Assessing the potential of e-learning to support re-engagement amongst young people with Not in education, employment or training (NEET) status

An independent research and evaluation study
Background report
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by

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Background report focuses on approaches taken, the literature reviews, and details of results and findings arising from the Becta commissioned research study to assess the potential of e-learning to support re-engagement amongst young people who are Not in education, employment or training (NEET). This background report offers initially an introduction and executive summary, a list of the key messages arising from the research, followed by details of the approaches and methods adopted across the study, a full set of literature and document reviews, details of evidence gathered, and a list of issues highlighted and conclusions drawn from the findings. A separate overview report highlights key messages and recommendations from policy and practice perspectives.

1.2 The aims and purpose of the research study

Becta identified a number of specific aims for the study at the outset:

- to explore the reasons why young people who are NEET have left education, and whether or not they have any intention of going back to education at any point in the near future (distinguishing between short-term and long-term NEET)
- to gauge their attitudes towards technology generally, to include computers, and also mobile telephones, games consoles, music technology, and video
- to know how young people use technology now and how they plan to use technology in the future
- to evaluate the potential for technology to re-engage young people.

A number of objectives were similarly identified for the study. There was a need to:

- better understand the potential of technology to re-motivate young people after they have disengaged from education
- consider whether technology has a part to play, based on interview evidence
- consider what the implications are for the technology itself, whether there is a need to look at new technology or existing technology, or existing technology used in different ways
- consider what the implications are for Becta in working with partners, especially the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) and Connexions
- develop advice for policy makers and agencies involved in NEET reduction and prevention on engagement in education and training
- understand any real potential for Becta in terms of policy to begin addressing the issue in a practical and focused way

- consider what sort of policy approach might be concerned
- consider what sort of approach could be developed, or whether there is a need to look at a number of different approaches in different localities, addressing different categories of young people who are NEET.

1.3 The evidence base for this study

The evidence base for this study consists of 53 young people interviews, 305 questionnaire returns, 50 key informant interviews, 21 training provider interviews, and a range of case study data (see Appendix 1 for further details)

2 Executive summary

The study has highlighted a range of systemic aspects concerned with supporting young people who are NEET and suggests a number of improvements in systems and practices. The research has also identified some gaps in the data for this group and highlights the need for more information in order to ascertain the size and nature of the 'NEET problem'.

The main support for young people who are NEET is currently provided by Connexions services who offer a range of information and support. The findings of the research indicate that the population of young people who are NEET is far from homogenous and includes a wide range of young people including those with serious problems, those who lack skills, those who have poor relationships and attitudes, as well as gap year students and those who are simply temporarily between courses or jobs.

Current government policy is introducing major changes to education for the 14- to 19-age-group, and this provides an ideal opportunity for Becta's involvement and influence to be developed in this area, since key people involved in this sector are working in a system that is in a state of flux, where practices are being questioned and established.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a clear case that ICT has a place in supporting young people 16- to 18-years-old who are NEET. However, the development of the implementation of appropriate support practices will not be simple. It is made more difficult because of the wide variety of differences that exist across the population of young people who are NEET. No single 'one size fits all' solution will be effective. Rather, a set of solutions that focus on different groups of young people, within a system that offers sufficient social intervention to engage young people who are NEET, will need to be identified.

ICT is currently being used in different ways and to different extents across the sector and the research identifies a range of actions that can be taken by Becta, both strategic and operational. There are some groups of young people who are NEET whom Becta would benefit from prioritising and the research suggests various ways in which Becta could work with these groups. There are also some useful ways in which Becta could work with providers, and in addition, there is a key need for Becta to work with the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families). Finally, the study suggests ways forward for future research.

3 Key messages

3.1 Background and context

3.1.1 Unemployment among young people

Unemployment among young people in the 16- to 18-year-old age group appears to be on the increase. There are, however, some problems with its definition (different sources appear to use data measured in different ways, for example).

- Rates of unemployment: Data from National Statistics (2007a) show that the unemployment rate within the 16- to 17-year-old age range category has increased over the past few years, and that it has increased more dramatically in the last four years (an increase of at least five per cent over that time period, reaching a level of some 27 per cent in January 2007). The unemployment rate for 16- to 17-year-old males has increased by some ten per cent over the past six years, to a level of some 30 per cent in January 2007, while the unemployment rate for women of the same age range was about 23 per cent in January 2007. The same pattern is not shown for the 16- to 24-year-old group, however. The percentage unemployment rate decreased (between 1992 and 2001) and then rose to a level of about 15 per cent by January 2007. The pattern for the 18- to 24-year-old age range is similar. By inference, this suggests that the unemployment rate in the 16- to 18-year-old sector is relatively high, but that lower levels of young people who are NEET persist as they become older. Indeed, recent figures indicate that about 145,000 young people in the 16- to 17-year-old age group have been unemployed for a period of up to six months (National Statistics, 2007b), but far fewer have been unemployed for a period over 12 months (currently around 15,000 young people). Connexions services work on targets that do not readily relate to these data (a Connexions service in one region met its November 2007 target of five per cent for young people who are NEET, for example).
- Inclusion in the group of unemployed young people: It should be noted that national statistics showing the numbers of unemployed young people in the 16- to 19-year-old age range use definitions which currently cover a very wide spread, and the unemployed includes those who are gap year students and those who are waiting to take up places on degree or vocational courses. This makes it difficult to assess how many of these young people are NEET in the sense of presenting a problem or needing help, as opposed to those who are merely between periods of productive employment and education.

3.1.2 Support currently offered to the NEET group

The main support for young people who are NEET is provided by Connexions services. The key staff involved in Connexions services, are personal advisers who

are assigned to work with individual young people. Personal advisers often spend large amounts of time in schools supporting young people with advice and guidance on training and employment, as well as considerable time in supporting individual young people 16- to 18-years-of-age who are NEET.

- Young people who are 16- to 18-years-of-age and who are NEET are involved in and supported by a system that already integrates some uses of ICT mainly through Connexions services
- It is clear from this exploratory study that the system of support is not uniform across England, that it is in a state of flux, and that there are inherent weaknesses in the system
- The research also shows that the role of ICT could have a marked impact in supporting young people more effectively, but that some aspects of the fluidity currently inherent in the system in certain respects do not support those who have a chaotic, unordered or potentially destructive lifestyle
- The study has highlighted a range of systemic aspects concerned with supporting young people who are NEET that could be improved. These improvements would parallel the current development of systems to implement the 14-19 agenda (as laid out in The White Paper, 2005), and should seek to provide a wide range of opportunities for the integration of ICT at a number of levels (some in general, and others in specific, ways).

3.1.3 The 14-19 agenda

Current government policy is introducing major changes to education for the 14 to 19 year old age group. The 14-19 agenda (The White Paper, 2005), stressed:

"The transformation of secondary and post-secondary education, so that all 16 year-olds achieve highly and carry on into sixth form, college, an Apprenticeship or work with training until at least the age of 18, is a critical priority for Britain … But the challenge ahead remains immense. The participation among 16- to 19-year-olds remains very low by international standards. We are close to the bottom of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) league table for participation among 17 year-olds. That is now the burning problem facing our education system. The system for 14-19 education – curriculum, assessment and the range of opportunities on offer – needs radical modernisation to meet contemporary and future demands. … In some parts of the country, designated as 14-19 pathfinder areas, the process has gone even further. Schools and colleges have worked with local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council to offer young people a range of options which goes beyond what any one institution can provide and which is succeeding in attracting many more young people to learning.

- The planned implementation of the 14-19 agenda will be through 14-19 consortia in local authorities and will involve a number of major agencies

- The 14-19 consortia in each local authority are vitally important to the NEET agenda, since the ways in which ICT might support young people who are NEET needs to be considered by each consortium when developing ideas of effective delivery through an action plan. At that point, the effective uses of ICT will need to be integrated at a local policy level as part of the local authorities overall strategy. The support for young people who are NEET (rather than covering everyone across the age group) needs to be a specific part of that strategy and plan, and all 14-19 consortia will need to develop appropriate actions to support preventative as well as responsive approaches
- Current government policy provides for schools to be the key agencies for preventative measures for those who are at risk of becoming NEET, while Connexions services are the key agencies for responsive approaches.

3.1.4 Areas where more data is required

There are a number of areas where more data is needed in order to ascertain the size and nature of the 'NEET problem'.

- Understanding the current context of young people who are NEET (and hence, potentially knowing more about how to address it), would be strengthened by having more detailed data on the kinds of young people included in the statistically unemployed groups
- There are also gaps in data recorded by Connexions services. Technology is used by the support services, including being used by Connexions services to maintain records on young people for monitoring purposes. However, while substantial progress has been made in this area by a number of services, the current data needs to be substantially enhanced if it is to be able to identify real trends or support needs.

3.2 Main findings from the research

3.2.1 Characteristics of the NEET population

The NEET population is far from homogeneous and includes young people with serious problems, those who lack formal skills, those who lack relationship and attitudinal skills, and those who are simply marking time between activities.

- Young people who are NEET commonly exhibit limited capabilities to support decision making. In addition to this limited capability in terms of decision making, other factors such as traumatic backgrounds and poor experiences of learning environments can mean that young people who are NEET often do not sustain employment or educational opportunities when they are offered to them. Young people who are NEET often engage most readily in practical and creative endeavour, and desire involvement in social environments. Many young people who are NEET have previously

experienced limited education and training choices. Many tend to move in and out of a range of training and employment opportunities (which can mean that they pick up a number of successive and specific skills as a consequence). The amount of this form of 'churn' is an important characteristic of this population

- There are some strong misperceptions regarding young people who are NEET. These misperceptions can class all young people who are NEET as unwilling or uninterested. Government policy has focused mainly on the role of courses and training to support young people who are NEET as a group with limited qualifications and skills. However, the research shows that there needs to be a clear understanding of these young people's attitudes, contexts, and concerns before support can be put in place that will work effectively. Concentrating on skills and qualifications may not always address the needs of the NEET group
- Relationships are often at the heart of both the issues that young people face and the desires which they have. Many young people who are NEET desire to engage with work or training, but often have difficulties in handling certain forms of social interaction, such as a difficulty in handling reprimand
- There are also wider social factors, in particular localised long-term unemployment. It is unlikely that education alone will be able to address issues such as generational unemployment and broader social interventions are needed if this kind of change is to be achieved.

3.2.2 Roles of ICT

The findings of this study indicate that there is a clear case that ICT has a place in supporting young people 16- to 18-years of age who are NEET. However, the development of the implementation of this will not be simple. It is made more difficult because of the wide variety of differences that exist across the population of young people who are NEET.

- Any implementation will need to account for individual personal and social contexts, since differences exist in terms of social background and (in a wide number of cases) social and personal issues and problems
- Many young people who are NEET have significant problems with behaviour, relationships and self-esteem. This means that the importance of supporting young people who are NEET through direct personal contact cannot be emphasised enough. Any ICT provision needs to be embedded in relationships, with forms of ICT being used to support the development of social skills and fundamental social networking in many instances
- Technology access and use by young people who are NEET is generally (and perhaps surprisingly) high. On the whole, ICT is used for communication purposes more than for information purposes. While

specific technologies tend to be used for specific purposes, some are used already for purposes concerned with learning, but computers and laptops tend to seen as workplace or education tools rather than personal tools. Lack of competence in written English is a major obstacle for some groups of young people, and current methods of teaching written English do not work for everyone. Alternative methods need to be found, and some education and skills providers use ICT imaginatively to this end

- Used in appropriate ways, the cost benefits arising from effective uses of ICT with young people who are NEET could be considerable.

3.2.3 Roles of Connexions services

Connexions services provide one-to-one support for young people and offer them a range of information and support.

- Connexions personal advisers recognise that young people who are NEET can be influenced by a wide range of traumatic, unsupportive or destructive external factors, and that these can influence the capacities of many young people to think outside a time period beyond a single day
- Connexions services provide young people who are NEET with information about employment and training opportunities. This aspect of provision, potentially widening choices for young people who are NEET, could be expanded substantially by uses of technology
- Connexions services do not directly influence the detail of courses and opportunities available to young people. However, they provide a vital link in terms of liaison, support, guidance and communication, and it is difficult to see that this could be offered in the same ways by providers
- There are a range of different providers, supporting young people who are NEET in often quite different ways. Some providers offer workshop-based support of a practical nature incorporating uses of ICT, while other providers offer creative media facilities integrating uses of ICT. Some providers (including those offering these forms of provision) have had considerable success in working with young people who are NEET
- Currently sharing across providers is not apparent or expected. Providers have a remit to develop opportunities, rather than to share them. This means that effective practice using ICT is not necessarily shared with others
- Connexions services are not specifically funded to undertake developments involving uses of ICT. Appropriate specific additional funding will be required if Connexions services are to expand their remits in these areas.

3.3 Key messages

There are clearly ways in which ICT can support young people who are NEET. However, it will not be possible to find a single implementation solution. Rather, a set of solutions that focus on different groups of young people, within a system that offers sufficient social intervention to engage young people who are NEET, will need to be identified. There are a range of actions that can be taken by Becta, both strategically and operationally.

3.3.1 Becta's role in taking things forward

It is important to recognise that this current time provides an ideal opportunity for involvement and influence, since key people involved in this sector are working in a system that is in a state of flux, where practices are being questioned and established, in particular in relation to the 14-19 agenda in education.

- Becta needs to work with a range of agencies to move things forward positively. The findings of this study suggest that there is a great deal that can be done, but that different forms of activity will be required at the level of the government department (the DCSF), the LSC, 14-19 groups within local authorities, Connexions services, providers, and schools
- There is a clear need for Becta to establish and maintain strategic relationships with the LSC, with local authorities and with their 14-19 groups, including and involving Connexions services.

3.3.2 Action in relation to government policy

There is a key need for Becta to work with the DCSF.

- While the DCSF has produced policy and guideline documentation to support practice in the 14-19 sector, there is a need to consider more specific policy and guideline documentation that can focus upon the needs of young people who are NEET, since their needs are so often different from the remainder of their peer age population
- Overall, across the sector that involves young people who are NEET, there is a lack of policies and guidance regarding ICT and its funding. The DCSF offers no specific policy or guidance; the LSC has no policy or guidance with regard to funding provision specifically concerned with ICT; Connexions services have no specific remit with regard to ICT integration; and providers have no specific guidance or exemplars available to them
- There are issues of poor availability of data, with a range of current practices that focus on data management, as there are with awareness, information flow and the offering of choices for young people who are NEET. The flow of information to learners in the NEET group, for example, is not always supported to the extent that it could be by ICT.

3.3.3 Action in relation to ICT uses

ICT is used in different ways and to different extents at the moment across the sector.

- ICT could be used to raise awareness of opportunities for young people a great deal more, not only within Connexions services, but also by providers. ICT could be used in a range of key ways to support young people who are NEET, although these uses will need to fulfil certain criteria if they are to be likely to be successful in the longer term as well as in the shorter term
- Tutors of some provider courses recognise the benefits of using ICT, as well as values arising from creative, social and practical elements within courses. The qualities of learning environments that provide for these are themselves important
- Location and timeliness are key features too; not all courses are located in places that are easily accessible, for example, especially for young people with a restricted view of "neighbourhood"
- There is no single solution from an ICT point of view – solutions are clearly worthwhile for some groups in some locations at certain times. There is no ‘one size fits all’, as this is a complicated sector. Different groups, such as boys and girls, need to be recognised as possibly needing different forms and levels of support, for example. Similarly, areas with ethnic minorities and those with predominantly white British populations may benefit from different approaches
- ICT is likely to support different categories of young people in different ways. This study has begun to identify a range of potential ways of matching support categories with support using specific forms of ICT.

3.3.4 Roles of other agencies

- Schools are in the best position to work on the development of alternative curriculum provision for those young people who are 14- to 16-years of age and are likely to become disengaged and to become NEET. However, the alternative curriculum is likely to be supported most effectively by using providers from outside the schools themselves
- Connexions services are best placed to work with young people who are 16- to 18-years of age and who are NEET. However, the research shows that in order to effectively support these young people they need to be categorised more effectively (in a different way from that used for monitoring purposes) and for the different needs of different sub-groups to be recognised. However, working more intensively with young people who are NEET will require the service to withdraw resource from working with young people in school. Any such withdrawal will need to be balanced in terms of the support by Connexions services for developments with

diploma schemes, and the gaining of important contact with young people in schools (particularly in Years 7, 8, 12 and 13). Face-to-face contact is desired by young people; ICT interfaces are not desired as a simple alternative.

3.3.5 Areas for development

Some groups of young people who are NEET are worthy of being prioritised from the point of view of action by Becta, working in collaboration with other groups. These categories are:

- Those young people who are employment and education ready (Eers)
- Those who are nearly employment and training ready (Neers)
- Those who have chosen alternative lifestyles (Alts).

Some ways in which Becta could work with these groups include:

- Developing mobile technology information provision to suit their specific needs
- Developing mobile technology information provision to offer them choices
- Access to web-based systems that will show them what is involved in different options and what others have achieved
- Access to multi-practice workshops with integrated ICT
- Access to creative media workshops with integrated ICT
- Support from providers using ICT to support courses appropriately
- Access to online facilities to develop and share portfolios of experiences.

The research has found several notable exemplars of practice in place already. Exemplars that could be extended include:

- ICT being used to maintain contact with young people who are NEET
- ICT being used to offer ranges of ideas and choices in visual and auditory forms via websites
- ICT integrated into multi-practice workshops
- ICT integrated into creative media workshops
- Creative media workshops in mobile form
- Tutors in specific courses using ICT appropriately.

There are also a number of ways in which Becta could work with providers. Providers tend to work to a great extent in isolation from other providers. However, Connexions services and 14-19 groups do maintain contact with providers, and normally supply details of providers on their online prospectuses. Some of these providers work at a local level, while others work at a national level.

- Those providers who have been successful have clearly understood their client group. This includes understanding the roles of ICT within wider social and practical support needs
- The current e-maturity framework that has been developed by Becta for use within the FE sector could potentially be usefully adapted to support providers, so that they can consider how well placed they are in integrating ICT into their practices. Developing this aspect might be most effectively done by working with 14-19 consortia
- A support pack would be likely to be seen as a valuable form of support by providers. A support pack could be developed to include an e-maturity framework, a checklist of key elements to be considered in terms of using ICT, video exemplars, and case studies of practice. Specific ICT funding to support Connexions services and providers would be needed for this approach.

3.4 A future research agenda

The study reported here has uncovered a range of issues to be addressed as well as finding many examples of useful practices. However, the scale of the study has been such that the findings in a range of respects have been limited. Further research would enable a greater understanding of how best to deal with some of the issues which have been surfaced. In particular, there is a clear need for a large scale quantitative research study to look at the attitudes of young people who are 14 to 19 year sold and who are likely to become, or who are, NEET. In establishing a study of this form, the difficulties of engaging with hard to reach groups should not, however, be underestimated.

This research would include:

- looking at potential future trends
- looking at patterns of churn or flux
- gathering evidence at a level sufficient to inform with more detail about each category of young people who are NEET.

Other relevant research could include:

- specific studies concerned with looking at how mobile technologies could be used to maintain contact more with young people who are NEET and what forms of web-based facilities most effectively support different categories
- specific exploration within a wider study, or separately, into the reasons why young people become long term NEET. It is generally accepted that there is a need to identify early the characteristics which put young people at risk of becoming long-term NEET, but the fact that government policy now expects this group to be supported by alternative curriculum provision

means that research is needed in order to demonstrate much more precisely what the outcome of this provision will be for the young people

- other potential studies could include identifying the outcomes and impacts of young people who are NEET who become mentors, the effectiveness of different kinds of creative programmes, and the uptake of different levels of ICT provision.

4 Approaches and methods adopted for this study

4.1 Background to the overall approach

It was clear that a key initial issue to consider in this study was an identification of reasons why young people had NEET status. Existing literature (such as Solomon and Rogers, 2001; Raffe, 2003; Passey and Rogers, 2004; DfES, 2006a; DfES, 2006b) pointed to a variety of reasons why young people might have had this status. The reports summarised in the Becta tender document (LSDA, 2006 and Cox, 2006) supported a view that young people with NEET status could move into this category for a variety of reasons (called 'triggers'), and could move out of the category when involved and supported in a range of ways (called 'enablers'). The literature indicated that 'triggers' might arise as a consequence of motivations of a more general cognitive, motivational, social or societal nature, perhaps concerned with behaviour, cultural or 'generational' background, or concerned with perceptions of involvement, or that they might more specifically arise as a consequence of circumstances such as pregnancy, bullying, homelessness, parental backgrounds, or involvement in crime, for example. It was clear from the range of 'triggers' and 'enablers'' described that attitudes of different groups of 16- to 18-year-old people towards information and communication technology (ICT) and its potential to support re-engagement in learning (for formal education and, or, for training) might very well vary considerably.

Raffe (2003) found (in a study conducted in Scotland) that: "more than three in ten (31 per cent) young people were NEET at some time during the three years after the end of compulsory schooling. More than half of these were unemployed. One in five was NEET on a narrower definition which includes only those who were unemployed, sick or disabled, or looking after a child or the home. On average NEET young people had lower S4 attainments, had truanted more and had less favourable attitudes to school". In terms of absences from schools, DfES statistics (DfES, 2006a) showed that percentages of half days missed due to absence in schools in England for 2005/06 were accounted for both by authorised absences, and unauthorised absences. Compared to the 2004/05 revised figures, there was an increase of 0.24 percentage points in total absences and 0.22 percentage points in authorised absences. Recent DfES statistics on permanent exclusions (DfES, 2006b) showed that compared with the previous year, the number of permanent exclusions had decreased by just over four per cent. The figure provided in the report showed, however, that this number had been around the same average for the past six years, that the exclusion rate was higher for boys than it was for girls, and that reasons for exclusions were persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse and threatening behaviour against an adult and physical assault against a pupil.

Raffe (2003) in his study went on to conclude that: "Young people who were unemployed or looking after child or home tended to have less advantaged social and educational backgrounds, to be NEET for longer, and to be vulnerable to further spells of NEET. Other NEET activities such as travelling or taking a long holiday,

voluntary work and part-time jobs were not associated with disadvantaged backgrounds or with an increased chance of further NEET spells. Despite better average qualifications and higher participation in education, females remained NEET for longer, and a gender gap opened up as the cohort grew older. More females looked after child or home, or took part-time jobs, but fewer were unemployed. Between four-tenths and two-thirds of young people who were NEET at a given time point were still NEET six months later. Relatively few entered Skillseekers". Importantly he concluded that: "Different NEET statuses require different policy solutions. Some young people freely choose their NEET activity and require no policy intervention. However, for many young people being NEET is part of a wider pattern of disadvantage and powerlessness, which may need to be tackled on a broader front".

Understanding motivations concerned with educational, employment and training endeavour would clearly be of major importance within the context of this study. In particular, the relevance of the conclusions arrived at by Solomon and Rogers (2001) needed to be carefully considered. This research concerned the motivational patterns and attitudes towards the education of pupils attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or Short Stay Schools (SSSs) at that time, following temporary exclusion from school. Many of the pupils would have gone on to "achieve" NEET status, so the dynamics were relevant to the target group of this study. In distinction to other research (for example, Kinder et al., 1995) these authors concluded that the pupil referral unit pupils attached a positive value to mainstream education and the qualifications and opportunities that it presented. What they lacked was a clear sense of self-efficacy in relation to their perception of their ability to engage effectively with mainstream schooling. Thus they tended to present with very positive attitudes towards the PRUs with their relatively sheltered and undemanding environments, but had a distinctly poor record of successful re-integration back into mainstream schooling, in spite of their stated positive valuing of what mainstream education had to offer. These conclusions, if correct, suggested that the prime role of technology-based interventions would be to create a stronger sense of self-efficacy for learning among members of the NEET population, with an impact on the expressed value for education being primarily indirectly achieved – stronger self-efficacy for learning predicting more positive attitudes towards the value of re-engagement. A key aspect of the study would need to relate, therefore, to an exploration of the relationships between technology use and the development of approaches to learning, with self-efficacy playing a central role in the latter.

It is known already that technologies can be used to support learning with these target groups. Passey and Rogers (2004), in a report for the DfES, found that: "ICT was seen to be having positive motivational impacts upon some pupils disaffected with traditional forms of learning. Communication aspects of ICT are important for engaging those at risk, while information aspects of ICT can further learning activity". Flecknoe (2002), looking at the impacts of communication technologies concluded that these technologies have: "the potential to include pupils who are excluded from

education and electronic discussion could provide a means to develop confidence and encourage pupils to express their opinions". It is known that a range of disaffected young people with NEET status welcome the support of communication technologies, in appropriate support settings (reported through uses of video technologies to engage hard to reach young people; Passey, 2006).

There has been a range of important prior work that has focused on different implementation practices in this field. One example of using social networks of computer-based games to support engagement of young people with NEET status was reported in a confidential paper to the DfES (Passey, 2007). The Notschool work at Ultralab supported a specific implementation model, providing an asynchronous online learning community set up to research, involve and re-engage disaffected, disengaged and disabled school-aged learners. Duckworth (2005), in her evaluation of the project, described key features of the Notschool project: "researchers are supported by a team of personal mentors, subject experts and virtual 'buddies' who variously direct, assist, assess and encourage them. … Notschool.net is a last resort when young people become disengaged from classroom education. Notschool.net does not aim to return young learners to school, but rather to a route that may include further or higher education, or employment". Duckworth found that: "98 per cent of Notschool.net researchers demonstrate observable progress. … Many of those Notschool.net researchers who entered the project showing little evidence of literacy have demonstrated substantial gains through increased self-confidence in expression, spelling and keyboard skills. … Notschool.net's unique combination of personal mentoring, and a secure virtual community, creates a fertile environment that empowers vulnerable young people to engage socially with others. … Of the 2004 – 2005 cohort of Notschool.net researchers 50 per cent moved into further education, 26 per cent entered college related employment and 18 per cent entered full time work … Many of the young people who displayed low self-esteem on entering Notschool.net have demonstrated substantial improvement within the nurturing environment of the virtual community. … Of the 916 researchers active over the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005, over 96 per cent obtained an accredited Part B certificate equivalent to GCSE grades D to G or higher, and over 50 per cent gain grades A to C equivalent, and roughly eight per cent achieve the equivalent of an A Level. … The Notschool.net learner centred approach and scaffolding provides the learner (as researcher) with the skills, tools and confidence to proactively participate in their learning, shifting them out of a model of non achievement. … Notschool.net cultivates communication leading to collaborative working skills within a virtual community. This is increasingly a 21st century work environment. … Researcher problem solving skills are developed through maintaining their own computers at home, learning to use appropriate software programs, creating multimedia projects, researching selected topics largely online, and establishing their own special topic communities".

