

The NEET Answer: The Participation Multiplier.

AAAnow.
August 2026.

Yes, we promote the fact AI was used to do the hard work building this.

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Executive summary.

AI is the defining opportunity of a generation, and we believe its advantage belongs to everybody. Understanding is what makes that true.

Today, 1.01 million young people in the UK are not in education, employment, or training: 13.5% of 16 to 24 year olds, and the first time the figure has stood above 1 million since 2013 (ONS, January to March 2026).

At the same time, corporate Britain cannot get AI out of the pilot phase. Compliance failure and digital debt hold UK competitiveness back at the exact moment it needs to generate, to use AI, and to grow with purpose. SMEs, the powerhouse of the UK, carry the same need, and this programme supports all of them.

These are not 2 separate problems. They are 2 halves of one answer, and the generation standing outside the workforce is the resource that joins them.

Bridging the gap between what an organisation understands of itself and what AI sees of it, we ensure what AI sees is appropriate at all times. For over 25 years, our technology has read organisations the way the outside world reads them, not the way they describe themselves. What needs doing is known first, and everything in this paper is built backwards from that knowledge.

The answer is a national programme: NEET young people educated in the practical use of AI and placed into paid employment with UK SMEs and corporates. The education is 2 courses, each of 8 weeks, both founded on understanding the needs and requirements of the market, then each turns to the specifics of one sector, research and work: one corporate, one SME. Taking both is 16 weeks.

One opportunity can begin a working lifetime, and the programme is built on that. Purpose first: a sector chosen by the participant gives the learning direction and the work genuine relevance. Then capability: practical learning responding to needs already identified inside organisations, useful from the outset. Then continuity: 2 years of continued learning and expert support turning early progress into lasting capability, and a role in the governance of AI beyond it, keeping organisations, and the country, at the top of the game.

For less than 1% of allocated funds*, the programme brings AI education, support and paid employment to 85,000 NEETs*, and gives over 170,000 SMEs* the advantages of AI, saving £218m, and up to £731m*, against the AI spend now coming.

The value runs for lifetimes. Every year a young person spends NEET carries an average £29,000 lifetime impact on the state and £52,000 on their own earnings (DWP); at the scale this paper models, the returns reach £2.9bn for the state and £5.2bn in lifetime earnings impact*. Above all of it sits the human value: confidence, a purpose, personal worth established, earning instead of waiting.

No new spend is required. The evidence base is ONS and DWP; the mechanism is proprietary. What follows is the whole of it: what we do, why we do it, and how.

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

1. Two converging failures.

The United Kingdom is carrying 2 failures at once. For years they have been treated as if they belong to different departments.

The first is a generation standing outside the working economy. 1.01 million young people aged 16 to 24 are not in education, employment or training. That is 13.5% of the age group, and the first time the number has passed 1 million since 2013 (ONS, January to March 2026).

The instinct is to read that figure as a lack of will. The evidence reads the other way. 84% want a job, education or training (DWP).

The willingness is there. The route is not. 6 in 10 have never had a job (DWP). This is not a generation that tried work and left it. It is a generation that was never handed the first rung.

Within the cohort, 39% are unemployed and actively looking. The other 61% are economically inactive (House of Commons Library), detached from the search itself. Confidence and purpose have to be rebuilt there before anything else can follow.

That split shapes the design. A programme built only for active jobseekers reaches the 39% and misses the majority. A programme that rebuilds confidence first, at each person's own pace, is built for the whole million.

Most people call it the NEET problem. This is the NEET answer.



The second failure sits inside the organisations that would employ them. 72% of organisations now use AI in at least 1 business function. Yet 80% of AI projects fail to scale beyond the pilot, and only 48% of generative AI projects ever reach production (Gartner). 70% of enterprises expect generative AI to reshape their talent strategy, but only 22% provide adequately for it.

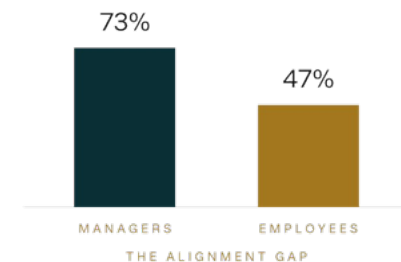


The ambition is real and so is the investment. What is missing is the layer of people who can carry AI from the boardroom slide into the daily operating procedure.

The 2 ends of the organisation do not even agree on where they stand. 73% of managers believe their AI deployment is strategically guided and well structured. Only 47% of employees agree.

Now set the 2 failures side by side. On one side, organisations that cannot find the people to do the work AI demands. On the other, 1.01 million young people, in a generation of whom 95.2% are already AI natives (CEIBS), raised with generative tools in their hands.

A workforce waits on one side of the gap. The work waits on the other. This paper is about the bridge: 2 sides of the same coin, each real in its own right, joined here into one national opportunity.



2. Why now: the AI answer economy.

Something structural has changed in how the world forms a view of an organisation, and it changed quickly.

AI now stands between an organisation and the people deciding about it: reading, weighing, and answering on its behalf. 94% of business-to-business decisions are based on AI (Forrester), and more than half of consumer decisions and purchases are led by it (AIB).

58% of consumers now start their search with AI, and 87% stay inside the answer without clicking through.

Whoever asks about an organisation, a buyer, a customer, a regulator, AI answers first. For most people asking, AI's answer is the only version of the organisation they meet.

And the answer AI gives is not the organisation's own. 85% of brand mentions in AI search come from third-party content, not the brand's own words (AirOps). Control of the conversation has already moved.

In industry benchmarking, 57% name misinformation as the top concern threatening AI adoption (Gallagher).

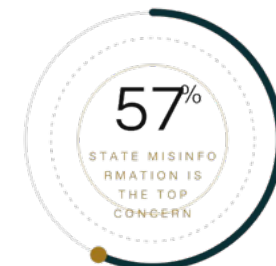
Our own research traces the root of it. 79% of the misinformation AI delivers arises from organisations' own content.

