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Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Establishing an initial broad strategic direction and supporting cross-Departmental actions to reduce the number of young people most at risk of remaining outside education, employment or training (NEET)

“...a successful strategy included the use of a wide range of partners in the development of the vision and a readiness to align and pool resources so that success could be sustained and integrated into an overall strategy.”

(Ofsted report March 2010 - ‘Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why’)

CONTENTS

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

1. INTRODUCTION

2. STRATEGIC FOCUS

3. MEASURING SUCCESS

4. KEY CURRENT AND PLANNED STRATEGIC ACTIONS

5. INITIAL PLANS FOR FURTHER WORK

6. STEERING AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

7. SUMMARY

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



The issue of young people not in education, employment or training is a high priority for me, for Executive colleagues, for the young people themselves and for our society as a whole. While my Department initially took the lead on the earlier Scoping Study I have developed this suggested strategic approach on behalf of the other main Government Departments which have a key role to play in reducing the numbers of young people most at risk who fall into this category.

Although this problem has been around for many years I am determined to ensure that the draft strategy is forward looking, comprehensive and will provide the foundation for the development of an approach to deal successfully with this issue. I clearly see the need to intervene early to engage young people in learning and address the risk factors that might cause them to disengage. I recognise that this issue needs to be considered in the context of cross departmental work and particularly with the Department of Education.

Confirming the work in the Scoping Study, the recent Assembly Employment and Learning Committee Report, which I welcomed, stressed that the NEETS group is not a homogenous group and the barriers faced by these young people can be myriad, complex and, in many cases, interwoven and multi-layered. The report recommends that a strategy tackling the issues they face must be about co-ordination, co-operation, multi-agency working, referral and collective accountability, requiring all stakeholders to work together within a framework. Executive Departments, the community and voluntary sector, the different sectors of education, employers and businesses all have a role to play.

The suggested strategic focus is in two interlinked parts, designed as an integrated package of active measures to prevent young people from becoming NEET; and to focus on re-engaging those young people, particularly in the 16-19 age group, who are already outside education, employment and training, and who are most at risk of remaining there.

In addition to a range of actions it is recognised that we will need to put in place structures or mechanisms to co-ordinate and make these more effective. These structures will begin to set and monitor the detailed outcomes sought and adjust these as required and as new information comes to light. With all our combined good practice, experience and goodwill we are confident we can make a difference to the lives of our young people who are most at risk.

Danny Kennedy

D. Kennedy
Minister for Employment and Learning
March 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'NEET'

- 1.1 The term 'NEET' used throughout this document simply refers to young people who spend a substantial amount of time outside any form of education, employment or training. The term itself has some problematic aspects and can carry possible negative connotations. Throughout this document the term is not intended to have implications of that nature. The term is being used here as a factual descriptor to enable thinking and strategic decision making.

- 1.2 It is also important to bear in mind that young people who are at the heart of the strategy cannot be conveniently pigeon-holed into administrative boxes and that the term does not refer to a homogeneous group. In this respect it is important to consider the different needs of different young people, for example those with a disability, from a minority ethnic group, Traveller young people etc. Our focus is on finding gaps in existing provision and in ensuring the best decisions possible are made about any individual young person in light of all the circumstances pertaining in a particular individual case.

Purpose of this document

- 1.3 The purpose of this consultation document is to seek your views on the draft framework for a cross Departmental strategy for reducing the numbers of young people most at risk of entering or remaining in the NEET category. It is intended that through this document you will have an opportunity to consider the draft framework, put forward your views on the content and also comment on how the Executive might take forward its implementation. This will be used to help inform the final Strategy and its future implementation.

Pre-consultation

- 1.4 We are committed to active engagement with stakeholders during the development of this strategic approach. We are keen to ensure that it will be firmly evidence-based and informed by the views of those working closely with children and young people and their families. Pre-consultation has taken place with key stakeholders, including discussions with key government departments, non government organisations representing children and young people and a number of sectoral umbrella organisations.

How to respond

- 1.5 A consultation questionnaire has been developed as part of this document to assist you in submitting your views. The consultation questionnaire is contained in a separate document available on our website and you should feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you wish. Indeed you need not answer any of the specific questions. The questions have been provided as a guide to help you think about the issues. Please tell us what you think in whichever way you feel best communicates the information you wish us to consider.
- 1.6 In addition, during the consultation period the Department for Employment and Learning will be arranging a series of consultation events in several locations. We would very much welcome your attendance at these events. If you are interested in attending one of these events, please let us know and we will advise you of the details when they are finalised. You can also obtain details of events from the Department's website or by contacting the Policy Development Team (contact details are overleaf). Details of these events will also be provided to the main young people's sector representative groups.

Freedom of Information

Confidentiality

- 1.7 The Department will publish a summary of response following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the

consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will be taken to apply only to the information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraph below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will provide you with guidance on the legal position regarding any information given by you in response to this consultation. The Department will handle any personal data you provide appropriately in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

1.8 The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. The right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, any information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, the Department does have the responsibility to decide whether any information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

1.9 Alternative formats of the document can be made available on request and you should forward any such requests to:

Department for Employment and Learning
Room 307, Adelaide House
39/49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD
Tel: 028 9025 7640
Email:NEETSConsultation@delni.gov.uk

1.10 **We particularly want your views on whether you agree with the immediate strategic focus.** To help you decide we have set out a rationale to allow you to come to a reasoned conclusion. However, if you have a different perspective we want to hear about that as well. In this case we also

want to hear about your supporting rationale including what actions need to be taken to move towards this.

- 1.11 **We also want your views on the path we should take to move in this direction in the immediate future.** Again we encourage you to specify what actions there should be. We have set out in the following pages information (and links to further detail) about current and planned actions so that you can begin to answer our question.

Equality impact

- 1.12 It is expected that the proposed strategic focus will have a positive impact on young people as the incidence of unemployment is increasing disproportionately for this age group. Evidence is derived from sources of unemployment data. The proposed strategy will help to address imbalance. What is proposed is for a more co-ordinated set of actions and resources on the proposed core of 16-19 year olds which should lead to better outcomes for this group.
- 1.13 This focus is not at the expense of other age groups as no reduction in existing provision is proposed. The proposed strategy therefore should not have a detrimental impact on other age groups.
- 1.14 If better information becomes available through this strand of work then the impact of the strategy can be re-assessed.

2. STRATEGIC FOCUS

OUTCOME

- 2.1 The suggested strategic focus is in two interlinked parts. It is designed as an integrated package of active measures;
- to prevent young people from becoming NEET; and
 - to focus on re-engaging those young people aged 16-19 who are already in the NEET category.
- 2.2 **The first and most immediate proposed core element of the strategic approach is a more co-ordinated set of actions and resources to reduce the numbers of those young people (aged between 16 and 19) who are not in education, employment or training and who are at most risk of remaining there long term.**
- 2.3 **At the same time, the other element has a focus on longer term preventative measures for those in other age groups and on a mechanism to manage the integration of both sets of measures.**
- 2.4 The suggestion is that, very practically, we need to start somewhere. The 16-19 age band is a key transition point from school to work. It provides a locus where we can begin to demonstrate where the strategy is being effective within a projected timeframe of three years. From this starting point we propose to join up the overall strategy by moving both up (to age 24) and down the age bands (to those pre 16).
- 2.5 Thus at the same time as the Department for Employment and Learning is leading an interdepartmental thrust in the 16-19 age band; the Department of Education in particular, is taking forward a major preventative programme aimed at raising standards and tackling underachievement, including fostering

aspirations, addressing the barriers to learning many of our young people face and working to equip our young people with the skills and dispositions they need to succeed in life and work. The Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety also lead on the Families Matter strategy which will contribute to the longer term measures.

