



## MenHelp VYTE Research

Questions	Answer.
<p>How many in the NEET target group?</p>	<p>In Denmark in 2024, there are 43,000 young people in the NEET target group.</p> <p>Typically, 60% of young people without jobs and education are still part of the group one year later. Almost half remain without jobs and education for three years.</p> <p>Three out of four young people without jobs and education are unskilled at the age of 25.</p> <p>Two thirds of 43,000 young people face significant challenges getting into the labour market or back into education.</p> <p>According to interviews with jobcentres, many of these young people have often struggled with low grades throughout their education and have not necessarily received adequate support.</p> <p>School dropout rate is a bigger problem in Denmark than in other EU countries and has worsened over time, increasing from 8.2% in 2013 to 10.4% in 2023 compared to an EU average of 9.5%.</p>
<p>How many in the group have real challenges?</p>	<p>There are two ways to look at this question:</p> <p>1) About 18,000 of the 43,000 young people are on benefits and about 15,000 are not on benefits, but also not in employment or education. The rest (around 25%) have jobs of less than 18 hours, are self-employed, at folk high school or similar and therefore probably do not pose a problem.</p> <p>2) In Denmark, the 43,000 young people are divided into clusters depending on their challenges. The largest cluster includes 15,000 young people, corresponding to approximately one third of young people without jobs and education. This group is characterised by having few or no measurable challenges. These young people are more similar to young people in employment or education compared to the other clusters and therefore do not generally pose a problem.</p> <p>The second-largest cluster consists of 6,500 young people, or 15.1%, and is characterised by having mental health diagnoses as the primary challenge.</p> <p>The third largest cluster consists of 4,400 young people, or 10.1% of the group, who have a difficult parental background and weak academic skills.</p> <p>The latter have a combination of several different factors.</p> <p>Based on these two statistics is the conclusion that 66-75% of the 43,000 young people potentially pose a problem in terms of getting a job or education.</p> <p>Research from Aalborg University, Denmark (AAU) concludes that 20% of the 43,000 young people remain outside the labour market and are characterised by early, persistent and recurring exclusion from the labour market.</p>
<p>What are the policy objectives and levers?</p>	<p>Denmark organises its active labour market policy through a decentralised structure with considerable autonomy for the local level and has well-established measures for young people in place with a strong focus on early efforts and activation. Each municipality has its</p>

own jobcentre that works closely with local companies, educational institutions and social partners. They also have considerable autonomy to tailor programmes to local labour market conditions and the specific needs of their inhabitants.

There is though a superior and national political objective from 2017. The political agreement is still valid with an end goal for 2030: At least 90% of 25-year-olds must complete upper secondary education and the proportion not in education or the labour market must be halved. As 7% were not in education or the labour market in 2017, the goal must be that by 2030 there must be no more than 3.5% in this group.

The current approximately 43,000 young people correspond to 6.3%.

Both targets must be met by 2030.

In addition, the 2017 agreement states that all young people under the age of 25 who are neither enrolled in nor have completed at least upper secondary education have the right to receive an education plan.

The goal is still valid, and since 2017 various political agreements have been made about efforts.

Most recently, on October 22th., 2024, a new political agreement called "Ungeløftet" was signed. The parties to the agreement set aside more than DKK 1.3 billion up to 2035, which will be used to strengthen initiatives for young people with mental or social problems. The initiatives take into account the young person's entire situation across areas such as employment, health and psychiatry. The parties also propose a new, strong partnership between relevant actors close to young people to create job openings and prepare young people for the labour market.