4.2 Methods used for this study

The research study reported here explored how NEET groups could be identified through appropriate categories, through which to consider support, attitudes of the young people to types of technology, their types of engagement, and their approaches to and experiences with learning. The study was conducted in four phases:

1. The identification of specific NEET groups to consider across the study, and whether there were any initial key characteristics that might indicate the value of particular technological forms of support in terms of engagement (such as mobile phones, PDAs, community centre internet and desktop access, specific software such as games, for example). This initial phase involved small group discussions with key informants, through face-to-face meetings and online means, to consider both NEET groups, and suggestive characteristics to be considered in greater detail through subsequent phases of the study
2. A number of literature and document reviews to identify the scope of groups, indications of attitudes towards types of technologies, types of engagement (whether of specific sensory forms, or social, or societal in nature), approaches to learning, implications of theories concerned with motivation of young people, and policy and practice perspectives describing current practices. Outcomes of the reviews fed into the study as it progressed through subsequent phases
3. Discussions with key personnel, involved with groups supporting and interacting with young people with NEET status. Key questions for this group focused on the nature of reasons for young people having NEET status, approaches that had been tried and had supported young people in these areas, which technologies and resources had been used (if any) and how, and the ways in which technologies had supported motivational engagement and learning participation
4. Discussions with key personnel to identify the most effective ways to subsequently discuss issues with identified groups of young people (which included individual face-to-face discussions, use of questionnaires, and small group discussions). Evidence was gathered directly, in ways recommended by key personnel and groups, using means appropriate to the approaches of individual young people, through paper-based questionnaires, face-to-face discussions and meetings, singly and in groups. Key questions of young people focused on their attitudes towards education, employment and training (focussing both on the values that they attached to each of these, and on their own confidence regarding their ability to engage effectively and successfully with each), attitudes towards technologies and forms of resources, which technologies were used by the young people and for

what purposes, whether there were examples of existing uses of technologies that had supported their educational endeavour, and recommendations from these young people.

The study sought to determine the extent to which the establishment of a clear link between the form of technology and the intention to engage with education affected both the attitudes towards the technology and the intention to engage with education. While the use of formal scales to assess learning approaches and attitudes to learning was not appropriate in the context of this study, questions asked through interviews and through less tightly structured questionnaire schedules were influenced by the clear theoretical and empirical framework provided by prior research concerning engagement with learning and various motivational and attitudinal characteristics.

Analysis of the evidence gathered focused on the bringing together of qualitative and quantitative evidence from the existing literature, from existing case study examples, and from discussions with key personnel and young people.

5 What the research literature tells us about approaches to learning and technologies by young people who are not in employment, education and training

5.1 Introduction

To review appropriate sources, a wide range of database searches was undertaken, in addition to searches of specialised sites such as NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) and LSDA (Learning and Skills Development Agency). A considerable amount of literature was found in the area of social exclusion and disadvantage among young people in general, as well as about the characteristics of the NEET population. There was also a good deal of research on the kinds of approaches to learning that are valuable with this group. However, less work had been published on attitudes to types of technologies among these young people and this is an area which definitely needs more research.

5.2 Composition of the NEET group

The phenomenon of the NEET (young people aged 16- to 18-years-old who are not in employment, education or training) began in the late 1980s when changes to the benefit system meant that those aged 16- to 18-years-old could no longer register as unemployed or claim state benefits. They thus ceased to appear in the unemployment statistics. The result of this change was that a familiar and well-defined category (youth unemployment) was replaced with a heterogeneous category comprising many different kinds of life experience and needs. A wide number of other groups were brought into the category, including those who were previously labelled as economically inactive (for example, young mothers, the disabled, and those in various stages of transition; Furlong, 2006).

The government's Social Exclusion Unit has done a considerable amount of work on analysing the NEET group and has found that the proportion of young people who are NEET has remained stable at around 9-10 per cent of the 16- to 18-year-old cohort since 1994 (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004a). This proportion has remained the same despite a range of government initiatives and policies which have included the creation of the Connexions service for young people, the introduction of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMA), Modern Apprenticeships, 'Entry to Employment' and the Increased Flexibility programme. This range of interventions coupled with the lack of change to the NEET population suggests that there is no easy answer to the 'NEET problem' and that young people who are NEET remain a fairly intractable group whose needs are not easily addressed (Sachdev et al., 2006). Looking at one particular government policy, for example, Maguire and Rennison (2005) find in their research that the Education Maintenance Allowance (a means tested benefit payable to 16- to 18-year-olds in full time education) does have a positive impact on preventing some young people from entering NEET status, but is less successful at attracting young people back when they have become NEET.

Another phenomenon which has appeared alongside the existence of the young people who are NEET is that of NEET 'churn'. This issue was surfaced in a report by the National Audit Office (2004) which found that while the majority of young people do leave NEET status, this is not necessarily a permanent exit. A substantial minority continue to join and rejoin the NEET group with numerous short periods of education and/or employment in between. Similar findings in an earlier report from the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) indicated that NEET status did not necessarily mean an unwillingness or inability to enter training or employment. Rather, these young people seemed to be entering work and education, but then stopping. The report concluded that it was as important to help young people to sustain education and work as it was to help them enter it.

The NEET group is thus not a stable group – young people are continually leaving and joining it. Sachdev et al (op. cit.), report that only one per cent of the group remain NEET right through from 16- to 18-years-old.

There are also ethnic differences. DfES statistics issued in 2005 for example indicate that at age 19, while about 10 per cent of white students were likely to be NEET this was higher for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (16 per cent), but lower for Indians (5 per cent). Similarly, those with disabilities or health problems were much more likely to become NEET than those without (27 per cent compared to 9 per cent). Young people with few or no GCSEs and those who had been excluded from school at some point during years 10 and 11 were also much more likely to become NEET (Sachdev et al., op. cit.). The Social Exclusion Unit also found (1999) that the numbers of young people who are NEET varied with region, as well as with ethnicity and other characteristics. Other research has also looked at regional variations and concluded that these are mainly due to differential access to labour markets and rural/urban opportunities (Green and Owen, 2006).

Bynner and Parsons (2002) examined data from the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study. They found that there were a number of key characteristics that predicted NEET status, including lack of parental interest in the child's education, poverty, and inner-city housing. They also found that these young people's lives were marked by a range of difficulties including poor labour market experiences, depression, early parenting, and poor housing, and they found an association between NEET status and various negative psychological states, such as a sense of lacking control over one's life and powerlessness. They also found differences between males and females, with the choice of motherhood acting as an alternative pathway for girls. They conclude that for many of these young people NEET status is not a failure of transition or of education but is a product of other deeper problems.

A further report from the Social Exclusion Unit (2004b) sought to identify the risk factors for becoming NEET. They found that these included poor educational levels, disadvantaged family backgrounds (including low income, geographical isolation, poor neighbourhoods, low expectations, and second or third generation

unemployment in families), chronic illness and disability (including special learning needs), being a care-leaver, homelessness, mental health, drugs and alcohol problems, and labour markets locally with few opportunities.

Other reports have found similar factors. Hoggarth et al. (2004) identified carer responsibilities, emotional and behavioural problems, being a young offender and teenage motherhood as key factors in becoming NEET. Payne (2002) identified negative attitudes towards school as contributing factors to NEET status, including boredom, poor relationships with teachers, and seeing education as having little value in the world of work. Similar findings appear in other writers who highlight educational factors including exclusion from school, truancy, low educational achievement, and a curriculum which does not engage or motivate them (Coles et al., 2002; Davies, 2005).

Similarly, in the US non-college bound young people can easily find themselves on the margins of the labour market (Worthington and Juntunen, 1997), moving in and out of a variety of unskilled jobs and unemployment. Young women frequently exit from the job market to pursue motherhood as an alternative route (Bynner et al., 1997). Young people may experience a patchwork of poor employment prospects, difficult relationships, lack of social participation, poor physical and mental health, drug abuse and criminality (Robins and Rutter 1990; Atkinson and Hills, 1997).

5.3 Needs of the NEET group

All the authors writing about the NEET group agree that it is a varied group which encompasses within it young people with widely differing needs. Furlong (op. cit.) is one writer who suggests that we need to disaggregate the NEET category in order to target policies effectively and that the category NEET includes both those who have little control over their situation and those who are exercising positive choice. He points out that the NEET group is not always distinguishable from the group of young people in short-term, unskilled insecure jobs who may enter and leave NEET status on a regular basis. He suggests as appropriate analytic tools the categories unemployed (long term and short term), caring for children or relatives, travelling, temporarily sick, long-term disabled, resting (taking a break from education or employment), and artistic endeavour (putting their efforts into artistic or musical activities). He argues that these young people need a range of different routes into education, work or training, with an individualised focus. His data indicate that as many as a third of early school leavers will experience a period of being NEET and he suggests that efforts should be targeted at those who are most in need – sub-groups such as the long-term unemployed, young carers, the disabled, those with health problems, and those with a history of disaffection. He expresses considerable concern at current policy pressures to place young people in any job, no matter how precarious or unskilled, or on training places regardless of their suitability or aspirations. The fact that so many young people drop out of these and return to

NEET status is an indication, that this strategy is not successful for many and that a targeted individualised approach is required.

Other authors confirm that, of those who are NEET, as many as 40 per cent will move into jobs which offer low wages, no training and are insecure (Bentley and Gurumurthy, 1999). These authors examine a variety of programmes aimed at young people and use the term 'magnet' to describe the projects that are attractive to them. They distinguish four different categories - 'cultural magnets' focused around the arts, music and sport; 'financial magnets' using cash or vouchers as incentives; those offering work and income (providing access to employment); and those offering services (for example, free legal or housing advice, access to IT facilities). Different 'magnets' may be appropriate for young people at different stages or in different situations.

A case for differentiated targeting is also made by Spielhofer et al. (2006) who point out that while some young people who are at risk of becoming NEET are easily identified, with a history of disruption in school and previous contact with other agencies and services, others are less visible, not attending school, not served by other parts of the system, and much harder to establish contact with.

Another study (Kendall et al., 2001) looked at delivery of the curriculum to disengaged young people in Scotland and found that changing the context of learning was the key to ensuring engagement, rather than the content. Similarly Merton and Parrott (1999) found that 'not being like school' was the key characteristic of successful programmes with disengaged young people. Steer (2000) found in reviewing a large number of evaluations that the element that seemed most important in helping disaffected young people was having the kind of individual attention and support that is not normally available in school. Steer also found that too much emphasis on qualification programmes could have a negative effect, because of the prior negative experiences of these disaffected young people in an educational context. Other findings indicate that projects that prioritise the needs of young people, rather than seeking to impose artificial targets or outcomes, were the most successful (Kendall and Kinder, 2005), and that projects needed to focus on major life issues (housing, health, welfare) and concentrate on building self-esteem, confidence and motivation before they could begin to address educational and employment issues (Morris et al., 1999). Morris et al also found that successful projects were those that focused on individual goal setting, action planning and reviewing, and included mentoring.

Further research suggests that both pre- and post- transition support, when young people leave a project are also crucial to their progression (Golden et al., 2004). Many projects for the young unemployed have as their goal getting the young person into education, employment or training, but Golden's research indicates that maintaining contact with the young person after they have left the project, as well as pre-transition preparation, is crucial if they are not to drop out subsequently. The

post-transition support also needs to be able to provide guidance if the young person wants to change destination en route.

5.4 Social exclusion

Social exclusion is a term used to encompass a whole range of factors which are implicated in disadvantaged or 'excluded' status in society. Much research has shown that concentrations of disadvantage are identified with location in the social structure and that these continue to be reproduced from one generation to the next (see for example, Bynner and Parsons, 2002).

There have been a number of explanations for this of which the notion of 'human capital' is one. Human capital is a term widely used in the literature by economists as well as sociologists when looking at employment issues. It may be exemplified as the skills and qualifications needed for employment and is an important factor in social exclusion. Those who do not have 'human capital' attributes find it increasingly difficult to maintain any kind of employment (Becker, 1975).

Recent years have also seen the rise of the parallel notions of social capital (Coleman, 1998), a term referring to the development of social networks, and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1997), a term referring to cultural knowledge and understanding. Other recent work suggests the term identity capital (Côté 1996; 1997), which encompasses human, social and cultural capital and also adds to these a range of psychological attributes, including the notion of *personal agency*, the ability of individuals to find their way or navigate through the social and economic landscape in which they find themselves.

The literature on theories of social exclusion often includes terms like 'marginalisation', 'disadvantage' and 'the underclass' (Burchardt et al., 2002; Macdonald, 1997; Macdonald and Marsh, 2001). There are many factors implicated in social exclusion, including poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, poor housing, homelessness, lone parenting, violence, and drug dependency (Williamson, 1997). One argument is that a lack of work is seen as putting young people at risk of long-term unemployment, homelessness, poverty, family disintegration, and a whole range of other problems. Beck (1992) for example talks of young people without education or employment falling into a 'social abyss' and facing 'social and material oblivion'. Others authors also suggest that access to education can overcome these deficits in marginalised individuals and can give them confidence and the other attributes they need (Antikainen et al., 1996).

Key issues for the social inclusion of young people are seen to be lack of qualifications, lack of confidence, and challenging behaviour (Prince's Trust, 2007). Many disadvantaged young people also lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy. They also have difficulty in the way they present themselves to others, and problems with building meaningful relationships (Sellman et al., 2002). These deficits may be seen as being part of a lack of human and identity capital as discussed above

(Bourdieu and Passeron, op. cit.; Langford, 1985). Morgan (2003) suggests that these young people need to be helped to develop what has become known as 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1995).

Other authors have written in a similar vein. Raffo and Reeves (2000) talk of young people developing agency and individual control over social relations and learning to negotiate their life-course. MacDonald (1997) argues that 'problem' behaviours are often the result of an inability of young people to manage the systems that influence their lives and to achieve control. Popham (2003) also found that NEET tended to have low levels of both aspiration and motivation.

However Williamson (op. cit.) presents the alternative argument that it is naive to presume the causality of factors such as poverty, unemployment, family breakdown etc in social exclusion. His work indicates that although that may be true for some, for others it is not these more global social and economic factors but a particular 'critical incident' that propels them into disadvantage. He suggests that many so-called 'excluded' young people find themselves entering a cycle of disadvantage because of a critical incident (for example, pregnancy, loss of job, exam failure, parental break-up) rather than being part of a web of pathological factors. Other writers see the effects of these events as being related to more psychological processes. Macdonald and Marsh (2001) argue that socially excluded young people often lack a sense of individual agency – things happen to them rather than them exerting control over their own lives. This is similar to Côté's (1996) use of the term identity capital as that which allows young people to control their lives and without which they tend to sink into exclusion.

Other authors suggest that the re-inclusion agenda often pushes young people into traditional pathways in order that they may become 'qualified' and 'employable' when this may not be appropriate for them (Morgan, 2003). This hypothesis is supported by the continued persistence of NEET churn which suggests that the options chosen by or for NEETs are often not long-term solutions. According to Macdonald and Marsh (2001), many young people today live chaotic, risky and unpredictable lives and traditional routes are often wholly inappropriate for them. The challenge therefore is to find solutions that can be truly effective.

Many educational programmes concentrate on the content of the learning rather than upon social and behavioural needs, but as is well-documented in the literature, there is a social aspect to learning (Bandura, 1995). Without learning to manage their behaviour, and to develop satisfactory peer and teacher relationships, many young people will not be able to succeed in educational terms (Claxton, 1984). Similarly, Morgan (op. cit.) concludes that programmes for young people need to focus on addressing emotional literacy and social dynamics. Lakes (2005) points out that traditional training schemes and further education are not able to provide effective motivation, develop self-confidence, or assist young people to develop optimism in the face of hopelessness.

5.5 Structural changes in society

Several authors have argued that structural change in society has affected the way in which employment is experienced (Stamm, 2006). Full-time lifelong employment is no longer the anticipated experience for many workers and what is needed in modern society are people who are equipped to handle transitions rather than those who have secure jobs. Stamm takes the view that instead of a burden-oriented paradigm for young people based on a deficit model, what is needed is a competence-oriented model that will enable them to develop the skills they need to live with uncertainty and cope with new kinds of working career.

Giddens (1991) also discusses the way in which young people shape and construct their own identities in the context of modern life, with its increasing uncertainties and levels of choice and possible destinations.

Society has changed and school to work transitions are now prolonged or elongated for young people and routes into the labour market have become more complex (Lakes, 2005). Du Bois-Reymond (1998) argues that young people no longer follow a normative adolescent-to-adult pattern of career development and training, but instead are managing their own careers and making decisions based upon risk and uncertainty. He found a number of themes in relation to unemployment as a choice, including young people gaining time in order to examine a variety of potential options; delaying adult responsibilities; and keeping options open. Furlong and Cartmel (2003) also observe that the normative sequential age-related sequences of education and employment while still adhered to by some are for others replaced by choosing temporary unemployment as an acceptable feature of contemporary life. As young people's lives become increasingly complex the concept of 'normal' transition becomes more problematic (Raffo and Reeves, 2000; Devlin, 2004).

5.6 Characteristics of the NEET group

As discussed above, there is widespread agreement that the NEET group is diverse and that 'one size fits all' is ineffective in approaching this group. Not all young people who are NEET are socially excluded, lacking in choices or experiencing multiple problems. Indeed, Yates and Payne (2006) argue that the concept of NEET is problematic and defines young people by what they are not. They find in their research that NEET is a negatively-perceived label associated with a range of problems including crime, drug abuse, poor mental health, and so on, whereas in fact NEET status covers a far wider range of heterogeneous young people with very different situations and difficulties. Young people who are NEET are generally perceived as being socially excluded or at risk of exclusion, whereas in the Yates and Payne research many young people who are NEET are shown to be making a positive choice. These included young parents, carers, and those in a period of deliberate transition while sorting out their future plans and opportunities. Harris (2004) for example found females using websites to encourage each other to take

the opportunity of unemployment to pursue creative endeavours, thus shifting the notion of being without work from that of being a loser to being a positive choice.

The Yates and Payne research found that about 40% of the young people who are NEET they interviewed exhibited at least two of the ten risk factors identified, and 22% exhibited five or more. The risk factors identified were: offending behaviour, substance misuse, health problems and/or disabilities, learning difficulties and/or special educational needs, emotional and/or behavioural problems, school resistance, academic underachievement, being looked after or homeless, being an asylum seeker or refugee, and having parental or caring responsibilities. A large number of these young people did therefore have profound or multiple problems. However, the researchers conclude that it is these other problems, rather than the NEET status, which need addressing and that the NEET label is not the most salient factor when professional services are needed to intervene or provide support. They argue that while the 'transition' group may need help with accommodation and benefits, information and advice about employment and education, help with application forms, transport, etc, those with profound and multiple problems need very different kinds of intervention with intensive multi-agency involvement. They also point to the need not only to achieve an exit from NEET status but to sustain that change. Temporary and unproductive moves into employment or training were often the result of Connexions interventions, in the research reported here, and the researchers found that targets were taking predominance over the needs and priorities of the young people themselves.

The Sachdev report in their research (op. cit.) identified two distinct groups of young people who are NEET:

Core NEETs, having social and behavioural problems and coming from dysfunctional families, including 'generational NEETs' from families with a history of unemployment;

'Floating NEETs', moving in and out of seasonal, low paid, or illegal work and short courses and creating 'NEET churn'.

They also identified a number of contributing factors such as lack of flexibility in education and training opportunities, lack of progression routes in terms of jobs and courses, absence of mobility (particularly where local labour markets offered few options) and poor public transport. Factors which could help to reduce NEET status were the availability of short courses, the provision of transport, and having workplace experiences provided. Other factors such as establishing relationships of trust with young people who are NEET, the timing of the support offered, creating positive learning experiences, and being able to motivate the young people also were important.

5.7 Approaches to working with the NEET group

As has been indicated above, there is a need for different kinds of approaches with the different kinds of individuals who may be included in the NEET group at any one time. Young people who are NEET need tailored approaches because of the wide diversity of their characteristics (Popham, 2003).

Sachdev et al (op. cit.) found that initiatives which helped reduce the number of young people becoming NEET were successful when they gave young people the opportunity to develop personal and social skills and the confidence to secure employment. These included interpersonal, communication and problem-solving skills and improved attitudes towards education.

Lakes (op. cit.) looked at some programmes which instead of viewing disengaged young people as dysfunctional and deficient and trying to transform them into docile members of society seek to help them recognise the new realities of employability and navigate their way through the options open to them, reinventing their own identities in a positive way. He reports on a number of drama and theatrical presentation projects which used a variety of techniques and which gave young people control, ownership and freedom of expression, particularly in relation to their own career orientations and job readiness. Young people responded positively to these arts based techniques. Lakes concludes that we need to move from a deficit model of youth as dysfunctional to a humanising and integrated approach which starts to build learning networks with schools and communities.

Spielhofer et al. (2006) looked at young people at risk of becoming NEET and found a number of key elements that enable interventions to work successfully for this group. These included the finding that disaffected young people need to be offered activities which are meaningful, relevant to them and voluntary; that projects need to give young people a sense of ownership, an environment that is different from school and that addresses their needs holistically; projects should set clear targets, recognise young people's achievements and work with other agencies to support transitions into education or employment; and that project staff need appropriate training and support. The main barriers to successful outcomes were home backgrounds and personal circumstances. They also found that the at risk group had many different kinds of problems that could not be dealt with by one provider alone but rather required a range of school, provider and other agency interventions that are diverse and flexible.

Flude (2000) discusses a computer-aided person-centred tool used in their research for working with the long-term young unemployed. Flude found that this tool was able to help move the young people from a sense of helplessness to empowerment. Flude distinguishes between two models of intervention for work with the young unemployed. The first, which he calls 'process and task', works to achieve change through a process of training interventions designed to develop knowledge and skills,

and often includes job search activities and work placements or work experience. The second, 'participation and trust', works to re-build a sense of self-worth, to help create new values in young people, and to enable them to engage in more effective social relationships, thus rendering them more employable. The intervention trialled in the research sought to combine these two approaches in a 'third way' and used a mixture of computer-based psychometric tools, groupwork, long-term follow-up, mentoring and coaching to help the young people to achieve sustainable long-term employment.

Other approaches used with young unemployed include dramaturgical projects using role-playing to enable young people to confront life-course strategies and learn to build positive relationships with supervisors and bosses (Miller, 1986).

Lovatt and Whitehead (2003) report on the British Foyers experiment, a project built on the French model of 'Foyers', accommodation combined with advice on education and training for young people leaving school. This project sought to break the cycle of joblessness and homelessness and combined affordable accommodation in a non-institutional framework with vocational training, leisure and recreational facilities, a safe secure environment and individual support for young people in the 16- to 25-age bracket. However, the Foyers found that young people aged 16 and 17 had very high support needs which they were not able to address, and therefore soon began to restrict entry for this age group. This experience supports the view that there is a case for treating the 16- to 18-year-olds differently from the older groups.

Halsey et al. (2006) undertook a study to determine what works in stimulating creativity among excluded young people. They found that there was very little research evidence on the topic. From the evidence they did gather they identified several key factors in the development of excluded young people's creativity: authenticity (including activities being relevant and meaningful to the young people); exposure to new ideas and concepts (including new locations, learning styles, and people); having someone in a mentor role; challenging opportunities (taking risks, exploring new ideas); and working with others. Factors hindering creativity were lack of transport, limited finances and lack confidence. A combination of small group work and working individually with an artist or mentor (Halsey et al., op. cit.) was a key element in success. Other useful aspects of creativity projects were providing contacts in the world of work, access to tools (technology, equipment, resources), and skill development (how to develop an idea, how to work in a professional way).

Halsey at al. also looked at whether successfully developing creativity actually fostered social inclusion. They found that confidence, self-esteem, the capacity for self-expression, enhanced skills and raised motivation were all important in contributing to a reduction in social exclusion. Outcomes such as thinking skills, imagination and capacity to innovate were not associated with reduced social exclusion. More research is needed to further illuminate the potential impact of developing creativity in increasing social inclusion.

Holroyd and Armour (2003) review the literature on sport and other physical activity programmes for disaffected young people. They found that although much is claimed for the efficacy of such programmes, few have been able to demonstrate a clear and sustainable impact upon the behaviour of young people. Those activities which are most effective seem to be those that develop positive social environments and personal empowerment, and are tailored to individual needs (Shields and Bredemeier, 1995; Coakley, 2002; Andrews and Andrew, 2003). The value of sport in contemporary culture of young people makes it a valuable 'hook' to draw young people into education (Steer, 2000; Witt and Crompton, 1996), but the use of sport is not in itself enough to achieve change in these young people's lives (Pitter and Andrews, 1997). It seems to be the social processes rather than the types of activity that are the crucial elements. What is effective is the blend of physical activity and social interactions, as part of a programme tailored to the needs of the individual (Coakley, 1984; Danish, 2002; Long and Sanderson, 2001)

Other research points to the key importance of involving disaffected young people in discussions about the development of programmes in which they engage so that they have a degree of autonomy and ownership (Goodman, 1999; Riley and Rustique-Forrester, 2000). Mentoring can also be useful but seems not to be sufficient on its own for this group. It needs to be part of a wider initiative or programme (Goodman, op. cit.).

5.8 Young people who are NEET and the use of information technologies

There is little published material relating to young people who are NEET and the use of technologies and few projects appear to be reported. One successful project in South London, 'Rolling Sound', which ran a computer games design course for young people who are NEET, leading to a qualification, has proved unexpectedly popular, suggesting that some technologies can work well with this group (Callaghan, 2007).

Attewell (2004) reports on a project which involved developing learning materials to run on handheld devices and was aimed at reluctant young adult learners with poor literacy or numeracy. The project was based around creating a number of learning tools and then trialling these in several European countries with learners aged 17 to early 20s. The findings indicate that mobile devices can be used successfully to involve hard-to-reach and disadvantaged young adults in learning. The project found that learners reported being more keen to take part in future learning after trying mobile learning. Their expressed preferences for future learning were with laptops, on a computer or using mobile devices. They also expressed a preference for learning with people of their own age. However less than a third of participants using one tool were assessed by their mentors as having a more positive attitude towards reading, despite their own expressed view that they enjoyed the learning and felt that it was helpful. The main benefits seemed to be in terms of confidence, self-esteem, attitude change and the engagement of reluctant learners. Some liked being able to

work in private because it was embarrassing working in a centre where other people could see what you were doing, while others preferred to work collaboratively. The author also raises the issue of not being able to block access to pornographic sites when working with under-18s, which turned out to be a problem in their project.

The 'Schome' project worked with a rather different group, 13- to 17-year-old students from the National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (Nagty) taking part in the Schome project (Open University, 2007). This used the online community Second Life as its main learning tool. The findings indicate that the level of engagement was very similar to that achieved by projects with more traditional formats such as text-based material. They also found that the Goal group (members of Nagty from socially disadvantaged or ethnic minority buckhounds) were significantly less engaged than the other students. Another finding was that far fewer young people engaged with the wiki or the online forum which were also part of the project than with Second Life itself. Those who engaged with all three elements did show enhanced knowledge and skills at the end of the pilot programme, but there was less development of knowledge and skill among those who only engaged with the Second Life element. Among the reported benefits for those engaging were that it helped them to gain social confidence, and that it provided a safe environment for those who experienced their school life as difficult socially. The report concludes that far more research is needed to develop an understanding of how 3D virtual worlds may best be used to enhance learning.

5.9 Discussion

The research findings show that the young people who are NEET are not a homogenous group but include a wide variety of young people in different situations and with different needs. Programmes need to be focused on achieving different objectives for different sub-groups. There are many young people for whom NEET status is not necessarily a failure either of transition or of education but represents either deeper problems or alternative choices. At one end of the spectrum, those with multiple problems need intensive multi-agency work, while at the other end those who are making positive choices and/or are in transition may need no or minimal help. The other groups between these extremes are likely to need programmes which help with their behaviours, confidence, self-esteem, and ability to relate to others. They may need motivation and to develop a sense of control over their own lives. They may need practical help with transport and application forms. They may need ongoing support to find a way out of a cycle of NEET status and low-level low-paid jobs or courses which they do not complete. The research shows that it is as important to help young people to sustain education and work as it is to help them enter it.