- 2.6 Our rationale for this initial strategic focus is set out in the rest of this document and is based on the most current and best evidence we have to date including the recently published Report of the Inquiry conducted by the Assembly Employment and Learning Committee. In particular one of the report's 22 main conclusions states;

“the Committee considers that a strategy that does not look at specific age groups will be less effective and somewhat unwieldy. A number of the respondents to the Inquiry indicated that the strategy should give cognisance to the need for interventions etc to be differentiated by age”.

- 2.7 Earlier prevention measures will be long term by their nature and more immediate results will be more likely to be achieved when we specifically target those young people who without these actions will be at most risk of continuing for a long period outside education, employment or training.

- 2.8 The initial strategic focus will be enabled through this framework which will facilitate the better targeting, co-ordination and effectiveness of a range of actions that assist a young person who is most at risk of remaining in the NEET category. Depending on the young person's starting point and circumstances this is likely to involve a personalised series of co-ordinated interventions each moving the young person closer to employment, education or training. This approach is supported in the Committee report where it indicates at recommendation 5:

“..ensure that the pivotal role of mentors/Key Workers/Support Workers is deeply embedded within the systems of the strategy”

2.9 The Department for Employment and Learning Scoping Study of July 2010¹ has helped us to be more precise in our focussing of the strategy on the 16-19 group. While the latest estimates put the total number of young people between 16-24 who are NEET at 46,000 the study showed how those in the 16-19 NEET age bands can be further more accurately subdivided into three statistical subgroups. The study borrows statistical categorisations used in England that suggest that those in the NEET category for Northern Ireland break down into:

- a. Those young people who are doing some activity which is not formally counted as education, employment or training, for example gap year students and those undertaking voluntary work. (Based on the latest (December 2010) LFS estimates (with caveats²) this group would represent 16% or 2,240 young people).
- b. Those young people with an identifiable barrier, such as they have a child or are experiencing serious illness or disability. (Based on the latest LFS estimates (with caveats highlighted at footnote 2), this group would represent 18% or 2,520 young people), and
- c. Those young people with no identifiable barrier, but are not in either of the specific categories outlined above. (Based on the latest LFS estimates (with caveats highlighted at footnote 2), this group would represent 66% or 9,240 young people).

¹ The Scoping study is available on-line from <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-misc/neet-scoping-study.htm>

² The current figures available are from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 16-19 year olds in Northern Ireland. These figures are known to have several possible limitations. For example the LFS reduces the numbers judged as being active and potentially leads to a higher NEET figure. In addition the LFS is a sample survey, so all data is subject to sampling error.

- 2.10 While we benchmark favourably with other UK regions (in terms of the overall percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training) we believe that adopting the strategic approach now being suggested will help us improve further.
- 2.11 Our suggestion for the initial strategy direction is based on providing focused help to those most in need. That is specifically to those currently in group 'b' above. Again, however, this will not preclude ongoing actions to prevent those in other groups, particularly perhaps those in group 'c', entering group 'b'. Thus the other group(s) are not being ignored and provision will continue to be made and developed for them. We are also clear that we need to take forward more research and work on information and good practice particularly in tracking individuals and how and when they enter and leave specific sub-groups.
- 2.12 Whatever nomenclature is used what is important is to keep in mind our purpose better to assist all stakeholders to develop a clear focus that allows different interventions to be better targeted for different groups and individuals.
- 2.13 For example, individual mentoring could help some young people get back on track, while support into training or work, perhaps through a training scheme, could be more likely to benefit those looking for but unable to find work. Clearer working definitions will facilitate the more focused policy responses that will emerge as the strategy gets delivered.
- 2.14 We plan to review this focus and its achievement annually via an implementation mechanism suggested at paragraph 6.1 below. Such a mechanism will also be crucial to the co-ordination of efforts to develop further collaboration which are pivotal in reducing the numbers of young people in the NEET category.

BACKGROUND

Department for Employment and Learning Scoping Study

2.15 This strategic framework takes as a major starting point the Department for Employment and Learning's Scoping Study (footnote 1 above) which outlined a set of the current information available on and action being undertaken (by a range of organisations including Departments, other agencies, the Voluntary and Community sector and local government) in relation to those young people currently not in education, employment or training or who are at risk of disengaging.

Assembly Employment and Learning Committee Inquiry

2.16 It is also informed by the very substantial work done in collecting and synthesising the evidence provided to the Assembly Employment and Learning Committee's Inquiry into young people who are NEET.³ We have drawn on the Committee's description of problems and solutions and believe that the thrust of this strategy picks up and responds positively to the recommendations contained in the Committee's report.

2.17 For example the Committee's report states that:

"The NEET strategy must be about co-ordination, co-operation, multi-agency working, referral and collective accountability. A NEET strategy will require all stakeholders to work together within a framework. The Executive Departments, the community and voluntary sector, the different sectors of education, employers and businesses – all have a role to play. During this Inquiry the Committee has also become aware that it is not only the Executive Departments which often tend to work in what might be described as a 'siloed'

³ The committee's report is available on-line from
http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/employment/2007mandate/reports/2010/report_32_10_11R_v1.htm
http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/employment/2007mandate/reports/2010/report_32_10_11R_v2.htm

fashion; there are community and voluntary organisations which appear to focus solely on their own work and do not see themselves within a framework where they share information and resources with others.”

2.18 This strategic framework sets out from the same starting point and plans that in its design and delivery it will put into practice this principle of collaboration, raising awareness of how the individual and collective actions of a wide range of agencies can play their part in increasing the life chances and progression opportunities of the most disadvantaged young people.

Departmental actions

2.19 The actions contained in the framework are based on ‘a snapshot’ of the key Departmental actions that we believe will jointly have most impact in reducing the numbers of those young people between 16 and 19 most at risk of remaining in the NEET category. Departments will also continue to maintain a range of other actions to drive up preparation for and participation in education and training across a range of sectors that will maximise employment opportunities for all young people.

Voluntary and community sector

2.20 In addition to departmental actions the scoping study contained some of the work being done by the voluntary and community sector and highlighted existing examples of good practice. It demonstrated how the voluntary and community sector plays a vital role in reaching those who are disaffected from the institutions. Many of these are only reachable by those operating outside formal government agencies. Thus the strategy will be designed to build on the work of the third sector and its strong community aspect with family support being an important element. This recognises the complexity of the problems facing the young people and the role that family and family experience plays.