Measures in the agreement - Ungeløftet:

- A strong partnership across the community
- Significant strengthening of efforts for young people with mental disorders
- Getting more young people on board
- Capital contribution in the Social Investment Fund
- Strengthened efforts for young people at risk of crime
- Meaningful communities
- Strengthened efforts for young people with disabilities
- Supporting the involvement of young people in Ungeløftet
- More young people should have the opportunity to attend folk high schools
- Higher subsidies for independent vocational schools
- Increase awareness of part-time basic vocational education (EGU)

The agreement builds on existing initiatives, including the "Agreement on the reform of personal income tax from December 2023", which allocates DKK 57 million annually to a bonus for 25-29 year olds without

	<p>education and employment to give young people better financial incentives for employment.</p>
<p>How does the project partner work with young people?</p>	<p>Vejle Municipality is a municipality in the Region of Southern Denmark on the Jutland peninsula in southeast Denmark. The municipality covers an area of 1,058.43 km<sup>2</sup>, and has a population of 121,696. Of these, 9,431 people are in the 18-24 age group.</p> <p>Of the 43,000 young people nationwide, around 18,000 are on public benefits (uddannelseshjælp) in the country's job centres. In Vejle Municipality's jobcentre, the current figure (September 2024) = 351 young people, which is slightly below the national average.</p> <p>When young people are on benefits (uddannelseshjælp) in Vejle Municipality, they are subject to the same rules as young people in other municipalities, including that they must be attending in meetings regularly and that they must participate in regular activation programmes (preferably business-oriented), unless there are special reasons to exempt them from this obligation.</p> <p>Vejle Municipality has learnt that many young people benefit from early intervention and need help before they become too entrenched in the system. Therefore, Vejle Municipality has introduced a special programme for young people aged 18-20. The programme is run by 2 employment counsellors, who are also responsible for business-oriented initiatives. The project creates a close relationship and a more hands-on approach to young people.</p> <p>In the programme they are also working to get more people working in companies, either in the form of internships, ordinary hours or a combination of both. At the same time, the project also focuses on creating greater resilience among the young people and thus giving them better conditions for adult life with a view to completing an education and/or entering the labour market.</p> <p>This programme is an example of a special local initiative in Jobcentre Vejle.</p> <p>In addition, young people have the opportunity to receive digital job search support, participate in internal activation programmes, and if the young people are in the target group of homeless people, there is also a special Housing First project.</p> <p>If the young person is not on benefits (uddannelseshjælp), Danish law obligates the "Kommunale Ungeindsats" (KUI) to follow up if the young person has not completed secondary education and is not in employment or education.</p> <p>According to Danish legislation, UU must follow up on young people who are not engaged in an activity. In practice, this is usually done by UU being notified by the Youth Database that the young person has changed their activity, e.g. started/stopped a youth education programme, work or public benefits. Other times, UU is contacted by</p>

our partners (e.g. student counsellors at youth education programmes). Vejle Municipality has an agreement with FGU that UU is contacted when a young person is discharged from the programme.

In cases where there has been collaboration between the caseworker and the UU counsellor, the caseworker will inform the UU counsellor, but in most cases, the UU is notified via the Youth Database. The Job Centre often gets the young person into a job or education, in which case the information from the Youth Database is sufficient.

If a young person stops an activity, they will be contacted by UU. This usually takes the form of a letter in E-boks, where UU offers guidance and the opportunity to find a new path. For 18-24 year olds, UU is an offer, while for 15-17 year olds, a new KUI education plan must be drawn up. Some of the young people are contacted by phone/text because contact has been made that way previously. Other young people seek out their UU counsellor and restart the counselling process in this way.

If the young people do not respond to the enquiry, UU in Vejle Municipality will regularly send reminder letters.

In addition to the statutory task that the municipality's jobcentre and UU perform, the municipality has an incentive to prevent its citizens from having or becoming mentally ill.

The Public Health Department in Vejle Municipality therefore supports preventive efforts and efforts to increase the well-being of young people. The department often supports by working through others, such as the jobcentre or educational institutions. For example, the department currently represents the municipality's interests in a project that focuses on young people's loneliness during education. The project is realised in collaboration with the Mary Foundation.

One of the Public Health Department's typical means is to develop the skills of others (both professionals and civil society) who can then help young people. In addition to this, the department also implements concrete initiatives directly to citizens, such as smoking cessation courses.

The Department of Public Health already has various initiatives targeting residents in the social housing areas, which is the target group in MenHelp VYTE. In addition, the department has initiatives aimed at the youth target group in general.

