



Comprehensive support to tackle complex needs

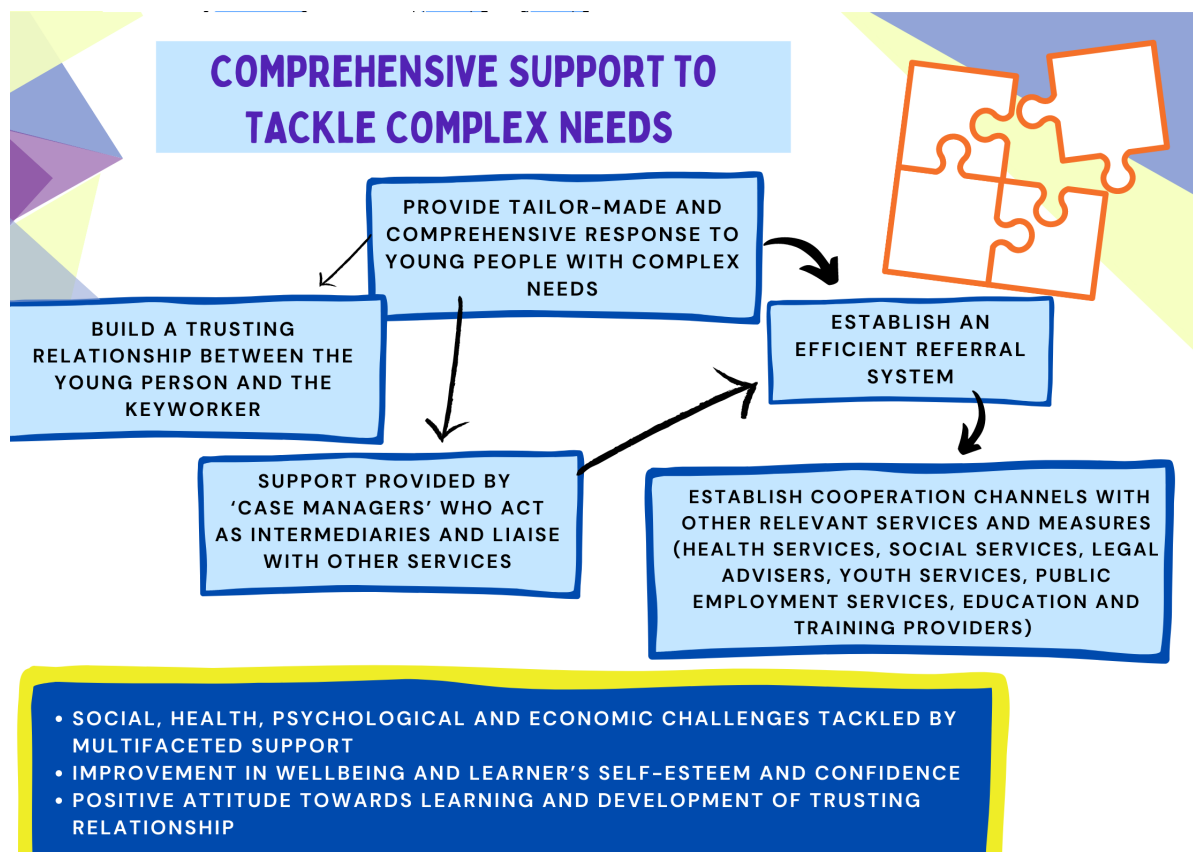
Problem statement

Addressed problem: Complex needs and challenges facing young people

Often, education is only one of the challenges in young people's lives. Some early leavers and learners at risk of early leaving have health, psychosocial, legal, or housing problems, among other issues.

Countries have different specialised services to assist citizens in such areas. Finding the right service, understanding the information provided, and applying for support measures, requires a certain amount of motivation and capacity from citizens. In the case of marginalised young people, it can be a big challenge.

Marginalised young people tend to distrust any support coming from public authorities, and very rarely directly contact specialised services. However, any efforts towards their (re)engagement in education and training are likely to fail if not accompanied by measures to tackle issues in other spheres of their lives.



Beneficiaries

Migrants / refugees

Case management aims at giving a tailor-made and comprehensive response to young people with complex needs. This approach is useful for all learners facing challenges in different areas of their lives, and particularly relevant for marginalised young people who have multiple problems and little contact with any support services.

Addressing the problem

What are the characteristics of effective case management?

Case management involves working in parallel on the full range of challenges the person faces. The young person is in contact with only one professional (a 'keyworker' e.g. counsellor, coach or mentor) or a small multidisciplinary team under the same setting. These 'case managers' act as intermediaries and liaise with other services. They coordinate the responses so as to deliver tailor-made multifaceted support.

Case management and multi-faceted support is often a feature of second chance measures, namely of comprehensive measures for young people who are highly disengaged from education and training. It can also be used by mainstream education and training providers, or by support services for early leavers.

The following tips are given as advice to policy-makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of such measures. The information is based on Cedefop research into successful measures.

💡 Tip 1: Build a trusting relationship between the young person and the keyworker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor)

One-to-one contact and building a trusting relationship is at the core of case management. The development of such a relationship requires time and frequent contacts with the learner. The nature, frequency and length of contacts need to be tailored to the needs of the learner. Contacts should continue until there is a stabilisation of the personal situation of the young person. Support can be provided alongside formal learning and extended to after the learner has completed training.

