their next steps
- **Regional inequalities:** with rising concerns about local jobs, young people often face a postcode lottery for post-16 opportunities



The PASS programme



The PASS programme has been designed to prepare young people, aged 16-19, for further education, higher education, or employment. The pilot programme, which is currently being delivered at the YMCA Centre in Horsham, runs for 23 weeks and learners attend for 15.5 hours over 3 days per week. The programme works in 4 strands to provide engaging support for young people who are NEET.

English and maths qualifications

For those who have not already achieved GCSE maths and English at grade 4 or above, Functional Skills qualifications are offered.

Vocational subject qualification

Level 1 Introduction to Customer Service or Entry Level 3 Introduction to Customer Service are offered to contribute to young people's employability. These vocational subjects provide valuable insights into:

- The importance of appearance and behaviour in customer service
- Effective communication with customers
- Working in a customer-friendly way
- Handling telephone calls from customers
- Digital communications for business

These employability skills are highly transferable, equipping young people for their next steps, regardless of what their next steps are. Learning transferable skills and behaviours is a vital element of the PASS programme, as young people leave with improved confidence and self-esteem, and positive attitudes towards employment or further training.

Employability, personal, social and health education (PSHE)

This important strand of the programme provides young people with vital support, including:

- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Diet and healthy lifestyle
- Careers education
- Work-related learning
- Financial capability

Work placement/work activity

Work placements and work activities are crucial to the success of this programme, and these can include work experience, job fairs, and industry speakers.

For more information on the PASS programme, or how the Council can help you to support school leavers at risk of becoming NEET, please contact adult.learning@westsussex.gov.uk.