This is not carelessness. It is a structural limit. Two decades of digital estates were built for human readers, and the machines now reading them meet content that was never designed for them. That accumulated weight is digital debt, and it undermines competitiveness and compliance alike.

The PDF sits at the centre of it. Across corporates and SMEs, valuable business intelligence and everyday transactions stay locked in unstructured formats: scanned delivery notes, invoices, contracts, reports. Standard business agents frequently fail on exactly these files. So the systems now answering for organisations meet their most important content in the form least readable to them.

Organisations that do not become part of the AI answer, and the AI economy it is building, will be left behind. Becoming part of it starts with content a machine can actually read.

The consequences are already live. Through our audits we have identified cases, unnamed here, with detail available under NDA, that show the pattern at its sharpest.



In a capital equipment business, safety information was misdelivered. The detail of what to do did not arrive correctly, and equipment was not isolated before work began on it. In the chemicals industry, instructions specifying what can be transported alongside what, and how those chemicals should be stored before mixing, were misrepresented in order, with potentially dangerous impacts.

Across public companies, annual reports are misread because of how they are constructed. Figures are misquoted and fed onward into other systems. Documents go out missing the elements AI needs to index them accurately. An organisation spends tens of thousands on a report, then watches AI misunderstand and misdeliver it.

Executives should consider what this means for their own liability and their own reputation. When a safety instruction or a published figure reaches the world wrongly, the question that follows sits on the risk register, not the technology agenda.

None of this is new as a discussion. Digital teams have worked at it for years. What has changed is the timetable.

Within the next 12 to 18 months, the AI answer economy will decide who pulls ahead and who falls behind. Readiness is no longer a technology project to be scheduled. It is the condition of being accurately represented where decisions are now made. That is the urgency this programme arrives into.

3. Why every other answer is conceptual.

Every intervention in the skills landscape shares one starting point: an idea of what the market needs. A syllabus is designed, a framework consulted, an employer survey run. However well executed, support built that way is conceptual, because it starts from an estimate of the need rather than the need itself.

For over 25 years, our technology has read organisations the way the outside world reads them, not the way they describe themselves. That reading surfaces the gap between where an organisation believes it stands and where it actually stands, in the eyes of the AI now forming judgements on its behalf. Left alone, that gap is a risk. Closed, and kept closed, it becomes the difference between a business exposed and a business ready.

In 2023 we launched the ARTYMUS III framework for AI and governance. From that work came the AI Readiness Maturity Scale™, through which the larger corporate organisations benchmark where they were and where they are.

The platform built since is the shortcut to the answers: 187 agents performing up to 360,000 checks to continually monitor the AI Readiness score. It highlights where, what, and why to review, change, and update.

For a board, that turns readiness from an annual exercise into a working instrument. The score moves as the estate moves. When something slips, the platform says where, says what, and says why, and the review, change and update cycle starts the same day rather than at the next audit. Millions of corporate and government websites have been audited through it. The result is a live, factual picture of the country's digital capability, gathered continuously rather than surveyed occasionally.

At the centre of that picture sits the CCDM, Continuous Content Discovery and Mapping. The CCDM knows what is required: the work that needs doing, how long it will take, what is involved and what is to be done. That knowledge drives the skills matching.

Alongside it runs the AI governance module, built on understanding the cause and the roots of AI governance for an organisation. And one further capability quietly carries a disproportionate share of the load: the PDF Automation framework. It catalogues, indexes and automatically converts unstructured content into clean, agent-ready form, so automation runs reliably in real operations rather than impressively in demonstrations.

Ingestion is where many enterprise AI projects actually stall. Generative models and business agents cannot easily take in unstructured data, and pilots die on that rock more often than on any shortage of ambition. Solving it is a cornerstone of this model, and it is among the new types of technology the young people learn from the inside.

From this foundation, the model runs as a three-part execution pipeline. First, detail the actual need: the exact technical and operational gaps within corporate and public bodies, established from the audit rather than assumed from a survey. Second, detail the technical fix: the precise integrations, workflow automations and data pipelines that close each gap. Third, detail the education and support, preparing people with the practical skills those verified gaps demand.

That order is the whole difference. Everyone else begins with a syllabus and hopes the market matches it. Here, the market is measured first, continuously, at national scale, and the education is built backwards from what the measurement finds.

The same foundation reaches down as well as up. The diagnostic mapping that reads a corporate estate has been extended to find exactly where SMEs lose operational hours to repetitive, manual tasks. One measurement discipline covers both markets, and a single matching engine draws on all of it.

That reach matters for a government reader. Labour-market planning normally waits on surveys and lagging statistics. Here the picture of demand is empirical and current, refreshed by the platform rather than commissioned by anyone, which is why the education it feeds can stay matched to a market that moves.

What needs doing is known first. Nobody else starts there.

4. The programme.

The education is 2 courses, each of 8 weeks, both founded on understanding the needs and requirements of the market, then each turns to the specifics of one sector, research and work: one corporate, one SME. Taking both is 16 weeks. Participants leave with the skills their sector needs, and the sector gains a person prepared for its work.

Nobody on it sits in a classroom imagining the workplace. They go into it: interviewing organisations, mapping exactly what those organisations need, learning practical skills matched to a real, verified gap rather than a guessed one. By the time they finish, they are not hoping a business wants what they can offer. They have already asked it, and built toward the answer.

Delivery combines online and in-person work, limiting unnecessary travel costs. A large proportion is done directly online, at each person's own pace, which matters for a cohort in which 61% are economically inactive and confidence has to be rebuilt step by step. Knowledge sharing and time in an office environment run alongside, so the young people experience a company and an organisational culture, not just a curriculum.

Part of the education is learning new types of technology as they emerge, the PDF automation among them. Participants come to understand not only how to use AI but why organisations struggle with it in the first place.

The 2 courses share a foundation and then diverge deliberately. Both begin from understanding the needs and requirements of the market, because nothing else works without that grounding.