2.21 However, despite all this sterling work the numbers of young people who are in the NEET category persists and therefore the need for this focussed strategic approach has been identified. In particular the use of the categorisations set out in paragraph 4.6 below as a starting point will better reach those at most risk.

SUPPORTING RATIONALE

2.22 Along with an absolute imperative on any society to provide young people with an opportunity to have a substantially better life, recessionary times underpin an important additional rationale for taking action and the future work envisaged. The broad figures below provide the additional motivation, if any were required, that the sooner we can put this strategy into effect the sooner we can begin to realise the benefits for all of us.

2.23 The significance of the monetary driver has been substantially strengthened recently by a set of figures from the Audit Commission.⁴ These figures (based on data from England) substantiate the prima facie case that society as a whole suffers when young people remain in the NEET category for long periods. The headline figures show that such a young person will cost an average of £160,000.⁵ If this figure is applied to Northern Ireland and (using the number of NEET young people from group 'b' only; i.e. 2,520) the equivalent total costs would be in the order of £400m spread over the lifetime of this group.

2.24 In particular young people in group 'b' most likely have the type of barriers which if not addressed more directly perpetuate against longer term reengagement thus creating continuing costs for society. This reinforces the need for the strategy to focus interventions aimed at sub-group 'b' while ensuring those young people from the other sub-groups also receive the attention that their circumstances dictate.

⁴ "Against the odds" Re-engaging young people in education, employment or training July 2010 available at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/againsttheodds/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵ £56,000 in public finance costs before retirement age (for example, welfare payments, costs to health and criminal justice services, and loss of tax and national insurance revenue). There will be an additional £104,000 in opportunity costs (loss to the economy, welfare loss to individuals and their families, and the impact of these costs to the rest of society).

2.25 We are also mindful of the wider context and the impact of global economic difficulties on levels of youth unemployment. This is important since any reduction in the numbers of the young people who are in the NEET category may be masked by the current economic situation. Resulting trends in employment and unemployment gains achieved by the delivery of better targeted or new initiatives can easily be lost and we will factor these into any specific goals that may emanate from the emerging work outlined below. (Further details at section 5). National statistics on NEETs focus on young people aged 16-18 years. However, at age 18 young people are also classed as unemployed and will count in 18-24 unemployment statistics.

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES

2.26 The costs associated with young people who are outside education, employment or training, while only beginning to be accounted for more precisely, have historically led to a range of existing interventions and related spending.

2.27 It is worth emphasising at this point that a key objective of this strategy is to ensure that all spending is as effective as possible. It is also possible that existing spending is not targeted enough to be effective in turning around the numbers of young people we are now seeking to reach. If this is found to be the case we may have to bring forward proposals as to how this might be done and some potential funding sources which may be required are highlighted at paragraphs 2.32 and 4.56.

2.28 The Department for Employment and Learning for example, has in place a wide range of initiatives, programmes and strategies which are relevant to this issue and for one of these, Essential Skills, spend in 2009/10 was £9.9m for all age groups. Since the start of the Essential Skills Strategy, nearly three quarters (71%) of the participants in Essential Skills courses are aged between 16 – 25 years. The Department has made significant progress in

expanding and improving provision to ensure courses are flexible, creative and delivered in a setting appropriate to the learner. The Department also spent around £36m in 2009/10 on its Training for Success programme which is primarily aimed at 16 and 17 year old school leavers who have not yet found full time employment or who have not entered further education. The Department spent £5.8m in 2009/10 on an all-age Careers Guidance Service to help people make informed decisions about training, education and employment opportunities. The Department also supports education and training provision for 16-to-19 year-olds through its recurrent block grant to further education colleges. In 2009/10 the recurrent grant for FE provision totalled £112.1m. Full-time study accounted for £85.9m of this, of which 85% [£73m] was taken up by 16-to-19 year-olds. In addition the Department provided recurrent grant for Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) provision totalling £24.9m; of this, full-time provision accounted for £19.6m, of which 52% [£10.2m] was taken up by 16-to-19 year-olds.

2.29 In addition to mainstream funding the European Social Fund (ESF) has provided another source of funding. Under the first call for ESF Funding a number of projects have a NEETs focus or specific NEET target group. Funding offered to these groups in the first call amounted to £3.02M ESF with £1.89M match funding provided by the Department for Employment and Learning. It is too early to ascertain how many will have a NEETs focus under the second call for ESF Funding. However, the Department encouraged applications from organisations forming local partnerships on either a geographical or client group basis or those targeting young people (16-19 years old) not in education, employment or training.

2.30 The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has made available additional investment of around £2m in the period 2008-2011 to support schemes which will impact on the economic activity and education attainment of young people leaving care. These include Preparation for Adulthood, Living with Former Foster Carers, Transition Teams and Leaving

Care Services. Of this £1m has been secured to enable Health and Social Care Trusts to establish dedicated employability schemes.

2.31 Schools have a key role to play in ensuring our young people develop the aspirations, attitudes, skills and qualifications they need to succeed in all areas of life and work – and to prevent them falling into the NEET category. Therefore, a significant area of the Department of Education’s spend is on the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB), as this is the funding schools use to deliver the curriculum and to provide pastoral care and other support to meet the needs their pupils may have. As well as the ASB delegated funding, schools may also receive in-year support funding for long-term substitution, rates, licences etc. and many services such as home to school transport and meals services. Provision is also made centrally for children with special educational needs, both in mainstream settings and in special schools. In addition, the Department of Education provides funding for a range of programmes that contribute to preventing or supporting those in the NEET category and these are detailed in the table below.

Department of Education budget area	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k (estimated)
Total Aggregated Schools Budget (nursery)	17,614	7,940
Total Aggregated Schools Budget (primary, including funding for nursery classes)	466,810	478,246
Total Aggregated Schools Budget (post-primary, including funding for preparatory departments)	621,577	630,814
Implementation of revised curriculum	4,636	3,716
Entitlement Framework	17,100	16,600
School improvement programme (aimed at raising standards and tackling underachievement in literacy and numeracy)	7,264	7,486
Extended Schools Programme	9,884	9,931
Full Service Schools	700	700
Pupil Emotional Health and Well-Being Programme	£4,000	£4,500
Behaviour support services	£6,500	£7,000
Support for Newcomer pupils	1,127	1,025
School Age Mothers Programme	780	771
Support for Traveller children	402	412
Youth provision		27,800
Attendance	1,543	1,540
Looked after children	500	489

2.32 In addition to these funding sources, the possibility of seeking additional resources from central funds will be considered. Given the tight financial climate all potential sources of funding must be explored to see if it is possible to secure a discrete fund for tackling the issues facing those who are in the NEET category. As indicated earlier, funding will be reviewed for effectiveness and sustainability.