Initiatives include:

- o "Feel good", which helps vulnerable citizens with both physical and mental well-being. It is typically the parents of the young people involved in the programme, which is why this has an indirect impact on the young people
- o Café aimed at preventing loneliness (15-25 years old) - community building and activities to help young people help themselves. The café

is run by staff and volunteers. The youth cafés are not part of the social housing, but there are social clubs in these areas

- o Open anonymous counselling – "Spor 18" - aimed at all young people over the age of 18. Has existed since 2012.
- o Health agents - volunteers are trained to help in the social housing areas. Has been running for 10 years (approx. 70 volunteers trained)
- o Neighbourhood mothers. Citizens with different ethnic backgrounds are trained to help others in the neighbourhood. Also approx. 70 volunteers trained. The neighbourhood mothers organises activities for both children, youth and adults
- o Pocket money project - young people under 18 (primarily in social housing areas) can receive pocket money to participate in activities
- o Leisure passport up to the age of 18 (and in special situations over the age of 18). All young people who fulfil certain criteria can receive financial support to participate in "Active Leisure".
- o Association for "Sports for the mentally vulnerable", supported by the municipality. The association has begun to target young people (broadly) in collaboration with Preparatory Basic Education (FGU)
- o Social directory. The public health department maintains a website with an overview of all municipal and voluntary offers for young people and others
- o Has trained 20 nature therapists who will also be able to work with vulnerable young people

Finally, it should be noted that Vejle Municipality has just politically approved "Health Policy 2024". This includes several relevant objectives:

- o "The health and well-being of children and young people must be something we can succeed with"
- o "In the coming years, the Health Department will focus on prioritising resources where they are most needed, building new relationships and roles between the municipality and civil society"
- o "The opportunity to live a healthy life in meaningful communities is unequally distributed, and therefore we must dare to make a difference"

There is also a focus on challenged citizens/residents in the social housing areas. In Boligselskabet AAB Vejle, who is a partner in MenHelp VYTE, the desire to support residents' well-being through a focus on communities is based on the following:

- o Social responsibility
- o Customers demand for housing - residents want to live somewhere with a community
- o Preventing the smaller group of residents who are challenged from taking up too much space

So far, AAB Vejle has hired two community employees to organise and support activities engaging with volunteers and partners, such as the Preparatory Basic Education (FGU). FGU has premises in one of the social housing areas, where the young people will eventually receive tasks from the property managers (who will be mentors in MenHelp

	<p>VYTE) in order to get the young people interested in training to become property managers.</p> <p>In addition, the housing company has rented out premises to a social economy company that is responsible for food production, while volunteer groups organise events such as communal dining in the areas.</p> <p>The housing association has also started a shelter for socially vulnerable people and is now working to connect volunteers to the programme.</p> <p>Finally, the housing company itself has several young people in internships, but this work has not yet been systematised. The housing company plans to gather all partners in the first quarter of 2025 to discuss what more they can do together for the target group of vulnerable people in Vejle Municipality.</p> <p>Thus, there are many parties that each make a great effort for young people in Vejle Municipality. The aim of this project (MenHelp VYTE) is to achieve synergy between the existing efforts and supplement them with additional cross-cutting support where relevant. Initially, the project will test a collaboration between the Jobcentre, the Department of Public Health, AAB Vejle and the Preparatory Youth Education (FGU).</p>
<p>What inspiration can be found nationally? (3 examples from each project partner)</p>	<p>Below are 3 national examples of relevant initiatives that MenHelp VYTE can draw inspiration from:</p> <p><b>1. Holistic approach (Holbæk Municipality)</b></p> <p>Holistic youth work can be a challenging task in a traditional municipal organisational structure. That's why several municipalities have reorganised themselves to focus more on the cross-cutting aspect - with the benefits and challenges that this brings. Holbæk Municipality is one of the municipalities that has chosen this model.</p> <p>The municipal council in Holbæk Municipality has put education high on the agenda by defining "Education for all young people" as a core task. The core area "Education for All Young People" was established in 2015 as an organisational unit. "Education for All Young People" is organised into two main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Guidance and Intervention: Educational guidance, official processing in relation to labour market and social legislation as well as offers such as company initiatives, support/contact persons, mentoring schemes, group courses, etc. Guidance and Counselling is commonly referred to as the 'Youth Initiative'.</li> <li>o Education and Prevention: Youth schools, youth clubs, SSP, 10th grade, youth classes, Specially adapted youth education (STU), brain injury/rehabilitation, etc.</li> </ul> <p>"Education for All Young People" works on the basis that the logic of legislation has been replaced b</p>