The corporate course turns to the work the audits surface inside large organisations, carried through 15 modules built from those findings. The SME course turns to the 5 mapped industry sectors, learned first as use cases and then verified in person, organisation by organisation. Research and work, in both cases. The classroom is the market itself.

The 5 sectors give the SME course its shape. Each is a worked example of a real trade's bottlenecks, built from the data, and each participant tests it against living businesses in their own area.

Assessment is practical and continuous. The system guides each person through, runs practical assessments, and knows their capability. That capability links directly to the skills matching: a live picture of what each person can do, updated as they do it, not a certificate filed at the end.

The matching is where the 25 years of technology pays out. Live vacancy data, employer recruitment intelligence and local insights combine in real time, mapping exact corporate gaps and SME bottlenecks to the young people ready to fill them. This is not a job board. It is a placement engine.

The loop it runs is closed: knowing what is needed, knowing who can deliver it, and teaching people how to deliver it alongside.

Every deployment is built on a human-in-the-loop architecture. AI automates the reading and the drafting. A person retains full control of the deciding. That removes the operational, legal and GDPR risk that stalls so many automation projects, and it is taught as a principle from the first week.

On completion, each person chooses how to deploy what they have built. The corporate route carries them into large organisations or structured higher apprenticeships, closing the execution gap from the inside. The SME route deploys them directly into local businesses, automating the administrative bottlenecks and handing hours back to the trade. The hybrid route combines both.

The choice belongs to the young person. A sector they chose themselves is where purpose starts.

The routes are not silos, either. Someone who deploys into an SME carries corporate-grade understanding of why organisations fall down. Someone who joins a corporate has stood inside a small business and seen what an hour is worth there. All 3 routes feed the same matching engine, so movement between them over a career is part of the design.

Completion is a beginning, not an end. For the first 2 years, every participant carries continued learning, access to intelligent education, and expert support standing behind them in live work. Capability is not certified once and left to fade. It is amplified, deliberately, through the period in which a first career either takes root or does not.

The support is practical, not ceremonial. A question from live work gets an expert answer. A new tool arrives in the market and a module covers it. The intelligent education keeps pace with the field, so what a participant knew at week 16 is the floor of what they know at year 2, never the ceiling.

Capability is signalled to employers the way employers actually trust: judgment, communication, adaptability and ethical decision-making, evidenced through verified practical projects rather than exams. The educational architecture is benchmarked against the strongest 16-week immersive standards in the market, including the Makers Tech Level 4 programmes, an AI-first standard equivalent to the first year of a Foundation degree. Active learning over passive lecturing. Real project challenges. Peer-to-peer problem solving.

What an employer receives at the end is specific. Not a grade, but a portfolio of verified work: the organisations interviewed, the gaps mapped, the automations built and running, with the platform's continuous record of capability behind it. Employers can trust it because they can inspect it.

And because the modules are interchangeable, delivery works at scale. It can be carried not only by us but by the many organisations already across the country offering services to government, driving improvement and supporting education.

5. The three beneficiaries.

Three levels of need run through this programme. Each is real in its own right, none depends on the others, and one belief joins them.

For the NEET generation, the offer is practical education matched to a real gap, not a guessed one. They leave with employment skills, paid work to step into, and a sector they chose themselves. Behind them for the first 2 years stand continued learning and expert support, so the first job becomes a career rather than an episode.

Personal worth established: confidence, a purpose, earning instead of waiting. People who grow, thrive and develop.

For the SMEs, the powerhouses of the nation, the change is arithmetic. There are 5.5 million of them, most with no technology department and no spare hour to ask what AI could actually do for the business.

Take a trade like electrical work, where the skill sits in the wiring, sharp and hard-won. The hours get lost in what sits around it instead: booking jobs by phone, chasing invoices by hand, writing quotes between calls. A young person equipped with exactly what AI can do for a trade like this changes that arithmetic: calls answered, invoices sent the same day, hours handed back to the work the business actually exists to do.

The workflows are ready today:

WORKFLOW	WHAT IT DOES	WHAT IT HANDS BACK
Document processing	Extracts invoice, purchase order and remittance data directly into accounting platforms such as Xero, Sage or Business Central	The hours lost to manual entry and retyping
Email triage	Reads, categorises and routes inbound customer, wholesale and delivery enquiries	The inbox overhead; enquiries answered in real time
Data extraction and reconciliation	Normalises disparate supplier stock feeds and matches bank statement lines automatically	Live visibility of stock and cash, without the spreadsheet hours

In every case, AI reads and drafts, and the owner decides. The human-in-the-loop model keeps the efficiency and removes the operational, legal and GDPR risk. Multiply that across the country's small businesses and the effect does not stay local. Supporting SMEs, the powerhouses of a nation, is supporting its growth.

For the corporates, the missing piece has never been ambition or budget. 80% of AI projects fail to scale because the people who can do the work the gap demands are the resource boards cannot find.

The programme creates that resource, educated against the corporates' own measured gaps.

Inside a corporate, that looks like the unglamorous work production actually needs: the integrations wired, the data pipelines built, the workflow automations run under human control. The tasks that stall pilots are the tasks these people are prepared for, because the audits named those tasks before the education was written. It also puts surplus Apprenticeship Levy funds to work in their own supply chains, so the mechanism strengthens the businesses around them as it strengthens their pipeline. Surplus funds that would otherwise sit unused become a bridge between a corporate and the small businesses around it, and the Oxford case in the next section shows that bridge carrying real weight.

Competitiveness strengthened, AI exposure mitigated. And, as Section 8 sets out, a governance capability stands behind them from that point forward.