3. MEASURING SUCCESS

- 3.1 The constraints in measuring aside, given that this order of magnitude savings are possible, the measurement of the reduction in the number of young people who are in the NEET group b category (currently estimated at 2,520) will be a key outcome. It will also be crucial in providing any arguments that additional funding might be required.
- 3.2 This will clearly need to be demonstrated using objective and agreed criteria. We are acutely aware (as outlined below) that we need to get better at measuring our success. We currently judge that the existing figures are good enough to allow work to begin on our strategic direction.
- 3.3 As mentioned previously the current key figures available are through the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 16-19 year olds in Northern Ireland who are not in employment, government training schemes or full-time education.
- 3.4 These figures are known to have several possible limitations. For example the LFS reduces the numbers judged as being active and potentially leads to a higher NEET figure. In addition the LFS is a sample survey, so all data is subject to sampling error.
- 3.5 Through the actions proposed through this strategic framework and their implementation we will work towards the basis for these initial statistics being superseded by a more precise form of measurement. The exact form of this better measurement will be brought forward during the detailed course of the work of the suggested ***work on Information***. (Further initial details are set out at paragraphs 4.10 and 5.4 below).

4. CURRENT AND PLANNED STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 4.1 We will only be able to tell for certain that the existing and planned strategic actions, including better collaboration, are working (and that we then realise the commensurate economic and social benefits) when the proposed information work brings forward more precise measurements.
- 4.2 However, through the gathered evidence base we are confident that we know enough to continue ongoing work and to develop a series of strategic actions in order better to co-ordinate and target this already ongoing work.
- 4.3 In constructing this framework we have built on the work of the voluntary and community sector and work is also ongoing with and within the voluntary and community sector through a number of channels including the NEETs Strategy Forum hosted by Barnardos.
- 4.4 Additionally the Department for Employment and Learning officials have been in contact individually and collectively with a range of organisations from the sector including Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), the Youth Council and the Participation Network. We have also conducted a pre-consultation event as part of our on-going engagements, which endorsed our strategic approach. The work of the sector overall will be crucial to the better co-ordination, sharing and collaboration required, and ultimately to the success of this strategy framework. We believe we have addressed the issues raised during our pre-consultation in this document and a further opportunity now exists to test this further.
- 4.5 Continuing this collaborative way of working is particularly vital when we take into account one of the main things we already know - young people who are not in education, employment or training are not a homogenous group. They face a spectrum of barriers which can be multiple and compounded. In order

better to co-ordinate effective actions we will target the causes of disengagement for those at most risk.

4.6 The major risk categories are illustrated from the emerging data indicated from the scoping study and are replicated below. This is not an exhaustive list but rather helps better understand the group the strategy seeks to support. To complicate the picture further, individual young people can belong to more than one category. There is scope to understand the characteristics better and how they interact and overlap. We do, however, know for example that the groups which are usually most associated with not being in education, employment and training are children and young people who have experienced being/having:

- in care; left care; on the edge of care;
- a negative experience of education;
- suffered from bullying at school;
- literacy and numeracy problems;
- carers;
- parents;
- involved with drug and alcohol abuse;
- a physical disability/learning disability;
- committed a crime;
- a mental illness;
- an economic disadvantage; or
- homeless.

4.7 Furthermore the latest longitudinal data⁶ from England and Wales has also highlighted three particular characteristics - lack of prior attainment, disability and parental economic inactivity - as being associated with young people being in the NEET category for longer. The data indicated that young people

⁶ DfE – the activities and Experiences of 18 year olds ; England 2009 available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000937/b01-2010v2.pdf>

in the NEET category for more than a year are ten times more likely to have no qualifications, seven times more likely to come from poorer backgrounds and twice as likely to have a disability⁷.

4.8 With these broad indicators in mind we will ensure that there is an enhanced joined-up approach to development and delivery of actions targeted at young people aged 16–19 who most need transitional help. To do this it is intended that all key Departments, NGOs, and the business sector will build further co-operation, facilitated through the arrangements for co-ordinating implementation of the strategy.

4.9 As a first indicator of our intent, an outline of key existing and new actions from each of the service delivery Departments with a role in reducing the numbers of young people in the NEET category are set out below. For the first time these have been placed together in one document in an initial step designed to facilitate better coordination. Some initial suggestions for further work are then outlined in section 5. The current and planned actions are set out immediately below under the broad headings and then within that by Department:

A. Information – plans for monitoring and tracking individuals and the effectiveness of collective strategic efforts.

B. Interventions - the projects, processes and tools in which we are investing to re-engage young people most at risk.

C. Prevention - reducing the in-flow of young people most at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment or training.

⁷ The same study at footnote 5 shows that 45% of those with no reported qualifications had spent 12 months in the NEET category compared with 4% of those with five to seven GCSE's at A* to C. 15% of young people with a learning difficulty or disability had spent more than 12 months being in the NEET category compared to 8% of those that did not. 14% of young people with parents in 'routine' occupations had spent 12 months being in the NEET category compared to 2% of those in 'higher professional occupations'.

A. Information – The provision of better information for monitoring and tracking individuals and our collective strategic efforts.

Department for Employment and Learning

4.10 The Department for Employment and Learning will inform the development of the NEETs strategy, and subsequent measures to address the issue, by developing improved information resources. We will explore options for cross-Departmental research on the development of a tracking system for young people not in Education, Employment or Training.

4.11 One initial strand will be to determine how young people themselves believe they might be best supported to get out of the NEET category. We envisage that the specific research here will provide initial qualitative background and supporting information on young people's views on the support they require e.g. what has helped, what would help if it was there and what types of intervention do not/did not work. It may involve bringing forward new research if required.

4.12 The Department's Careers Service is currently giving consideration to developing a more proactive approach which is likely to include a follow-up survey on the progress of young people after they leave compulsory education. Young people who are in the NEET group are not a static group and some may have become disengaged since the initial school leaver survey. This intervention would provide a further opportunity to support young people to re-engage. The effectiveness of any follow-up survey will be dependent on obtaining accurate baseline information.

4.13 The Department for Employment and Learning has considered the possibility of undertaking a Youth Cohort Study in Northern Ireland, similar to studies in Great Britain. However, the lack of a suitable sampling frame from which to

draw a sample of participants has meant that it has not been possible to undertake the Study to date. This will remain under consideration.

4.14 In terms of tracking, the Department for Employment and Learning is currently looking at the data requirements of the tracking system used in Great Britain to see what (similar) information is available in Northern Ireland and where information gaps exist.

4.15 Access to the Careers Service should be available to all post-primary pupils in Northern Ireland, including those in education otherwise than at school and those in the colleges. This will be taken forward under "Preparing for Success"⁸ through the revised Partnership Agreement between the Careers Service and all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. Plans are also in place to assess the Careers Service against agreed quality indicators. This will initially be on a self assessment basis to establish a continuous improvement culture, leading to evaluation by an external assessor.

4.16 The Careers Service will continue to build partnerships that provide access to an increasing number of young people. The development of relationships with businesses, colleges and training organisations and the development of exchange and employability programmes will be considered in the context of "Preparing for Success". This will be taken forward jointly with the Department of Education.

4.17 The Department for Employment and Learning will also consider further research into how many who present at 18 claim benefit with no or little work, training or schooling since age 16. Key issues will be client profiles, length of benefit claim, progression and retention rates. This evidence would allow us to develop our main programmes to meet the specific needs of this client

⁸Department of Education/Department for Employment and Learning 'Preparing for Success' – The Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Strategy and Implementation Plan January 2009 available at http://www.delni.gov.uk/es/ceiag_pfs.pdf

group and also allow the Department more generally to develop prevention measures.

