

SkillsFit Focus



**Newsletter - Issue 2:
18th December 2025**



SkillsFit: What We Do

Industry-setting Alternative Provision for 14-19 year olds

Targeted on-site support for attendance, SEMH, behaviour and progress

NEET Engagement projects for young people and neighbourhoods in need

Enrichment and wellbeing sessions for those accessing alternative education

FOCUS FEATURE

SkillsFit Awarded NW Local Authority Approval!

Referral-Ready! - Appointment to LA frameworks gives assurances to schools & settings that SkillsFit is referral-ready, and set to provide targeted and structured support.

FOCUS INSIGHT

Anxiety and Absence

What's really getting in the way? - Growing anxiety & school absence aren't short term issues, or simple ones! SkillsFit want to talk about early intervention.

FOCUS HEADLINE

'The Art of Turning Up'

SkillsFit Mentoring - SkillsFit are offering on-site, targeted mentoring to help young people rebuild routine and strengthen their sense of identity.

FOCUS FEATURE - SkillsFit Awarded NW Local Authority Approval!

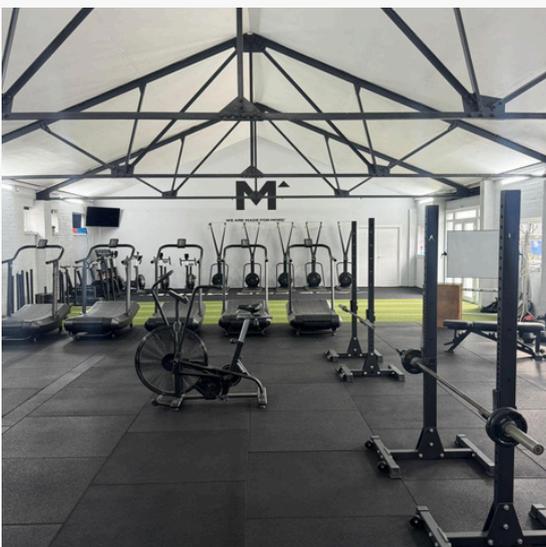
Referral-Ready!

I'm delighted to share that **SkillsFit has been formally approved on the North West Flexible Purchasing System (FPS)**, commissioned via Cheshire East Borough Council on behalf of participating North West Local Authorities.

In practical terms, this means that schools, academies, PRUs, colleges and wider settings across the North West are now eligible to refer young people directly to SkillsFit's programmes. For busy leaders and practitioners, it removes the noise and provides a clear, compliant and trusted route to commission support.

This approval is significant for SkillsFit, and for young people in Salford and Greater Manchester. Being accepted onto the FPS means that our policies, **safeguarding** procedures, **governance**, **quality assurance** and **delivery models** have been scrutinised, tested and approved. For commissioners, that provides confidence; for young people, it widens access to **safe, purposeful and high-quality support** at a time when the need has never been greater.

SkillsFit is now formally recognised as **referral-ready**: equipped, compliant and prepared to support settings facing growing pressures linked to attendance, SEMH, behaviour, reintegration and NEET risk.



Who We Can Support

SkillsFit is available to work with:

- Secondary schools and academies
- College and sixth-form provisions
- PRUs and alternative provision settings
- Local authority services and outreach teams
- Community organisations supporting 14–19 year olds

Whether a young person is struggling to attend, facing social or emotional barriers, at risk of exclusion, or simply needing a structured environment to rebuild confidence, our offer is designed around **purposeful progress** and **real-world readiness**.

SkillsFit Services

Available Across the North West

1. Industry-Setting Alternative Provision for 14–19 Year Olds

Delivered in partnership with Made for MORE, offering a high-quality, active and aspirational environment where young people build confidence, routines and employability-ready behaviours.

2. Targeted On-Site Support for Attendance, SEMH, Behaviour and Progress

Flexible mentoring and guidance within school settings, helping young people overcome daily barriers, re-engage with learning and take steady steps back into routine and participation.

3. NEET Engagement Projects for Young People and Neighbourhoods in Need

Community-focused programmes delivered through SkillsFit CIC, designed to improve connection, readiness and aspiration for young people who may be furthest from education, training or work.

4. Enrichment and Wellbeing Sessions for Those Accessing Alternative Education

Purposeful sessions that blend physical activity, personal development and wellbeing, giving young people safe spaces to grow, reflect and make meaningful progress.

FOCUS INSIGHT - Anxiety and Absence

What's Really Getting in the Way?