y the logic of the citizen. Young people are not sent around between several departments, and they encounter a holistic effort with a greater coherence.

Employees work according to the same core mission - education for all - and all initiatives contribute to supporting the start and completion of education.

In concrete terms, it means for the young person:

- o The individual young person is at the centre
- o Young people have one entry point to the municipality
- o Young people are met with an educational focus
- o It is a holistic approach

The municipality concludes that the organisation has resulted in savings in welfare costs, as more young people have entered education and employment.

In addition, Holbæk Municipality has found that they have a more coherent effort. Young people, especially those who have been in the system for a long time in Holbæk, also feel that co-operation has improved significantly with the unification of youth initiatives.

## **2. Collaboration with civil society (Tønder Municipality)**

Tønder Municipality works strategically and purposefully with civil society in the form of NGOs and voluntary social organisations. Tønder Municipality has adopted a strategy for such partnerships called the "Tønder Model". The municipality experiences a high level of commitment among volunteers in their work with vulnerable citizens and writes the following in the introduction to the strategy: "The strategy should contribute to a continued good dialogue and respectful cooperation between the parties".

Tønder Municipality realises that the collaboration adds value in relation to:

- o *Improved quality of service* - New knowledge, new innovative approaches and a more holistic solution to complex problems
- o *Improved early prevention* - Due to the NGOs' unique trust-based relationship with citizens, the collaboration succeeds in detecting vulnerable citizens earlier
- o *Improved coping skills* - NGOs take on a guiding and facilitating role that supports the strengthening of citizens' coping skills, including citizens' own participation in solving their own challenges

The Tønder Model has five key pillars:

- 1) Joint development and learning in the partnership
- 2) Strong relationships
- 3) Preserving the DNA of NGOs as much as possible
- 4) Demanding goals and impact
- 5) Strengthening volunteering

In practice, partnerships arise either because the municipality sees a need and contacts an NGO, or because the NGO approaches the municipality with a good idea. Some partnerships consist solely of developmental co-operation, while others are supported by public funding.

There are many examples of partnerships in the municipality, with a partnership with the Salvation Army on a family workshop being the largest. The partnership provides a holistic approach to vulnerable families. The project has had the side benefit of having a preventive effect on more families than the municipality had intended, because the good reputation for help spreads to other families in the local area. For example, the programme focuses on family roles, a men's café, a health visitor, a job café and a youth café (including after-school jobs).

The municipality provides buildings and an employee who bridges the gap between the NGO and the municipality. In addition, the municipality has established a flyer office in the building, which the municipality's employees use flexibly with the aim of meeting citizens on their home turf.

And it's this mindset that makes a difference. For example, the municipality has succeeded in organising Danish lessons for citizens with reading and writing difficulties without the citizens feeling that they were attending a formal (and often taboo) Danish course. 20 citizens completed the programme.

The municipality follows up on the collaboration in a structured way with two administrative and one political follow-up meeting per year per NGO with which the municipality has a partnership agreement. These meetings also follow up on the KPIs that the municipality and the NGO have jointly developed and agreed on. In addition, the municipality organises an annual NGO fair where municipal employees can meet the NGOs and discuss cooperation, and the various NGOs can meet each other.

The municipality and the NGOs also have joint learning meetings if, for example, one party wonders about an action or lack of action on the other party's part, or a new idea has arisen, etc. Finally, the municipality makes sure to invite relevant NGOs to internal theme meetings when it makes sense. For example, a recent thematic meeting on stalking, and in 2025 a meeting is planned on school absenteeism.

