

# HOW ITPS CAN SUPPORT NEET LEARNERS

 gateway  
qualifications





## How Independent Training Providers can support NEET learners

Gateway Qualifications, in partnership with Youth Employment UK, SCL Group and City Gateway

As the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) continues to rise, independent training providers (ITPs) across the UK are playing an important role in offering these learners much needed support.

Gateway Qualifications, along with its partners, are at the forefront of delivering flexible and personalised qualifications that support NEET learners to re-engage with learning, develop essential skills, and move onto further study, apprenticeships or the workforce.

Over 900,000 young people in the UK are estimated to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) (Office for National Statistics (ONS), November 2024)

### The growing NEET challenge

Recent figures show an alarming rise in the number of NEET young people, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This demographic faces a unique set of challenges, which prevents them from accessing mainstream further education or training opportunities once they've left school. Many NEET learners enter the system with low confidence, high anxiety, and a history of disengagement from traditional education settings.

ITPs are uniquely positioned to offer tailored support to this group of young people. By offering alternative pathways, flexible qualifications, and inclusive support, ITPs can make a significant difference to the lives of NEET learners.

Gateway Qualifications provides the framework for this flexibility, allowing providers to create programmes that meet both the needs of learners, and local employers.



## Youth Employment UK: Amplifying voices

### Youth Employment UK: understanding and supporting NEET learners

Youth Employment UK plays an important role in supporting young people at risk of becoming NEET, or who have already slipped through the cracks of the education system, by helping to shape policy and practice based on the real experiences of young people.

Through their annual *Youth Voice Census*, they gather crucial insights into the barriers that prevent young people from engaging with education or employment.

The findings from the most recent Youth Voice Census reveal that many young people struggle with mental health challenges, with anxiety being a significant barrier for 43% of over 5,000 respondents.

This growing mental health crisis, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, has made it harder for young people to re-engage with learning or take steps towards employment.

## Mental Health Crisis: 43% of young people report that anxiety is a major barrier to finding work or continuing their education (Youth Voice Census 24)

The research highlights the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, which is particularly challenging for disadvantaged young people.

Many NEET learners come from lower-income households, and financial pressures often prevent them from accessing further education, even when they want to. These young people are also more likely to have additional responsibilities, such as being carers themselves, which further limits their ability to engage fully with FE courses or vocational training.

Youth Employment UK focuses on ensuring that young people are given a voice in shaping the support and services they receive. They work closely with providers and employers to ensure that young people's needs are considered when developing the curriculum, training, and associated support services.

By understanding the lived experiences, and real-world challenges these young people face, providers can create programmes that are practical and flexible, but also emotionally supportive, helping NEET learners to overcome multiple barriers.

Through its collaboration with Youth Employment UK, Gateway Qualifications will help to ensure that flexible qualifications are widely available.

These qualifications help learners build confidence, develop employability skills, and take steps towards re-engaging with education or entering the workforce.

Youth Employment UK continues to advocate for more tailored interventions that focus on the unique challenges faced by NEET learners, ensuring that education and training opportunities are truly accessible to all.



## City Gateway: Bridging the gap for NEET learners

City Gateway, a Tower Hamlets based ITP is changing the lives of young people who are NEET.

14% of 18-24 year olds in London are classed as NEET, and 20,000 of the most disadvantaged young people are living in East London. City Gateway is meeting this challenge head-on.

### What they offer

City Gateway has a wide offer that includes support programmes, training courses, and Apprenticeships, everything they do is designed to support young people into the world of work.

Partnering with Gateway Qualifications, they deliver IT and digital skills training alongside versatile qualifications such as Business Administration. Everything they offer has a strong focus on work-based learning, ensuring their young people get valuable practical experience.

Tower Hamlets is London's most deprived borough, and yet home to Canary Wharf, an area of wealth and prosperity. Despite this, only 15% of people who live in the borough work in the local area.

City Gateway is working to change this by helping young people realise that these opportunities are not out of reach. The ITP has adopted an inclusive approach, welcoming any eligible young person who can reach their centre – no one is turned away.





This is vital in tackling the low self-esteem and limited expectations that many NEET learners have. The ITP also works closely with SMEs, which often provide a more supportive environment than large corporations, for young people starting their employment journey.