💡 Tip 2: Train the keyworker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor)

Training is important for the keyworker (e.g. counsellor, coach or mentor) prior to starting to work with young people. This is particularly important for volunteer mentors, e.g. students, or volunteers from the community.

💡 Tip 3: Establish cooperation channels with other relevant services and measures

The keyworker coordinates the different services needed to meet the learner's individual needs. This involves cooperating with health services, social services, legal advisers, debt advisers, youth services, public employment services and other entities, as well as education and training providers. The use of formal protocols for the referral of young people can help to ensure that no young person 'slips through the net'.

The fact that the keyworker is the one referring the young person to a certain service, when compared to someone who has limited contact with the learner, increases the chances that the visit actually takes place.




Expected outcomes

Outcomes of case management



Case management and multi-faceted support helps to tackle social, health, psychological, and economic challenges faced by young people. This should lead to an improvement in

well-being. The development of a trusting relationship and individualised support help the young person’s self-esteem and self-confidence, and can help stimulate a positive attitude towards learning.

The following outcomes can be expected at different levels:

 INDIVIDUAL	 INSTITUTIONAL	 SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social / health / psychological/economic challenges being tackled • Improved well-being • Development of a positive vision of oneself • Development of a positive attitude towards learning and education and training • Reduced risk of drop-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral systems between schools, providers of second chance measures, and other services, are being used • Reduced risk of early leaving among students receiving support from a key worker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-connected services are being used • Reduced rates of early leaving among at-risk students receiving support from a key worker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor) • Increased rates of young people returning to mainstream education after receiving support from a key worker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor) • Increased rates of young people attaining an upper secondary qualification after receiving support from a key worker (e.g. a counsellor, coach or mentor)

Related protective factors

 <p>Health and well-being</p>	 <p>Inclusive environment</p>
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Related resources

Good practices

 Good practice

Youth Coaching Scheme

Jugendcoaching

In Austria, the Youth Coaching Scheme offers high quality coaching and input from other services to ensure participants are provided with support to meet their individual needs.

 **Austria**

 Good practice

Orienta4YEL

Supporting educational and social inclusion of young early leavers and those at risk of early leaving through mechanisms of orientation and tutorial action.

 **Germany**  **Portugal**  **Romania**

 **Spain**  **United Kingdom**

Tools

 Tools

PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs

The PES handbook offers national examples of how the public employment services work in partnership with youth outreach workers and other key services to engage and support young people at risk of early leaving.

 **EU level**

 Tools

SOS-Network: Social Inclusion of students/learners with special needs into mainstream VET and labour market

The SOS network is a practitioner's community which contributes to the social inclusiveness of disadvantaged learners or those with special needs. The website is a platform for teachers, trainers and other professionals from all over Europe who share good practices and experiences of inclusive education.

International

 Tools

DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.

 Belgium  Denmark  Finland

 Netherlands  Portugal

 Switzerland

Publications

 Publications

Invest in Talent

In the Netherlands, the 'Invest in Talent' initiative provides practical advice on how to bring together partners from the worlds of employment, education, housing, coaching and mentoring to offer support to young people in dealing with the challenges they face in everyday life.

Read the initiative [flyer description](#).

 Netherlands

 Publications

Prevention and Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion through Education, Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning

This European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Key Issues and Promising Practices Paper provides a grassroots assessment of the current state of play and new developments in the education field, from the perspective of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and from NGOs providing support, guidance and services to them.

 Publications

Natives and immigrants enrolled in Spanish intermediate vocational education and training: a comparative study

Antoni Cerdà-Navarro, Francesca Salvà-Mut, Rubén Comas-Forgas & Mercè Morey-López

This article looks at the differences and similarities between Spanish-born and immigrant students enrolled in the first year of Intermediate Vocational Education (IVET) programmes in Spain.

 Spain

 Publications

Recommendations on inclusive education

Based on the COFACE Disability S.H.I.F.T. guide for a meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families. COFACE Families Europe is a pluralistic network of civil society associations representing the interests of all families.

According to article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), signed and adopted by the European Union and all its Member States, and of its General Comment No. 4, State parties must ensure the realisation of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive

education system at all levels, including pre-schools, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extracurricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities.

 Publications

Pathways to School Success

Replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving

This Council Recommendation aims to provide a framework which serves as a reference tool for national, regional and local policy makers and practitioners in education and training which can inspire a systemic policy response to ensure better educational outcomes for all learners.

 **EU level**

 Publications

AI to Support Neurodivergent Learners in Vocational Education and Training AI

OECD 2026 Report

Drawing on insights from over 50 stakeholder interviews, the report highlights the potential of these technologies to make VET more adaptive, accessible and inclusive.

 **EU level** **International**

Quick wins

 Quick win

Create opportunities for informal interactions between students and VET provider staff

Creating opportunities for informal interactions between learners and staff can help build trust and create positive relationships.

 **Poland**  **Portugal**

 Quick win

Quick and easy referral to support measures

Formal protocols for the referral of young people to specialist support services saves time for the VET provider, and facilitate a quicker response to the learners' needs.

 **Austria**  **Netherlands**