Department of Justice

4.18 At a strategic level, and from experience of working with young offenders, it is apparent that too many of them have slipped out of our formal education system and are not linked into the world of employment and training. We are clear that it is better to tackle the root causes of their offending behaviour. On 1 November 2010, the Minister of Justice announced a review of the Youth Justice System looking at all aspects of youth justice, thereby fulfilling a commitment in the Hillsborough Castle Agreement. The Review Team will report in June 2011. This Review will be informed by the NEETs strategy, and may make recommendations to address the numbers of those young people who are not in education, employment or training.

4.19 There are also clear links between the emerging cross Departmental strategic approach to NEETs and the ongoing work on Disaffected Youth, and the Department of Justice and the Department for Employment and Learning officials are forging closer links in this area.

B. Key current and planned interventions – the projects, processes and tools in which we are investing to re-engage young people most at risk.

Department of Education

4.20 The Department of Education supports youth work through the Education & Library Boards' Youth Services and the Youth Council (YCNl). Youth work within education is an important part of a coherent package of education services for all children and young people. Youth work can make a significant contribution to a range of outcomes, but is focused particularly on education and employment. This contribution is set in the context of education priorities of raising standards, especially in literacy and numeracy, narrowing the gap in achievement, helping young people overcome barriers to learning, and enhancing their employability.

4.21 Taking part in structured youth activities can lead to improved self-confidence and self-esteem. Youth work activities can help overcome barriers to learning as well complement learning within the revised school curriculum. Youth work provides support and guidance to young people as they mature. Good quality youth facilities provide a welcoming and safe environment, offering structured programmes which provide young people with opportunities to gain for themselves knowledge, skills and experience to reach their full potential as valued individuals. Good quality youth work can have a profound impact on the lives of all children, but is particularly relevant for marginalised young people, those falling through the net of formal education or those whose needs are considered outside of the mainstream.

4.22 The Department of Education is developing a new 'Priorities for Youth Strategy', a proposed new policy approach, structured around the five education priorities, which are all relevant to supporting young people to stay engaged in education or training. Youth Work can be particularly relevant for young people who may be at risk of entering the NEET category.

4.23 The Department of Education is working with the International Fund for Ireland to develop a programme aimed at addressing the needs of disaffected young people from urban areas who are not in education, employment or training. The “Youth Works” programme aims to identify and engage a target group of young people at risk of becoming NEET. The target group will be young people with no formal qualifications and from areas suffering the greatest economic and social deprivation. The aim of the programme is to use a youth work methodology to engage the young people and support them to gain a recognised qualification. The programme will run over three years and is due to begin in Spring 2011. It aims to reach approx 270 young people in that period.

Looked after children

4.24 Ten percent of looked after children missed at least 25 days of school within the 2008/09 academic year and a significant number have low educational achievement which increases the likelihood of them entering the NEET category. DE has commissioned research aimed at establishing the underlying causes and influences on attendance by looked after children at post-primary level and review effective approaches to improve attendance among this group. The research which will be completed by March 2011 will inform policy and practice.

Department for Employment and Learning

Essential Skills

4.25 Consideration will be given to the development of a programme which focuses on the wider literacy, numeracy, ICT and employability requirements of a target group to include young people who are in the NEET category and who have additional barriers to learning and are considered most at risk. This will focus particularly on those unable to cope with the demands required within mainstream programmes.

European Social Fund (ESF) NEETs targets

4.26 The ESF Programme target is 4,500 for 16-19 year olds over the life of the programme (2007-2013) and to date (Dec 2010) we have 1,248 participants from the NEET group 16-19 year olds representing 28% of the target. In the second call for funding under Priority 1 of the Programme applications were encouraged from organisations targeting young people (16-19 years old) not in education, employment or training (NEET).

4.27 In addition, when the wider definition of NEETs i.e. 16-24 year olds is applied to the current programme an additional 2,041 participants have been recorded as benefiting from the ESF Programme. In total 3,289 participants from the wider NEETs definition 16-24 year olds are participating on the programme, with 1,248 contributing to the ESF target of 4,500.

Care leavers

4.28 As well as the Department's ongoing joint initiative with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to the employability of care-leavers, the Department for Employment and Learning will support the participation of NI further education colleges in a pilot programme to achieve Frank Buttle Trust (FBT) Charter Mark status. The Department is funding two Northern Ireland colleges (Belfast Metropolitan College and North West Regional College) to participate in the pilot. Participation is intended to lead to the creation of a set of standards and guidelines which addresses the specific needs of the FE Sector in NI. The achievement of the Quality Mark will enable FE colleges to demonstrate that they are meeting the needs of children from a care background through the provision of appropriate levels of support to help to improve retention and learning outcomes. Work is also ongoing in the Higher Education institutions.

WorkingRite pilot

4.29 The Department has established a WorkingRite pilot to provide a work based mentoring service for disengaged young people not participating on the Department's mainstream Training for Success provision. We plan that the monitoring and evaluation of the WorkingRite pilot will inform any potential roll out of similar policy interventions for this target group.

Careers Service

4.30 The Department's Careers Service works in partnership with a number of organisations to enhance access to careers guidance support for young people at risk of disengagement. Through Partnership Agreements with schools, colleges, training organisations, Health and Social Care Trusts and Include Youth, the Careers Service identifies those young people at risk and in need of additional support.

Individual Learner Programme (ILP)

4.31 The Department has introduced changes on how further education (FE) colleges offer a service to its 16-19 year old students who have left school. Since September 2010, all 16 to 19 year olds enrolling with further education colleges are provided with a personalised programme of learning to ensure that each young person is placed on to the most appropriate course of study and that their individual career aspirations are met in the most effective way. The Individual Learner Programme (ILP) is agreed with each 16 to 19 year old as part of the enrolment and induction process and is used by FE staff to plan and monitor progress on college recruitment, retention and achievement. Complementing the Department's wider Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance strategy, it is hoped that introduction of the ILP will increase retention rates and help to avoid young people falling into the NEET group out of FE provision.

Education Maintenance Allowance

4.32 Both the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education received the findings of the jointly commissioned Review of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme in Northern Ireland in December 2010. Officials from both Departments are currently assessing the findings of the report therefore no decisions have yet been made on the future of the scheme.

4.33 Any proposals to change the current provision of the EMA scheme in Northern Ireland will be subject to a public consultation and appropriate equality considerations. They will also take account of the very difficult budgetary position currently facing the Department. The Department does, however, note the Employment and Learning Committee's recommendation that EMA funding should be better targeted.

Widening Participation in Higher Education

4.34 In academic year 2010/11, the Department allocated £2.5 million to various widening participation initiatives including special project funding for outreach programmes, such as Step-Up and Discovering Queens.