6. Funding, economics and the value delivered.

— THE VALUE, IN ONE VIEW

Here is the value this programme delivers. For a £7.8m investment over 3 years, the country's most expensive standing problem starts becoming working, earning, contributing people, and the returns run for lifetimes. The model beneath every figure:

FIGURE	WHAT IT IS
£4,063	Annual Universal Credit standard allowance, single under 25 (2026 to 2027)
65%	AAAnow modelling allowance, clearly labelled as ours
£6,704	Resulting indicative welfare cost per person per year
£6,500	Retained as the cautious working figure
£29,000	Average lifetime state impact for each year spent NEET
£52,000	Average lifetime earnings impact for each year spent NEET
Up to £240,000	Lifetime public-finance cost of a young person who never works
£2.9bn and £5.2bn	Scenario returns reaching £2.9bn for the state and £5.2bn in lifetime earnings impact

Annual AAAnow estimates stay separate from lifetime DWP measures. The published benchmark covers ages 18 to 24, and that range is preserved throughout. No unsupported average for wider support services is invented. The sources are the official 2026 to 2027 benefit rates and the DWP Young People and Work report, linked in full in Appendix C.*

— THE POSITION

Funding is a fait accompli. The project investment is £7.8m over 3 years*: less than 1% of the budgets being allocated to this space.

Funding is not the question this paper answers; the value delivered is.

— THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

The system already carries the capacity many times over. It is worth seeing the scale of what is in motion, cited here as examples of the landscape rather than as requirements of the programme.

The £820m Youth Guarantee (Autumn Budget 2025) is committed to exactly this generation. The Skills Bootcamps allocations for 2026 to 2027 (DfE) are distributed and active. The Apprenticeship Levy carries substantial surpluses inside large corporates, and partners of the scale of Cisco, Microsoft and Deloitte hold exactly such surpluses today.

The transfer mechanism is proven in practice. Oxford City Council upskilled 33 staff through Level 3 and 4 AI and Data standards with an Ofsted Outstanding provider, a £360k Levy transfer from Cisco International Ltd among the funding, with employees spending 50% of their learning time applying the skills directly in their roles.

What Oxford proves is precise. Not that a council spent money on education, but that the transfer mechanism moves corporate Levy surplus into practical, applied capability, at Level 3 and 4, with half the learning applied in the role. That is the shape of this programme's funding logic, already working, in public, before this paper was written.

None of that money is needed here. It is cited because it settles the question a careful reader asks first: the resource in this space is abundant, allocated and already moving. Against that landscape, a 3-year investment of £7.8m is a rounding line, and everything from here is about what it returns.

— THE INVESTMENT, COUNTED

The investment model is built line by line, and every line is visible in Table B2 of the appendix. The reference points are already public: Skills Bootcamps projects are commissioned at exactly this scale through the DfE's published allocations, so a £7.8m investment sits inside the normal shape of what government already funds in this space.



Education delivery is the largest component, held efficient by design. A large proportion of the work is done directly online at each person's own pace, limiting unnecessary travel and venue costs, with the in-person element concentrated where it matters most, in office environments and organisational culture.

The platform carries the diagnostic mapping, the matching and the continuous assessment. This is capability the technology already runs at national scale, extended rather than invented, so the project buys delivery, not invention.

The 2 years of continued learning and expert support are carried as a funded cost line in their own right. Continuity is a designed feature of this programme, funded on the page.

Management and friction costs are counted too, because there are always friction and management costs, and a model that counts them is a model that holds. Rigorous, data-driven tracking runs through every pound, so the spend can be followed as closely as the outcomes it buys.

Everything costed, everything inside the £7.8m investment*. An investment this size stays this size because nothing in it is speculative.

Measurability is part of the offer, not an afterthought. Every pound is tracked against a named line, every line against an outcome, and the reporting is generated by the same platform that runs the delivery. A reader of Table B2 in year 3 will be reading actuals against the same rows printed here.

THE VALUE, AT EXAMPLE LEVELS

Start from the arithmetic the country currently runs. For every £1 spent on active employment support, £25 is spent on benefits.

This programme is active employment support, so its cost sits on the £1 side of that ratio. Factor the ratio through the project and the scale of the other side comes into view. At the country's own arithmetic, the £7.8m this project invests stands against some £195m of benefit spend running on the £25 side of the same ledger*.

Every person moved into paid employment turns that arithmetic in both directions at once. Spend comes off the £25 side, and tax and National Insurance contributions begin on the other.

The welfare side of that turn is built from the published rates, with our own allowance stated as ours. From April 2026, the Universal Credit standard allowance for a single person under 25 is £338.58 a month: £4,063 a year (official 2026 to 2027 benefit rates).



On top of the allowance sits a clearly labelled 65% AAAnow modelling allowance, covering support beyond the standard rate. That gives an indicative welfare cost of £6,704 a year, and the model retains £6,500 as the cautious working figure, held below it. The model sits in full at Table B4a.*

The table below shows the direct fiscal value at example levels of people into employment. These are examples of the value at different levels. The overall estimates and the target of this programme stand unchanged.

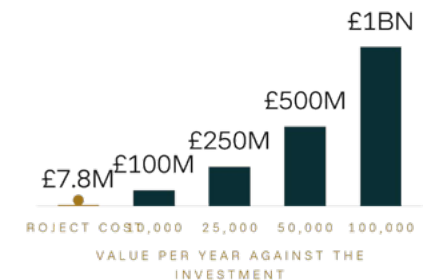
PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT	BENEFIT SPEND REDUCED PER YEAR	TAX AND NI CONTRIBUTIONS PER YEAR	DIRECT FISCAL VALUE PER YEAR
10,000	£65m	£35m	£100m
25,000	£162.5m	£87.5m	£250m
50,000	£325m	£175m	£500m
100,000	£650m	£350m	£1 billion

Modelled at £6,500 of benefit spend reduced and £3,500 of tax and NI contributions per person per year: £10,000 of direct fiscal value per person, each year they remain in work.*

An investment made once over 3 years is answered by fiscal value that repeats every year a person stays in work, and the 2 years of support behind each person exist to make staying in work the expected outcome.

A person supported through year 1 and year 2 is a person still contributing in year 5, and every year of work adds another £10,000 of direct fiscal value to the running total.

The example levels also connect to something larger, set out in the next section: the quantum of work our data shows is required across the sectors. That is the work these people will be doing.