### Tailored support

City Gateway offers a unique Rebuild programme which supports those who are in the criminal justice system or are at risk of falling into crime.

Recognising the additional challenges these learners face, the programme offers flexible options such as remote learning or shorter sessions to ensure they can engage safely.

On the ITP's most recent introduction day, nearly half of the attendees were eligible for Rebuild, highlighting the importance of this tailored approach. Beyond qualifications, City Gateway helps learners build confidence and social skills through interview practice and dedicated guidance, ensuring they feel ready for the next steps in their journey.

### Positive outcomes

City Gateway's learner-focused approach is seeing positive results.

By equipping young people with practical skills and boosting their confidence, they are helping to open doors to apprenticeships, employment, and further education.

Their dedicated business development team actively sources suitable opportunities, ensuring that learners can progress to good quality jobs.

### Looking forward

City Gateway is committed to adapting and expanding their programmes to meet the changing needs of NEET learners. Through ongoing collaboration with Gateway Qualifications and local employers, they are creating opportunities for young people to build brighter futures for themselves.



# SCL Education Group: Enriching the lives of NEET learners

The SCL Group is a leading national independent training provider, changing the lives of thousands of young people, adults and apprentices across the country. One area of focus for SCL is NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) learners. In the West Midlands, SCL delivers education, skills, and training through innovative and engaging programmes in sectors that are in demand within the localities of the region.

Through the use of fun and engaging enrichment, behaviour specialists, and unique learning environments, SCL successfully connects with hard-to-reach young people and adults.

## A tailored approach

Understanding the local jobs market plays a key role in SCL's success. For example, in the West Midlands, there are clear demands for skills that underpin jobs within Construction, Health & Social Care, Education, and Customer Service. As a result, SCL focuses its NEET provision on providing young people and adults with the skills, confidence, and behaviours to progress into these sectors as well as preparing for further education pathways.

However, for SCL, it's not just about offering qualifications and technical skills. The organisation understands the unique challenges that many of its learners face.

As Stuart Allen, Chief Education Officer (CEdO) of SCL Group, said: "Some of our learners are only one poor decision away from prison - if not worse."

To address these and similar issues, SCL focuses on recruiting staff such as teachers, youth workers, and mentors who understand these young people, can see through their behaviours, and help them unlock their talent, gain confidence, and realise that their potential can open doors to all sorts of opportunities.

## Specialised programmes

SCL has developed specialised training programmes that go beyond the traditional offer. Its Tutorial Programme includes training around independent living, preparation for work and life, and raising learners' awareness of how to protect themselves from exploitation.

In addition, SCL has introduced behaviour mentors into its programmes who support individual learners as they work through their personal histories. These mentors focus on addressing behaviours that have manifested as a result of past experiences, helping learners to overcome challenges and unlock their true potential.

Some learners have experienced years of abuse and need support and guidance to recognise unhealthy relationships and stay safe from predators and harmful activities, such as 'county lines'—a form of exploitation in which criminals groom and manipulate children and young people into drug dealing.

## Expanding opportunities

In July 2023, SCL was presented with an opportunity to set up high-quality, bespoke 16-to-18 study programmes for NEET residents in the West Midlands. The group now operates from five centres in the region, where 81% of learners come from postcodes in areas of deprivation. These centres provide a supportive and welcoming environment, designed to feel





different from school or college. They offer a fresh start to learners who may have struggled in traditional education settings.

With around 60 learners per centre, students are not overwhelmed and can thrive in a smaller, community-focused setting.

### Impressive growth

The impact of SCL's approach is clear. There has been a 74% increase in young people and adult NEET enrolments compared to the previous academic year within the West Midlands sites. This growth reflects the demand for their unique and learner-focused programmes.

Working with Gateway Qualifications, SCL delivers a range of qualifications, including Health and Social Care, Business Administration, and Customer Service. They are also preparing to launch an exciting new Enterprise and Entrepreneurship qualification.

### Future plans

SCL Group will continue to transform the lives of NEET learners by providing meaningful opportunities that equip them with skills for the future. By understanding the needs of their learners and the local jobs market, they are creating brighter futures for young people.

SCL is committed to and focused on expanding its NEET offer into other localities, including Leeds, Manchester, and London.



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