4.35 Step-Up is a science-based programme of academic and vocational activities delivered by schools in conjunction with the University of Ulster, industry and government. The aim of the programme is to encourage participation in higher education by disadvantaged students who have low attainment levels and relatively low expectations, and who previously might not have considered higher education as an option. By academic year 2010/11 over 1200 students will have participated in Step-Up. 93% of Step-Up students have progressed directly to university both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

4.36 Discovering Queens is a Northern Ireland wide programme of activities designed to stimulate demand for higher education from under-represented groups; to raise awareness and aspirations of the targeted groups; to improve attainments and progression rates; and to effectively tackle the marginalisation and exclusion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The targeted groups are disadvantaged pupils in non-selective post-primary schools. To date over 15,000 pupils have engaged with the programme and 87% have reported that the initiative had made them more likely to want to attend higher education.

4.37 The Department also provides additional student support measures, including higher education bursaries and maintenance grants, and requires individual universities to produce their own access agreements, which include details of their student bursaries and funding for other outreach activities.

4.38 At almost 50%, Northern Ireland's participation rates in higher education are the highest in the United Kingdom. The participation rate in Northern Ireland in 2008/09 for those from Socio Economic Classifications (SEC) 4-7 was 42%. This is also the highest rate in the United Kingdom.

4.39 However, despite the range of Department for Employment and Learning funded initiatives to widen participation in Higher Education, the evidence suggests that some groups continue to be under-represented. The Department recognises that addressing disadvantage and exclusion will require co-ordinated action and consequently it is leading on the development of a new integrated Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education. It is planned to launch a public consultation on the development of the Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education by Spring 2011.

Retention of students in higher education

4.40 The Department is working with the Northern Ireland universities and university colleges to improve retention, in particular among students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.41 In academic year 2010/11 the Department has allocated £1.5m to the Northern Ireland higher education institutions to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with additional needs.

Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment

4.42 Invest NI has a range of initiatives to assist people, including those currently out of work, to become self employed and start their own businesses and this includes a new initiative aimed specifically at the 16 to 24 age group. This Youth Enterprise Programme provides a route for Invest NI to reach young people (aged 16-24) throughout Northern Ireland and to encourage them to go down the road of self employment. Online and 'youth friendly' provision is part of the package. The programme provides tailored, enhanced enterprise support at the pre-start and growth stages to young people, complementing support within the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP). The core focus of the programme is to support young people to think about and act on business start up and growth.

4.43 The programme will run until November 2011 with the following targets;

- 1,000 young people supported at pre start stage.
- 350 new business starts.
- 200 young entrepreneurs supported in business growth plans.

4.44 This programme alongside the work of other stakeholders in the youth area will be the framework within which Invest NI will develop activities to assist the NEET group. A possible further alignment with this programme and the

NEETS framework for action is the identified need for specific financial support for disadvantaged young people unable to raise finance from banks/existing loan funds. In the context of the Budget 2010 process, a Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment/Department for Employment and Learning working group considered additional measures to promote jobs in the short-term, taken as the years 2011-12 to 2013-14. It was clear that there was not a single measure that would deliver significant employment creation by itself and included within eight measures put forward by Invest NI is the provision of grants of up to £2,000 for disadvantaged young people unable to raise finance from banks/existing loan funds. Grant will be awarded on completion and approval of a business plan (with capability assistance from Invest NI's business start programme). The business plan must include justification for the grant being sought and will be awarded following establishment of the business. 280 business starts are targeted within the measure, with a budget of £450k. This measure is at economic appraisal stage and subject to Invest NI approval and confirmation of budget.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety/Department of Education/Department of Social Development

- 4.45 Along with a range of other existing provision for looked after children, (who total 2463 (at 31 March 2009) in Northern Ireland), the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will, in keeping with the policy direction within Care Matters in Northern Ireland and specifically the Preparation for Adulthood Scheme, provide dedicated funding for the establishment of individual employability services in each Health and Social Care Trust.
- 4.46 The primary aim of this employability initiative is to improve the post 16 education, training and employment outcomes of looked after children and young people in leaving and after care. It is important that the components of the service are developed in the context of existing provision to avoid duplication and maximise expertise and opportunities that already exist and ensure that the full potential of this initiative is achieved.

4.47 The service is now operational in all five Trust areas.

4.48 Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety also currently has three key areas of partnership which impact on the life chances for children in care and care leavers. The first of these are the partnerships in place with the Department of Education. These aim to improve outcomes at GCSE, AS and A level in the short term but to also take a longer term view in targeting improvements in numeracy and literacy amongst primary school age children. Secondly with the Department of Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will provide more supported living arrangements for the 60% of care leavers who are not living within the Go the Extra Mile (GEM) scheme. The third area is sport and leisure and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety would like to see this developed in future.

Department of Justice

4.49 At an operational level, the Department of Justice and its agencies currently fund the following two projects which impact directly on the focus of the proposed cross-departmental strategy. The Department of Justice will review these to consider how they might better fit with an overall strategy for NI, what opportunities exist for their scope to be widened for those young people who are most at risk of remaining in the NEETs category:

- Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offender's (NIACRO) employability scheme, funded jointly by the Department of Justice, the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and the Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI), which helps marginalised young people to acquire the skills to find work. This scheme currently deals with 195 young people who are in the NEET category and aged between 15 -18.

- Include Youth and the "Give and Take" scheme. This, in broad terms, connects young people from similar circumstances to learning and training opportunities. This scheme currently deals with 74 young people who are in the NEET category and aged between 16-21.

Department for Regional Development

4.50 The Department for Regional Development will have a role in encouraging the economically inactive back into the workplace and encouraging training and skills development. These objectives are included in Roads Service, NIW and Translink Sustainable Action Plans. The continuation of construction and capital works will be critical to maintain such jobs.

Department of Social Development

4.51 The Department of Social Development will contribute to the objectives of the NEETs strategy by working in greater collaboration with the Department for Employment and Learning to develop a more holistic approach to tackling the barriers to continuing education, accessing training or gaining employment for young people living in the most deprived areas. The Department of Social Development will help support the delivery of services which fill the gap in service provision which are identified through the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans.

Department of Social Development/Department of Education

4.52 The Department of Social Development is also currently developing a Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland with input from the Department for Education. Subject to Ministerial approval the Strategy will include a specific action to create suitably interesting and challenging opportunities to enable more young people to become involved in volunteering and help them develop skills and gain experience through their voluntary activity.

4.53 Youth programmes, funded by the Department of Education and delivered by the Education and Library Boards' Youth Services and the Youth Council, encourage and support young people to volunteer in safe and supported environments. Similar volunteering opportunities are available to these young people through schools. Education prepares young people for volunteering, which volunteering can provide a sense of what the world of work is like and enable young people to gain skills and experiences beyond the classroom. The Millennium Volunteer Programme provides opportunities for the young people involved to gain experience, recognition and training through structured and supported activity.

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

4.54 A priority action area around NEET has been included in the Child Poverty Strategy - "target young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) to support them to re-engage". The Child Poverty Strategy consultation closed on 6 February and a revised Child Poverty Strategy is required to be laid before the Assembly by 24th March 2011.