Building on previous work with unemployed young people (Williams, 2001) the research findings suggest the following classification structure for young people who are NEET:

- Eers – education and employment ready
- Neers – nearly education and employment ready
- Mulps – those with multiple problems
- Alts – those choosing alternative lifestyles.

Eers: This group would include those who churn in and out of low level jobs and training courses of one kind or another but who need help finding more sustainable employment. It would also include those in periods of transition who have chosen or are mapping out a path (for example, waiting for a course to start, travelling before settling down to a job). Others might be job-ready but geographically isolated and living in locations where there is no work or public transport, temporarily sick, or unable to afford childcare. They are ready for employment or education but unable to achieve it for extrinsic reasons.

***Neers*:** This group are nearly ready for employment or training and may need help with things like application forms, transport, finding a suitable opening, upgrading or improving their skills, gaining confidence, learning to relate to others, improving their behaviour and becoming better at managing relationships at work. It may also include immigrants with good employment skills but poor English language skills, or those with some kinds of disabilities.

***Mulps*:** This group have multiple long-term problems which will include several of the following: mental illness, criminality, drug and alcohol dependence, debt, poor housing, low basic skills, challenging behaviour, disadvantaged family backgrounds, poor neighbourhoods, low expectations, second or third generation unemployment, chronic illness and disability (including special learning needs), being a care-leaver, homelessness. These young people need the intensive intervention of a number of agencies. For this group, lack of employment or education is not the key issue and their other problems need addressing before they will be ready to hold down a job or successfully complete a training course.

***Alts*:** These are the young people who have chosen alternative lifestyles. It will include those who are concentrating on developing self-employed careers in arts or music; are setting up a business which has not yet proved successful; have chosen motherhood as an option and intend to stay at home while children are small; are working in the family business and not seeking outside employment, etc.

5.10 Conclusions

Using differentiated approaches and tailored support, many of the young people who are NEET can be helped into longer-term employment or education, or enabled to develop 'portfolio' lives and careers in a changing, uncertain and risky society. Others (for whom being NEET is not the main problem) will have a range of difficulties and disadvantages and will need more intensive long-term interventions.

The research shows that a whole range of methodologies can be useful when working with the NEET group, including creative and artistic projects, drama, music or sport, access to new technologies, learning in contexts that are 'not school', new activities that are seen as relevant and meaningful, mentoring, and challenging opportunities. Those in the 'churn' groups will also need post-programme support to help them to maintain whatever transitions they choose and to prevent a constant stream of temporary and unproductive moves into employment or training.

Programmes for young people who are NEET need to be diverse and flexible, and to focus on the needs of the young people rather than on targets. Some programmes will need to be aimed at the development of social and interpersonal skills, confidence and self-esteem, a sense of control over one's own life, goal setting, emotional literacy, motivation and optimism. Others will need to offer more practical help such as transport, skill top-ups, English language skills, access to tools and resources (including ICT), help with application forms, job search activities, or work placements. Overall, programmes will work best when they target different sub-groups of the NEET population and work to address individual and diverse needs.

6 What the research literature tells us about motivation when considering uses of technologies in e-learning to support young people who are NEET

6.1 Introduction

A review of relevant aspects of motivation theory allows us to explore ways in which ICT might be able to assist with the re-engagement of young people identified as having NEET status (henceforth young people who are NEET) in the processes of education. As has been shown elsewhere the problems faced by young people who are NEET, and the problems inherent in any attempt to bring about their re-engagement in education, are varied and complex. There is unlikely to be a "magic bullet" (ICT based or otherwise) that will provide a quick and simple solution. However, without an adequate understanding of the meaning of engagement, and thereby disengagement and re-engagement, any such attempts will be highly likely to fail.

Motivational theory as currently expressed and researched arrives at a number of broad conclusions that are relevant to the analysis of the circumstances affecting young people who are NEET. Further detail is offered in this section, but the following key points seem to be central to findings across the literature.

First, motivation needs to be understood as a multifaceted and multidimensional entity. While generally referred to as a single thing, the component parts of motivation need to be addressed and understood separately.

Second, motivation has a significant impact upon the ways in which individuals engage with the challenges that they face. It does this primarily through cognitive processes which concern, initially, aspects of self-perception and self-understanding, and secondly though the perception of the nature of tasks and challenges that need to be confronted.

Third, motivation needs to be understood primarily in terms of its quality rather than its quantity. That is, differences between individuals are not so much related to how much motivation they have, but to the way in which they are motivated or what they are motivated to do. Re-engagement is therefore likely to be a matter of redirecting motivation and ensuring that the various personal components are available to enable this to happen.

Finally, motivation is and can be developed. This might not quite be the same as claiming that motivation can be taught. However, it is, for our purposes, an optimistic conclusion in that it indicates strongly that interventions to change motivation will be possible – but they may well be difficult.

6.2 An overall framework

Finding an appropriate framework in which to discuss the relevant aspects of motivation theory and research is not straightforward, and it has to be conceded that alternative frameworks exist. Some of these may also turn out to be better than the one proposed here. However, for present purposes a potentially useful starting point is provided by work concerning future time perspectives and their motivational implications. A model proposed and discussed by Miller and Brickman (2004) will provide our starting point.

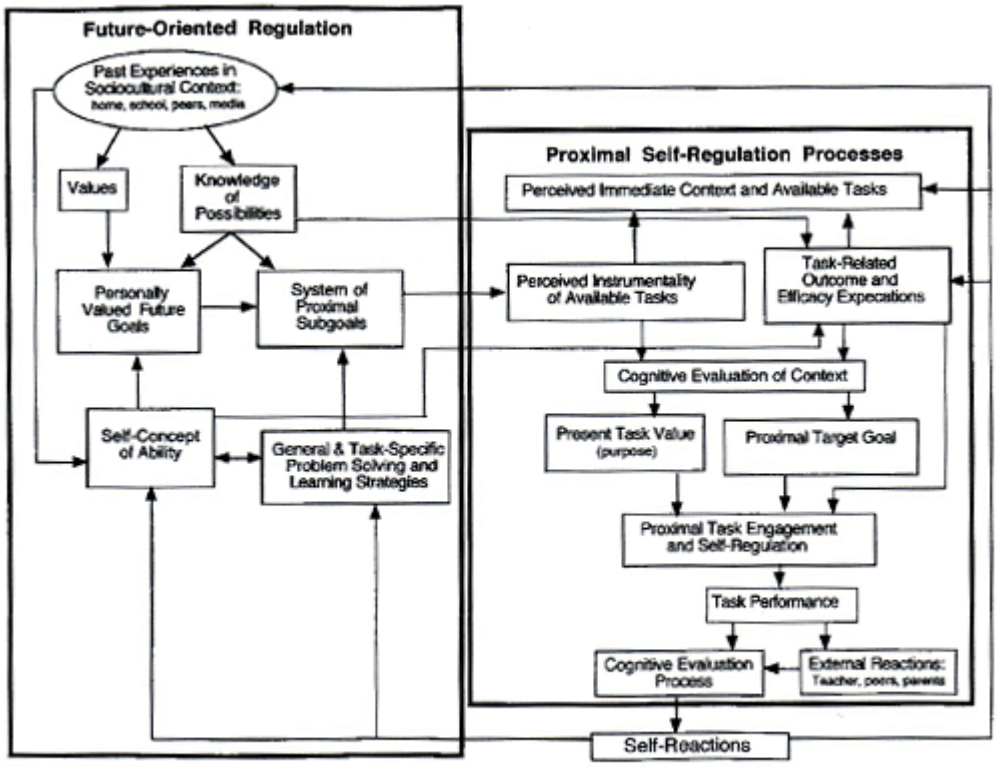

Fig. 1. A model of future-oriented motivation and self-regulation.

(Source: Miller and Brickman, 2004)

In essence, this admittedly complex model seeks to establish links between the proximal processes that influence the degree to which an individual will seek to, and will be able to self-regulate their behaviour in the present given an awareness of key aspects of future time perspective. It is apparent from the diagram that in setting out their concern with those aspects of this process associated with self-regulation, Miller and Brickman posit a central role for socio-culturally determined experiences. These would in turn have an important influence upon the value systems developed by an individual and, also very importantly, that individual's knowledge of future possibilities. The essential link between these aspects of future orientation and present-day proximal processes is provided through the development of a system of

proximal sub-goals. These in turn are influenced by the value systems and levels of self confidence that an individual is seen to have.

As far as the development of interventions for young people who are NEET is concerned the model as discussed so far draws attention to two clearly important aspects. The first of these is the knowledge component. An individual needs to be aware of the links that might possibly exist between present-day activities and longer term goals in order for the present activities to be invested with value derived from any commitment that they may have to those longer term goals. Many school-based activities will be valued by more successful students not necessarily because of any intrinsic interest or indeed intrinsic value that those activities may have, but instead are valued precisely because of the understanding that the successful student has of those links between the present and the future. The absence of a clear awareness of what success (success being defined relative to present levels of attainment) might lead onto will present the less successful student with a major handicap. Under such circumstances, there is no reason at all to suppose that they will engage any of the relevant motivational processes deemed to be essential for success in the proximal task. Secondly, for present purposes, the model also makes it clear that an individual has to have a sufficient level of self belief in their abilities to perform at a successful level on the proximal task in order for the links with valued future goals to be established.

We may pause here to consider the implications of this model so far for the development of successful interventions, ICT based or otherwise, for the development of effective motivational strategies in the NEET population. Many students, not only those destined for NEET status, will fail to find intrinsic value and associated intrinsic motivation in many of the activities they are required to perform at school. Two strategies immediately present themselves for consideration by those with responsibilities for the education of such young people. First, intrinsic interest may be added to the activity. It is clear that ICT, in a variety of forms, provides a number of avenues through which this objective could possibly be realised. Evidence from elsewhere (Becta, 2003; Hall and Higgins, 2005; Passey and Rogers, with Machell and McHugh, 2004; Reber, 2005; Schofield, 1997; Smith, Higgins, Wall and Miller, 2005; Susskind, 2005) indicates clearly the potential to use ICT to raise the "interest" level of a variety of activities through the development, for example, of more appropriate pacing and the introduction of the use of a wider variety of teaching modalities than may be possible or practicable without the use of ICT. We will consider below some of the advantages, but more importantly the disadvantages and clear limitations, of this approach.

The Miller and Brickman model draws attention to the importance of an alternative strategy. This second approach assumes a degree of acceptance of less than sufficient levels of intrinsic motivation in connection with a number of classroom based learning activities. Instead, the assumption is made that the students obtain the motivation through the links established between the present activities and future

goals that the student has come to value and desire. It is the adoption of the longer-term motivational framework that this link makes possible that enables many students to successfully complete tasks that they themselves find to be lacking in intrinsic motivation. An important question we are asked to consider therefore concerns the potential for ICT to not simply be used as a way of providing additional intrinsic motivation, or interest, for present tasks but perhaps more importantly to help to establish the links between present activities and longer term valued goals. At the same time, the model draws our attention to the significance of the processes involved in the development of those valued future goals in the first place.

The Miller and Brickman model emphasises the importance of the self-regulation of behaviour. It is precisely because one cannot assume that all, or indeed even a significant part of the National Curriculum (or other curricula just as much) will engage the intrinsic motivation mechanisms of a student that a need for self-regulation is manifest. The majority of school-work will need to be engaged through some form of self-regulation – that is, processes designed to encourage and maintain engagement with the present activity when one would, in all honesty, really rather be doing something else. However, not all forms of regulation are equal and some are likely, it would appear, to produce motivational and learning benefits much more akin to those classically associated with intrinsic motivation.

6.3 Forms of regulation

At this stage it will be useful to consider a little of the detail of one of the many theoretical approaches to the study of motivation that has informed the thinking behind this current review. The work of Deci and Ryan (Deci and Ryan, 2000, 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2000a, 2000b) provides us with some potentially important insights. These authors have discussed in some detail the nature of the difference between the classically distinguished "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" forms of motivation. Classic definitions set these two motivational forms as being somewhat in opposition to each other and, probably, as being mutually exclusive. As Deci puts it: "…early formulations viewed extrinsically motivated behaviors as non-self-determined and antagonistic to intrinsically motivated (self-determined) behaviors" (Deci, 1992, pp. 44-45).

An activity is said to be intrinsically motivated if the reasons for engaging in the activity are to be found solely within the activity itself. Extrinsic forms of motivation, on the other hand, include those situations in which the activity is pursued in order to bring about something else. While not rejecting this distinction, Deci and Ryan argued that it is often more important to consider the different forms of regulation of activity that will apply in all situations where extrinsic forms of motivation may be involved. One essential characteristic of highly intrinsically motivated activity (further discussed by Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) is that the engaged actor does not need to apply any form of regulation to their behaviour. Csikszentmihalyi has used the term "flow" to depict the state where levels of intrinsic motivation are so high as to remove

the need for any form of conscious regulation of behaviour. In the vast majority of cases of human activity, however, some form of regulation is required and for Deci and Ryan it is the nature of this regulation, rather than the fact that it is necessary, that is of importance. They set out a range of different forms of regulation anchored at one end by forms which are entirely external in nature and at the other by those which are entirely internal (Ryan and Deci, 2000a). The types of regulation within this dimension are described briefly here.

"External" regulation, not surprisingly, forms the external anchor point. Here an individual engages in a given activity simply because another person, who has authority over them, is present and is demanding that the activity be engaged with. Parents and teachers are obvious candidates. The implication however is that as soon as the external regulator is absent from the individual's environment the reasons for engaging in the behaviour will cease and the behaviour itself is likely to cease also as a consequence. "Introjected" forms of motivation mark an apparent move towards more internal forms but actually are considered to remain as an external form of regulation. The key difference is that with introjected forms of regulation the physical presence of the external agency is no longer strictly necessary. It is as if the regulatory "voice" of the external agency has become internalised. Individuals operating under introjected forms of regulation may often experience anxiety and guilt if their performance fails to meet the requirements of the internalised external agency. A move to more clearly internal forms of regulation (true self-regulation) comes with the development of "identified" regulation. Here we see the beginnings of an understanding of the value system that might have initially formed the foundation for the requirements imposed by the external agency. An individual operating with identified forms of self regulation is therefore likely to report themselves as engaging in the activity, and in imposing constraint upon their own behaviour, in order to enable the engagement to be effective, due to the belief that this activity is linked to an underlying value system to which the individual shows some allegiance. The most complete form of internal regulation, according to the Deci and Ryan model, is to be found with "integrated" regulation where the value systems at work are fully integrated with the individual's sense of self. The difficulties involved in empirically distinguishing identified and integrated forms of motivation have led to much of the relevant research focusing only on the former. At the polar extreme from intrinsic motivation (the latter is clearly recognised as the most effective motivational form) is amotivation. At this point, all forms of regulation can be assumed to have failed, the individual will be quite unclear as to why they are meant to be doing something and may indeed even become hostile to the activity itself. Clearly any of the above forms of regulation are likely to be preferable to amotivation if the objective is the display of any form of reasonably effective engagement with the task in hand. It is not unreasonable to assume that amotivation will be a characteristic of the approach of young people who are NEET to formal education.

Deci and Ryan emphasise that while it may often be tempting, and sometimes useful to do so, this dimension of forms of regulation should not be understood as a

developmental sequence. There is therefore no overall drift from external to internal forms of control with age and (or) maturation. Indeed it is possible for an individual to show varying forms of regulation across different domains of activity and over time within the same domain. The determinants of the forms of regulation to be shown will be a combination of characteristics of the individual (with some individuals being more prone to engage effectively than others across situations) but also of the situation (some situations will be prone to provoke more effective forms of regulation in most individuals).

The relevance of this to our concerns with the nature of effective interventions to the development of motivation in the NEET population is to emphasise the importance of considering the forms of regulation that the introduction of any technologically based pedagogic devices may themselves encourage. We would note here that earlier research (Passey and Rogers, with Machell and McHugh, 2004) indicates that the effective use of ICT in schools does indeed seem to be associated with the more internal, and therefore more effective, forms of regulation identified above.

6.4 Motivational goals

The Miller and Brickman model emphasises the importance of the role of motivational goals in drawing attention to their basic distinction between distal and proximal goals. It is clear that each of these broad types of goals can be further subdivided. We shall examine here some of the distinctions that have been applied primarily to proximal goals by theorists and researchers concerned with the development of an understanding of motivation in an academic context.

This work can be generally traced back to the contributions of Maehr and his colleagues (Kaplan and Maehr, 2007; Maehr, 2001; Maehr and Braskamp, 1986; Maehr and Midgley, 1996) and Dweck and her colleagues (Dweck, 1991, 1999; Dweck and Bempechat, 1983; Elliott and Dweck, 1988). Martin Maehr's concern in the development of his theory of personal investment (Maehr and Braskamp, 1986) was with the analysis of the various objectives that people chose for themselves. The essential motivational question was considered to be: "What is it that someone chooses to invest their energies in? ". The important point here was the development of a conceptualisation of motivation that emphasises qualitative differences in the motives people had (what they were motivated to do) rather than quantitative variations (how much motivation did they have). While deceptively simple, this distinction challenges many widely held views about the nature of motivation and, more importantly, motivational problems. The student with a motivational problem is often considered to have weak motivation, or to be lacking in motivation. The framework provided by the theory of personal investment suggests instead that variations in how much motivation people have may be much less important than the directions in which they chose to channel that motivation. In other words we can all be motivated, and possibly strongly, but not necessarily to do those things that others might wish. The contribution of Carol Dweck was to couple developing notions

of varying motivational goals to an underlying theory of the nature of beliefs people hold about their own abilities. The emphasis here being not so much on the level of ability we might consider ourselves to have (a familiar enough concern), but rather the type of ability we have (its nature).

In summary, modern goal theory draws attention to the following: the goals that people have when engaged with varying forms of endeavour (albeit our principle concern being with academic forms of work) play a critical role in shaping the behaviour that they display and will impact upon such variables as the intensity of behaviour, the level of effort expended, and the degree of persistence shown when difficulty is encountered and so forth. These goals in turn tend to be associated with underlying conceptions of the nature of ability. Ability can be understood as being fixed, stable and difficult to change (the "entity" view of ability) or malleable and subject to change if the appropriate strategies are used (the "incremental" view). Dweck's detailed conceptualisation actually sets the entity and incremental forms as the end points of a dimension but her work, and that of others, has tended to operationalise the construct in a dichotomous manner.

Entity conceptions of ability, give rise to a set of concerns focused upon how much ability one has relative to significant others. After all if ability is indeed a fixed entity, then having less than others (or less than is understood to be required for successful task completion), puts one in a fairly hopeless position. These concerns give rise to "performance goals". With performance goals an individual is primarily concerned with the gaining of positive feedback, or the avoidance of negative feedback, about current ability levels relative to others or the task in hand. One seeks affirmation of oneself as capable, or, if that might appear unlikely, one aims to avoid confirmation as being incapable. This distinction between seeking out affirmation of competence (an approach form of a motivational goal) and seeking to avoid confirmation of incompetence (an avoidance goal) was lost sight of in much of the earlier research but was brought to prominence in attempts to clarify the findings regarding the benefits of various types of goals (Elliot and Church, 1997).

Performance goals, of both kinds - performance approach and performance avoidance - have generally been contrasted with "learning" or "task" goals. These are linked to Dweck's incremental views of the nature of ability and are concerned with seeking improvement and the development of talent, knowledge and understanding. The overall distinction has been usefully described as one that emphasises "ego" in the case of performance goals or the "task" in the case of learning goals. In other words, when performance goals are dominant, one is focused upon the implications of performance for oneself, but when learning goals dominate, it is the task itself that is the focus of attention.

Performance goals are seen to be less well adapted to the purposes of education, while learning goals are associated with more effective strategies. There are many reviews of this literature (Kaplan and Maehr, 2007; Midgley, 2002; Pintrich, 2000,

2003a, 2003b; Rogers, 2005; Smith, Rogers and Tomlinson, 2003; Urdan and Schoenfelder, 2006) and the goal theory approach has proven to be both popular and useful in illuminating the nature of motivation and the likely impact of classroom and school-based process on its development. The clear implication of the above is that any intervention intended to enhance motivational processes must aim first and foremost at increasing levels of learning goals relative to all the others. This may also require the development of more incremental views of the nature of the relevant abilities, as the holding of strong entity views will be likely to inhibit the development of learning goals. As a secondary aim, the intervention should also seek to produce performance approach goals and reduce performance avoidance goals. One of the clearest findings from the extensive goal theory literature is that performance avoidance goals will have a marked negative impact upon levels of academic engagement. It is also clear that one of the factors most closely associated with the development of performance avoidance rather than performance approach goals is the holding of low levels of self-efficacy beliefs. It will be recalled from the discussion of the Miller and Brickman model above that self-efficacy beliefs are also seen to be central by them in the development of appropriate systems of proximal sub-goals in the service of the pursuit of longer-term distal goals. We shall therefore briefly turn our attention to the nature of self-efficacy beliefs.

6.5 Self-efficacy

As before, there are a number of comprehensive and useful reviews of this literature to which the interested reader is referred (Alderman, 1999; Bandura, 1997, 2001; Bandura, Barbaranelli and Pastorelli, 2001; Baumeister, 1999; Bong and Skaalvik, 2003; Schunk and Pajares, 2005). While modern work into self-efficacy is generally recognised as beginning with the theoretical and empirical contributions made by Bandura, it is perhaps the work of Schunk that is most relevant to our present purposes (Schunk, 1990, 1991, 1995, 2000; Schunk and Meece, 1992). Schunk has largely concerned himself with an analysis of the ways in which levels of self-efficacy are created, maintained and changed. He has argued that self-efficacy can be usefully conceptualised as a skill, in other words something that is learnt and potentially therefore taught.

Self-efficacy first of all needs to be recognised as being different from the familiar notion of self-concept or self-esteem. In comparison with self-efficacy, self-concept can be recognised as being more stable and more normative (in that it frequently involves relative judgements about one's personal characteristics in relation to others), more affective and primarily past oriented. Self-efficacy on the other hand is seen as being much more concerned with projections into the future, is highly context specific, referenced to a specific goal, and is essentially cognitive rather than affective in nature. Various formal definitions have been offered, but self-efficacy is typically assumed to be concerned with the: "… belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). As was noted above in the discussion of the Miller and

Brickman model this definition assumes an important role for the knowledge that an individual has about the nature of the goal and the actions that are required in order to be able to achieve it. If an individual does not know what actions need to be carried out in order to achieve a particular goal, then it is not possible for them to have a high level of self-efficacy in relation to that goal. It is also clear that knowledge of the course of action required, while necessary, is not sufficient for a high level of self-efficacy. One also has to be able to believe that one is capable of carrying out that course of action. This also implies (and the evidence supports the implication), that self-efficacy in relation to any given task can vary from one occasion to another. Ill-health, for example, will generally reduce an individual's sense of self-efficacy. Importantly, higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with more effective forms of engagement.

Schunk and his colleagues have identified four main sources of self-efficacy levels. In summary these are: a) mastery experiences; b) social persuasions; c) vicarious experience; and d) somatic and emotional states. A quick comment on each of these will suffice for present purposes.

Mastery experiences: the more one has experienced success in relation to any given task the higher will be one's level of self-efficacy in relation to future occurrences of that task. It is therefore likely to be the case that any individual lacking in a history of success, and certainly any individual with a clear history of failure, will have relatively low levels of self-efficacy. This of course suggests that individuals who have experienced failure in the past are likely to be caught in a downward spiral with previous failures likely to increase the chances of future failure due to the intervening variable of low self-efficacy. Interventions aimed at raising self-efficacy are therefore presented with a challenging causal question concerning whether it might be better to attempt to engineer success in order to raise self-efficacy or to otherwise raise self-efficacy in order to help bring about future success.

Social persuasions: a resolution to the dilemma presented above is in part supplied by the second factor relating to the development of levels of self-efficacy. The general term "social persuasions" refers to a variety of forms of, primarily verbal and written, feedback which offers to the individual possible explanations for their level of success, or the lack of it. Schunk is clear that what he refers to as "knee-jerk praise" will not be effective. His main concern here is with the effects that forms of feedback will have upon the attributions that an individual is likely to make as they attempt to explain the success or the failure that they have experienced. Self-efficacy is likely to be enhanced, or at least protected, in the light of failure when the feedback offered to the individual encourages them to attribute their failure to a lack of effort or possibly to an inappropriate strategy rather than to an uncontrollable lack of ability. The key thing is for the individual to be led to believe that there is action that can be taken that will help them to move towards a greater degree of success in the future. Knee-jerk praise, or successes which are very obviously engineered (for example, by making available extremely easy tasks) will encourage the individual to either

attribute this success to the presentation of an easy task (which will do nothing to encourage them to believe that they are more likely to gain success in the future) or to attribute the praise to the fact that the teacher feels sorry for them. The latter is itself an indicator of the teacher's belief that an underlying lack of ability was responsible for the failure (see Graham and Barker, 1990) for an example of a relatively early reporting of this now well-established phenomenon.

Vicarious experience: the observation of other people gaining success in the same activities that one is attempting oneself is likely to influence one's own level of self-efficacy. However, the nature of those other people is crucial here. The greater the degree of similarity between an individual's self-conceptions and the nature of the other people whose performances are being observed then the greater the impact upon levels of self-efficacy. One's level of self-efficacy is not likely to be enhanced by observing a successful performance carried out by somebody who would clearly be expected to have substantially higher levels of skill than one's own. However, the observation of a successful performance carried out by a similar peer is much more likely to have a positive impact upon one's own level of self-efficacy; if they can do it then so can I. This implies, and Schunk (Schunk and Pajares, 2005) refers to evidence relating to this, that the peer group is likely to play an important role in the development of self-efficacy. More specifically, Schunk suggests that the nature of an individual's immediate peer group during the first few years of secondary education will have a crucial impact upon the development of self-efficacy levels. The more an individual associates with other "well motivated" peers the more likely they are to themselves develop a high level of self-efficacy. There are clear indications here for the early development of poor levels of self-efficacy for those who, by virtue of their peer groups, are likely to enter into NEET status.

Somatic and emotional states: this provides a reference to the feedback that an individual naturally supplies to themselves about the nature of their performance. For example, if an individual is aware of signs of anxiety (for example, sweaty palms and trembling knees) while engaging in an activity they will be more likely to assume a low level of self-efficacy for any given level of attainment than if these signs are absent.

Our final consideration concerns the set of circumstances where an individual may find themselves being asked to engage upon tasks for which they are likely to be motivated by performance goals and for which they have a low level of self-efficacy. As will be clear from the discussion above, it would not be uncommon for these two characteristics (performance goals and a low level of self-efficacy) to be found together. The combination of performance goals and low levels of self-efficacy is likely to bring about two particular responses both of which are unlikely to be helpful in enhancing levels of attainment. First, the performance goal in question is likely to be of the avoidance variety. While there is some significant evidence to suggest that performance approach goals can sometimes help to enhance attainment, it is clear that performance avoidance goals invariably have negative consequences. Second,

the pursuit of the performance avoidance goal with a low level of relevant self-efficacy is likely to engender significant attempts by the individual to protect their sense of self-worth. This leads us into the final area of motivation theory and research which is relevant to this current study

6.6 Self-worth protection

Martin Covington has developed a particular approach to the study of motivation that attaches a premium role to concerns with self-worth protection (Covington, 1998, 2000).Covington's basic assertion is that, in Western society at least, the possession of ability is highly valued. It will, of course, generally be the case that the most certain route to persuading oneself that one does indeed possess a high level of ability is to experience and demonstrate to others a high level of success. However, it is also clear that even the most able are unlikely to be able to maintain a high level of success with total consistency. The challenges for the less able are clearly greater. Whenever success is not experienced, and when a degree of failure is being anticipated, there is the potential for an individual to experience anxiety and concern about the implications of that failure for their assessment, and the assessment by others, of their relevant ability level. Repeated threats of this kind broadly lead to evermore heightened concerns about self-worth. Under these circumstances an individual's prime motivation becomes self-worth protection rather than the successful completion of the task. Covington has outlined a number of the mechanisms that individuals might engage with in order to attempt this self-worth protection. These may include, among others: procrastination; subscribing publicly to the view that it is "cool" not to work and to seek success; alternatively proceeding to set targets that are so high as to be unattainable and thereby providing a built-in excuse should failure actually be experienced; and finally trying to ensure success by cheating. In considering the nature of these psychological devices it begins to become apparent why a number of motivational researchers have elected to talk about different motivational characteristics in terms of their adaptiveness.