THE LIFETIME MEASURES, KEPT SEPARATE

Annual AAAnow estimates and lifetime DWP measures are different instruments, and this paper keeps them separate. The measures below are the department's own, from the Young People and Work report, benchmarked on ages 18 to 24.

Each year a young person spends NEET carries an average lifetime impact of £29,000 to the state and £52,000 in lifetime earnings. The lifetime public-finance cost of a young person who never works runs up to £240,000. Across the system, around £8 billion a year already goes on Universal Credit or PIP for young people.

PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT	LIFETIME STATE IMPACT	LIFETIME EARNINGS IMPACT
10,000	£290m	£520m
25,000	£725m	£1.3 billion
50,000	£1.45 billion	£2.6 billion
100,000	£2.9 billion	£5.2 billion

The department's lifetime measures, applied to the example levels: each person into employment is at minimum one fewer year spent NEET. Scenario returns reach £2.9 billion for the state and £5.2 billion in lifetime earnings impact. Separate from the annual model above, and never added to it.*

THE WIDER MONETARY VALUE

The direct fiscal line is the floor of the value, not the ceiling.

Every placement into an SME hands hours back to the trade: quotes written, invoices chased and enquiries answered by systems a young person runs, while the owner does the work the business exists to do. Multiplied across the SMEs reached, that is productivity returned to the powerhouse of the economy.

Every placement into a corporate moves AI work from pilot toward production, in an economy where 80% of such projects currently stall. There is a compliance value alongside the productivity value. An organisation brought to readiness is one whose public record reads accurately to the systems now answering for it: safety information delivered as written, figures quoted as published.

All of it plays against the largest number in this paper, the £125 billion annual cost of inactivity. And the value compounds, through the 2 years of continued learning that raise each person's contribution year on year, and through the governance role that keeps the readiness bought here from decaying.

At scale, the programme brings AI education, support and paid employment to 85,000 NEETs*, and gives over 170,000 SMEs* the advantages of AI, for less than 1% of allocated funds*.

Now set the pieces side by side and let them run. £10,000 of direct fiscal value per person, every year they remain in work. Hours returned across over 170,000 SMEs. £1.5 billion of next-year spend, set out in the section that follows, redirected to land at home. Lifetime measures reaching £2.9 billion for the state and £5.2 billion in earnings. Capability compounding through 2 years of continued learning and a governance role beyond it.

The full value of the growth this sets in motion is not a figure this paper will cap. Who knows the scale of what it could deliver? The arithmetic is laid out above, every step visible. The reader can carry the sum as far as the evidence allows, and make up their own mind about where it ends.

— THE VALUE BEYOND MONEY

Some of what this programme delivers does not sit in a fiscal table.

Prosperity for the country: growth built from its own people, in its own businesses. A sense of purpose for the roles we are talking about: real work, chosen by the person doing it, valued by the business receiving it. Confidence, built the only way it builds, through capability proven in practice. Personal worth established.

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

7. The coming AI spend: money the country is losing.

Behind every figure in this paper sits a measured quantity: the quantum of work required to address and understand AI across the sectors. This is our estimation, from our data, and it is what the CCDM exists to measure.

Millions of audited websites resolve into a countable picture: what needs doing, organisation by organisation, how long it will take, what is involved. The quantum is not a single national number. It is a ledger, held per organisation, and the sum of that ledger is what the country's coming spend will be buying, whoever it buys it from.

That is also why the spend estimate can be conservative without being vague. It is priced from the ledger, not projected from a trend line.

The spend to meet it is coming regardless of anything in this paper. Held conservative to be safe, and without itemising counts, the UK government and UK corporates are set to spend no fewer than £3 billion on AI in the next year, driven by what is going to be needed*.

Held to the low side, 50% of the current spend goes outside the UK.

That is £1.5 billion in the next year alone leaving the country. Money the country is losing, and, more permanently, capability the country is not building.

Spend that flows outward buys outcomes. Spend that lands domestically buys outcomes and the people, skills and infrastructure that produce the next outcomes. A nation that intends to lead in AI cannot import its readiness indefinitely.

The country is already building the other half of sovereignty: compute, infrastructure, national capacity. Capability is the half this programme supplies. Machines at home and skills abroad is not a strategy, and the coming spend is the moment to settle which way the capability flows.

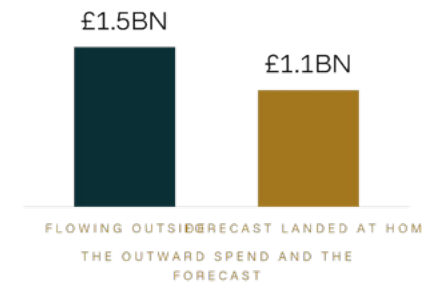
The NEET answer changes where the spend lands. A domestic workforce, educated against the measured quantum of work, deployed through domestic SMEs and corporates, means the coming spend builds domestic resource, domestic capability and domestic growth.



Focused on what is key to AI Readiness, the saving against that spend is £218m, and could be up to £731m*. Carried forward against the external figure, and held to the low side, the forecast is £1.1 billion: the midpoint of £731m and the £1.5 billion currently flowing outside*.

The full derivation, from the quantum of work through the spend estimate to the forecast, sits in Table B5 of the appendix, every assumption visible.

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.



8. Governance going forward: staying at the top of the game.

Everything to this point describes a gap being closed. This section describes it being kept closed, at all times. That is the discipline the whole model is built on, and the young people are part of how.

Going forward, the people this programme educates support government and corporations with AI governance itself. They help manage the rules engines that govern how AI reads, represents and acts for an organisation, and they keep an eye on things, so that everybody stays at the top of the game.

Managing a rules engine is concrete work. It means keeping the sources an AI draws on current, the representations it makes accurate, and the thresholds it acts on right for the organisation it serves. When any of the 3 drifts, the person watching catches it, and the correction is made before the outside world meets the error.

AI readiness is not a state an organisation reaches. It is a state an organisation holds, and holding it is continuous work. That work is exactly what a generation educated inside this system is equipped to do.

