

**College:** East Durham and Hougall Community College  
**Location:** Peterlee, England, UNITED KINGDOM  
**Practice:** Youth Project  
 Targeting “at risk” teens with an array of educational and support services

<i>Year Started</i>	1997
<i>Budget</i>	N/A
<i>Program Participants</i>	130
<i>College FTE</i>	N/A
<i>Target Sector</i>	N/A
<i>Staff Size</i>	2 FT
<i>Structure</i>	College supports and provides facilities; youth leaders operate
<i>Key Outcomes</i>	Increased enrollment levels among school-age youth Increased employment levels among those youth who have completed required education

## Introduction

County Durham, England shows what can happen when industry leaves a region and the resulting lack of prospects takes its toll on teens. That toll includes high dropout rates, unemployment, and involvement in crime. The Youth Project offered by East Durham and Hougall Community College provides “at risk” students with basic skills, vocational training, options for qualifications, and personal and social support from youth leaders.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Peterlee is close to the North Sea coast in the eastern part of the county.

County Durham had traditionally relied on coal mining as its economic base, but the decline of the industry since 1993 has resulted in high unemployment and an increasing disenfranchisement of the region’s youth. Evidence includes poor progress in school, high dropout rates, unemployment, and involvement in crime—especially among those under 20.

## Community Background

County Durham is a largely rural county in the northeastern part of England. Much of the west of the county, the Durham Dales, is designated as an

## Program Description

Established in 1984 as the first tertiary college in northeast England, the institution now known as East Durham and Hougall Community College is

Program focus	Sector specific	Economic condition	Economic base			Target populations
			Mfg	Agr	Svc	
Access and At-Risk	No	Distressed	N/A	N/A	N/A	Youth/students

<i>Service Area County</i>	<i>Durham</i>
<i>Total Population</i>	490,000
<i>Median Household Income</i>	N/A
<i>% Below Poverty Level</i>	N/A
<i>% Unemployment Rate</i>	N/A
<i>% Minority Population</i>	N/A
<i>% Rural Population</i>	N/A
<i>% High School Graduates</i>	N/A
<i>% College Graduates</i>	N/A

located in Peterlee, in the Easington district of County Durham. The college is a general Further Education college that typically begins matriculating students at age 15 or 16. The institution operates out of three main centers, plus three auxiliary centers and a number of outreach facilities. Its mission statement is “to contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the region and beyond.”

The Youth Project began in 1997 following a study showing that, in East Durham alone, more than 450 students from secondary schools failed to gain employment or entitlement or move on in further education. The program aims to reach students before the age of 16 which is the end of compulsory education. The Local Education Authority and the college provided funding for the program. Thirty students were chosen to participate the first year and were inducted into the program in February 1997.

Students in the program are 13 and 14 years old and considered “at-risk” in their traditional secondary schools. At-risk factors include poor attendance, behavioral problems, expulsions or suspensions, under-achieving, lack of self-esteem and assertiveness, and poor social relations. In addition, a majority of this group also lacked knowledge of career options and pathways.

Following an introductory session, students attend class at the college two or three days a week and study in as many as four vocational areas such as construction, technical drawing, personal fitness, or horticulture. They are also provided with basic literacy and mathematics remediation. A “base room” is open for students to check in both before and after their school day. On-site counseling and other resources are available. Free meals and free transportation are offered and prove helpful in

maintaining high attendance rates.

Youth leaders from the community, rather than teachers from the college, operate the program because of their experience with and understanding of youth. The college principal and agents from local social services agencies also support the program.

## Outcomes

Follow-up surveys with students who have participated in the program yield positive responses. Students report that they like the atmosphere at the college, especially as they are treated more like adults than in their previous schools. In addition, students feel that they are not judged beforehand, but are given a chance to prove their capabilities.

The success of the first year was clear: of the 30 participants, half started full-time courses at the college, five are seeking employment, two are entering further youth training, and five will be returning to the project to complete it. Only one participant dropped out of the program. As of early 2001, 130 students have enrolled in a college program.

## Strengths, Challenges, and Replicability

It is clear from evaluations that the program is serving a need in the community. The program’s focus on basic skills, vocational training, options for qualifications, and personal and social support helps at-risk youth. Given a second chance in the Youth Program, these students can contribute to their community when they become adults.

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