4.55 The draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration recognises that many disaffected and marginalised young people are also within the NEET category. It wants to empower the next generation to engage in positive activities and programmes that will have beneficial impacts and outcomes for them. Two of the four key aims for empowering the next generation includes:-

- under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration, establishing a major initiative aimed at developing a longer term strategic approach to helping marginalised young people; and
- supporting young people to increase their civic responsibility including facilitating and empowering youth.

4.56 The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will also consider the existing opportunities for funding presented by:

- The Summer Intervention Programme under Cohesion, Sharing and Integration which has, as a key criteria, targeting disadvantaged and alienated youth.
- The Atlantic Philanthropies and Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister Pilot Interface Programme which is aimed at Early Intervention and might help indirectly some of those NEETs who are young parents.
- The Social Investment Fund which has been established to provide support for additional and innovative programmes with clear links into disadvantaged communities and a clear impact on economic and employability issues. Criteria have not yet been agreed.

C. Prevention – The following actions will help reduce the in-flow of young people most at risk who end up in the NEET category:

Department of Education

4.57 The Department of Education will continue to take forward a range of measures to:

- raise aspirations and standards;
- close the achievement gap; and
- enhance skills and dispositions.

Raising aspirations and standards

4.58 "Every School a Good School" – a policy for school improvement which is the Department of Education's overarching policy for raising standards and tackling underachievement. It stresses the importance of having high expectations for all our young people and aims to embed the characteristics of a good school, identified as child-centred provision, high quality teaching and learning, effective leadership and a school connected to its community, in all our schools, so that every child receives a good education. The Department of Education has set ambitious targets to increase the proportion of school leavers achieving the Level 2 qualifications, particularly in literacy and numeracy that are increasingly recognised as essential for individuals to function effectively in society and to gain employment. The Department of Education has therefore set targets as follows:

- By 2020, 70% of school leavers to achieve five or more GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths at grades A*-C (baseline 2008/09 of 58%).
- By 2020, 65% of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals to achieve five or more GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths at grades A*-C (baseline 2008/09 of 30%).

Closing the achievement gap

4.59 Attendance at school is fundamental to successful educational outcomes – regular attendance enables a pupil not only to achieve to their full potential academically but to also develop important personal and social skills through interaction with their peers and with teaching staff. The Department of Education recognises that non-attendance is often a symptom of an underlying problem and has put in place support targeted at specific groups of pupils such as school age mothers, Travellers and young carers. The Department now has a third year of detailed information about pupils' attendance and non-attendance patterns. The plan is to carry out an in depth analysis, which will allow us to examine the effectiveness of current approaches to improving attendance and to target and tailor new and innovative approaches to promote regular and sustained attendance at school. The support structure that is available in schools (and which we are working to improve), or from other professionals such as social services or the health service, is also vital in tackling this problem and keeping young people in education. We are very aware of the numbers who are out of mainstream school and in alternative education provision and a review of that area is currently underway.

4.60 The Department of Education is putting in place a range of programmes to raise standards and tackle underachievement by addressing barriers to learning that young people may face. These include:

- The Extended Schools and Full Service Schools programmes, which work in partnership with statutory agencies, voluntary and community groups to provide pupils and their families from disadvantaged backgrounds with access to a range of services, aimed at tackling barriers to learning and supporting pupils to achieve their full potential.
- A comprehensive Pupils' Emotional Health and Well-being Programme is in development with an initial focus on the needs of the post-primary

sector. Within this Programme counselling support, which is independent of the school, is accessible to all pupils of post-primary age.

- A major review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.
- Leading on the interdepartmental Sub-group of the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People, which has developed an action plan on transition from school for young people with special educational needs.
- Capacity building of the school workforce to engage with young people across the range of barriers to learning, including those who are: looked after; from the Traveller community; or do not have the language skills to participate fully in the curriculum.
- A programme to support school aged mothers.

Enhancing skills and dispositions through the revised curriculum

4.61 The revised curriculum is now in place for all year groups and has a greater emphasis on developing the skills young people need for all aspects of life and work. At its core are literacy, numeracy and ICT, the skills young people need to access current and future learning and to function effectively in the workplace and all aspects of life. It also includes a focus on developing the skills, attitudes and dispositions for learning and employment, such as creativity, problem solving and team-working. It includes a specific area focusing on Personal Development & Mutual Understanding/Learning for Life and Work, which covers personal development, citizenship, employability and, at Key Stage 3, Home Economics, to equip young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to cope with the challenges they will face in life, whether personal, social, emotional or educational, to make a positive contribution to society, and to plan and pursue their chosen career pathways. The revised curriculum will ensure pupils receive a broad

and balanced education that prepares them for the future pathways they choose, while also providing greater flexibility to tailor teaching to suit the needs of pupils.

- 4.62 From Key Stage 4, the revised curriculum is counter-balanced by the Entitlement Framework (EF), which provides the flexibility needed to give effect to the wider range of opportunities, matching provision to pupils' aptitudes and aspirations. From Key Stage 4 on, when pupils can be more inclined to disengage from education, the EF widens the choices and options for 15 and 16-year-olds, and opens access to applied/vocational courses alongside the more general subjects. This choice is underpinned by a coherent programme of careers education, advice, information, advice and guidance from primary school onward.
- 4.63 The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are already working closely to prepare a joint statement that sets out how the two departments are working together to ensure that policies and programmes aimed at young people in the 14-19 age group are coherent and aligned. It recognises the discrete role of schools and FE, the interface between these roles and a determination to ensure that this interface is managed in a way that delivers quality education for young people.
- 4.64 Within the now 29 Area Learning Communities, schools, FE colleges and other providers are working collaboratively to increase the range of courses for pupils in local areas. All six regional FE colleges are delivering a range of professional and technical courses to pupils from all school types.
- 4.65 The Department for Employment and Learning's FE college curriculum policy is based on quality and clear progression routes for all learners. The policy has been developed to ensure that, through their curriculum offer, FE colleges achieve an appropriate balance between provision that strengthens

economic and workforce development whilst at the same time enhancing social cohesion and advancing the individual's skills and learning.

4.66 Specifically, the Department for Employment and Learning will :

- with the Department of Education develop a joint statement on 14-19 provision;
- within this focus on specifically Pastoral Care issues and the Individual Learner Programme to increase retention of young people on FE Courses;
- encourage a greater uptake of economically relevant vocational qualifications available in FE colleges for schools to access in the context of the Entitlement Framework which could help to stimulate those students who have disengaged from school.

4.67 These strategic actions provide the outline of a supporting architecture for individual young people. Along with the strategic focus being set and the initial plans to augment and co-ordinate these in the following section we have set out possible future actions. Together all of these will help young people navigate particularly the periods of transition in their lives. Ultimately it is this better transition which is crucial to the success of the strategy.