The role is delivered from inside the information the system is getting. Employers taking young people on feed back what the work actually demands. The technology feeds back where organisations stand today, not last quarter: 187 agents performing up to 360,000 checks to continually monitor the AI Readiness score. The education system feeds back what each person can do, and the support system feeds back how they grow.

One continuous flow of intelligence, and the people maintaining the country's AI governance sit inside it, learning from it as they work.

Control is engineered in, not hoped for. Human-in-the-loop is the architecture throughout: AI automates the reading and the drafting, and a human retains full control of the deciding. The systems are built for the realities of high-volume processing from the outset, throttling limits among them, so nothing fails silently when the volumes are real.

Measurement is defined before delivery begins, and it runs at 3 levels.

For each person: capability built, assessments passed, placement made, retention through the first 2 years. For each organisation served: the work completed against the gap the audit identified, and the AI Readiness score

moving as it closes. For the programme as a whole: cost against the model in Table B2, outcomes against the value tables, and the matching engine's own precision, how often the work predicted is the work found.

The platform tracks all of it continuously. Course correction is native to the model, because the loop that runs the programme, knowing what is needed, knowing who can deliver it, and teaching people how to deliver it alongside, is the same loop that improves it.

Delivery quality scales through the network that already exists: the many organisations across the country offering services to government, driving improvement and supporting education, carrying interchangeable modules to national reach.

The readiness this programme builds is still readiness in 2 years and in 10: the watch never stands down, and the people keeping it were educated for exactly that.

9. Answering the critics.

A paper written for scrutiny should do the scrutineer's work for them. These are the questions a careful departmental reader will ask, answered directly.

Would these outcomes not happen anyway? No. 6 in 10 of this cohort have never had a job, and 61% are economically inactive. Outcomes for this group do not occur by drift, which is why the number has climbed to a 13-year high. Every placement is made against a verified vacancy or a measured bottleneck, so each outcome is a need filled, not a statistic relabelled. The matching data makes additionality visible rather than argued: for every placement, the need it answered is on record. And every year avoided as NEET carries the department's own lifetime measure with it: £29,000 to the state, £52,000 in earnings.

Does this displace existing providers? It equips them. Delivery at scale runs through the organisations already serving government, carrying interchangeable modules. What the programme adds is the layer nobody else holds: the measured picture of the work, the matching, and the continuous assessment. And the programme's investment sits inside existing allocations, so no provider's funding is diverted to pay for it.

Why this rather than the existing bootcamp landscape? Because of where each starts. A conventional offer starts from a designed syllabus, an estimate of the need. This starts from the need itself, measured continuously across millions of audited websites. The distinction shows up in the syllabus: the 15 corporate-facing modules are built from what the audits find, and the 5 SME sectors are verified by the participants directly with organisations. The content is checked against reality twice before anyone is placed.

Can it reach the 61% who are economically inactive, including those with health barriers? It is designed for them. 84% of the cohort want a job, education or training; the barrier is the bridge, not the will. Learning runs at each person's own pace, largely online, with office time introduced deliberately to build workplace confidence. Assessment is practical and continuous rather than exam-gated. And nobody is handed a certificate and left: expert support stands behind each person for 2 years.

How is quality assured? The educational architecture is benchmarked against the strongest 16-week immersive standards in the market, at Level 4, equivalent to the first year of a Foundation degree. Capability is evidenced through verified practical projects, judgment, communication, adaptability and ethical decision-making, and the

platform knows each person's capability continuously, not annually. Every module is interchangeable and every provider delivers against the same mapped content, so quality does not vary with geography.

What exactly is proprietary here? The mechanism. ARTYMUS III. The AI Readiness Maturity Scale™. The platform: 187 agents performing up to 360,000 checks to continually monitor the AI Readiness score. The CCDM's continuous map of the work. The PDF Automation framework. 25 years of reading organisations from the outside. The evidence base, by contrast, is deliberately public: ONS and DWP. None of it is a black box to the reader of this paper: what each component does is stated plainly here.

How firm are the value figures? Every headline traces through a visible table. The assumptions are stated in the table itself, the arithmetic can be followed line by line, and every estimate carries the same footnote: our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs, full basis available. Nothing is asserted that cannot be walked back to its inputs. The lifetime measures are the department's own, from the Young People and Work report, applied to the example levels and kept separate from the annual model.

Does this work outside London and the big cities? It is national by construction. The matching runs on live vacancy data and local insights, borough by borough. SMEs, the majority beneficiary, are everywhere: 5.5 million of them, in every constituency. The 5 mapped SME sectors are trades found in every region, which is a design choice. The first beneficiaries are deliberately the businesses every high street already has.

Are employers ready to receive young people safely and well? The placement model assumes the answer must be built, not presumed. Participants experience office environments and organisational culture during the education, before deployment. Every deployment runs human-in-the-loop, with a manager retaining the deciding role. And the 2 years of expert support stand behind the young person inside the placement, not just before it.

What happens after the 16 weeks? The 16 weeks are the beginning. Continued learning and access to intelligent education run for the first 2 years, with expert support alongside, through the period where a first career takes root. Beyond that, the governance role opens: keeping organisations' AI readiness held, continuously, as working professionals inside the system that educated them. The sector remains theirs to choose, and the door back into further modules never closes.

How will anyone know it is working? Because the measures are defined before delivery begins and the platform reports them continuously: capability built, placements made, retention through the 2 years, readiness scores moving in the organisations served. Reporting is a by-product of how the system works, not an overhead added to it. The same closed loop that runs the programme corrects it, in flight.

Conclusion.

The circle this paper draws closes because each part answers the one before it.

The corporate gap, measured for over 25 years, gave the reason to build the education. The education gives a generation of NEETs practical skills, paid work, and a reason to expect something of themselves, with 2 years of support and a governance role beyond it. Their skill, carried into the SMEs and the corporates, gives the powerhouses of this country the edge to grow.