All of the above mechanisms as discussed by Covington would be poorly adapted to the objective of maximising success levels. However each of them is very well adapted to the objective of maintaining self-worth in circumstances where failure is predicted to be likely. For example, in choosing to procrastinate, an individual will naturally reduce the amount of time that is available to them to devote to obtaining success. This will be likely to reduce the chances of success but at the same time it provides the individual with the information necessary to enable them to make an attribution for their failure to the fact that there was insufficient time to prepare properly. This attribution in turn deflects the threat from perceived ability levels and thereby to self-worth. It would also be incorrect under these circumstances to claim that such an individual was only weakly motivated. As stated above, the motivation is strong but the concerns at hand of the individual lead to it being very poorly adapted to the purposes of gaining success. It is also likely to be the case that once these self-defensive mechanisms are brought into play they are likely to be needed more

and more as time goes by. As the individual succeeds in providing themselves with ways of protecting self-worth from the consequences of failure, so they can make the expectation of future failure higher, therefore the need for such self protective devices all the greater in the future.

6.7 Implications for interventions

The above discussion can be summarised by highlighting the need for a number of steps to be undertaken when considering or implementing interventions:

1. A successful intervention needs to develop a future time perspective in order to encourage individuals to consider carefully the links between present activities and significant future goals
2. The future, distal, goals need to be valued. The successful intervention must therefore either focus upon goals to which a significant positive value is already attached or seek to develop positive values for other goals. Motivation theory would indicate that either of these two alternatives, if successfully carried out, would have an approximately equal likelihood of success. However, given that interventions will be designed with the express intention of drawing young people with NEET status into recognised avenues of education, training or employment, the second alternative is the one that is the more likely to be necessary. Given this, it is likely that the principal component of any effective intervention through the use of ICT will be the development of such positive values
3. As the Miller and Brickman model makes clear, unless the individual has access to relevant knowledge concerning the links between these valued distal goals and current proximal activities the presence of the valued distal goals will serve no effective purpose. As it is likely that the socio-cultural background of young people with NEET status will have failed to provide adequate access to this information, a key aspect of any successful ICT based intervention will be the provision of this knowledge and (or) the development of the necessary information retrieval skills required to enable access to that information
4. The intervention will need to establish a system of proximal sub-goals there will provide the all essential bridge between the proximal activities and the longer term valued distal goal
5. The fourth step in the development of an effective intervention is more likely to be achieved successfully when the individuals engaging in the intervention are able to develop relatively high levels of self-efficacy in relation to the attainments required for successful completion of each of the proximal sub-goals

6 As links are successfully developed between the valued distal goal and a subsystem of proximal goals so the chances of learning goals being established by participants is increased

7 Such a combination of raised levels of self-efficacy and the development of relatively strong learning goals will have the considerable added benefit of reducing the chances of participants developing performance avoidance goals and the consequential use of self-worth protecting strategies.

The three key aspects therefore of any effective ICT based intervention will be: the development of relevant and valued distal goals; the development of knowledge of the links between the present activities with and those valued distal goals; and, perhaps most essentially, the development of high levels of self-efficacy in relation to those activities.

As ICT and its applications in school and school-related contexts has only rarely been examined within the context provided by a theoretically sophisticated conceptualisation of motivation it is difficult to point to evidence of particular practices that will have the most certain chances of success. The earlier work of Passey and Rogers (Passey and Rogers, with Machell and McHugh, 2004) serves to indicate that when ICT is used effectively the motivational characteristics of the students engaging with it are likely to provide a good match with those that relevant theory would indicate as being desirable. The challenge implicit in setting out to create ICT based interventions that will enhance the motivational characteristics of such a challenging group as young people with NEET status is obviously significantly greater. However, interventions based upon theoretically sound and empirically supported principles will have a greater chance of achieving success.

ICT based interventions have an immediate appeal as they are assumed to draw upon a current interest in the technologies and a degree of confidence in the use of those technologies that may compensate for a lack of interest and confidence in more formal educational and training pursuits. Whether this is the case or not remains to be seen. However, if such interventions are to be ultimately successful, then they need to do more than provide a possibly short-term boost to interest. If young people with NEET status are to become and remain engaged in the workplace, they will need to have an ongoing set of motivational strategies that are sufficiently adaptive and robust to stand the test of time. Significantly, the intervention will need to develop motivational characteristics that will not be dependant upon the ongoing presence of the ICT devices. The thinking behind the development of the interventions, and the evaluations of them, need therefore to address the underlying and longer term concerns discussed in this section.

7 Existing evidence concerned with policy and practice

7.1 Numbers of young people with NEET status in the 16- to 18-year-old age group

Data that is accessible at a national level tends to group young people into specific age categories, which does not allow the 16- to 18-year-old age group to be identified readily as a single entity. The Departments for Children, Schools and Families and Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) publish historical figures relating to the destinations of school leavers (see Table 1 following). Figures for the whole of the United Kingdom and for the four separate nations are shown. In England and Wales destinations of Year 11 pupils leaving secondary schools are shown. In Scotland destinations of pupils leaving classes after Years S4, S5 and S6 are shown, so they are not directly comparable. Data for Wales are no longer collected, so these are not included in any UK aggregates. Notes about these figures also indicate that the group designated 'Unemployed or not available for work' includes those who: "failed to let the Careers Service or school know what they were doing, and who failed to respond to at least two attempts at follow-up by the Careers Office". (Percentages are shown in italic within Table 1.)

	Thousands and percentages			
United Kingdom	**1991**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**
Number of school leavers	638.3	683.3	647.9	638.7
England				
Number of school leavers	522.8	562.1	561.2	553.7
Of which (%):				
Education	61	68	68	68
Government supported training	15	10	10	9
Employment	10	8	8	9
Unemployed or not available for work	9	7	7	7
Unknown or left area	6	8	7	6
Wales				
Number of school leavers	34.9	36.9	..	..
Of which (%):				
Education	62	70	..	..
Government supported training	16	8	..	..
Employment	8	9	..	..
Unemployed or not available for work	8	7	..	..
Unknown or left area	6	6	..	..
Scotland				
Number of school leavers	55.2	57.4	60.4	59.3
Of which (%):				
Education	32	45	47	49
Training	25	14	11	10
Employment	24	23	25	26
Unemployed	9	..	..	..
Miscellaneous/other known destinations	11	14	13	13

Destinations not known	..	4	3	3
Northern Ireland				
Number of school leavers	25.4	26.9	26.3	25.7
Of which (%):				
Education	58	67	66	67
Government supported training	27	22	22	21
Employment	5	5	6	6
Unemployed or not available for work	4	4	4	3
Unknown or left area	6	3	2	3

Table 1: Destinations of school leavers (Source: DCSF and DIUS, 2007; reported to be sourced from School Leavers Destinations Surveys and Careers Service Activity Survey)

These figures indicate that the number of school leavers in England with NEET status was at least (not including figures for those with unknown destination or those who left the area):

- In 1991: 47,052
- In 1996: 39,347
- In 1997: 39,284
- In 1998: 38,759.

National Statistics sources (2007a) provide more detailed data about unemployment levels. Rates of unemployment are provided as percentages on a monthly basis, and from March 1992 they show percentages of persons in a range of age categories who are unemployed, and then separate these out into similar percentages for men and for women. The categories used are: 16 and over; 16 to 59 for women and 64 for men; 16 to 17, 16 to 24, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 59 for women and 64 for men; and 60 and over for women and 65 and over for men. From these figures, it is possible to extract monthly unemployment percentages for 16- to 17-year-olds, for 16- to 24-year-olds, and for 18- to 24-year-olds. From these, it is not possible to calculate percentages of 17- to 18-year-olds and 16- to 18-year-olds who are unemployed, as the percentages shows the proportion of unemployed young people from within that age range only. Figure 2 following shows these rates in graphical form over the same period. From these figures it is clear that the unemployment rate within the age range category is increasing over time, and that it has increased more dramatically in the last four years (an increase of at least five per cent over that time period for this age group).

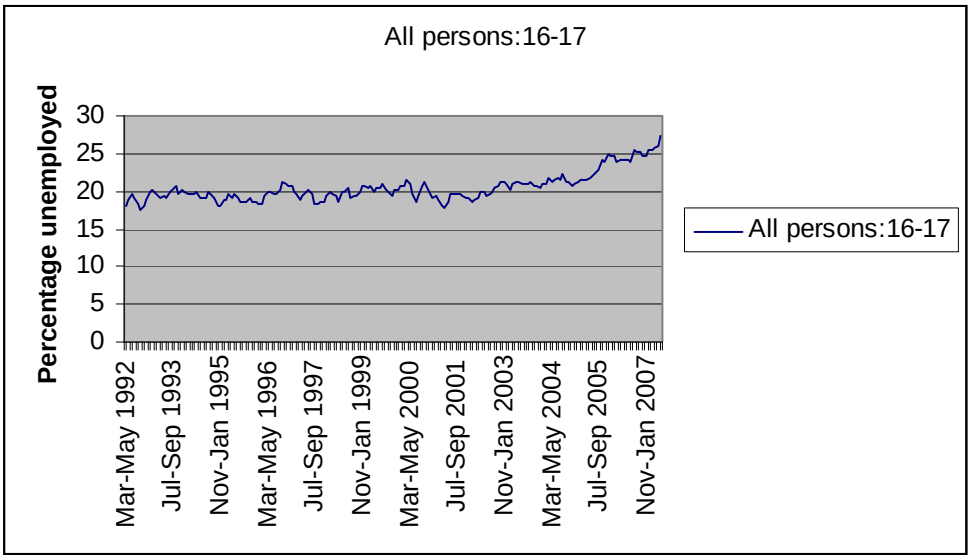

Figure 2: Unemployment rates for all young people aged 16- to 17-years

Figure 3 shows these rates in graphical form for men leaving school. These figures show that the unemployment rate within this category has increased by some 10 per cent over the past six years.

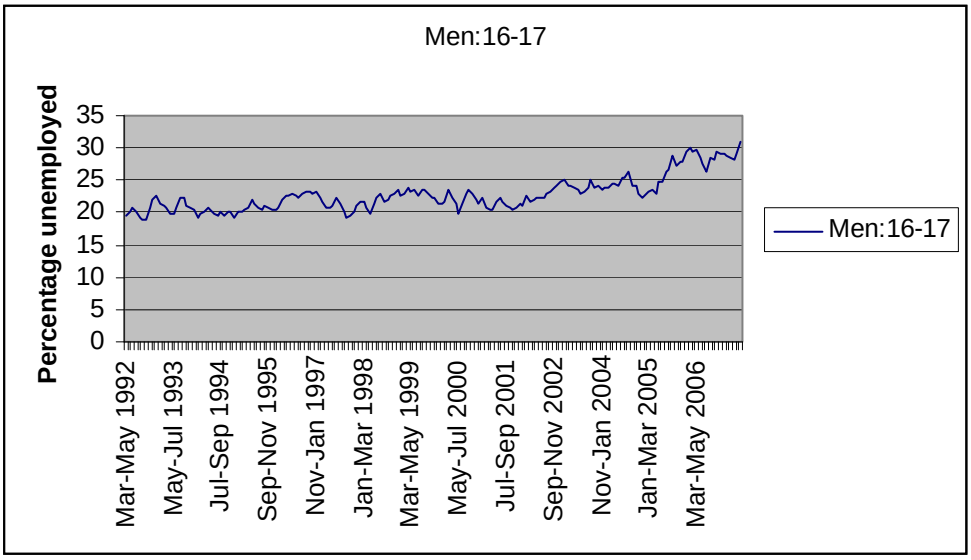

Figure 3: Unemployment rates for men aged 16- to 17-years

Figure 4 shows these rates in graphical form for women leaving school. These figures show that the unemployment rate within this category has increased by some five per cent over the past four years. However, the starting base for women was lower (by some 2.5 per cent), and the increase has happened more recently compared to that for men.

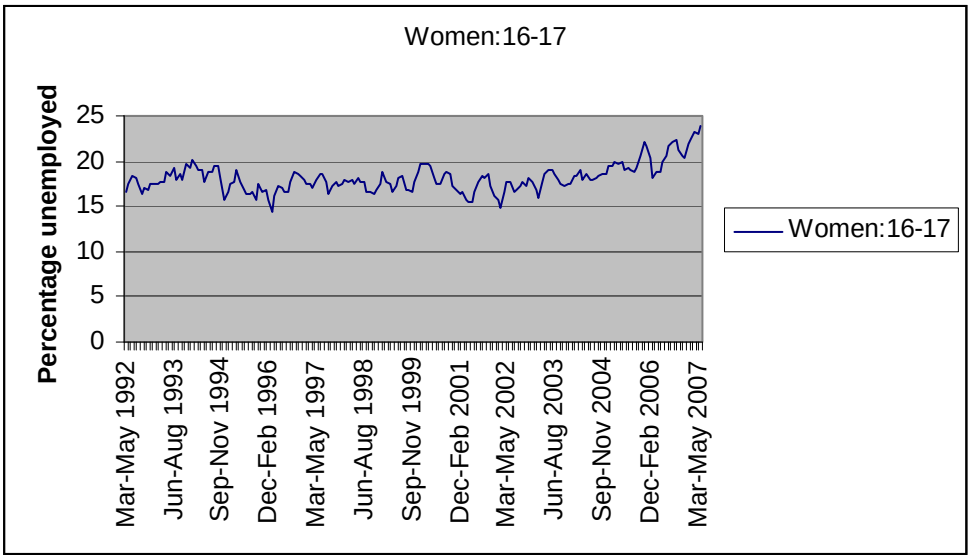

Figure 4: Unemployment rates for women aged 16- to 17-year-olds

The same pattern is not shown for the 16- to 24-year-old group, however. Figure 5 shows that the percentage unemployed has decreased (between 1992 and 2001) and has then begun to rise again to a level of about 15 per cent overall.

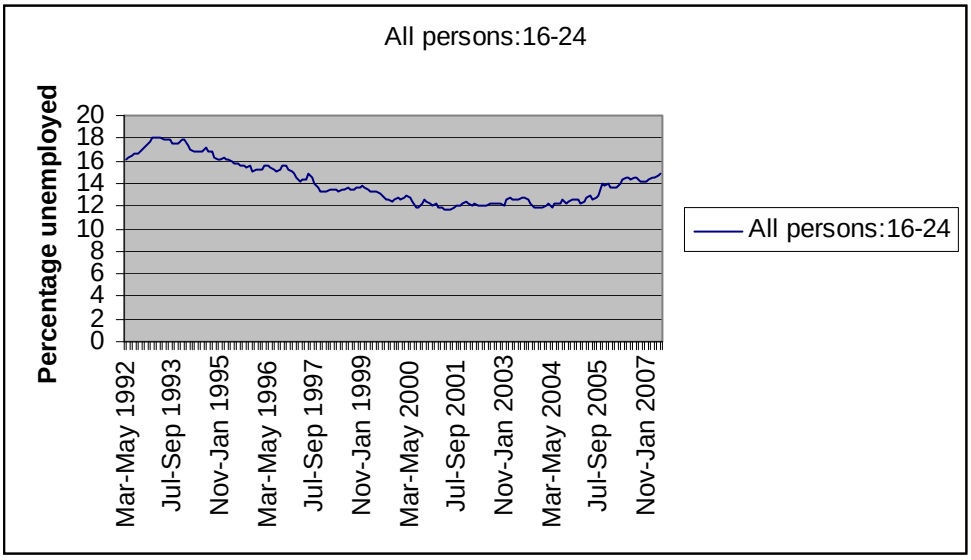

Figure 5: Unemployment rates for all young people aged 16- to 24-years-old

The pattern for the 18- to 24-year-old age range is similar. Figure 6 shows that the unemployment rate for this group declined (from 1992 to 2001), but has steadily climbed again, to a level of about 13 per cent in 2007.

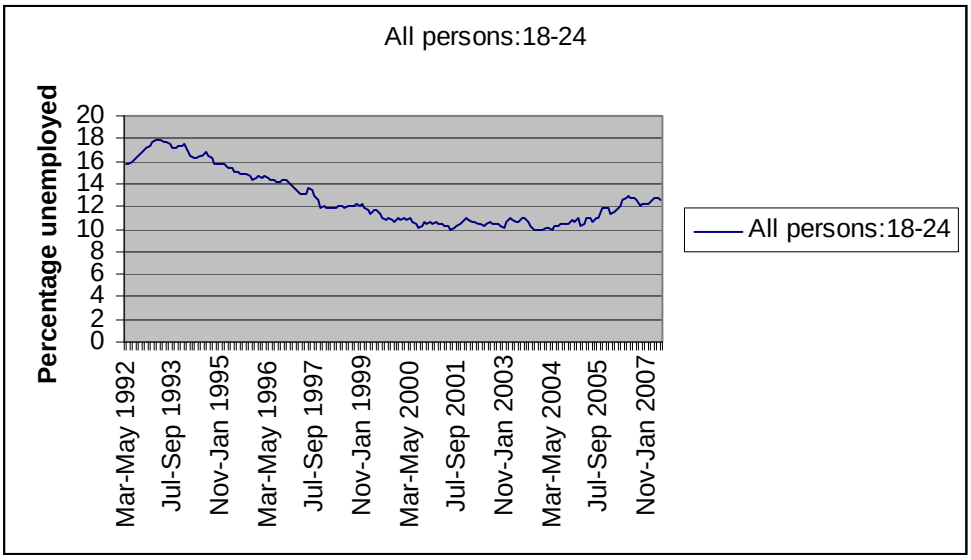

Figure 6: Unemployment rates for all young people aged 18- to 24-years

By inference, this suggests that the unemployment rate in the 16- to 18-year-old sector is relatively high, but that lower levels of young people with NEET status persist as they become older. National Statistics sources (2007b) provide data that indicates patterns of persistence of unemployment within certain age groups (16- to 17-year-old and 18- to 24-year-old young people). Numbers of young people in these age ranges who have been unemployed for up to six months, up to 12 months, over 12 months, and over 24 months are shown for all young people, for men and for women.

Table 2 following shows lengths of unemployment for 16- to 17-year-old young people. The figures are shown in thousands, between 1992 and 2007. It should be noted that the indicative levels for periods beyond 24 months are low because the young people have moved out of that age range. Similar distortions are possible in other columns.

	All persons: 16-17	Up to 6 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 6 and up to 12 months: All persons:16-17	Over 12 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 24 months: All persons:16-17
Mar-May 1992	148	116	22	9	..
Apr-Jun 1992	154	118	27	9	..
May-Jul 1992	160	120	28	11	..
Jun-Aug 1992	155	116	27	13	..
Jul-Sep 1992	146	106	27	14	..
Aug-Oct 1992	135	97	23	14	..
Sep-Nov 1992	137	94	26	16	..
Oct-Dec 1992	143	99	26	18	2
Nov-Jan 1993	149	100	29	20	2
Dec-Feb 1993	148	97	29	22	2
Jan-Mar 1993	143	94	27	22	3

	All persons: 16-17	Up to 6 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 6 and up to 12 months: All persons:16-17	Over 12 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 24 months: All persons:16-17
Feb-Apr 1993	140	93	27	20	3
Mar-May 1993	136	91	27	18	3
Apr-Jun 1993	138	90	26	22	3
May-Jul 1993	136	91	23	23	3
Jun-Aug 1993	143	95	25	23	3
Jul-Sep 1993	143	95	27	21	2
Aug-Oct 1993	148	96	29	23	2
Sep-Nov 1993	142	95	27	20	2
Oct-Dec 1993	145	98	30	18	2
Nov-Jan 1994	143	98	30	15	2
Dec-Feb 1994	143	98	29	15	1
Jan-Mar 1994	142	100	28	14	0
Feb-Apr 1994	144	106	23	16	0
Mar-May 1994	145	109	19	16	1
Apr-Jun 1994	138	104	20	15	1
May-Jul 1994	137	101	21	15	1
Jun-Aug 1994	137	99	25	14	1
Jul-Sep 1994	142	102	23	17	2
Aug-Oct 1994	138	100	24	15	2
Sep-Nov 1994	135	97	23	15	2
Oct-Dec 1994	126	95	19	12	0
Nov-Jan 1995	127	95	18	14	1
Dec-Feb 1995	137	104	18	15	1
Jan-Mar 1995	138	102	21	16	1
Feb-Apr 1995	145	109	22	14	1
Mar-May 1995	144	110	23	12	1
Apr-Jun 1995	150	115	23	12	1
May-Jul 1995	145	111	22	12	2
Jun-Aug 1995	142	109	20	12	1
Jul-Sep 1995	143	112	19	12	1
Aug-Oct 1995	145	114	19	12	1
Sep-Nov 1995	151	119	20	12	1
Oct-Dec 1995	147	115	22	11	1
Nov-Jan 1996	150	116	21	12	0
Dec-Feb 1996	146	113	21	12	1
Jan-Mar 1996	146	113	21	13	1
Feb-Apr 1996	158	121	25	12	1
Mar-May 1996	165	127	26	12	0
Apr-Jun 1996	166	130	24	12	0
May-Jul 1996	164	130	23	11	1
Jun-Aug 1996	163	131	21	11	0
Jul-Sep 1996	171	136	22	13	0
Aug-Oct 1996	180	147	21	12	0
Sep-Nov 1996	178	145	20	14	0

	All persons: 16-17	Up to 6 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 6 and up to 12 months: All persons:16-17	Over 12 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 24 months: All persons:16-17
Oct-Dec 1996	175	139	21	15	1
Nov-Jan 1997	175	134	21	19	1
Dec-Feb 1997	170	129	23	17	1
Jan-Mar 1997	167	129	22	16	0
Feb-Apr 1997	161	126	23	12	1
Mar-May 1997	168	129	23	16	1
Apr-Jun 1997	176	137	24	15	1
May-Jul 1997	182	139	24	19	0
Jun-Aug 1997	175	137	23	15	0
Jul-Sep 1997	161	125	22	13	1
Aug-Oct 1997	160	126	21	13	0
Sep-Nov 1997	167	133	22	12	1
Oct-Dec 1997	166	130	24	12	1
Nov-Jan 1998	169	134	26	..	1
Dec-Feb 1998	174	139	27	..	1
Jan-Mar 1998	173	141	24	..	1
Feb-Apr 1998	170	142	20	..	0
Mar-May 1998	159	131	19	..	0
Apr-Jun 1998	172	140	21	10	0
May-Jul 1998	175	142	23	..	0
Jun-Aug 1998	180	151	22	..	0
Jul-Sep 1998	169	137	22	10	0
Aug-Oct 1998	168	137	22	..	1
Sep-Nov 1998	170	137	24	..	0
Oct-Dec 1998	174	146	20	..	0
Nov-Jan 1999	179	148	21	11	1
Dec-Feb 1999	179	147	22	11	1
Jan-Mar 1999	174	139	23	12	1
Feb-Apr 1999	176	139	25	12	0
Mar-May 1999	169	136	23	10	0
Apr-Jun 1999	172	139	22	10	0
May-Jul 1999	170	143	18	..	0
Jun-Aug 1999	174	140	23	11	0
Jul-Sep 1999	169	139	22	..	0
Aug-Oct 1999	166	133	22	11	1
Sep-Nov 1999	163	131	20	12	1
Oct-Dec 1999	168	135	20	13	1
Nov-Jan 2000	167	137	20	10	1
Dec-Feb 2000	172	139	23	10	0
Jan-Mar 2000	174	142	23	..	0
Feb-Apr 2000	185	148	26	10	0
Mar-May 2000	177	144	24	..	0
Apr-Jun 2000	165	130	26	10	1
May-Jul 2000	153	119	24	10	1

	All persons: 16-17	Up to 6 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 6 and up to 12 months: All persons:16-17	Over 12 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 24 months: All persons:16-17
Jun-Aug 2000	162	125	25	11	1
Jul-Sep 2000	172	136	23	13	1
Aug-Oct 2000	175	142	21	12	1
Sep-Nov 2000	170	140	19	11	1
Oct-Dec 2000	160	129	21	10	1
Nov-Jan 2001	158	128	20	10	0
Dec-Feb 2001	159	127	22	10	1
Jan-Mar 2001	153	126	17	10	1
Feb-Apr 2001	147	124	14	..	0
Mar-May 2001	146	122	15	..	0
Apr-Jun 2001	152	127	16	..	0
May-Jul 2001	161	131	18	11	1
Jun-Aug 2001	162	134	17	11	1
Jul-Sep 2001	164	134	21	..	1
Aug-Oct 2001	164	134	22	..	1
Sep-Nov 2001	163	131	22	11	1
Oct-Dec 2001	159	129	18	12	1
Nov-Jan 2002	154	122	18	14	0
Dec-Feb 2002	152	124	16	12	0
Jan-Mar 2002	154	128	16	11	0
Feb-Apr 2002	158	130	17	11	1
Mar-May 2002	163	131	22	10	1
Apr-Jun 2002	161	130	22	..	0
May-Jul 2002	158	130	19	..	0
Jun-Aug 2002	160	134	17	..	0
Jul-Sep 2002	165	135	21	..	0
Aug-Oct 2002	168	133	26	..	0
Sep-Nov 2002	171	133	29	10	0
Oct-Dec 2002	179	143	27	..	0
Nov-Jan 2003	178	143	25	10	1
Dec-Feb 2003	179	141	27	11	1
Jan-Mar 2003	170	131	27	12	1
Feb-Apr 2003	176	137	26	12	1
Mar-May 2003	177	140	22	15	1
Apr-Jun 2003	176	142	20	14	1
May-Jul 2003	174	140	21	13	1
Jun-Aug 2003	172	139	23	11	1
Jul-Sep 2003	171	137	22	11	1
Aug-Oct 2003	175	139	24	11	1
Sep-Nov 2003	170	136	24	10	1
Oct-Dec 2003	171	135	24	13	1
Nov-Jan 2004	167	128	24	15	1
Dec-Feb 2004	170	133	24	13	..
Jan-Mar 2004	172	132	29	10	..