5. INITIAL PLANS FOR FURTHER WORK

- 5.1 In addition to the existing and planned work above and in order to ensure our strategic approach is effective we consider that further work will need to be taken forward. These will be the necessary building blocks to facilitate the completion of the full policy cycle with a focus on implementation including prevention. We have provided a flavour of what this further work might look like below. Each suggestion is by definition part of the overall strategic framework to be put in place in order to reduce the number of young people in our society who are at risk of long term disengagement.
- 5.2 Each will need to be designed as a set of interdependent actions and each will mean further sharing and collaborating on knowhow, good practice, experience and emerging findings. In fact in the context of this strategy it is clear that better collaboration in itself can make a real difference, in creating a new dynamic, enhancing awareness of the contribution each agency can make and thus creating a framework to facilitate the young person's progression.
- 5.3 We have endeavoured to ensure that each piece of suggested further work will be clearly focussed on providing solutions. Input will be essential from practitioners and those with a particular expertise, for example from Government departments and the voluntary and community sector. Working through in detail how to conduct the work will necessarily involve these groups.
- 5.4 In broad terms the proposed actions are likely eventually to fall within the areas of Information, Interventions, Preventative, and Good Practice. However, as there is likely to be a substantial amount of potential overlap with the work in practice, it is considered preferable to identify key areas for action and group them for the purposes of development or delivery once they have been agreed. It is envisaged that the implementation mechanism outlined in

section 6 will oversee this process of reaching agreement. The initial issues for the developmental work to be taken forward through our strategic framework are outlined below and you are invited to comment on these and add your own further suggestions:

- **Develop and refine** existing NEETs data (from LFS and other sources such as the Scoping Study) to create a pool of information in order to enable improved monitoring.
- **Provide the information** that will realistically tell us how we are progressing in reducing the number of young people who are in the NEET category⁹.
- **Translate the latest Audit Commission figures** (referenced at footnote 5) (July 2010) into more direct Northern Ireland terms. (These suggest the cost to society of a young person being in the NEET category and are currently based on figures from examples from England).
- **Identify and locate** those young people who are NEET in Northern Ireland in geographical terms, including examining if there is a specific urban-rural dimension to the NEET issue. This is central to examining existing and developing any new remedies - the need to pinpoint where we need do the most effective work is central to implementing an effective strategy and monitoring the on-going results.
- **Map existing good practice** (from the process for finding and engaging, to initial assessment through to employment) and examine what works best.

⁹ We will also need to bear in mind that the development of any appropriate Northern Ireland targets related to the reduction of the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training, will involve consideration of the difficulties associated with setting a target for a reduction in the numbers, given the current economic situation where resulting trends in employment and unemployment may mask gains achieved by the delivery of better targeted or new initiatives.

- **Assess** what overall impact is currently being made by existing interventions, including preventative early interventions, in reducing the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training and in the most at risk group.
- **Demonstrate** that selected solutions can work on a bigger scale and provide further learning for dissemination.
- **Improve** co-ordination or awareness-raising of routes to effective support – so that every young person has access to the high quality information, advice and guidance they need to choose the right option and the support to progress successfully in that chosen route.
- **Encourage** collaboration, further signposting and the formation of partnerships between delivery organisations to ensure more effective interventions.
- **Formulate** recommendations (including taking into account the voice of young people who are NEET) as to further specific actions which need to be developed to reduce numbers across Northern Ireland.
- **Design** an interventions toolkit and consider what will work most effectively in particular instances of someone being in the NEET category.
- **Research** the experience of the ‘final stages’ of preparing young people who are currently in the NEET category for employment.
- **Specify** what works from good mentoring and engagement practice in getting people into sustained employment.
- **Support** the piloting of work programme or programmes for young people not in education, employment or training.

- **Determine** how young people themselves believe they might be best supported to get out of the NEET category.
- **Seek** and make use of opportunities for additional funding to support the delivery of our strategic objectives.

6. STEERING AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

- 6.1 A delivery mechanism will be put in place which will ensure that the cross-departmental and multi-agency aspect of the work is appropriately reflected and enabled in our overarching strategic framework.
- 6.2 We propose that a structure would involve the establishment of a Steering and Implementation Group (SIG). This is likely to consist of both departmental and stakeholder representatives and expert input for example from figures with a track record in implementing strategies designed to reduce the number of young people who are in the NEET category.
- 6.3 We will consider the advantages in the SIG working collaboratively with the existing Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People and assisting the cross-departmental working/overview element.
- 6.4 The Committee's report also considered the **possible structures** that might exist to allow the Executive Departments and stakeholder groups to develop the strategy. They suggested that;

“These would comprise a forum group for stakeholders with the same structure for departments and their agencies/bodies. These fora would then populate a joint steering and implementation body which would, with reference to the two fora, develop the detail of the NEET strategy and then formulate implementation and action plans for it, using four sub-groups: Intervention; Prevention; Information; and Employment Preparation. These may also reflect specific strands of the strategy. The Committee puts forward these structures as a suggestion..”

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1 The immediate core outcome of this strategy will be a co-ordinated set of actions with the objective of reducing the numbers of young people aged between 16 and 19 who are currently not in education, employment or training and at most risk of remaining there for a sustained period.

- 7.2 A range of on the ground actions is also proposed. In addition it is recognised that we will need to put in place structures or mechanisms to co-ordinate and make these more effective. These will begin to set and monitor the outcomes sought and adjust these as required and as new information comes to light.

- 7.3 You are asked either to endorse the initial direction and methods suggested to achieve this or to present your amendments/alternatives. With our combined good practice, experience and goodwill we are confident we can make a difference to the lives of our young people who are most at risk.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

AEP	Alternative Education Programme
ASB	Aggregated Schools Budget
CCIS	Client Caseload Information System
CiNI	Children In Northern Ireland
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DOJ	Department of Justice
DSD	Department of Social Development
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
E2E	Entry to Employment
ILP	Individual Learner Programme
EDP	Enterprise Development Programme
EF	Entitlement Framework
ELB	Education and Library Board
EMA	Educational Maintenance Allowance
EPPNI	Effective Pre-School Education Provision in Northern Ireland Report
ES	Extended Schools
ESF	European Social Fund
ETE	Education, Training and Employment
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FBT	Frank Buttle Trust
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GEM	Go the Extra Mile
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HSC	Health and Social Care
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICSS	Independent Counselling Support Service
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
ILP	Individual Learner Programme
JBO	Jobs and Benefits Office
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
JWT	Jobs without Training
LACE	Looked After Children in Education

LFS	Labour Force Survey
LYSPE	Longitudinal Study of Young People
NDAQ	National Database of Accredited Qualifications
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NFER	National Foundation for Education Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIABF	Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum
NIACRO	Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NIW	Northern Ireland Water
NSD	New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs 2006-2011
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PBNI	Probation Board Northern Ireland
PEAS	Prevention Education on Alcohol and Substance Misuse
PEHAW	Programme to Promote Pupil's Emotional Health and Wellbeing
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
QUB	Queen's University, Belfast
Roi	Republic of Ireland
SEC	Socio Economic Classifications
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SFR	Statistical First Release
SIG	Steering Implementation Group
StW	Steps to Work
TfS	Training for Success
TSO	Training School Orders
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Services
UU	University of Ulster
VEP	Vocational Enhancement Programme
VLEs	Virtual Learning Environments
VQs	Vocational Qualifications
YCNI	Youth Council NI
YCS	Youth Cohort Study
YJA	Youth Justice Agency

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Department for
**Employment
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THE DEPARTMENT:

Our aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

This document is available in other formats upon request.

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