### **3. Involving young people (Aalborg Municipality)**

Aalborg Municipality works with "Unge på vej" by focusing on giving young people more influence and responsibility in their own case. Here are some of the concrete initiatives:

*o Individual meetings:* Young people actively participate in meetings with their caseworkers where they help set goals and plan their path towards education or employment

*o Tailor-made programmes:* Programmes are adapted to the individual's needs and situation, which means that both personal and professional challenges are taken into account

*o Support and Follow-up:* There is ongoing follow-up and support to ensure that young people feel supported and motivated throughout the process

*o Collaboration with educational institutions and companies:* Jobcenter Aalborg works closely with local educational institutions and companies to create relevant internship and training opportunities

As part of "Unge på vej", the "13U" project, a collaboration between Jobcenter Aalborg and the vocational training programme TECHCOLLEGE, has helped 78 young people switch from benefits to SU and student wages in just six months.

Over half of the young people who participated in the most recent programme started an education afterwards, while 10% found regular work.

In addition to the concrete examples, a **new OECD report ("Investing in Youth North Denmark Region")** with the following recommendations should be mentioned:

*Invest in integrated mental health and employment programmes by*

- o Addressing the lack of coherence between health, social and employment services through formal co-operation agreements between municipal services and the mental health sector and the development of employment-oriented mental health care*
- o Increase capacity in mental health services to address unmet needs, including more capacity in terms of psychiatrists, specialised nurses and psychologists*
- o Addressing mental health problems at an early stage, including mild or moderate (and often unidentified) mental health problems, by investing in adequate and integrated resources for the education system and youth mental health services*

*Combat low education by:*

- o Ensure close collaboration between the education system, jobcentres, social services, psychiatry and other youth actors in the municipalities to identify students at risk of dropping out of education early*
- o Strengthening preventive measures and targeted interventions through mentoring, (mental) health and social support for young people struggling at school*

*In addition, the report makes the following recommendations:*

- o Prevent young mothers from disconnecting from the labour market*
- o Improve access to services for people with transport problems*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Invest in training for youth workers</li> <li>o Expand the target group and include 25-29 year olds</li> <li>o Consider a richer way to measure success (e.g. also those who work less than 9 hours, those who have a positive development in their health etc.)</li> <li>o Expand the use of administrative data to better understand the causes of NEET (inspiration can be drawn from Estonia's Youth Guarantee Support System, which combines data from nine input registers and allows municipal case managers to identify young people who are not in education, employment or training, reach out to them and provide support if necessary)</li> </ul>
<p>Can inspiration be drawn from neighbouring countries or the rest of the EU? (3 examples from each project partner)</p>	<p>The following are examples from Denmark's neighbouring countries of relevant initiatives that MenHelp VYTE can draw inspiration from:</p> <p><b>1. Lillehammer, Norway (inclusion mindset)</b>  Lillehammer Norway is known for its inclusion mindset, which, although it relates to the school sector, has parallels with the youth sector.  Lillehammer has closed all special programmes and thus includes all children in regular primary school based on the mindset that "we have the children we have". This means that even pupils with significant challenges participate in mainstream education.</p> <p>As a result, they operate with smaller class sizes and more adult resources per class. Their educational psychological counselling (PPR) participate in the classroom rather than sitting in an office testing or interviewing, and they create classes by matching children to teachers.</p> <p>If a child is absent from school, the contact teacher calls the child on the second day, and in case of prolonged illness, there are video greetings and gifts from the class. This has significantly reduced school absenteeism because the child feels part of a community rather than being excluded.</p> <p>The results have also been impressive at the academic level. The pupils' reading skills have improved significantly and they are now among the best in the country.</p> <p><b>2. Germany (success with dual education system)</b>  Germany has a successful dual education system where young people combine schooling with practical work experience.</p> <p>This system ensures that young people gain both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, making them well prepared for the labour market.</p> <p>In practice, it works like this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Theoretical Education: Students spend part of their time at a vocational school where they receive theoretical training in their chosen field of study</li> <li>o Practical Training: The rest of their time is spent in a company where they gain practical experience and learn the skills needed for their future job</li> </ul>