Across Salford and Greater Manchester, schools are facing a growing challenge that feels very different to the landscape we knew just a few years ago. Attendance is still a national priority, but behind the percentages and dashboards sits a much more human story; one increasingly shaped by **anxiety, confidence, safety, and the daily realities young people are navigating.**

We know from national research that anxiety is becoming a major barrier to school attendance. Studies now show that **around half of secondary-aged pupils have avoided school due to anxiety**, and pupils with emerging mental health needs are far more likely to become persistently absent than their peers. But Salford has its own context too; and it adds weight to what schools are experiencing first-hand. Rising SEMH need, local neighbourhood pressures, and an unsettled post-pandemic landscape continue to shape the lived experience of young people in our communities.

What I hear from schools mirrors this picture. For many pupils, the barrier isn't refusal or disengagement, it's **the emotional load of simply turning up.** For some, that looks like anxiety that builds over time; for others, it's low confidence, isolation, or a sense of being overwhelmed before the day has even begun. And increasingly, young people tell us that **the challenge isn't only inside school.** Local neighbourhood factors; like antisocial behaviour, fear of confrontation, or feeling unsafe on the journey to and from school, can be enough to keep a young person indoors, even when their intention is to attend.

When these pressures combine, the result is a cycle that's incredibly hard to break.

- Anxiety makes attendance feel harder
- Absence increases isolation and self-doubt
- Returning feels overwhelming
- The gap widens

74% of young people with SEMH needs report difficulties attending school

A growing concern for schools across the North West

Salford continues to sit above national averages for persistent absence

Reflecting rising emotional and environmental barriers for young people

SkillsFit provides structured, relational support to rebuild routine and confidence
Helping young people take steady, supported steps back into education



For professionals, this creates a difficult tension. Staff want to offer relational, consistent support, but rising needs and stretched capacity make it harder to give every young person the time and headspace required. Attendance teams, pastoral leads and SEND services are working tirelessly, **but the scale and complexity of need have changed**, and the system is feeling the strain.

Where SkillsFit Helps

This is where SkillsFit aims to make a tangible difference. Our programmes sit in the space where **anxiety, confidence and attendance intersect**, offering young people a structured route back into routine, purpose and connection. Through targeted on-site support, Alternative Provision pathways, and community-facing activities, we create environments where young people can:

- rebuild confidence at a realistic pace
- strengthen daily routines and readiness
- understand how to represent themselves well
- feel safe, valued and supported
- take steady steps back into school life

For schools and services, SkillsFit becomes an additional layer of capacity; a partner who can hold the time-intensive, relationship-based work that sits beneath attendance challenges, allowing settings to focus on what they do best while ensuring young people don't fall further behind. The truth is, when we look beyond the numbers, anxiety and absence aren't problems of motivation, they are challenges of **safety, confidence, belonging and hope.** If we address those foundations, attendance becomes a by-product of young people feeling ready to step forward again.

FOCUS HEADLINE -



The Art of Turning Up is SkillsFit's 1-to-1 and small-group mentoring programme designed to help young people understand *who they are, how they show up*, and what small daily choices can do to shape the opportunities ahead of them. At a time when anxiety, low confidence and disrupted routines are impacting attendance and engagement across Salford and Greater Manchester, this programme gives young people space, structure and support to rebuild from wherever they currently stand.

What the Programme Is For

Many young people join the programme because school feels difficult, overwhelming or simply "too much" right now. Others may be rebuilding after time away, returning from exclusion, or needing a supported pathway back into routine. Whatever the context, The Art of Turning Up helps young people develop the confidence, habits and mindset needed to step forward again.

How it Works

Sessions are relaxed, honest and practical, delivered 1-to-1 or in small groups of up to four. Each session blends conversation, reflection and real-time challenges, helping young people explore identity, build positive habits and practise new behaviours in a safe and supported way.

Young people journey through a simple but powerful model:

Reflect → Learn → Practise → Prove → Progress, building skills such as effort, preparation, consistency, self-presentation and coachability.

Intended Outcomes

SkillsFit work with young people to strengthen:

- readiness to return to lessons
- confidence in who they are and how they represent themselves
- daily routines and positive habits
- emotional resilience and self-management
- behaviour consistency and engagement

How It Helps Schools and Settings

The Art of Turning Up eases pressure on pastoral, behaviour and attendance teams by taking on the time-intensive relational work that sits beneath the surface of many engagement challenges.

How It Supports Young People

Above all else, the programme is about helping young people feel safe, capable and ready to turn up; for themselves, for others, and for their future pathways.

They gain:

- confidence through small wins
- clarity about who they want to be
- a stronger sense of identity and belonging

Getting in Touch with SkillsFit

If you would like to talk about anything in Issue 2, or or find out more about SkillsFit:

 07743 058990

 skillsfitltd@gmail.com

 **COMING SOON!**