	All persons: 16-17	Up to 6 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 6 and up to 12 months: All persons:16-17	Over 12 months: All persons: 16-17	Over 24 months: All persons:16-17
Feb-Apr 2004	178	139	29	10	..
Mar-May 2004	174	136	29	10	..
Apr-Jun 2004	173	135	27	10	..
May-Jul 2004	178	139	29	..	..
Jun-Aug 2004	178	139	29	11	..
Jul-Sep 2004	187	147	29	11	..
Aug-Oct 2004	177	141	25	11	..
Sep-Nov 2004	176	144	23	..	..
Oct-Dec 2004	171	139	24	..	..
Nov-Jan 2005	172	140	24	..	..
Dec-Feb 2005	174	140	25	10	..
Jan-Mar 2005	177	142	22	12	..
Feb-Apr 2005	174	142	22	11	..
Mar-May 2005	173	139	23	11	..
Apr-Jun 2005	176	139	25	12	..
May-Jul 2005	177	140	25	12	..
Jun-Aug 2005	177	139	27	11	..
Jul-Sep 2005	178	138	28	11	..
Aug-Oct 2005	184	142	31	11	..
Sep-Nov 2005	181	141	27	14	..
Oct-Dec 2005	187	147	29	12	..
Nov-Jan 2006	185	144	29	12	..
Dec-Feb 2006	186	142	33	12	..
Jan-Mar 2006	178	132	33	13	..
Feb-Apr 2006	182	133	35	14	..
Mar-May 2006	179	131	37	12	..
Apr-Jun 2006	179	129	37	13	..
May-Jul 2006	177	128	33	16	..
Jun-Aug 2006	175	131	26	18	..
Jul-Sep 2006	186	143	26	16	..
Aug-Oct 2006	186	144	25	16	..
Sep-Nov 2006	189	144	29	17	..
Oct-Dec 2006	188	144	28	16	..
Nov-Jan 2007	183	142	27	15	..
Dec-Feb 2007	186	142	28	16	..
Jan-Mar 2007	185	143	28	14	..
Feb-Apr 2007	186	145	26	15	..
Mar-May 2007	187	148	24	16	..
Apr-Jun 2007	196	152	30	14	..

Table 2: Lengths of unemployment for young people aged 16- to 17-years (Source: National Statistics, 2007b)

These data indicate that many young people (about 145,000 currently) in the 16- to 17-year-old age group are unemployed for a period of up to six months, but far fewer

are unemployed for a period over 12 months (currently around 15,000 young people). However, it is clear that ways to support these young people with approaches that might enable a larger proportion to engage with employment and training, so that there might be a lower level of young people with more persistent NEET status, would be a potential advantage, both economically and socially.

7.2 Geographical distribution of young people with NEET status

There are generally two sources of data that provide evidence of geographical distribution of young people with NEET status. These come from local authority returns (including returns from individual schools or districts), and from careers offices. Some sources provide more historic data, while others provide current evidence.

Hampshire County Council (2007) provide historic data about destinations of school leavers between 1994 and 1999. These data are shown in Table 3 following.

Destination	**1994**		**1995**		**1996**		**1997**		**1998**		**1999**	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Continued Education	9255	73.9	9975	74.2	9854	73.2	9661	71.7	9653	73.8	10071	75.6
Entered Employment	1070	8.5	1303	9.7	1161	8.6	1335	9.9	1352	10.3	1351	10.1
Entered Youth Training	907	7.2	766	5.7	736	5.5	675	5.0	774	5.9	609	4.6
Part-time Learning	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0.0	8	0.1	3	0.0
Unemployed	504	4.0	502	3.7	587	4.4	552	4.1	499	3.8	570	4.4
Unable to Work/Unknown	516	4.1	650	4.8	872	6.5	923	6.9	568	4.3	425	3.3
Moved Away	270	2.2	245	1.8	252	1.9	326	2.4	229	1.8	301	2.3
Total Leavers	12552		13441		13462		13472		13083		13330	

Table 3: Destinations of school leavers across Hampshire County between 1994 and 1999

The percentage of unemployed school leavers was at a level of around four% over this period. The data did not unfortunately distinguish between those school leavers who were unable to work (who would be included within the NEET group), and those who were unknown (who might or might not be included within the NEET group).

Data from other geographical areas indicates that levels of school leavers with NEET status might well be markedly different. Table 4 following (sourced from Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council, 2007) shows the various destinations of school leavers across both Lancashire and Blackburn and Darwen in 2002. The data are

given as percentages of the total. The table compares percentages and changes for Lancashire as well as for Blackburn and Darwen.

	Lancashire		Blackburn with Darwen	
	%	% Change from 2001	%	% Change from 2001
FE College	53	3	62	6
6th Form	15	-1	7	-2
Modern Apprenticeship	7	-2	5	-1
NVQ Level Training	3	-1	3	-2
Other government support	1	0	2	1
Other training	7	2	6	1
Job without training	2	-1	2	-1
Unemployed	6	0	6	-1
Moved away	4	0	4	0
Other	3	-1	3	0
All in learning	86	1	85	3
All not in learning	10	-1	11	-2
Source: *Learning Skills Council School Leaver Destination 2002 Report*. Data collected by Connexions Lancashire. http://www.lsc.gov.uk/				

Table 4: Destinations of school leavers in 2002 in Lancashire and Darwen and Blackburn

The data suggest that there were 10 per cent of school leavers with NEET status in Lancashire in 2002, while there were 11 per cent in Blackburn and Darwen. A report from the Learning and Skills Council in Lancashire (LSC, 2005), indicated both the high levels of NEET status of school leavers across the County, as well as indicating the variation that could occur across districts within the County. Table 5 following indicates the levels of school leavers in 2004 in each district 'Not in Learning' (either in a job without training, unemployed, or 'other'), as percentages of the whole cohort.

District	*A. Not in Learning*		
	Job without training	**Unemployed**	**Other**
Blackburn with Darwen	2	6	2
Blackpool	3	5	2
Burnley	4	5	1
Chorley	3	5	0
Fylde	4	4	0
Hyndburn	2	7	1
Lancaster	2	5	1
Pendle	3	7	2
Preston	3	6	1
Ribble Valley	1	2	0
Rossendale	3	4	0
South Ribble	2	3	0
West Lancs	4	4	1
Wyre	2	7	0

Overall	3	5	1

Table 5: Destinations for school leavers in 2004 in districts across Lancashire

These data indicate that there are wide differences across districts in terms of levels of unemployment of school leavers. The LSC report indicated that there were 1,825 (9 per cent) school leavers not continuing in any form of learning in 2004, and that this was a reduction both in terms of number and proportion compared to the 1,830 (10 per cent) recorded in 2003. It was noted that the LSC Lancashire cohort grew by over 900 leavers in 2004, so the number not in learning had fallen slightly. It was noted that the: "LSC Lancashire area experienced an increase in volume and proportion of young people entering a job without training with a corresponding reduction in leavers becoming unemployed. Pendle (12 per cent), Hyndburn (11 per cent) and Preston (10 per cent) had the highest overall proportions of non-learners in 2004. The areas with the smallest proportions were Ribble Valley (3 per cent) and South Ribble (6 per cent). Although Preston still had one of the highest proportions of non learners in 2004, 10 per cent (185) represented a large reduction on the 16 per cent (275) recorded in 2003. Blackburn with Darwen, South Ribble and Rossendale were the other districts to experience significant reductions in 2004. The districts of Fylde and Pendle experienced the largest increases in leavers recorded as not continuing in learning post-16 in 2004. In Fylde there was an extra 35+ leavers recorded as not in learning compared to 2003, raising the proportion of all Fylde leavers from just over four per cent to approaching eight per cent. In Pendle, the proportionate increase from eight per cent to 12 per cent in 2004, represented an increase of 50 young people". The report offered a map to show non-learners at a ward level, based on postcodes of young people. In conclusion, the report stated: "Of all LSC Lancashire school leavers between 2002 and 2004 there were a total of 19 wards throughout Lancashire with more than 15 per cent not continuing in learning post-16. Preston has the highest number of wards with five, namely Ribbleton, Fishwick, Brookfield, Ingol and Sharoe Green".

Connexions Nottinghamshire highlight in their report on school leavers in 2006, the difference between geographical locations. They also indicate levels of school leavers ‘unavailable for work’, as well as those ‘unemployed’. Across Nottinghamshire including Nottingham city, those school leavers who were unemployed accounted for some six per cent of the total, while those unavailable for work accounted for some 1.25 per cent. Figures for Nottingham City LEA indicated the level of unemployed to be higher, at some eight per cent, and the level of those unavailable for work to be some two per cent of the total. In Nottinghamshire LEA, the level of unemployed was some five per cent of the total, but the level of those unavailable for work was about 1.25 per cent, suggesting that there could be a wider variation in the levels of unemployed compared to those unavailable for work.

Data about school leaver destinations for specific wards within Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council in 2001showed that levels of NEET status can be quite

different even when localities are quite close in terms of distance. Table 6 following shows the differences across the wards.

Ward name	Number of School Leavers	Full Time Education %	Government Supported Training %	Full Time Employment %	Not Settled %	Moved Away *From Area* %	No Response %
BELMONT	90	74	13	2	7	0	3
BROTTON	81	58	19	9	10	0	5
COATHAM	47	53	15	2	28	0	2
DORMANSTOWN	117	56	16	5	19	1	3
ESTON	111	60	19	7	7	2	5
GRANGETOWN	138	43	19	7	25	2	5
GUISBOROUGH	71	55	23	7	13	1	1
HUTTON	63	94	3	0	3	0	0
KIRKLEATHAM	110	64	10	5	17	0	4
LOCKWOOD & SKINNINGROVE	69	42	13	14	19	1	10
LOFTUS	111	63	10	10	8	1	8
LONGBECK	91	81	11	2	4	0	1
NEWCOMEN	67	67	13	6	9	0	4
NORMANBY	112	68	14	4	10	0	4
ORMESBY	66	67	12	6	9	0	6
REDCAR	86	70	12	5	13	1	0
ST. GERMAIN'S	60	60	17	8	8	3	3
SALTBURN	62	69	6	2	18	0	5
SKELTON	98	56	13	12	15	0	3
SOUTH BANK	143	56	15	7	17	1	4
TEESVILLE	88	64	15	6	11	2	2
WEST DYKE	91	67	14	10	8	0	1
REDCAR & CLEVELAND	1972	62	14	6	13	1	4

Table 6: Destinations of school leavers in 2001 in wards across Redcar and Cleveland Borough

The differences across wards, show that the levels of school leavers with NEET status can vary from three per cent to 28 per cent (using the category ‘Not Settled’). Similar patterns of difference across wards are shown by similar data provided by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (shown in Table 7).

Ward name	Number of School Leavers	Full Time Education %	Government Supported Training %	Full Time Employment %	Not Settled %	Moved Away From Area %	No Response %
BISHOPSGARTH	112	75	12	6	5	0	2
BLUE HALL	95	52	17	6	17	1	7
CHARLTONS	61	39	28	10	20	0	3
EGGLESCLIFFE	110	80	7	5	5	3	0
ELM TREE	62	69	16	8	6	0	0
FAIRFIELD	62	84	10	5	0	2	0
GLEBE	84	82	7	5	4	0	2
GRANGE	96	63	9	6	20	1	1
GRANGEFIELD	73	66	8	16	7	3	0
HARDWICK	81	48	21	11	12	2	5
HARTBURN	76	76	12	4	5	1	1
INGLEBY BARWICK	193	81	9	6	3	1	2
MANDALE	100	58	20	7	8	2	5
MARSH HOUSE	110	75	15	5	2	1	1
MILE HOUSE	80	53	14	14	13	3	5
NEWTOWN	101	50	20	7	20	2	2
NORTHFIELD	60	87	3	5	0	0	5
NORTON	82	68	11	7	9	2	2
PARKFIELD	91	58	12	10	16	2	1
PORTRACK & TILERY	65	52	12	8	25	0	3
PRESTON	36	86	6	0	8	0	0
ROSEWORTH	97	59	18	6	15	0	2
ST.AIDAN'S	63	62	16	8	13	0	2
ST.CUTHBERT'S	100	62	21	8	7	1	1
STAINSBY	88	64	10	10	13	0	3
VICTORIA	62	55	15	3	23	0	5
VILLAGE	66	55	15	18	9	0	3
WHITTON	52	73	6	10	10	0	2
WOLVISTON	48	77	10	8	2	2	0
YARM	132	86	6	4	2	0	2
STOCKTON	2538	67	13	7	9	1	2
TEES VALLEY	9188	65	14	7	10	1	3

Table 7: Destinations of school leavers in 2001 in wards across Stockton-on-Tees Borough

More recent data from Connexions in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (2007), shows levels of NEET status of school leavers in 2006, with some variation across districts. Those in the 'Not settled' category accounted for six per cent of the school leavers across the Borough, with eight per cent in Bournemouth, five per cent in Dorset, and six per cent in Poole. Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire (2007) provide a destination analysis that shows a specific category entitled 'Not in employment, education and training'. Across a four year period, the level across Coventry and

Warwickshire for this group has remained fairly stable, being 5.5 per cent in 2003, 5.4 per cent in 2004, 5.2 per cent in 2005, and 5.6 per cent in 2006.

7.3 Variations in levels of NEET status and levels of deprivation

It is perfectly possible that higher levels of NEET status will arise in area of higher levels of social deprivation. A range of measures of social deprivation are used at a policy level. A document from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) summarises the ways that social deprivation indices were conceptualised and constructed for the purposes of reviewing 'neighbourhood renewal'. This report states that: "The IMD 2004 contains seven Domains of deprivation: Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Health deprivation and disability, Education, skills and training deprivation, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living environment deprivation and Crime". The report indicates that 32,482 Super Output Areas (SOAs) were identified across England, and an index of multiple deprivation (IMD) was calculated for each one. Figure 7 below, taken from that document, shows, by government region, the percentage of Super Output Areas in that region that lie in the most and least deprived 20 per cent of all Super Output Areas in England.

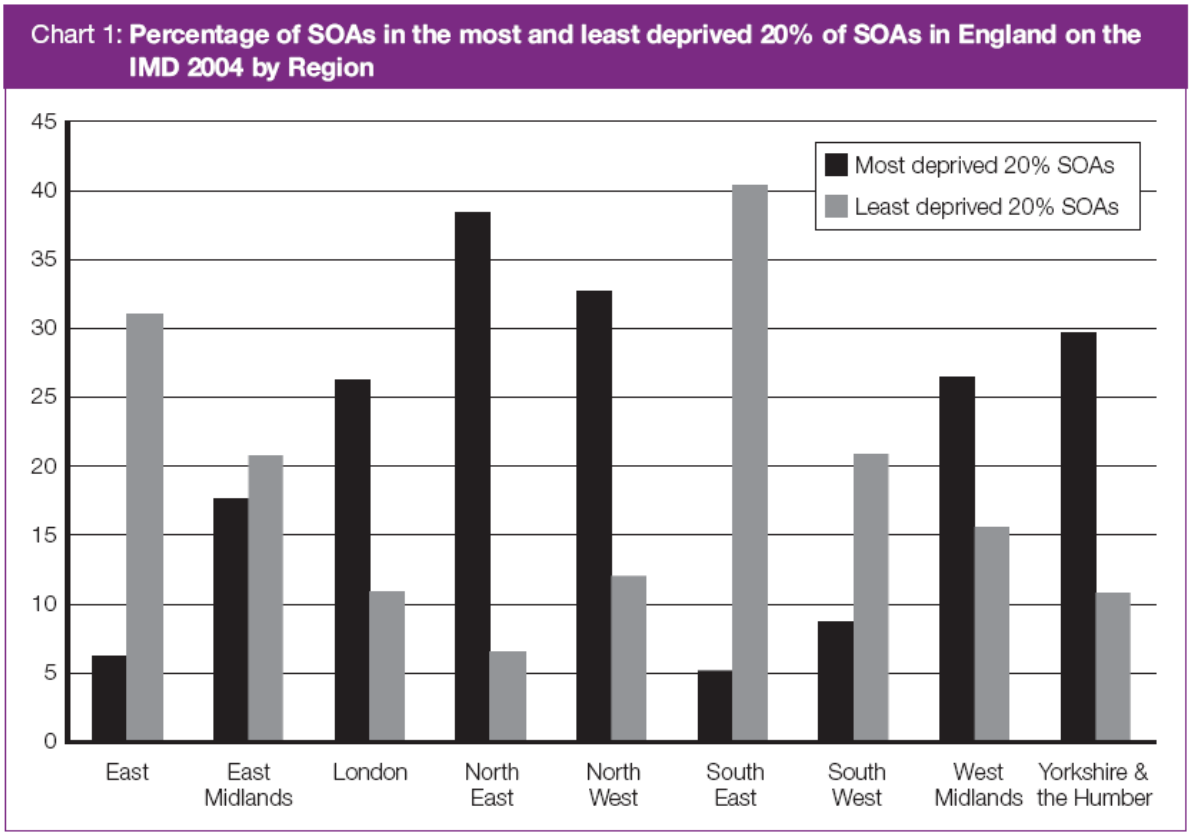

Figure 7: Percentage of Super Output Areas in the most and least deprived 20% of Super Output Areas in England (Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004)

It should be noted that the high levels of Super Output Areas occur in the most deprived 20 per cent of Super Output Areas in England in the regions of the North

East, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands and London. Looking at social deprivation at a county or borough level, Table 8 shows the counties and boroughs ranked in order of average social deprivation score (with a ranking of 1 being the highest level of social deprivation).

County name	Rank of average score
Liverpool	1
Manchester	2
Knowsley	3
Tower Hamlets	4
Hackney	5
Islington	6
Nottingham	7
Kingston upon Hull, City of	8
Middlesbrough	9
Newham	10
Salford	11
Haringey	12
Hartlepool	13
Birmingham	14
Sandwell	15
Southwark	16
Stoke-on-Trent	17
Camden	18
Newcastle upon Tyne	19
Halton	20
Sunderland	21
Lambeth	22
Blackpool	23
Rochdale	24
Gateshead	25
South Tyneside	26
Barnsley	27
Bradford	28
Leicester	29
Blackburn with Darwen	30
Wolverhampton	31
St. Helens	32
Westminster	33
Doncaster	34
Greenwich	35
Barking and Dagenham	36
Oldham	37
Redcar and Cleveland	38
Waltham Forest	39
Wirral	40
Tameside	41

County name	Rank of average score
Bolton	42
Walsall	43
North East Lincolnshire	44
Wigan	45
Wakefield	46
Lewisham	47
Durham	48
Sheffield	49
Rotherham	50
Coventry	51
Hammersmith and Fulham	52
Bristol, City of	53
Leeds	54
Derby	55
Stockton-on-Tees	56
Plymouth	57
Kirklees	58
Sefton	59
North Tyneside	60
Brent	61
Brighton and Hove	62
Calderdale	63
Portsmouth	64
Darlington	65
Torbay	66
Bournemouth	67
Southampton	68
Bury	69
Ealing	70
Peterborough	71
Luton	72
Hounslow	73
Enfield	74
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	75
Dudley	76
Northumberland	77
Telford and Wrekin	78
Lancashire	79
Southend-on-Sea	80
Cumbria	81
Kensington and Chelsea	82
North Lincolnshire	83
Thurrock	84
Isle of Wight	85
Nottinghamshire	86
Wandsworth	87
Slough	88
Trafford	89

County name	Rank of average score
Croydon	90
Derbyshire	91
Warrington	92
Reading	93
Lincolnshire	94
Stockport	95
Medway	96
Norfolk	97
Redbridge	98
Hillingdon	99
Devon	100
East Sussex	101
Swindon	102
Solihull	103
Staffordshire	104
Barnet	105
Kent	106
Northamptonshire	107
Somerset	108
Herefordshire, County of	109
Milton Keynes	110
Shropshire	111
East Riding of Yorkshire	112
Cheshire	113
Suffolk	114
Bexley	115
Worcestershire	116
Havering	117
York	118
Merton	119
Warwickshire	120
Essex	121
Poole	122
City of London	123
North Somerset	124
North Yorkshire	125
Gloucestershire	126
Harrow	127
Sutton	128
Bromley	129
Dorset	130
Bedfordshire	131
Bath and North East Somerset	132
West Sussex	133
Cambridgeshire	134
Kingston upon Thames	135
Leicestershire	136
Oxfordshire	137

County name	Rank of average score
Hertfordshire	138
Wiltshire	139
Hampshire	140
South Gloucestershire	141
Richmond upon Thames	142
Bracknell Forest	143
Buckinghamshire	144
Windsor and Maidenhead	145
West Berkshire	146
Surrey	147
Rutland	148
Wokingham	149

Table 8: County and borough authorities ranked according to average social deprivation (with highest social deprivation being rank 1) (Source: Communities and Local Government, 2007)

It will be worth considering whether the levels of NEET status relate in any ways to this form of social deprivation ranking. If so, then factors concerned with social deprivation may well be linked to factors that affect NEET status. As an alternative to the form of ranking given in Table 8, it is possible to rank by extent of social deprivation. This alternative ranking is presented in Table 9, where highest extents are shown from rank 1.

County name	Rank of extent
Hackney	1
Tower Hamlets	2
Islington	3
Manchester	4
Liverpool	5
Newham	6
Knowsley	7
Nottingham	8
Haringey	9
Middlesbrough	10
Kingston upon Hull, City of	11
Southwark	12
Birmingham	13
Hartlepool	14
Sandwell	15
Salford	16
Halton	17
Stoke-on-Trent	18
South Tyneside	19

County name	Rank of extent
Camden	20
Lambeth	21
Sunderland	22
Newcastle upon Tyne	23
Blackburn with Darwen	24
Wolverhampton	25
Gateshead	26
Barnsley	27
Rochdale	28
Bradford	29
Doncaster	30
Leicester	31
Blackpool	32
Oldham	33
St. Helens	34
Walsall	35
Greenwich	36
North East Lincolnshire	37
Barking and Dagenham	38
Bolton	39
Wirral	40
Sheffield	41
Wigan	42
Tameside	43
Redcar and Cleveland	44
Wakefield	45
Westminster	46
Durham	47
Waltham Forest	48
Derby	49
Rotherham	50
Coventry	51
Leeds	52
Stockton-on-Tees	53
North Tyneside	54
Bristol, City of	55
Kirklees	56
Plymouth	57
Lewisham	58
Sefton	59

County name	Rank of extent
Hammersmith and Fulham	60
Darlington	61
Calderdale	62
Brighton and Hove	63
Peterborough	64
Portsmouth	65
Brent	66
Bury	67
Luton	68
Southampton	69
Dudley	70
Lancashire	71
Bournemouth	72
Telford and Wrekin	73
Ealing	74
Kensington and Chelsea	75
Enfield	76
Northumberland	77
Southend-on-Sea	78
Torbay	79
Warrington	80
Cumbria	81
Nottinghamshire	82
North Lincolnshire	83
Trafford	84
Solihull	85
Thurrock	86
Hounslow	87
Derbyshire	88
Swindon	89
Croydon	90
Stockport	91
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	92
Lincolnshire	93
Norfolk	94
East Sussex	95
Northamptonshire	96
Wandsworth	97
Milton Keynes	98
Reading	99

County name	Rank of extent
Cheshire	100
Slough	101
Isle of Wight	102
North Somerset	103
Staffordshire	104
York	105
East Riding of Yorkshire	106
Kent	107
Medway	108
Suffolk	109
Worcestershire	110
Barnet	111
Bexley	112
City of London	113
Gloucestershire	114
Redbridge	115
Devon	116
Bromley	117
Essex	118
Hillingdon	119
North Yorkshire	120
Bedfordshire	121
Warwickshire	122
Somerset	123
Havering	124
Sutton	125
Poole	126
Herefordshire, County of	127
Oxfordshire	128
Bath and North East Somerset	129
Merton	130
Dorset	131
Hampshire	132
Harrow	133
West Sussex	134
Shropshire	135
Cambridgeshire	136
Leicestershire	137
Wiltshire	138
Kingston upon Thames	139

County name	Rank of extent
Hertfordshire	140
Buckinghamshire	141
Richmond upon Thames	142
Bracknell Forest	143
South Gloucestershire	144
Surrey	145
Rutland	146
West Berkshire	146
Windsor and Maidenhead	146
Wokingham	146

Table 9: County and borough authorities ranked according to extents of social deprivation (with highest extents of social deprivation being rank 1) (Source: Communities and Local Government, 2007)

County name	Rank of income scale
Birmingham	1
Lancashire	2
Kent	3
Liverpool	4
Essex	5
Manchester	6
Leeds	7
Bradford	8
Norfolk	9
Sheffield	10
Nottinghamshire	11
Derbyshire	12
Hampshire	13
Hertfordshire	14
Durham	15
Staffordshire	16
Newham	17
Lincolnshire	18
Devon	19
Tower Hamlets	20
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	21
Hackney	22
Nottingham	23
Suffolk	24
Sandwell	25
Leicester	26
Cheshire	27
Northamptonshire	28
Wirral	29

County name	Rank of income scale
Bristol, City of	30
Lambeth	31
Kingston upon Hull, City of	32
Haringey	33
Southwark	34
Newcastle upon Tyne	35
West Sussex	36
Sunderland	37
Surrey	38
Kirklees	39
Cumbria	40
East Sussex	41
Brent	42
Lewisham	43
Wolverhampton	44
Coventry	45
Doncaster	46
Gloucestershire	47
Ealing	48
Worcestershire	49
Enfield	50
Wakefield	51
Islington	52
Croydon	53
Walsall	54
Sefton	55
North Yorkshire	56
Stoke-on-Trent	57
Somerset	58
Salford	59
Greenwich	60
Waltham Forest	61
Knowsley	62
Bolton	63
Warwickshire	64
Wigan	65
Dudley	66
Leicestershire	67
Rotherham	68
Camden	69
Derby	70
Cambridgeshire	71
Barnsley	72
Oxfordshire	73
Rochdale	74
Barnet	75
Oldham	76
Gateshead	77

County name	Rank of income scale
Northumberland	78
Brighton and Hove	79
Wandsworth	80
Plymouth	81
Middlesbrough	82
Tameside	83
Barking and Dagenham	84
South Tyneside	85
Redbridge	86
Bedfordshire	87
Hounslow	88
North Tyneside	89
Westminster	90
Stockton-on-Tees	91
Southampton	92
East Riding of Yorkshire	93
St. Helens	94
Stockport	95
Dorset	96
Medway	97
Hammersmith and Fulham	98
Buckinghamshire	99
North East Lincolnshire	100
Luton	101
Calderdale	102
Wiltshire	103
Blackburn with Darwen	104
Hillingdon	105
Blackpool	106
Bromley	107
Redcar and Cleveland	108
Shropshire	109
Portsmouth	110
Halton	111
Harrow	112
Southend-on-Sea	113
Peterborough	114
Trafford	115
Bury	116
Telford and Wrekin	117
Havering	118
Bexley	119
Milton Keynes	120
Bournemouth	121
Hartlepool	122
Warrington	123
Torbay	124
Kensington and Chelsea	125

County name	Rank of income scale
North Lincolnshire	126
Solihull	127
Merton	128
Isle of Wight	129
Thurrock	130
South Gloucestershire	131
Swindon	132
North Somerset	133
Sutton	134
Herefordshire, County of	135
York	136
Slough	137
Darlington	138
Reading	139
Bath and North East Somerset	140
Poole	141
Richmond upon Thames	142
Kingston upon Thames	143
West Berkshire	144
Windsor and Maidenhead	145
Bracknell Forest	146
Wokingham	147
Rutland	148
City of London	149

Table 10: County and borough authorities ranked according to income scale (with lowest income scale being rank 1) (Source: Communities and Local Government, 2007)

A further alternative is to rank social deprivation in terms of employment. The ranking using this alternative is shown in Table 11 following (with lowest employment rates from rank 1).