	<p>A close collaboration with companies from the industry has been established. A number of companies are actively involved in the programme, ensuring that the teaching is relevant and up-to-date.</p> <p>In Germany, there are a number of benefits to this model, as students who complete the dual system often have a higher employment rate as they already have work experience.</p> <p>The system is very popular in Germany and has become a model for many other countries looking to improve their VET systems.</p> <p><b>Finland (Nuorisotakuu) and Sweden (Youth Guarantee)</b>  The Youth Guarantee in both Finland and Sweden are initiatives designed to ensure that young people under the age of 25 gain access to education, internships or work within a certain time frame after finishing school or becoming unemployed.</p> <p><i>Finland</i>  In Finland, the Youth Guarantee was introduced in 2013. It guarantees that all young people under the age of 25 and recent graduates under the age of 30 are offered a work, education, training or rehabilitation opportunity within three months of becoming unemployed. This initiative aims to reduce youth unemployment and ensure that young people get a good start to their careers.</p> <p><i>Sweden</i>  Sweden has a similar approach with their Youth Guarantee, which also focuses on offering young people under the age of 25 some form of employment, education or training within 90 days of becoming unemployed. The programme is part of a wider effort to combat youth unemployment and ensure young people gain the skills and experience needed to enter the labour market.</p> <p>Both countries have had success with these programmes and they have helped to reduce youth unemployment and improve young people's chances of having a stable career.</p>
<p>How can we use the inspiration in Men Help VYTE?</p>	<p>The following explains how the learning from the above 6 examples can be applied in MenHelp VYTE.</p> <p>In <b>Holbæk</b>, a more holistic approach has been achieved by implementing a cross-functional organisation. But regardless of whether you want a more specialised organisation, which also has its advantages, the lesson from Holbæk is that when employees share a common core task and goals, they are more successful in providing citizens with a meaningful effort that leads to results.</p> <p>In MenHelp VYTE, this emphasises the importance of the parties being clear about goals and objectives and common interest.</p> <p>The lesson learnt from <b>the Tønder Model</b> is that collaboration between municipality and NGOs makes a lot of sense and produces good</p>

results. The lesson is also that long-term cultural work needs to be done in the municipality. E.g. must the municipal employees be taught that it's okay for NGOs to do something different and have different opportunities than municipal employees, and that municipal employees need to understand that NGOs have their own DNA and tasks, and that asking an NGO for a status or ordering a task done is a "no go".

In relation to MenHelp VYTE, the experiences support the desire for interaction between the municipality and civil society and provide input on how the parties should be aware of each other's different roles and make the most of the opportunities they each have.

**Aalborg Municipality's** work to involve young people and the results show that a targeted effort focusing on involvement and support can make a significant difference for young people in the municipality.

Again the thinking behind MenHelp VYTE is confirmed. It seems right that young people should be involved and contribute to setting goals and developing their own plan.

The three national examples is very useful in relation to MenHelp VYTE. **And the international examples** can also serve as inspiration.

From **Lillehammer**, Norway, MenHelp VYTE learns that the match between pupil and teacher (in MenHelp VYTE mentor and young person) is crucial for success and that it is important to include young people in the community rather than exclude them to a special programme.

**The German method of** combining theory and practice is already used today by the Preparatory Basic Education (FGU), but the idea of alternating theory and practice to an even greater extent and involving companies in the teaching itself will be included as input in MenHelp VYTE.

Finally, the Youth Guarantee in **Norway and Finland** demonstrates the value and results of early and targeted intervention. Jobcenter Vejle has started early intervention (the programme for 18-20 year olds), but there may be a basis for an even earlier intervention and perhaps also an intervention that ensures the tracking of young people who do not contact the jobcentre. The target group in MenHelp VYTE is the 18+ year olds, so this project does not have the opportunity to capture the very young. On the other hand, the interaction with the housing association provides an opportunity to track down young people who may not be part of the system (the municipality), but who still need help.

MenHelp VYTE will take all the good input from these examples into the implementation of the project.