That growth is what UK plc feels: young people earning instead of waiting, businesses handed back the hours to do what they do best, organisations finally seen as they actually are, and kept that way.

Nothing here ends at a finish line, because none of it is a one-off. Continuous education and continuous support, so that people grow, thrive and develop. That is the design.

AI is the defining opportunity of a generation, and we believe its advantage belongs to everybody. Understanding is what makes that true.

Appendix A: figures register.

Every figure used in this paper, with its basis. Estimates are AANow's own, with the derivation shown in Appendix B.

FIGURE	BASIS
1.01 million NEETs; 13.5% of 16 to 24 year olds; first above 1 million since 2013	ONS, January to March 2026
84% want a job, education or training	DWP interim report
6 in 10 have never had a job	DWP interim report and analytical annex
39% unemployed and seeking; 61% economically inactive	House of Commons Library
£25 on benefits for every £1 on active employment support	Public expenditure analysis; AANow evidence base
£195m standing on the £25 side of the project's £1	AANow estimate (Appendix B, Table B6)
£125 billion annual cost of inactivity	Public expenditure analysis; AANow evidence base
£820m Youth Guarantee	Autumn Budget 2025; cited as example
Skills Bootcamps 2026 to 2027 allocations	DfE; cited as example
Apprenticeship Levy transfers	Published mechanism; Oxford City Council; cited as example
72% of organisations use AI in at least 1 function	Industry benchmarking; AANow evidence base
80% of AI projects fail to scale	Industry benchmarking; AANow evidence base
48% of generative AI projects reach production	Gartner

FIGURE

BASIS

70% expect AI to reshape talent strategy; 22% provide adequately	Industry benchmarking; AAAAnow evidence base
73% of managers against 47% of employees	Industry benchmarking; AAAAnow evidence base
95.2% of Gen Z are AI natives	CEIBS
94% of B2B decisions AI-based	Forrester
More than half of consumer decisions AI-led	AIB
58% start their search with AI; 87% stay inside the answer	Industry benchmarking; AAAAnow evidence base
85% of brand mentions from third-party content	AirOps
Misinformation the top concern, 57%	Gallagher
79% of AI misinformation arising from organisations' own content	AAAAnow research
Over 25 years reading organisations from the outside	AAAAnow
187 agents performing up to 360,000 checks	AAAAnow platform
Millions of corporate and government websites audited	AAAAnow platform
5.5 million SMEs	UK business population, as compiled
Universal Credit standard allowance, single under 25: £338.58 a month; £4,063 a year (2026 to 2027)	Official benefit and pension rates, 2026 to 2027 (GOV.UK)
65% AAAAnow modelling allowance, clearly labelled	AAAAnow; our allowance, stated as ours
£6,704 indicative welfare cost per person per year	£4,063 with the 65% allowance applied; AAAAnow estimate (Table B4a)
£6,500 retained as the cautious working figure	Held below the indicative figure; AAAAnow estimate (Table B4a)

FIGURE

BASIS

£29,000 average lifetime state impact per year spent NEET (ages 18 to 24)	DWP Young People and Work report
£52,000 average lifetime earnings impact per year spent NEET (ages 18 to 24)	DWP Young People and Work report
Up to £240,000 lifetime public-finance cost per young person who never works	DWP Young People and Work report
Scenario returns reaching £2.9 billion for the state and £5.2 billion in lifetime earnings	Lifetime DWP measures applied to the example levels (Table B4b)
Around £8 billion a year on Universal Credit or PIP for young people	Milburn review, via House of Lords Library
The target: 85,000 NEETs; over 170,000 SMEs; less than 1% of allocated funds	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B)
The project investment: £7.8m over 3 years	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B2); Skills Bootcamps projects the reference points
Example levels: 10,000; 25,000; 50,000; 100,000 into employment	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B4)
£6,500 benefit spend reduced and £3,500 tax and NI per person per year	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B4)
The quantum of work across the sectors	AAAnow estimation (CCDM)
No fewer than £3 billion coming-year AI spend; £1.5 billion external at 50%	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B5)
£218m to £731m against AI spend	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B5)
£1.1 billion forecast: the midpoint of £731m and the £1.5 billion external figure	AAAnow estimate (Appendix B, Table B5)
The education: 2 courses of 8 weeks, one corporate, one SME; 16 weeks taking both	AAAnow programme design

FIGURE**BASIS**

Continued learning and expert support for the first 2 years	AAAnow programme design
5 SME industry sectors within the 16-week programme	AAAnow programme design
15 corporate-facing modules	AAAnow programme design
Oxford City Council: 33 staff; Level 3 and 4 standards; £360k Levy transfer from Cisco International Ltd; 50% of learning time applied in role	Oxford City Council, published reporting
16-week immersive benchmark, Level 4, first year of a Foundation degree equivalence	Makers Tech, published standards

Appendix B: estimates and tables.

These tables are the full basis behind every estimate in the paper. The assumptions sit in the tables themselves, so the arithmetic can be followed from input to headline.

TABLE B1: THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE AND THE POSITION

ITEM	AMOUNT	STANDING
Youth Guarantee	£820m	Autumn Budget 2025; committed to this generation
Skills Bootcamps 2026 to 2027	Allocated nationally	DfE; distributed and active
Apprenticeship Levy transfers	Substantial corporate surpluses	Mechanism proven in practice: Oxford City Council
The cited allocations together	Comfortably exceed £1 billion*	The space the project sits inside
The project investment	£7.8m over 3 years	Less than 1% of the budgets being allocated; Skills Bootcamps projects the reference points*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B2: THE PROJECT INVESTMENT MODEL

INVESTMENT LINE	3-YEAR TOTAL	NOTE
Education delivery and content	£3.6m	A large proportion online, at each person's own pace, limiting unnecessary travel costs
Platform, diagnostic mapping and matching	£1.5m	Extension of capability the technology already runs at national scale