County Name	Rank of employment scale
Birmingham	1
Lancashire	2
Liverpool	3
Kent	4
Essex	5
Manchester	6
Durham	7
Nottinghamshire	8
Derbyshire	9
Leeds	10
Staffordshire	11
Norfolk	12
Sheffield	13
Bradford	14

County Name	Rank of employment scale
Hampshire	15
Lincolnshire	16
Cheshire	17
Cumbria	18
Devon	19
Hertfordshire	20
Sunderland	21
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	22
Wirral	23
Wigan	24
Suffolk	25
Northamptonshire	26
Newcastle upon Tyne	27
Wakefield	28
Nottingham	29
Doncaster	30
Bristol, City of	31
Sefton	32
Kirklees	33
Stoke-on-Trent	34
Sandwell	35
Kingston upon Hull, City of	36
Surrey	37
West Sussex	38
North Yorkshire	39
Barnsley	40
Worcestershire	41
Lambeth	42
Northumberland	43
Leicester	44
Gloucestershire	45
East Sussex	46
Leicestershire	47
Coventry	48
Newham	49
Southwark	50
Warwickshire	51
Hackney	52
Salford	53
Somerset	54
Bolton	55
Wolverhampton	56
Knowsley	57
Rotherham	58
Haringey	59
Gateshead	60
Tower Hamlets	61
Dudley	62

County Name	Rank of employment scale
Walsall	63
Lewisham	64
Islington	65
Brent	66
St. Helens	67
Rochdale	68
Ealing	69
Brighton and Hove	70
Cambridgeshire	71
Oldham	72
Tameside	73
Plymouth	74
Camden	75
South Tyneside	76
North Tyneside	77
Croydon	78
Oxfordshire	79
Derby	80
Enfield	81
Middlesbrough	82
Greenwich	83
Stockton-on-Tees	84
East Riding of Yorkshire	85
Waltham Forest	86
Stockport	87
Blackpool	88
Wandsworth	89
Dorset	90
Redcar and Cleveland	91
Barnet	92
Bedfordshire	93
Westminster	94
Wiltshire	95
Shropshire	96
Halton	97
Blackburn with Darwen	98
Trafford	99
Calderdale	100
Southampton	101
Warrington	102
Redbridge	103
Bury	104
Hammersmith and Fulham	105
Medway	106
Barking and Dagenham	107
Buckinghamshire	108
North East Lincolnshire	109
Bromley	110

County Name	Rank of employment scale
Hounslow	111
Hartlepool	112
Bournemouth	113
Luton	114
Portsmouth	115
Hillingdon	116
Solihull	117
Havering	118
Telford and Wrekin	119
Southend-on-Sea	120
Torbay	121
North Lincolnshire	122
Kensington and Chelsea	123
Milton Keynes	124
Peterborough	125
Bexley	126
Harrow	127
North Somerset	128
Isle of Wight	129
York	130
South Gloucestershire	131
Darlington	132
Herefordshire, County of	133
Merton	134
Swindon	135
Thurrock	136
Sutton	137
Bath and North East Somerset	138
Poole	139
Slough	140
Reading	141
Richmond upon Thames	142
Kingston upon Thames	143
West Berkshire	144
Windsor and Maidenhead	145
Bracknell Forest	146
Wokingham	147
Rutland	148
City of London	149

Table 11: County and borough authorities ranked according to employment (with lowest employment rates from rank 1) (Source: Communities and Local Government, 2007)

Overall, counties and boroughs at either end of Tables 8 to 11 are similar. However, there are large differences often demonstrated in the localities. For example, Birmingham is largely urban, while large tracts of Lancashire are rural. In terms of NEET status therefore, there could be large differences in the drivers involved, although it is possible that there are some commonalities also. The DCSF provides

locality references for each of its secondary schools. The localities of all Lancashire secondary schools, according to DCSF references, are shown in Table 12.

Locality reference	*B. Number of schools*
Urban (greater than 10,000 population)	72
Town and fringe (less than 10,000 population)	9
Hamlet and isolated dwelling	2
Village	2

Table 12: Frequencies of secondary schools in Lancashire by locality using DCSF location references (Source: DCSF, 2007)

NEET status is likely to arise for a number of different reasons. Those who move into crime may well have different interests and motives from those who have children or who need to care for them or others in a home. Different localities and cultures are likely to have impacts. Young women in Asian households may well have pressure on them to look after others at home, rather than them going into employment, education and training.

7.4 Considering features of NEET status that indicate forms of groupings

Becta, in the tender document for this research study, stated that: "The government has set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for reducing the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training, this target is owned by the Connexions Service. The target requires that the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training is reduced to 8 per cent by 2010. The percentage of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training has remained stable, at between 8 per cent and 10 per cent, between 1993 and 2004. In 2005, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) estimated that this figure had increased to 11 per cent, which represents 220,000 young people, but the latest figure for 2006 is 10.3 per cent ".

The Becta tender document reported that the LSDA had defined two distinctive categories of young people with NEET status: "A report by the LSDA in March 2006: Regional and sub-regional variation in NEET – reasons, remedies and impact, recognises that the group is not homogeneous and defines two distinct categories:

- "Core NEET – more likely to have social and behavioural problems. This group also comprises the ‘Generational NEET’ – young people who come from families where the accepted norm is for adults to be unemployed
- "Floating NEET – young people who may find themselves lacking direction and motivation and tend to move in and out of the NEET group, engaging in low paid and temporary work and short courses".

The Becta tender document went on to indicate features of practice identified by the LSDA that support engagement of young people with NEET status into employment,

education and training: "The report goes on to define key aspects of good practice including:

- " appropriate targeting of resources according to the need of a particular group of NEET
- "holistic support which takes into account the complexity of issues involved
- "positive partnerships between a range of agencies which work with young people as they appear fundamental to developing good practice
- "involving young people in decision making and recognising their achievements
- "fostering young people's readiness to make decisions after leaving school
- "by involving young people in their own development planning
- "innovative practice, such as the use of sport, art and media to engage young people in project activities and learning opportunities".

The LSDA were also reported to have identified features that worked in ways counter to positive engagement: "The report also identified factors which impede the progress of initiatives focusing on NEET reduction:

- "emphasis on hard outcomes and a disregard of soft outcomes
- "the link between funding and targets based on hard outcomes is a source of concern for many agencies
- "pre-level 2 provision it is not accessible to all".

The Becta tender document reported how Connexions had analysed 'triggers' that moved young people 16- to 18-years of age towards NEET status, and 'enablers' that helped them to move from NEET status: "A report by Connexions (Cox, K. January 2006: *The NEET group: A quantitative analysis of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education employment or training)* categorised the factors which trigger NEET status and those that enable young people to move out of NEET": shown in Table 13 following.

Triggers to NEET	Enablers to NEET
Primary Triggers	Primary Enablers
Leaving care	Family/parental support
Homelessness	Financial support
Difficult parental relationships	Advice, guidance and information for specialists, e.g. Connexions Pas, support workers
Lack of qualifications	Post-16 education
Early school leaver	Entry2Employment (e2e)
Criminal records	Transport
Caring for a parent	Parenthood
Bullying	
Pregnancy	

Secondary Triggers	Secondary Enablers
Parental separation	Being in a stable relationship
Drug and alcohol misuse	Stopping drug/alcohol misuse
Lack of appropriate advice at school	Peer activities/influences
Moving home frequently	Gaining work experience/voluntary work
Bereavement	Career planning
Learning difficulties	
Poor access to transport	

Table 13: 'Triggers' to and 'enablers' from NEET status for 16- to 18-year-old young people (Source: Cox, K., 2006)

7.5 Drivers that might be generated by the system (the educational system in schools) and impact on engaging NEET status

A key issue to consider is whether young people who have NEET status have been, or are, interested in subjects provided by schools, or in education or learning. The Solomon and Rogers work (2001) would suggest that at least some young people value the potential that is offered. There are likely to be factors associated directly with schools and educational practice that have impacted on those who leave school without going into employment, education or training.

Positive value that young people with NEET status describe could be a value that is desired rather than actual. It could be that some young people find difficulties with the value system that is inherent within a subject curriculum. Subjects that are core subjects are socio-economically influenced in terms of the value that is ascribed to them, rather than those values influencing the nature of the subject itself (for example, having more algebra than trigonometry is not a subject feature that is influenced by socio-economic values). However, the ascribing of value to the entire subject may well be a driver that disengages some young people.

Subjects that are arts based are influenced by socio-economic values in terms of the content rather than the subject alone. The presence of, and focus on, opera and ballet, or looking at the works of Warhol, rather than street music and street art, are influences arising from specific socio-economic values. Subject content could be influenced by socio-economic values that could disadvantage some young people. In terms of subject content, it could be argued that those young people who could have an interest in arts based subjects might well have greater difficulties with socio-economic values than those who are interested in core subjects.

Young people who are presented with opportunities to work in a project based way (engaging socially), collaboratively (engaging with others rather than having to work in isolation or in ways that could be regarded as potentially competitive), with arts based work (which involves subjects of interest, but where the subject content can be influenced by their own interests) could well engage them actively. Because they feel such work allows them to participate and it values their interests, they could

engage positively. If they cannot engage with something that offers them shared values and perceptions of worth and collaboration, then they might well disengage.

Social issues are likely to play an important role (especially when the main reasons for permanent exclusions are considered). The role of drop-in sessions, and part-time education should be considered in this context. Further education (FE) institutions provide a different form of environment for young people. They allow young people to engage for a limited time, leaving the young people a great deal of flexibility with regard to structuring the use of other time at their disposal. Part-time education within the FE sector has provided a different pattern of education and learning from that found largely in schools. Reports about levels of participation in part-time study by young people at Blackburn College, for example, demonstrates the level of popularity of this form of opportunity for some young people. Data from Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council (2007) shows that while the majority of students in Blackburn College who are under 19-years of age study full time, there is a significant cohort of students of this age range who study part time (about one third of the total number). Figures are shown in Table 14 following.

	Under 19 years				19 and over			
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Full time								
Males	1,057	1,130	1,109	1,108	428	452	520	442
Females	912	901	900	882	532	578	624	333
Part time								
Males	521	477	496	506	2,985	3,243	3,785	3,242
Females	412	473	516	564	5,659	5,805	6,422	5,242
Total	2,902	2,981	3,021	3,060	9,604	10,078	11,351	9,259

Table 14: Student participation by age in full time and part time courses at Blackburn College

7.6 Existing examples of technology supporting young people with NEET status

Becta, within the tender document for this research study (2007), stated that: "Technology could be part of the ‘solution’ to the NEET ‘problem’ (the client group is a technology literate section of society), but we need to explore the exact nature of the solution and how policy makers can develop this if the NEET client group is to benefit from future applications. Technology use for leisure purposes is very high among the 15- to 24-year-old age group, and evidence from research studies in both school and post-16 settings shows that ICT can have a motivating effect on learners, see Becta 2007: *Learner Feedback in FE and Skills*, where 56 per cent of respondents said they found the use of computers on their course motivated them to study. Perhaps more importantly the NEET client group has to some degree backed away from more traditional methods of teaching and the use of technology-based learning may provide a viable alternative".

What technologies young people with NEET status use already is likely to be important. What they use the technologies for is likely to be important, as this might well provide ways to suggest how other uses could be tailored to support those with NEET status.

Examples of practices supporting young people with NEET status appear to have some commonalities; practices appear to be often arts-based, project-based, and community-focused using technology. There are implications if this is the wider case, for ways that technology might support different groups of young people with NEET status. Scotland has a strategy to support young people with NEET status (Scottish Executive Publications, 2006), but no examples of practice using technology are known. Other approaches to support young people with NEET status have involved using technology in ways that have described as ‘bribery’ (Cox, 2005):
"Bournemouth College thinks it has the answer - bribes, or what it calls incentives. This summer it has run a 14 week course for NEETs. The teenagers taking part get £50 a week, free lunches, free travel, and a £100 bonus and a free iPod if they complete the course".

8 Evidence gathered and findings arising from this research study

8.1 How young people who are NEET are identified and supported

Young people who are 16- to 18-years of age who are NEET have traditionally been identified and supported by agencies concerned with careers (often termed Connexions although the title can vary in different regions or local authorities). The Connexions service has worked in conjunction with schools, and has generated contact with all young people in schools while they are still within schools. When the young people become 16-years of age (at the end of Year 11), Connexions staff work with schools in finding their destinations (where known), and then follow up with specific young people who are not known to be in employment, education or training (the NEET group).

Connexions staff, maintain contacts with ranges of providers who can support the young people with appropriate forms of training, work experience or employment. Discussions with individual young people have played a vital part in helping Connexions staff, usually personal advisers, in considering appropriate possible training or employment opportunities. Referrals from Connexions personal advisers to appropriate providers are based on a wide range of knowledge at a highly specific level.

Connexions personal advisers work with individuals across a very wide spectrum, from those who are already highly qualified but uncertain of their future directions, to those who are in a spiral downward pattern associated with crime and drug taking. Negative background circumstances and situations have often arisen some time in the past, with Connexions personal advisers in these cases needing to work with the young people often following long periods of increasing disaffection, disengagement and mistrust.

To address the issues that such background circumstances bring, some schools have now taken the initiative to identify and work positively with those young people they believe could move into the NEET group in the future. This preventative range of actions has often arisen only recently, so long term outcomes and benefits are difficult to know at this stage. However, shorter term benefits and outcomes can be identified.

8.2 What is known about the backgrounds and characteristics of young people who are NEET that might impact on their uses of ICT

When background data on young people who are NEET is considered, it becomes evident that the gaining of a crisp picture is difficult. Young people who are NEET are often a highly fluid population, and even trying to identify numbers of young people who are NEET can itself be a major undertaking. Tracking young people who are NEET is a challenge for those who support them.

Not only can a locality have a bearing upon the interests and attitudes of young people who are NEET, it can also dramatically affect the potential ways that ICT might be used to support them. Locality can not only influence directly the numbers of young people who are NEET, but it can influence attitudes and opportunities. If ICT could have a levelling effect in addressing some of the issues arising from locality then this itself might be of wide potential benefit.

Trying to characterise young people who are NEET is a challenge, and there are many different ways in which practitioners as well as researchers have done this. The background reasons for being in a NEET group can vary considerably, and the individual characteristic of those in NEET groups can vary enormously. However, a key characteristic of those who are NEET appears to be a lack of ability in or understanding about or the appropriateness of timing for decision making.

Attitudes can vary, and differences in attitude can clearly contribute to approaches taken and importance given to forms of decision making that young people might consider. Overall, however, the young people may very well not be thinking in the same ways as the majority; they may not value the same things, and the focus of their concern may not conform to constructs concerned with progress, ambition and endeavour as many would measure them. Having said that, there are clear examples of young people who have been NEET who have found a topic or area of interest that has enabled them to become engaged, and then to progress, to gain ambition, and to employ endeavour. Addressing their background issues and concerns, providing them with ranges of chances and opportunities, and supporting their social and motivational needs have been common elements in situations where success has been identified.

The duration of motivations of young people who are NEET may not always be long term; they may well be concerned with the short term, with today, tomorrow and the next day. They may be more concerned about employment than with training and learning, and their values may be concerned with their environments, their social interactions, and their practical or creative approaches to life.

8.3 What ICT has been available to them and used by them already

The uses of ICT in raising awareness about opportunities for young people, in helping to monitor and track important events and details, and in enabling young people to engage with information of potential importance to them, is currently in part being driven by national concerns and directions. However, these national drives are not necessarily specifically directed at the most vulnerable groups, those who have limited literacy, limited experience, and the most ingrained negative attitudes.

Connexions services are developing and providing online facilities to allow training providers and employers to make courses and opportunities accessible. Local and regional Connexions services are in places seeking to widen what is being sought

through national drives. This widening is often directed at supporting and meeting the needs of NEET groups.

Voluntary sector groups, supported by Connexions services, are in some areas playing key roles in developments focused for young people who are NEET. A number are currently developing and providing facilities, involving directly a number of young people who are NEET, to match their interests and needs. The medium of ICT is often a key element within these forms of facility.

When young people are referred to providers, providers often focus on practical and creative forms of courses and activities. However, the role of ICT is often integrated and vital within this range of provision (but may not always be recognised as such).

Young people who are NEET may well be considered to have fairly low access to levels of technologies. The reality is that many young people who are NEET have access to wide ranges of technologies. They may select to use these technologies in particular ways, and their ICT skills may well be limited to certain applications that have become important to and well used by them, but their overall engagement with ICT is well recognised.

8.4 Reasons why young people who are NEET have left education

A great deal of focus on young people who are NEET has traditionally been placed when young people leave school from 16-years of age. Some schools now focus on exploring reasons why young people might move into a NEET group, and what they can do to prevent this, by looking at ways to address the issues they find in an increasingly preventative way. In one school where this approach has been taken, interviews with a number of the young people who were deemed by the school to be likely to become NEET in the future provided some levels of illumination about why young people disengage from education during their times at school. These young people clearly identified a range of reasons why they were concerned with education, and their reasons for disengaging from school-based education. Five young people supported by an alternative curriculum provision (three girls and two boys, three in Year 11 and two in Year 10), offered personal views about their experiences of education and learning. Table 15 following details their views about learning in the different environments they experienced.

Environment	Number involved	Positive features	Negative features
School	4	Working one-to-one is good, helpful, a lot better (3), working with the mentor has let me see what I want to do, and not to get angry (1)	Lessons are boring, not fun (4), hate proper lessons (2), get into trouble in lessons (1), a lot of 'pickiness' and bullying (1), need long attention span (1)

FE colleges	4	Love going, enjoy it (3), can finish earlier (1), when it is done, it is done (1), are treated like adults (1), can show our uniqueness (1), can listen to music (1), get more practical advice (1), nice atmosphere (1)	None (5)
Work experience	4	Worthwhile (4), meeting new people (3), providing ambition (1), shadowing helps (1), other people found out what triggered my anger (1)	None (4), except working when cold and dark (1)
Work	1	Enjoyable (1), 'learning something new every day' (1)	Getting there (1)

Table 15: Views about learning and learning environments from young people (n=5)

It is clear that their experiences of school-based learning environments were often strongly negative. These views arose either because of their need (and inability) to maintain a high level of attention span over a 'long' period of time in classrooms, or because of issues arising through social dynamics. Reflections on their experiences in the FE colleges, in work experience, and in work, are clearly reported much more positively by these young people. Key positive elements identified in these environments are concerned with the gaining of a greater control over personal time and space, the feeling of being treated like adults, the ability to exercise and express individuality, the gaining of what is considered to be practical advice and guidance, and meeting new people.

Views expressed by 35 young people who were interviewed (18 girls and 17 boys) in one region, and who were NEET (they had left school-based learning already) did not differ greatly from the views offered by those still in school or supported through the school. In terms of the young people's thoughts about their experiences at school, responses varied, with some not liking or 'hating' school, others feeling it was 'all right', and one reporting 'miss it quite a bit'. Positive features reported by the young people were:

- Liked being with friends, talking with friends or meeting people (10 cases)
- Sports (three cases)
- Some of the lessons, and was good at mathematics (three cases)
- Passing examinations (two cases)
- Having a structured day with something to do every day
- Trips
- Some of the teachers
- School dinners.

Where young people reported positive features, these tended to focus on social aspects arising from being with others (friends and teachers), specific activities outside the classroom (sports and trips), and aspects where they had been successful (in mathematics, or passing examinations). For some, the provision of structure to support their involvement was clear, but this was not a view provided by a large number of those interviewed.

Negative features that were reported by these young people tended to focus around the same forms of issue. These were:

- bullying handled poorly, or people not being nice (one cases)
- teachers, or some teachers, nagging, not listening properly (nine cases)
- teaching that was focused on lectures, or was 'boring', or not teaching anything, not work related (five cases)
- having to just sit and listen (two cases)
- nothing to do at break times, or poor facilities (two cases)
- some lessons, such as English
- having to be there.

Many of the young people indicated that they did not enjoy school. Negative features that they reported tended to focus on bullying or poor relationships being prevalent, and having to sit in lessons that were lecture orientated (and the absence of social interaction is clear within the situations described by these young people). A few indicated lack of facilities outside the classroom to engage them adequately in activity as an issue.

At least 17 of the young people had experienced involvement in courses at further education colleges (including childcare, public finance, music technology, IT, hair and beauty, motor vehicle mechanics, painting and decorating, sport, catering, A Levels, and E2E). Some indicated that they had changed their courses for a variety of reasons, including the initial course 'not being right for me', not getting on with the people on the course, a tutor who focused on a single context (in this case, the army) that was not the context of interest to the young person (which was the navy), just changing their minds about the topic, or being asked to leave the course because 'me and another lad were messing about in the workshop'. Again, the importance of social dynamics and topics or subjects of interest are highlighted as important features for ongoing engagement. The young people reported on the positive features from their experiences with further education:

- More freedom than school, and more independent (four cases)
- Everything about it (two cases)
- Working on interesting topics, such as cars (two cases)
- Talked to as an adult rather than a child (two cases)
- Being trusted (two cases)

- Enjoying being on a placement
- Not so many people there
- The help you get
- Making new friends
- Being on the computer
- Working practically with the hands.

Young people reported positively on aspects concerned with independence, being treated as adults, being trusted, and working on topics that were of interest and of a practical nature. Aspects concerned with positive relationships were again highlighted. Negative features about experiences at further education colleges were reported much less commonly:

- Lack of support for assignments (two cases)
- Others on the course were not nice
- Teachers were incompetent
- Having to sit and listen to a lecture
- Pressure of a lot of work
- Having to go every day, starting early, and finishing late.

These negative features clearly parallel the form of negative features identified by young people with their school experiences.

Five of the 35 young people were able to report experiences when they attended a pupil referral unit. All of the young people indicated that they enjoyed their experiences in the pupil referral unit:

- Peace and quiet away from everyone
- Made loads of friends there
- Worked with you in a better way
- Used to be rewarded for what you did
- Always doing something.

The comments indicate the importance to these young people of environment (less ‘busy’ and more ‘spacious’), relationships with others (both teachers and learners), interesting work activities, and being rewarded for success.

When young people who are NEET find something of specific interest to them, their recollections of experiences within learning environments still remain. A group of four young people who were NEET, who were voluntarily involved in and supporting music technology activities in a youth centre, identified similar factors when they reported their experiences. The young people were asked about their experiences with education and employment. With regard to school:

- The positive features identified were having friends that you could get along with (including teachers in one case), practical work aspects, and lessons that were liked (IT, English and mathematics in one case)
- The negative features identified were going to school "because you have to, it's not something you want to do", not liking writing, teachers "didn't like me", teachers not getting "on with me because I was naughty but now I wish I was good".

Their reports of experiences with alternative support varied. One boy who attended a learning support unit said: "it was more chilled out, you could have a laugh with them. They'd help you with your work". The girl, on the other hand, said: "I didn't go, didn't want to". Comparing their reflections about school experiences to those about further education college, their experiences about the latter were much more positively reported. On the positive side, they said: "You get more respect, they treat you more like a person", "Liked the practical work, getting the job done", "Enjoyed plastering, stonemasonry was the best", "College was fun", "Just enjoyed it", "I liked it". On the negative side, the only comment related to a much more specific concern: "Didn't give you the right materials for the jobs".

A wider sample of responses from young people who were NEET, gathered from across a region using a questionnaire, suggested that experiences of school and other forms of educational provision can vary. The young people were asked in the questionnaire about their experiences with learning and work. Their responses are shown in Table 16 following.

C. Whether the young people:	**Frequency of 'yes' responses**	**Frequency of 'not sure responses**	**Frequency of 'no responses**
Enjoyed learning in classrooms with large groups	115	137	37
Enjoyed learning in practical sessions	217	58	19
Enjoyed learning with small groups	200	70	18
Enjoyed working on their own with a tutor or mentor	186	67	38
Have tried work or work experience	245	38	44
Enjoyed work	197	34	37
Enjoyed work experience	191	33	39

Table 16: Experiences reported by young people who are NEET (n=305)

These responses suggest that many young people who are NEET have enjoyed a variety of approaches to learning, and that many have enjoyed work or work experience. Of the learning approaches listed, more young people have enjoyed practical sessions, small group work, and working on their own with a tutor or mentor, while fewer have enjoyed classrooms with large groups present.

Overall, therefore, the reasons why young people who are NEET have left education is likely to be due to one or more factors, including:

- difficulties or issues arising in terms of social dynamics and social interactions
- lack of practical or social interactions within lessons
- difficulties with attention spans associated with lengths of lessons
- lack of opportunities to gain praise, to be rewarded, and to be recognised as being successful
- lack of opportunity to exercise independence
- Lack of opportunities to be involved in useful activities outside lessons.

It is clear that important factors in engagement in education for young people who are likely to move into the NEET group are:

- environment
- social dynamics and interactions
- trust and relationships
- success and reward
- topics of interest that include practical elements of activity.

Key elements of importance are perhaps summed up by the experiences of one boy who was interviewed during a practical front-of-house activity, serving restaurant guests as a part of a catering course in a further education college. The boy had recently moved onto a full-time Level 2 course, and he reported that this had been: "the best thing to have happened". He said that he felt he ‘grew out of school’, and was in danger of ‘throwing his last year away’. Now he feels he is doing something he enjoys. He says the pattern is different (there are no fixed breaks), the relationship is different (they have to work with the tutors), the focus is different (they have to work on ‘real’ things and with real people). He says he wants to pursue this as a career, but that he wants to travel first.

8.5 Whether or not young people who are NEET have any intention of going back to education at any point

Whether or not young people who are NEET have any intention of going back to education at any point is likely to be related not just to their background experiences and attitudes, but also to their interests and ambitions. A group of young people in a school, all on an alternative curriculum, and deemed likely to move into the NEET group, discussed their interests and ambitions when they were interviewed. When talking to the young people (three girls and two boys, three in Year 11 and two in Year 10), it was clear that many had wide interests, and that the alternative curriculum had helped a number of them to generate or identify ambitions and ways to potentially achieve these. The two boys shared interests in football, cars, and

mountain biking. One girl was particularly interested in dance, and indicated that she would like to set up a dance studio to inspire other young people. Only one girl of the five young people indicated no specific ambition; the other four young people indicated ambitions concerned with work in the hair and beauty industry, as a chef, as an electrician, as a photographer, in the army, or as a mentor. The young people said that these ambitions had been generated or supported by the alternative curriculum provision that had been made available to them. Of particular note was the fact that even with this small group of young people, interests in practical endeavour and creative endeavour emerged strongly, as did the social nature of the areas of interest. When interviews from other groups of young people are considered, similar features were highlighted. Across a group of 35 young people interviewed in one region, although there were some young people who did not report any specific interests, these were in a minority (and their background circumstances were not known, and could easily account for a lack of interest). The most commonly reported interests by this group were focused on socialising, sports, and creative arts.

The young people gave ideas about their ambitions:

- Undecided, what was tried was not right for me, not sure (three cases)
- Working in a nursery (three cases)
- The army (two cases)
- Barrister or law (two cases)
- Chef (two cases)
- Gardening
- Construction
- Resort worker with children
- Having own school
- Social worker
- Joining the navy
- Customer service at an airport
- Working as a fork lift driver
- Working in a kennel with breed dogs
- Sports coach perhaps
- Retail work
- Trucking
- Practical work like joinery
- Receptionist
- Being successful
- Being happy
- Being in a job that is not dead end

There were some young people who did not have any particular ambitions (eight out of the 35). Some were undecided, having tried some things already, but many had ambitions, or had specific ideas of what they would like to do. Some barriers were reported, but more reported seeing no barriers to their ambitions. The sorts of ambitions tended to focus on activities concerned with working with people, being outdoors, working practically, and working in areas of creative endeavour.

Many of these young people had been in jobs already (working in a café, in the army, erecting marquees, gardening, mechanical work, working at a resort park, waitress work, night club work, hairdressing, sports coaching, retail store work, on a paper round, call centre work, and restaurant work). The positive features reported by the young people were:

- getting on with people at work, and meeting people (eight cases)
- physical work and hands-on work (five cases)
- learning things, and the nature of the work (five cases)
- enjoying being busy (three cases)
- Earning money (three cases).
- it being different all the time (two cases)
- travelling
- working outside
- helping other people
- liking the animals.

The aspects that the young people highlighted, were focused on social, physical and practical features of the work, the nature of the work and its variety, and earning money. The negative features they reported were:

- it being tiring (four cases)
- lack of variety (four cases)
- problems with people at work, or closeness of the environment (two cases)
- hours not good (two cases)
- discipline
- not demanding enough
- getting sacked
- not paid enough

There were fewer negative comments, and those that reported negatively tended to focus on aspects concerned with the tiring nature or hours of the work involved, lack of variety, or concerns with work relationships. Reports of the young people about their experiences with work experience mirrored their reports about jobs.

Interests and ambitions described by a group of young people who were NEET, who were attending and supporting music creativity activities at a youth centre, suggested that interests and ambitions could be strongly linked not just to practical or creative endeavour, but also where these forms of activity were involved with and supported by technology. The young people indicated that they had a range of interests - music in four cases, art in one case, media in one case, DJing in one case, and socialising in one case. In terms of their ambitions, the young people indicated that they wanted to: "be the world's top DJ", a radio presenter, working in modelling animation, making music productions, and making their own songs and music. The only barriers they saw to these were: "Getting the equipment", " maybe music production but I already have achieved what I wanted to do - MCing and club singing, jam singing, rapping".

The types of jobs that these young people had had, were not related to the sorts of ambitions that they talked about. They said that they worked:

- for two weeks after leaving school, plumbing, and woodwork, but "was laid off, then did a bit of labouring" ("hard graft but you got used to it")
- labouring at weekends with a brother ("it was all right, nothing wrong with it")
- on cleaning jobs, packing jobs, bricklaying, in a hardware shop ("I liked working - but they were only short term")
- in a fish shop, sports shop, bakery ("but they were only temporary. I liked working but it wasn't really what I wanted to do. I don't know what I want to do")

It is clear, therefore, that while it is possible for young people to have interests in practical and creative areas, and areas where ICT might support endeavour, they might tend to choose employment that is sometimes at a lower level in terms of creative potential, only because of what is possible or available.

Ambitions of a wider group of 305 young people who were NEET was identified through their responses to a questionnaire. Their responses are shown in Table 17 following.

D. Whether the young people:	***Frequency of 'yes' responses***	***Frequency of 'not sure responses***	***Frequency of 'no responses***
Have any plans for the future	234	58	9
Have barriers preventing these	98	120	80

Table 17: Levels of ambitions and barriers reported by young people (n=305)

These data confirm the picture shown by the evidence from interviews. Many young people identify ambitions, but fewer identify barriers. The lack of identification of barriers may itself, of course, be an issue; young people who are NEET may not be

easily identifying barriers, they may not be recognising what is needed or how to achieve it, and these in themselves may be a barrier for them.

Overall, therefore, the question of whether or not young people who are NEET have any intention of going back to education at any point is concerned much less with a concept of education being something that is valued and worthwhile, and much more concerned with individual needs related to:

- environment (real, spacious, and non-restricting)
- social dynamics and interactions (positive and ad hoc)
- trust and relationships
- success and reward
- topics of interest that include practical elements of activity, as well as creative and social features
- support to address barriers that might not be seen or recognised.

8.6 Distinguishing between short-term and long-term NEET

Evidence that allows ways to distinguish between short-term and long-term NEET is not accessible easily from interview or questionnaire data gathered through this study. Secondary evidence from those who support young people who are NEET can shed some light on this issue.

Evidence from one region indicates that young people who are NEET often need to explore a wide variety of different opportunities before they might find something of interest in terms of employment, education or training. In some local areas, it is found that some young people are quite willing to consider employment, education or training, but it is sometimes found that there may be nothing for them to move on to. Voluntary work is found to be done by ‘the more confident’ or ‘the more capable’. Some who are successful in gaining employment, education or training are identified as being ‘academically more able’, or with parents in work, or having the chance to ‘get them at just the right time’. Experiences of those supporting young people who are NEET suggest that timeliness is all important for many in this group. Transport can also be a key factor; having a bicycle or someone with a car can make a big difference.

Evidence from the same region indicates that there are differences concerned with locality that impact upon short-term or long-term outcomes. The numbers and percentages of young people aged 16- to 18-years in the NEET group in this region vary according to both district and ward. Wards where the percentage of young people in the NEET group is higher than the overall percentage in the district have characteristics that are well recognised by those who support the young people. For example, characteristics associated with higher numbers of young people who are NEET tend to be an underachievement in terms of basic skills, having lower education skilling, and lower expectations. It is found in some wards that young

people will take a lower level skills job rather than aspire to anything higher (and one of these wards has recognised high levels of social deprivation). One estate, for example, has high unemployment levels, and families tend to have a background of unemployment, so attitudes relating to this tend to be more engrained. Many young people in the NEET group in this locality do not see the point of working. Aspirations with regard to employment vary, however, from locality to locality within this region. The technician level is 'king' in some areas; the 'professional' level is 'king' in other areas. Whatever the level of individual aspirations, experience of those who support these young people suggests that the young people themselves need to bring a number of qualities if they are to be successful: hope (for gaining some form of provision); encouragement (from the experiences of others); being positive (about engaging with others); academic skills (together with the confidence to use them); knowledge from parents (based on a reality of their potential); an open mind (a willingness to try); and flexibility. Desire on the part of the young person is a quality that is needed, as is an opportunity to pick an area of work or training that the young person can explore. In some areas there are young people whose families have never experienced work; there is a total lack of family experience in this respect. Young people in one area have low levels of experiences with life skills, and one consequence of this is that they do not want to leave the local area. These young people often have low self-esteem, and do not have a wide perspective on life. It is found that there tends to be too much 'stacked against them'; they see barriers rather than ways to approach alternatives. Experience of those supporting young people who are NEET suggests that low qualification levels are related to high social deprivation levels. Vocational qualifications now being offered are felt to be increasingly more supportive and effective.

Evidence from another region supports the view that locality has an impact on short-term and long-term NEET. In one district, there were 189 young people who were classed in the NEET group in December 2007, and of these, 47 were not available for employment, education or training (some were young mothers, others were ill, etc.). So, approximately 150 were available for employment, education and training. Of these, 66 per cent were male, and 34 per cent female, and many of these were 17-years of age. There are reported to be two main sources that form this population: those who have left full-time education (school, or college, with some having completed a course, some leaving midway through a course, but most who do not complete a course); and those from jobs without training or mentoring. This population is not static. Over a one year period starting from September 2006, there were 750 young people who joined the NEET group, so there were some 504 placements over a period of two years. The young people tended to look for: general practical work, low level or semi skilled work (some 22 per cent of them); construction; retail; motor vehicle work; or office or IT work (about eight per cent of them). Generally, they sought something practical and different from what they had done at school. Many of them saw their parents getting a job and working upwards, and attempted to emulate their patterns of work. However, in contrast to the situations in which their parents gained work, these young people now need

qualifications, and most of the young people in the NEET group had few qualifications.

Evidence about skills of young people who are NEET also indicates the roles that this may play in terms of short-term or long-term NEET status. It is reported that a skills gap is the most fundamental issue confronting young people who move into NEET status. It is recognised that there is now a higher level of skills needed for young people to obtain a job or an apprenticeship. However, it is found that young people coming out of school have lower skills levels, so their chances of getting a job are decreasing. The background environments of young people in this category do not often provide them with any form of advantage. Young people who would fall within the support groups that would be considered for highest priority levels of support almost always have low levels of qualifications, low levels of skills, and low self-esteem. Yet a level 2 qualification is needed to apply for a plumbing course (and not many have this). E2E is a pre-employment programme that seeks to address this form of limitation, but very few young people who complete it are found in some key areas to go on to a Modern Apprenticeship.

Table 18 shows the levels of qualifications of young people on a live register of one support area at the end of October 2007 (the area covers two local authorities). The subject headings refer to the young people's first choice career option as an unemployed individual. The 'other' category refers to career choices outside these categories, and the 'none' category refers to all others who do not fit into any of the previous categories (they have no stated career aims).

Qualification level	Business and Administration	Retail, Warehousing & Distribution	Health care	Hospitality, Catering & Leisure	Engineering and Motor Vehicle	Construction	Hairdressing & Beauty	Animal care & land based	Other	None	Total
No formal qualifications	5	41	15	8	35	62	16	9	104	10	**305**
No details	1	3	5	1	4	8	1	2	7	10	**42**
GCSEs Grade F/G	4	31	11	6	9	32	12	7	37	10	**159**
GCSEs D/E or equivalent	18	52	18	9	33	52	19	10	46	14	**271**
1-4 GCSEs C+	10	31	15	9	22	29	4	1	21	9	**151**
5 GCSEs C+/ or equivalent	19	21	6	7	24	13	1	1	14	6	**112**
A levels or equivalent	4	4	0	1	4	0	0	0	2	0	**15**
Total	**61**	**183**	**70**	**41**	**131**	**196**	**53**	**30**	**231**	**59**	**1055**

Table 18: Qualification levels of young people who were NEET in October 2007

Where young people have made career choices, these are largely focused on work that is focused on social and manipulative skills. It is clear from these data that many

young people who are NEET have low levels of qualifications. Out of a total of 1,055 young people, 735 have qualifications at grade D or E in GCSE or lower (this accounts for 70 per cent of the total number, with no details known for only four per cent of the total).

It is found that young people in the NEET group often take up employment that makes low demands on them. At the same time, the number of young people who are taking low-level jobs is reported to be increasing. It is found that young people in the NEET group tend to come from low income homes, and that while each is an individual, there is a tendency for young people in this category to come from 'classic broken homes' associated with low economic backgrounds. If young people who are NEET do not find training or employment of interest to them, then both their home environments and work choices are likely to be fluid; the likelihood of them moving into long-term NEET status is higher as a consequence.

Overall, therefore, factors that play a part in the length of time over which young people are NEET include:

- The range of opportunities that are accessible or available for young people to try out.
- Levels of background qualifications and skills.
- Transport and accessibility.
- Opportunities arising at times that meet the interests of the young people themselves.
- Family and locality pressures and experiences.
- Values associated with education and employment at a local level.
- Access to support concerned with raising self-esteem, gaining information and advice, and identifying approaches to take and successes arising.

8.7 Attitudes towards technology generally, to include computers, and also mobile phones, games consoles, music technology, and video

Interview evidence indicates that many young people who may become NEET, and many who are NEET, have access to wide ranges of technologies. Interviews with a small group of young people in one school, supported through an alternative curriculum, deemed to be likely to become NEET in the future, reported their access to and uses of technologies. Five young people (three girls and two boys, three in Year 11 and two in Year 10) offered ideas about their uses of technology. Details are shown in Table 19 following.

Type of technology	How many own or have access to the technology	What it is used for	Where it is used	Whether it is used when they are on their own, with friends, or family
Mobile telephone	All 5	Phone calls (5), sending texts (5), listening to music (5), watching videos (2), accessing software from the internet (1), appointment calendar (1)	Anywhere a signal can be gained (5)	At all times whenever useful or possible (5), in lessons more for some things (1)
Internet access	All 5	Downloading music (4), videos (2), games (2), coursework (1), MSN (1), MySpace (1), not for accessing learning materials outside school (1)	At home (5), school (3), college (2), on the mobile telephone (1)	At any time, could be on their own, or with friends (5)
PC or desktop	All 5	As above (internet access mainly)	At home (5), school (3)	As above
Laptop	All 5	As above (internet access mainly)	At home (5)	As above
Games machine or console	All 5	Games (2)	At home (2)	With others sometimes, but mainly on their own (2)
Television	All 5	Specific programmes only (3), for DVDs after school (2)	At home (5)	Mainly with family and friends (3)
Radio	3	Not much (2), all the time for the news (1)	In the car (2), at work (1)	On their own, or with others (3)
MP3 or iPod	All 5	Listening to music (5), taking pictures (3), videos (1), often broken or lost (2)	At home (4), in work (2), in school or college, on field trips, to help concentrate (1)	Mainly on own (3), on own or with others (2)

Table 19: Types of technology accessed and used by young people on an alternative provision curriculum

It is clear that these young people have access to a very wide range of technology. It appears from this sample that the core technologies used are mobile telephones, the internet, and MP3s or iPods. Games machines, televisions and radios appear to be used more selectively than the core technologies. Main uses of the technologies are focused on talking and texting (mobile telephones), accessing, listening to music and watching videos (mobile telephones, internet, MP3 and iPods), and taking pictures (MP3s and iPods). Different technologies are used in different settings, but the range allows forms of access to resources that stimulate and engage these young people

at almost any time or in any location (although in terms of forms of interaction, the use of the radio in the car is clearly in contrast with the use of the mobile telephone on the street, or the use of television in the home with members of the family, for example). Games machines, radios, MP3s and iPods tend to be the technologies that are used more when young people are on their own.

Interviews with a range of young people who were NEET from across one region provided a similar picture. In total, 35 young people were interviewed (18 girls and 17 boys). The young people indicated that mobile telephones were a technology that they used widely, wherever they were, when they were on their own or with friends or family. Of the 35 young people, 33 had a mobile telephone, which they said was used for:

- texting (in 31 cases)
- talking (in 18 cases)
- playing music (in 14 cases)
- playing games (in one case)
- accessing the internet (in one case).

Use of the internet with a computer was almost at the same level. Of the 35 young people, 32 had access, with one only using it a little. However, 15 of the young people stated that they accessed internet on their own, six indicated that they used it with friends or family (one at a friend's house), while one used facilities in the library. The uses they stated covered:

- MSN (in nine cases)
- talking to friends or other people, including use of chatrooms (in seven cases)
- accessing music (in four cases)
- looking for jobs (in three cases)
- Use of MySpace (in two cases)
- browsing (in two cases)
- Bebo (in two cases).
- research (in two cases)
- Facebook (in one case).

Of the 35 young people, 26 had access to a desktop computer. In only one case did a young person state that the computer was used with friends. Most indicated that the computer was in the home, but in one case it was at a sister's home, and in another case at a friend's home. The range of uses mirrored those above, indicating that the computers were used almost exclusively for internet access (playing games was stated in one case).

Of the 35 young people, 12 indicated that they had access to a laptop or mobile computer. Most indicated that they used them at home, many in a bedroom, on their own. Uses varied, and included the playing of games, internet access, email, using Facebook and MySpace.

Of the 35 young people, 28 stated they had a games machine or console. Only three young people indicated that they used them only on their own, while six indicated that they used them only with family or friends. Most were used in a bedroom or living room, while one was used in a dining room and another in a garage. Some young people had more than one games machine, while others reported not using a games machine a great deal. The machines that were owned were stated to be Play Station, Play Station 2, and Xbox.

A television was accessible to 33 of the 35 young people. Four of these stated they watched television on their own, while the remainder watched television either on their own, with friends, or with family. Four of the young people reported that they did not watch a great deal of television. Types of programmes watched by the young people included cartoons, music, soaps, drama series, or they were used for watching videos.

Fewer of the young people had radios. Of the 21 who had radios, four listened to them on their own, and four did not listen to them often. A few reported that they listened to the radio when in the car, or doing sports. Music was reported most often as the reason for listening to radio, and some listened to specific forms of music only (such as reggae). Of the 35 young people, 23 reported that they had an MP3 player or iPod, for listening to music, widely in terms of location.

A similar pattern emerged from interviews conducted with a small group of young people who were NEET and who were supporting music technology workshops in a youth centre. Of the four young people, three were boys and one was a girl. It was clear from the interviews that they had access to a lot of technology, but that certain technologies were used for certain purposes. Access to information or details concerned with employment, for example, were gained through computer and internet access. Across the range of technologies they were asked about, they said:

- they all used mobile telephones, the boys used them mainly for music, while the girl used it for texting and calling people
- they all had access to a computer with internet, used for job searches by three of them, MSN by three of them, for music by two, and for shopping by the girl. The boys mostly used the facilities at home on their own or doing research together, while the girl used facilities with friends and family more
- they all had access to a laptop or mobile computer
- the boys had a games machines, but the girl did not. The boys used the machines in bedrooms rather than elsewhere.

- they all had a television. Some used it mainly for watching movie films
- one boy and one girl had a radio, and this was used for listening to tapes or when doing voluntary work
- they all had an MP3 or iPod, and all used CDs and DVDs.

A wider questionnaire survey across a region highlighted a similar picture, but with some differences between access and uses by boys and girls who were NEET. The young people were asked about their uses of technologies. They were asked which technologies they had, what they used them for, where, and who with. Their responses are shown in Table 20 following.

Technology	Have one	What it is used for							Where it is used			Who with	
		Music	Video	Texts	Talk	Email	Learning	Finding things	School, college, work	Home	Out	On my own	With friends, family
Mobile phone	279	213	153	256	262	22	19	59	99	227	247	211	207
Computer with internet	204	185	127	77	137	181	156	190	124	180	26	147	129
Laptop or palmtop	84	67	52	29	52	59	50	64	40	67	17	51	54
Games machine	201	74	60	6	15	4	25	14	7	140	20	123	125
Television	278	181	188	2	5	2	109	60	32	217	28	186	192
Radio	202	170	6	1	4	1	30	20	15	113	29	105	86
MP3 or iPod	196	187	67	5	3	3	15	7	58	115	135	135	86
Totals	1444	1077	653	376	478	272	404	414	375	1059	502	958	879

Table 20: Uses of technologies reported by young people who are NEET (n=305)

Those items where there were about two-thirds or more responses are shaded. It is clear from these responses that technologies are popular with these young people, and that many young people own or have access to more than one form of technology. In order of decreasing popularity, the technologies owned or accessed by young people were:

- mobile telephones (mainly used for texting, talking, and music, both outside and at home, on their own and with friends)
- television (mainly used for music, video, and for learning, at home, on their own or with friends)
- computers with internet (mainly used for music, finding things, email and learning, at home, school, college or home, on their own or with friends)
- games machines (used for music, at home, on their own and with friends)
- radio (used for music, at home, on their own and with friends)
- MP3 or iPods (used for music, at home and out, on their own and with friends)
- laptops or palmtops (used for music, finding things, video, email, talking and learning, at home, with friends and on their own).

Overall, technologies were used a great deal to access music and to play videos, while more specific technologies were used for talking, learning, finding things, and sending and receiving texts. Technologies were used at about the same levels on their own, or with friends or family.

Of the 305 young people responding, 153 were girls and 151 were boys (one young person did not indicate gender). The patterns for girls and for boys are offered separately in Tables 21 and 22 following.

Technology	**Have one**	**What it is used for**							**Where it is used**			**Who with**	
		Music	Video	Texts	Talk	Email	Learning	Finding things	School, college, work	Home	Out	On my own	With friends, family
Mobile phone	142	106	70	131	131	10	7	24	44	115	121	108	106
Computer with internet	94	86	38	43	70	83	73	90	60	79	13	64	63
Laptop or palmtop	46	41	22	17	27	34	28	39	23	40	6	29	31
Games machine	79	23	11	0	2	1	10	4	2	53	6	46	52
Television	139	87	81	0	0	0	52	25	12	116	12	88	98
Radio	104	86	2	0	0	0	18	10	5	58	14	54	47
MP3 or iPod	95	94	27	1	0	0	8	1	31	53	64	65	44
Totals	699	523	251	192	230	128	196	193	177	514	236	454	441

Table 21: Uses of technologies reported by girls who are NEET (n=153)

Those items where there were about two-thirds or more responses are highlighted in green. In order of decreasing popularity, the technologies owned or accessed by girls were:

- mobile telephones (mainly used for texting, talking, and music, both outside and at home, on their own and with friends)
- television (mainly used for music, video, and for learning, at home, on their own or with friends)
- radio (which was clearly much more popular than with boys, used for music, at home, on their own and with friends)
- computers with internet (mainly used for music, finding things, email, talk and learning, at home, school, college or home, on their own or with friends)
- MP3 or iPods (again more popular than with boys, used for music, out and at home, on their own and with friends).
- games machines (not used a great deal except for games, at home, on their own and with friends)

- laptops or palmtops (used for music, finding things, email, talking and learning, at home, with friends and on their own).

Technology	Have one	What it is used for							Where it is used			Who with	
		Music	Video	Texts	Talk	Email	Learning	Finding things	School, college, work	Home	Out	On my own	With friends, family
Mobile phone	136	106	82	124	130	12	12	35	55	111	125	102	100
Computer with internet	109	98	89	34	66	97	82	99	64	100	13	82	65
Laptop or palmtop	37	25	30	12	24	24	21	24	17	26	11	21	22
Games machine	121	51	49	6	13	3	15	10	5	86	14	76	72
Television	138	94	106	2	5	2	56	35	20	100	16	97	93
Radio	97	83	4	1	4	1	11	10	10	54	15	50	38
MP3 or iPod	100	92	39	4	3	3	7	6	27	61	70	69	42
Totals	738	549	399	183	245	142	204	219	198	538	264	497	432

Table 22: Uses of technologies reported by boys who are NEET (n=151)

Those items where there were about two-thirds or more responses are highlighted in green. In order of decreasing popularity, the technologies owned or accessed by boys were:

- mobile telephones (mainly used for talking, texting, music and video, both outside and at home, on their own and with friends)
- television (mainly used for video, music, and for learning, at home, on their own or with friends)
- games machines (more popular than with girls, used for music and video as well as for games, at home, on their own and with friends)
- computers with internet (more popular than with girls, mainly used for finding things, email, music, video, learning and talk, at home, school, college or home, on their own or with friends)
- MP3 or iPods (mainly used for music, out and at home, on their own and less often with friends).
- radio (mainly used for music, at home, on their own and with friends)
- laptops or palmtops (used for video, music, finding things, email, talking and learning, at home, in school, college, or work, with friends and on their own).

In terms of differences between the levels of responses of girls and boys:

- Games machines were more popular with boys, and they used them more for music and video access

- Computers with internet were more popular with boys, and they used them more for video access, email, learning and finding things out.

Overall, concerning attitudes of young people who are NEET towards technology, from the samples where evidence was gathered:

- Most have access to a very wide range of technology
- The core technologies used are mobile telephones, the internet, and MP3 or iPods
- The internet with a computer is used for learning, information access and research by many young people, but the television is also reported to be used for learning
- The internet with a computer is more popular and commonly used by boys who are NEET than by girls who are NEET.

8.8 Knowing how young people use technology now and how they plan to use technology in the future

Ideas about possible future uses of technologies were gathered in the study when young people were interviewed. A small group of five young people in a school who were deemed to be likely to move into the NEET group, when asked whether they thought more use of technology would work for them in supporting learning, gave mixed responses; some were unsure, but others indicated that they would like to see more uses of technology. They felt that the role of technologies to support access to more ‘real-life’ experiences, to support access to wider sources for research, to support college courses more, and (with better resources available), to use in school to a greater extent, would all be beneficial. One girl emphasised the value of technologies in supporting engagement, and offering a way to write that was ‘better than by hand’.

These ideas were supported by evidence offered from a wider group of young people interviewed across one region. The 35 young people were asked whether they felt technology could help them with work or learning. Their responses varied:

- Can learn a lot from looking things up, quicker to find things, more things (15 cases)
- Not sure or no (six cases)
- Can help with reading, writing and mathematics (four cases)
- Lecturers have limited understanding of technology, and users need more support (two cases)
- Can focus more when using computers
- Can use for completing CVs
- Helps to communicate
- Can revise using websites.

Although some young people were not sure that technology could help them (six out of 35), others felt it could. The most commonly reported ways in which it was felt technology could support work or learning were using the internet to find information as and when needed, and help with writing particularly, but also with reading and mathematics. However, there was some concern that those working with the young people needed to know more, in order to help them more.

Future ideas about uses of technologies reported by a small group of four young people who were NEET, involved in music technology activities in a youth centre, provided a variety of perspectives. However, their concerns were focused around the specific interests that they had already with the ICT they were using: "Downloading", "You can put it where you put the music together" "it's everything - the technology is everything", "In the same way, music technology it's what we do", "Yes, because you can't do anything without technology nowadays".

Future ideas about uses of technologies were reported by a wider group through questionnaires (305 young people who were NEET in one region). Levels of response are shown in Table 23 following.

E. Whether the young people:	**Frequency of 'yes' responses**	**Frequency of 'not sure responses**	**Frequency of 'no responses**
Think technology could help more with work or learning	217	61	6

Table 23: Levels of possible support from technology reported by young people (n=305)

Overall, from this sample, many young people felt that technology could help them more with work and with learning. Having an idea of future or possible potential and having ideas about practices that are known and are possible, are of course, two different issues. However, there are some examples of practice that have been piloted and implemented, which offer some useful perspectives about what might be developed and implemented at a wider level.

One centre that offers a provision based on creative arts uses ICT as a central element of the provision. The centre has two suites of machines, and ICT is used in a variety of ways to engage young people. It is recognised that ICT can provide 'new' experiences for young people. For example, animation is currently being seen as quite popular and engaging. It is reported that the reasons for this are likely to be because young people suddenly recognise how animation can be done, they see it is as something they can tackle, they want to try it out, and a few young people pursue it in the longer term. For some young people, ICT is their main medium of engagement, but the focus of use can often be quite narrow, and determined by the specific interests and the willingness of the young person. For example, young people from a pupil referral unit like to socially interact, but do not like to use a keyboard for writing.

The two main uses of technology in the centre are to support programmes in music technology and interactive media (those involved in the latter programme can go on to create ICT-based interactive games, for example). However, there are uses of ICT of a more generic nature that are needed to support young people who are NEET effectively, and which are being put in place. For example, an online portfolio system has been set up, with the intention to get every young person to put an entry into it.

The central role of ICT has led to re-engagement of young people, and to a range of recognised successes. One of the first young people who attended the centre was a member of a well-known local gang. All of the gang were on bail, and in risk of being served anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs). Because of the interests of one gang member, he was referred to the centre by Connexions. Having attended the first session, and having gained from the experience, he told other members of the gang about the experience, and they all attended the following week (and as this gang was known to the police, the police contacted the centre when they all arrived, to check if everything was in order). The group continued to attend but needed to be intensively supported at times in terms of their social and engagement needs. From this group, two members went on to take a creative technology diploma at art college three went into full-time employment, and two have become peer mentors at the centre. It is estimated that this success saved some £80,000 for the local authority, as no ASBOs were issued. This NEET group have been involved in giving public and national presentations, and as young agents they have produced work that has gone onto YouTube, while others have created films with their support that have gone onto MySpace. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Drug and Alcohol team have commissioned resources from this group to alert other young people about the hazards of moving into the use of drugs and alcohol. Resources to influence young people that were created prior to the work of this group have been produced by adults, but these commissions have been produced by the young people themselves in the form of music videos. The video on drugs focuses on the sadness caused through use of drugs (created in the form of a musical commentary using a form of rap). The second video, called ‘Only 14’ is about teenage pregnancy, created using a similar style of rap, with music produced by one of the young agents. A third video, produced by young people in a local school working with three young agents, is about gun crime, and is created in a similar style. This group has the potential to form a production company, in order that as a group it might continue to be able to work on these forms of commissioned work.