INVESTMENT LINE	3-YEAR TOTAL	NOTE
Assessment and certification	£0.6m	Practical, continuous; capability known and linked to the matching
Continued learning and expert support, first 2 years	£1.4m	Continuity funded as a designed feature, on the page
Management and friction	£0.7m	Counted, because there are always friction and management costs
Total	£7.8m	The investment in full*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

— **TABLE B3: SME REACH**

STEP	FIGURE	BASIS
Participants at scale	85,000	The target*
Deploying through the SME and hybrid routes	51,000	6 in 10 of participants
SMEs supported per participant	3 to 4 on average	Across the first 2 years, average modelled at 3.4
SMEs reached	Over 170,000	51,000 at 3.4 each: 173,400*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

— **TABLE B4: THE VALUE FORECAST AT EXAMPLE LEVELS**

PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT	BENEFIT SPEND REDUCED PER YEAR	TAX AND NI CONTRIBUTIONS PER YEAR	DIRECT FISCAL VALUE PER YEAR
10,000	£65m	£35m	£100m

PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT	BENEFIT SPEND REDUCED PER YEAR	TAX AND NI CONTRIBUTIONS PER YEAR	DIRECT FISCAL VALUE PER YEAR
25,000	£162.5m	£87.5m	£250m
50,000	£325m	£175m	£500m
100,000	£650m	£350m	£1 billion

Modelled at £6,500 of benefit spend reduced and £3,500 of tax and NI contributions per person per year: £10,000 of direct fiscal value per person, each year they remain in work. Example levels only; the overall estimates and the target stand unchanged.*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B4A: THE WELFARE COST MODEL, PER PERSON

STEP	FIGURE	BASIS
Universal Credit standard allowance, single under 25 (2026 to 2027)	£338.58 a month; £4,063 a year	Official benefit and pension rates, 2026 to 2027
AAAnow modelling allowance, clearly labelled	65%	Our allowance for support beyond the standard rate, stated as ours
Resulting indicative welfare cost	£6,704 a year	£4,063 with the 65% allowance applied*
The cautious working figure, retained	£6,500 a year	Held below the indicative figure*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B4B: THE LIFETIME MEASURES, KEPT SEPARATE

MEASURE	FIGURE	BASIS
Average lifetime state impact per year spent NEET	£29,000	DWP Young People and Work report; ages 18 to 24

MEASURE	FIGURE	BASIS
Average lifetime earnings impact per year spent NEET	£52,000	DWP Young People and Work report; ages 18 to 24
Lifetime public-finance cost, never worked	Up to £240,000	DWP Young People and Work report
Corroboration: higher lifetime welfare costs per NEET	£68,000, within a £244,000 total lifetime cost to government	Impetus, July 2026
Scenario returns at the example levels	State impact £290m to £2.9 billion; earnings impact £520m to £5.2 billion	Lifetime DWP measures applied to the example levels; separate from the annual model, never added to it*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B5: THE QUANTUM OF WORK, THE COMING AI SPEND AND THE FORECAST

STEP	FIGURE	BASIS
The quantum of work across the sectors	Scoped per organisation	Millions of websites audited; the CCDM resolves the picture into the work required, its duration and its content
Coming-year UK government and corporate AI spend	No fewer than £3 billion	Held conservative to be safe; based on what is going to be needed*
Share of current spend flowing outside the UK	50%	Held to the low side*
External spend, next year	£1.5 billion	Money the country is losing*
Saving against AI spend	£218m, up to £731m	Focusing the spend on what is key to AI Readiness*
Forecast value of landing the spend domestically	£1.1 billion	The midpoint of £731m and the £1.5 billion external figure, held to the low side*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B6: REALLOCATION CONTEXT, FACTORED THROUGH THE PROJECT

STEP	FIGURE	BASIS
The country's ratio	£25 to £1	Benefits against active employment support
The project's side of the ledger	£7.8m	Active employment support: the £1 side; the investment
Standing on the £25 side	£195m	The investment factored through the ratio*
The context the programme starts to turn	£125 billion	Annual cost of inactivity

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

TABLE B7: THE PARTICIPATION MULTIPLIER

PEOPLE INTO EMPLOYMENT	DIRECT FISCAL VALUE PER YEAR	RETURNED PER £1 OF PROJECT INVESTMENT, PER YEAR IN WORK
10,000	£100m	£13
25,000	£250m	£32
50,000	£500m	£64
100,000	£1 billion	£128

Computed against the £7.8m project investment, rounded. The multiplier, visible.*

* Our estimates, from our data, mapped against published government spend and costs. Full basis available.

Appendix C: bibliography.

The evidence base behind this paper: every reference and source, organised in 3 groups.

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— AI AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

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CEIBS AI Research Center

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— SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE EXECUTION

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<https://makers.tech/software-engineering-bootcamp>

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Appendix D: glossary.

TERM	MEANING
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training. UK Government term, ages 16 to 24.
CCDM	Continuous Content Discovery and Mapping. Knows what is required: the work that needs doing, how long it will take, what is involved; drives the skills matching.
ARTYMUS III	AAAnow's framework for AI and governance, launched in 2023.
AI Readiness Maturity Scale™	The corporate benchmark created from ARTYMUS III, through which larger organisations benchmark where they were and where they are.
Apprenticeship Levy transfer	The published mechanism by which large employers move surplus Levy funds to other employers, including their supply chains.
Skills Bootcamps	The Department for Education's funded programme of short, intensive courses, with allocations distributed for 2026 to 2027.
Youth Guarantee	The £820m commitment made at the Autumn Budget 2025 to expand support for young people.
Human-in-the-loop	The control architecture in which AI reads and drafts while a person retains full control of the deciding.
Digital debt	The accumulated weight of digital estates built for human readers that machines now read: the gap between how content was constructed and how AI consumes it.
Rules engine	The configurable logic governing how AI reads, represents and acts for an organisation; managed continuously as part of governance.
PDF automation	The cataloguing, indexing and automatic conversion of PDF content into clean, agent-ready form.
Quantum of work	AAAnow's estimation of the work required to address and understand AI across the sectors, resolved by the CCDM into scoped work per organisation.