In other sessions in specific courses at the centre, some groups have produced radio-style material, while others have focused on music creation. One boy used a software packaged called Reason to create music, using drum and bass music effects. One piece he produced was particularly effective, well structured and used instrumentation to good effect. The piece began with a quite haunting introduction, followed by a strongly contrasting section, effective use of drums, effective use of voice as an interjection, followed by a stronger continuation of the same theme line. Further vocal interjections, adding elements to the line each time it was repeated,

taking the line back to the basic rhythm, then making a new start, followed by a simple rhythm with drums, and moving back to haunting sounds, was repeated until the listener chose to end the piece.

Music technology has been the focus of other pilots and projects in other localities, and these have seen successes also, in terms of gaining engagement from a range of young people. A number of young people who are NEET, who attend a youth centre, work there in the evening and feel they are helping other young people to stay out of trouble and find something meaningful to do. The girl in the group helps in the office in the day, while the others (three boys) run music technology and are taught DJing skills. All of them help in the evening as volunteers. The boys teach other young people who are NEET during the day, passing on skills they have learnt. As they say: "We've got sort of the stuff we need here", "If I wasn't here I'd hang around with the wrong people and have nothing to do and get into trouble", "You need something to do – need to focus on something", "I like coming here".

Another similar project, but working in more rural areas, has set up a mobile creative arts facility. A charity has developed a mobile facility which has eight work stations in it. They have been commissioned to run a course in a number of schools, and possible accreditation of the course through Trinity Guildhall is being considered. The charity ran a pilot with a group of possible truants last year, which was reported to go well. This year, the charity has run a course with four students (who are not easily engaged) at one school.

Pilots and provision that focus on social support arising from uses of ICT are not as common as those concerned with music or creative activity. In one centre, there is use of 'text to speech' software, which is often used as an 'ice breaker' with groups of young people. In the same centre, the computers provide access to a variety of photo forms that can be used easily without a great deal of prior experience.

Some ICT-based pilots supporting young people who are NEET are concerned with how information about the activities that young people who are NEET can be engaged in, or have succeeded in, can be made more accessible to a wider group of young people who are NEET. One Connexions area, working with local authority partners, have commissioned the development of a specific website to engage young people who are NEET. There were a particular set of reasons for this commission. A field worker at a voluntary services group visited existing NEET projects, and identified a range of issues that were apparent at that time. Access to the projects was somewhat limited, take-up was lower than expected, and marketing was not easy for the groups who offered the projects. It was also recognised that referrals to the projects were not happening to the extent anticipated. To address these issues, it was suggested that a website be created, so that young people themselves could see and access the projects. As a 'not-for-profit' company had previously been involved in working in this medium with young people, it was

suggested that they identify what might be done, and their bid to do this form of work was accepted by the commissioning groups.

A key idea behind the website was that young people (and those supporting them) could gain a wider picture of what was available, and what might be involved in each of the projects that were available. The website was set up to publicise courses and events run by the voluntary sector groups. The courses and events, including outcomes of these, as described in audio and video by the young people themselves could then be made more accessible to other young people, and to those who support them, including youth workers, for example. It has been found that young people who are NEET often need to take a lot of short courses to build up a range of different skills. Numbers of courses tend to be limited, so it is important that the young people and those supporting them know about the courses, when they start, when they finish, and what their intentions are in terms of skills that are developed. The field worker felt that link-ups of this type would be fulfilled most easily if there was access to these forms of details on a website. Once the website had been developed, it would then be possible to see how it might be connected to a Connexions service core site.

The voluntary services group ran an event where they were able to gain feedback from a range of agencies and individuals about the website, and how its potential was perceived at that time. During the event, 26 out of the 31 participants completed an evaluation form following a presentation of the website. Respondents did not answer all questions, as all of the questions were not necessarily relevant to them. The audience included young people as well as representatives from Connexions, voluntary sector groups, and students from a local business school who were about to embark upon a project for young people who were NEET. The audience comprised five young people, two MBA students, 12 Connexions centre staff, two voluntary sector group staff, two police community support officers, and 14 voluntary sector organisation staff.

Responses to the four questions posed were very positive. The responses are shown in Table 24 following. (It should be noted that the responses were numbered on the original questionnaires, with only the extremes having descriptive labels, so the response labels shown in Table 24 have been offered as likely descriptors.)

Question	**Response**	*F. Frequency*
1. How effective do you think this website could be as a tool for informing young people about courses on offer?	unsure	1
	somewhat	10
	extremely	15
2. How useful would this be for Connexions Personal Advisors when informing young people about options?	somewhat	12
	extremely	13
3. As a voluntary organisation would you want to publicise your courses on this website?	unsure	1
	somewhat	2
	extremely	15
4. Should we use the website as a tool for informing others about	unsure	4

projects which have already happened?	somewhat	4
	extremely	17

Table 24: Responses about the potential of the website (n=26)

The responses indicated that many young people, voluntary agency representatives and key groups involved, felt that the website had longer-term potential for informing young people about courses on offer, for supporting Connexions personal advisers, voluntary organisations with their publicity, and offering ways to see what had happened on specific courses. Additional (selected) comments from those involved in the feedback event also provided some useful indicators about future directions for the website:

- "Video clips really show what the projects are about
- "The drivers of the website should be young people themselves who have gone through the process and are now refocused on achieving something
- "Need to show info on courses that have already happened in order to promote other courses
- "Archive success stories
- "Useful for having on display at events like careers conventions
- "Use more colour, 'happy colours', bright colours".

The role of ICT in supporting courses for young people who are NEET is being realised increasingly in a range of provider locations. It is clear that some training providers are seeking to integrate ICT into their courses. A telephone interview survey of 18 training providers in one region gathered details about the uses of ICT by young people in courses available to them. Tutors were asked whether ICT was used in specific ways in the courses. Their responses are shown in Table 25 following.

Course topic	**Uses of ICT in the courses**
Animal care	Only a minimal amount. ICT is used for research. Portfolio work can be completed using a computer (but work can be hand-written)
Apprenticeship in animal care	Used for online testing (assessment), in key skills (young people need to produce one presentation), for research, to produce work in MS Word, and young people also use cameras and videos
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	A mixture of paper-based and computer-based learning is used to offer variety and keep students interested
Certificate in Health and Social Care, and BTech First Diploma In Health and Social Care	Used for creating MS PowerPoint presentations, for research, and number application with MS Excel. Young people word process assignments
Childcare	Used for research for the technical certificate, and some learners complete work using the laptop
Construction	Very rarely. The tutor would like to have more ICT available in the classroom but there is a funding issue. Currently there is only one laptop in the classroom. Work-based learners use ICT for preparing portfolios, and for research. Those on ICA and ACA courses take

Course topic	Uses of ICT in the courses
	photographs with mobile telephones (as evidence) then bring them to the tutor who uses blue tooth technology to download onto the laptop
E2E	Used to support job seeking skills, the writing of CVs, application letters, as well as to support basic skills, in literacy and numeracy sessions
E2E	ICT is used, and the needs of individual students are met by looking at the needs of the employment areas that they want to move into
E2E	Some take ICT as a specific unit as part of the course. There are Smartboards in the teaching rooms for use with interactive games. ICT is used in job-seeking skills, and videos are used for teaching. Word processors are used for creating CVs and letters. Digital cameras are used for recording evidence from day trips and also on the 'Working with others' module (one of the key skills)
E2E	There are dedicated ICT classes as well as using ICT being used for other work, research for projects, key skills ICT, production of posters, reports, presentation of work, and videos of residentials and find-raising events. These are all burned onto CD-ROMs for the young people
E2E in horse care, and an apprenticeship in horse care	Only for the advanced apprenticeship for ICT key skills. It is reported that young people attend this course because there is no ICT involved
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	Very widely, for research, MS Word to create CVs and applications, MS PowerPoint for presentations
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	The provider has just bought Smartboards, and the young people like them. They use ICT as part of their key skills, and it is incorporated in the work that they do (some of machines will be using computerised controls). The learning in key skills is embedded into the NVQ, and these skills are incorporated within their work practices, such as use of spread sheets for cutting lists
IT engineering	Used for word processing, for research and MS Excel for data recording
Key Skills	Young people have to do ICT as part of the key skills course. Videos are used, and computers for researching and producing work. Assessments are all paper-based
Land-based operations	Use of video cameras and digital cameras for evidence gathering
Learn Direct	Learning is delivered online, and learning resources include video clips, images, sound, and online assessment. Young people login to websites that cover areas such as skills for life
Understanding retailing	Project work uses ICT to incorporate graphs, images, and for research. No assessments are online at the moment. Some modules use ICT more than others. Digital cameras are used to gather evidence from role play, and video is used

Table 25: How ICT is used in a range of provider courses

It is clear that ICT is being used across many courses to support different forms of practice. ICT is used across a number of courses to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills, for the gathering of evidence, and to support reflective practices by looking at recordings from digital cameras and video.

Tutors were asked whether young people could use ICT easily, or whether they needed a lot of support or training when using ICT. Their responses are shown in Table 26 following.

Course topic	Tutor experiences of young people's ease of use of ICT
Animal care	It is found that they use ICT easily
Apprenticeship in animal	It is found to depend on the learners. 'Able' learners are found to be

Course topic	Tutor experiences of young people's ease of use of ICT
care	very able in using IT
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	Yes, they can use ICT easily, 'better than me'
Certificate in Health and Social Care, and BTech First Diploma In Health and Social Care	They need some support, as they do not have much knowledge of MS Excel. They know MSN, email, but not the finer points of word processing such as justification. The provider runs a special session for this
Childcare	It is found that the majority find it quite easy
Construction	Not known
E2E	Yes, they can use ICT easily, with the tutor feeling more like a technophobe
E2E	A lot are found to need support because of lack of basic skills. Support is given in group sessions and one-to-one
E2E	Yes, they can use ICT easily, but a few need support
E2E	It is found that most are conversant with word processing, but most need help with other applications
E2E in horse care, and an apprenticeship in horse care	It is found to vary, but ICT is not used in the course
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	ICT abilities are monitored, and peer mentoring is encouraged
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	Some need one-to-one support, but it varies
IT engineering	Yes, they can use ICT easily, and they are becoming more knowledgeable with use of ICT
Key Skills	Generally speaking it is found that they are better on entry with ICT than they are with numeracy and number. It is found that some do need support
Land-based operations	Yes, they can use ICT easily
Learn Direct	Yes, they can use ICT easily, and courses are designed to be quite easy to work through. There are some young people with learning difficulties who need support
Understanding retailing	Some can use ICT easily. The majority can use ICT easily, but it is found that they do not always understand what they are doing. It is found that there is a big gap between using and understanding, and not appreciating how beneficial ICT can be. It is found that they are 'not able to think outside the box'. Flexible support is provided, so as not to single out individual students

Table 26: Whether tutors find that young people can use ICT easily or need support

Many tutors recognise that young people easily use ICT. However, it is also clear that some young people may need individual support as they may not be as conversant as others, and that young people may not be very aware of the use of certain features or the use of certain specific software packages.

Tutors were asked whether young people enjoyed using ICT. Their responses are shown in Table 27 following.

Course topic	Whether young people enjoy using ICT
Animal care	They do not really use it enough for comment
Apprenticeship in animal care	Yes
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	Yes, they ask to go on it
Certificate in Health and Social	They find it enjoyable. They make booklets and leaflets, and are

Care, and BTech First Diploma In Health and Social Care	involved in peer teaching
Childcare	Yes
Construction	Yes, they enjoy the evidence gathering activities
E2E	Yes
E2E	Yes. For some it is used as a comfort zone; there is no need for them to engage in a group environment. They may need to realise that they can use the skills of others to aid their needs in the work environment
E2E	Yes
E2E	The majority, yes
E2E in horse care, and an apprenticeship in horse care	It varies
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	Yes
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	Yes, because it is very hands-on that matches the trade they have chosen for many of them
IT engineering	Yes, so far
Key Skills	Yes, they like playing on the computers. If they are asked to write, they will always go to computer
Land-based operations	Yes
Learn Direct	Yes
Understanding retailing	Yes, all like it

Table 27: Tutor experiences of whether young people enjoy using ICT

It is clear that the majority of tutors find that the majority of young people enjoy using ICT, with some exceptions. The activities that young people choose to do using ICT may well be supporting their engagement with these tasks (and there is evidence from elsewhere to support this conjecture). However, it is clear from the responses from some tutors that young people need sometimes to find how to work socially within an environment if they are to gain the most they can from the use of ICT.

When asked whether the uses of ICT by young people were helping the young people with other aspects of their work, nine tutors felt they could comment. These tutors felt ICT helped with:

- the many learners who have difficulty with writing and spelling, as it makes it easier for them to complete their work without embarrassment
- spelling and punctuation, using a thesaurus and dictionary, especially for those who are dyslexic
- getting used to doing research. For example, one task is to bring news headlines into the class, and many of the young people use the internet to find these
- gaining confidence
- Wider use, concerned with ICT being an essential part of modern day learning.
- other aspects of work, but did not specify these further (in three cases)
- equipping with transferable skills
- completing a technical certificate.

Overall, tutors who commented felt that ICT was supporting writing, spelling, punctuation, presentation and research. However, tutors also commented on confidence being increased, and the confidence to use ICT more widely, in contexts that the young people will find in environments that they will experience at later times.

Tutors were asked about issues or problems arising when ICT was used. Some tutors found from their experiences that ICT did not create any issues or problems, but 10 tutors identified specific issues or problems arising:

- For those that do not have ICT at home, access is ideally needed in ICT suites in provider sites during weekends
- Not having ICT facilities at home can mean that ease of use is limited. As the vast majority of young people do not use ICT in certain workplaces (or only at a very basic level), then those that are already in employment and have no ICT facilities at home can be disadvantaged
- Funding issues may mean that there are a lack of computers; if they break down, that takes one out of use
- Limited facilities mean that uses of the computers have to be monitored, so they all get a 'fair share'
- There is not enough equipment available, and it should be available to all
- ICT can be used as a barrier to avoid socialising with others
- If young people are left with the computers, they can quickly go off-task
- Young people may want to go on MSN messenger
- Some young people go onto unauthorised sites, and they can discover sites that can overrun the provider 'blockers'
- If the young people are under 16-years of age, they need parental consent for being photographed on the course
- Some young people do not like being photographed
- Some examinations, such as the City and Guilds Level 3 communications examination, require the young person to complete a handwritten paper, some 2½ hours long, and some young people may not be used to handwriting for this length of time.

The forms of issues identified by tutors focused on the need to identify with individual young people their previous experiences of ICT, to monitor and support uses in provider environments as appropriate, and to ensure that use is balanced with other needs (such as the need for the social development of young people). Some tutors clearly felt the need for more ICT facilities to support engagement and learning, and the need for examination and qualification bodies to consider a review of their policies regarding the use of ICT for completion of examination papers.

Experiences in some colleges that provide courses for young people who are NEET suggest that individual ICT courses as well as integrated uses of ICT are both worthy

of consideration in any geographical area (although awareness of young people to the opportunities that these courses might offer and to the practices that can be developed, may differ substantially). In one college in one town, some young people took specific IT courses. One boy at the college who was on an E2E course was keen on IT, and is now employed for IT work by the college. Many young people who are interested in IT at the college do a Clait course (and they take readily to this course rather than rejecting it), while others do entry level IT. Many of the young people who do courses at the college do IT at some level (Level 1), most are quite conversant with the use of IT, and a few like to go further with IT.

A range of IT resources are currently used in E2E sessions that are run in the college, and these are selected by two tutors involved. It is found that the use of these resources supports engagement and learning outcomes. The IT resources used are shown in Table 28 following.

IT resources used on the E2E courses	**Purpose**
Microsoft Office and Microsoft Windows	To deliver the new Clait 2006 and Clait+ courses
Adult Directions	Ideas for jobs. 'A career matching database where you answer a series of questions about what you like and dislike in your work' (http://www.futureprospects.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=114)
Basic and Key Skill Builder	Tests to analyse the status of basic skills (http://www.bksb.co.uk/)
Virtual Work Placement	Spotting hazards in the workplace
Job Explorer Database	Ideas for jobs, 'Explore over 800 jobs with pictures, videos*, quizzes and text' (http://www.careersoft.co.uk/Products/Job_Explorer_Database/)
Animods 2	'A series of 3D-animated modules of work that will engage and motivate students to learn about a wide variety of topics. Sixteen modules focus on a range of topics from making job applications, work experience, equal opportunities and drugs issues' (http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk/include/resource/printproduct.asp?oid=13540)
WebWise	How to use the internet and email (http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/)
Lifebites	Details about aspects of life skills, drugs, alcohol, relationships, in interactive forms with quizzes (http://www.lifebytes.gov.uk/indexmenu.html)

Table 28: IT resources used in an E2E course in one college

Overall, many young people use technology already and have ideas about how they might use technology in the future:

- To offer more 'real-life' experiences
- For research, and to access information and to gain wider awareness
- To support courses and training more widely
- To support writing, reading and mathematics within the context of specific courses
- For completing and handling application forms and CVs.

Existing uses of technologies suggest that ICT can support engagement and practice for young people in:

- music and creative arts
- reflection on practice through the use of digital cameras and video
- online testing
- presentations
- portfolio work
- research work
- awareness of access to and successes in courses and activities
- social interactions (but only in limited cases observed)

However, issues raised in a range of locations indicate a need to consider:

- How to support those young people who do not have ready access to ICT
- How to support tutors and providers with ideas about the most effective uses of ICT and how to access equipment
- Examination and qualification requirements
- The role of IT courses within certain localities.

8.9 What developments are in place and how the impact of these could be evaluated

An important number of pilots, seeking to develop ICT-based facilities to support access and interests of young people who are NEET, are already in place. The outcomes of some of these pilots are already accessible, and it is clear that the evaluation of these pilots does need to be considered carefully; evaluation needs to consider the attributes that young people who are NEET feel are worthy and valuable, and these may not wholly concur with a more traditional set of outcome values.

It is clear that a number of existing pilots could well be supported and developed further, as an evaluation of them would suggest that they are meeting the needs and aspirations not only of those who would like to see young people who are NEET supported appropriately, but also meeting the interests and ambitions of young people who are NEET themselves.

A number of other developments are worthy of considering for some initial exploratory implementation at this stage, although these ICT-based developments will need to match the positive support factors attributed to successful cases already arising. There is little evidence that ICT will replace certain crucial functions, but there is evidence to suggest that ICT could have an important and wider contribution in support than it already plays. To consider the potential of these forms of

development, it is important to consider how ICT is being used already within the system that integrates with and supports young people who are NEET.

8.10 The role of Connexions services

To address the needs of local authorities, Connexions staff are based in centres that act as focal points for conurbations and more rural areas, with the majority of the work of services generally taking place in urban conurbations. Connexions services deal with young people from 13-to 19-years of age, but their personal advisor time tends to be disproportionately taken by those at greater risk. The service supports schools directly, and in some areas Connexions services provide a daily presence. Increasingly, resources are being put in to support the pre-16 year old age group, in order to focus on preventative action. A wider inclusion approach is being taken in an increasing number of schools, so that prior to any permanent exclusion arising, schools can support through alternative curriculum provision or the 'swapping' of pupils, for example. Across a year, a service will work with all students within the age range covered. This means that in one area, for example, some 13,000 Year 11 students are all seen at least once during the year, and for some, they are seen on a great many more occasions. Some 92 per cent of these students at the end of the 2006 to 2007 school year made a successful transition to employment, education or training (Eet).

Personal advisers are based in Connexions services centres, and tend to work within teams. In one area, personal advisers have a workload that covers schools, colleges, and out-of-work support. Some personal advisers have specialist functions, such as working with care leavers (as this group is found to be a particularly hard group to engage), or with young unemployed people. In some Connexions services, young people have been positively encouraged to be involved in the service in a number of ways. For example, young people have been involved in inspections of the service in one area.

8.11 The role of ICT in supporting the work of the Connexions service

It is recognised that for some young people in some areas, local transport is an issue, so services in some areas use a great deal of ICT innovation to support communication where possible. One service, for example, in localities where there is limited transport available, has well developed technology, to enable those who find it easier to communicate through the ICT medium to use it as easily as possible. The service provides websites, that present its 14-19 prospectus. The service attempts to support young people through ease of information access. Websites including New Opportunities are accessible to young people. An intranet is accessible to staff, including areas concerned with staff development, and is used for the induction of new staff.

The idea of a 14-19 prospectus to support young people in this age range comes from a national drive and priority. All areas of the country have a prospectus, and there is also a government portal concerned with providing an overview about this area. The vision paper that has driven this form of initiative (DCSF and LSC, 2007a), indicates that: "By 2010, the 14-19 prospectus will be learners' first choice of

information for accessing all 14-19 learning opportunities. The prospectuses will be used in conjunction with guidance professionals to enable young people (supported by their parents) to make informed choices about where and how they would like to undertake their learning. The prospectus will enable learners to easily select and submit applications for learning courses and programmes. The prospectus, containing integrated a Common Application Process (CAP) and Individual Learning Plan (ILP), will be a primary enabler for the local implementation of Diplomas and will closely support the wider 14-19 reform programme. Through accurate and timely management information generated from the area prospectus, 14-19 partnerships will better align local learning provision with demand, enabling the implementation of the September Guarantee and provide opportunities to improve the management of disengaged learners".

The document goes on to say that: "The scope of the area prospectus capabilities can be defined as the combination of: a search capability underpinned by accurate data describing the full local learning offer; an integrated CAP, an integrated ILP, integrated information and advice about the local learning offer, links to a wide range of other web-based 14-19 information and advice sources (eg Connexions Direct); the ability to generate a range of management information reports for local area partnerships".

A parallel document (DCSF and LSC, 2007b), explores some of the potential that is currently being seen if there is an integration of resources and uses through an appropriate IT infrastructure: "By using the area prospectus as a local portal for all 14-19 learners' needs, a full picture of where, how, when and why learners make their choices of educational direction at 14 and 16 can be recorded. This is achieved by integrating the prospectus with the Common Application Form (CAP), Individual Learning Plans (ILP) and Client Caseload Information System (CCIS). The information collected can then be used to ensure that the September Guarantee is met; disengaged learners are identified so interventions can be made; and the learner's potential and actual choices can inform the demand-led planning process".

Recommendations in this alignment paper would suggest that ranges of data would be accessible to schools, colleges, young people, and other professionals. This would allow applications to be tracked. The idea would be to allow Connexions and local authorities to look for gaps, and to identify weaknesses and strengths of local provision, for example.

Although the 14-19 prospectus is being seen as the 'core portal', it is too early to say whether young people themselves will see it as a core. It is not clear how some young people would start to use the facility, or whether all young people who are NEET would start in the same way or in the same place. As it stands, it is felt by one Connexions service that its website is likely to fairly easily support well motivated young people who have parental support. It is less clear how it will be used to support those who have more 'chaotic' lives, although it is felt that it may well help

those who want to make changes in terms of what they are doing. It is felt that linking aspects to texting could help engagement with some groups of young people.

The needs of young people who are NEET, who work predominantly on practical and creative courses, needs to be considered appropriately in the context of the current facilities being developed. At the moment the ILP being used allows documents to be attached (in one Connexions service). It is felt possible that systems could allow providers or others to offer evidence in other alternative forms. The importance of evidence being generated by young people, recorded and presented in imagery, video and auditory forms for those who have limited literacy and numeracy skills is being increasingly recognised. Evidence of how video footage has supported reflection and development of some practices for young people indicates that video footage showing practical work completed, and work experience skills, for example, should be able to be recorded and retained for review where possible. It is felt by one Connexions service that an ILP could offer a place to put these elements (although it should be said that this has already been developed in another Connexions service), and that evidence could then be transferred onto a portfolio site. It is clear that practical and creative young people need to be able to demonstrate their abilities, not just in written form, but in forms that can be seen and heard. A wider application of this type of facility might be undertaken as a trial with E2E providers, who could look to report and record visual evidence online.

8.12 Connexions services extending access through ICT developments

Some Connexions services have engaged in the development of additional ICT facilities, in order to extend their support for young people who are NEET. However, Connexions services that undertake these forms of initiative are not specifically funded to do so. Development, maintenance and longer term sustainability issues are of fundamental concern to these services, therefore.

One Connexions service, in collaboration with other Connexions services in a region, have produced a CD-ROM that provides a large bank of resources covering aspects of career and lifestyle. Menu selections allow users to access resources, giving information and advice on issues such as money, health and safety, and spare time. Further navigation screens provide access to more specific information. Some of these screens provide access to resources that are web-linked (so information is as up-to-date as the web link or the information accessible on the website). The initial navigation screen allows the user to select elements appropriate to age (students in Years 7 and 8, or in Years 10 and 11, or young people aged 16- to 19-years, for example). Information is accessible according to the needs of some specific users (for a parent or carer, for adults, or for job interviews, for example). The resource is comprehensive, and a great deal of information is provided. The resource has not been produced specifically to support the group of young people who are NEET, however. There is a great deal of information provided in textual form, and this is often provided in lengthy scroll-down format. Voice-overs are provided for videos that

show a wide range of jobs, but the voices are adult rather than those of young people, although young peoples' voices are used on the videos describing Modern Apprenticeships. The accessible job interview resources provide a useful way for young people to choose alternative responses to interview questions, in a range of different situations. Advice is offered when choices are made, and the interviews can be re-run when the young person has gained such advice.

In another Connexions service 14-19 prospectus, an 'Online Applications' area has been created and linked. This allows young people to complete applications online. One personal adviser has received 69 online applications from young people who are on her case book already, and can see the status of provider acknowledgement. This development is at an early stage, and at this time 244 young people have not sent in any online applications. For those received, it is possible for the personal adviser to see what has been applied for, and to which providers. It is not possible using the system at the moment to sort applications according to specific criteria, but it is possible that reports may show lists in a specific order in the future. For the future, it is felt that features of online application feedback forms might need to be 'standardised' in order to help most effectively those who support young people who are NEET. It is felt that this is a worthwhile direction to move in, since some students say already that they prefer to complete applications online because of the issues they have with spelling. When forms are complete, a personal adviser has immediate access to them, and can advise and monitor progress easily.

This Connexions service has also locally commissioned a CV tool that goes beyond the current scope of a CAP. LSC funding has been gained to pilot this facility. At the moment, this is at a development stage, but it is being seen as a vision that could potentially be implemented over the coming two to three years. Using this CV tool, employers could look at those CVs sent to them from young people, but at an informal level. The CV tool under development is basically a CV builder, where it is possible to build a CV from scratch or to take pieces from the CAP that would populate the CV frame. CVs could be sent by young people anonymously to employers, to allow their details to be seen without providing contact information. In this way, a young person's CV could be used to promote them to the employer, and the system would allow communication to happen anonymously. There is scope built in to provide for all round monitoring by a personal adviser. This facility enables an employer-application rather than a course-application. It is currently ready for trial with employers. It is not clear how this facility might affect or support the NEET group, but evidence from personal advisers about CAP use by young people who are NEET has indicated that personal advisers found it easier to engage young offenders using IT rather than using methods by hand.

It is felt by some managers in Connexions services that IT could be used a great deal more in the service to support engagement and social networking. Young people say they Google, for example, rather than going to a website. It is felt that it might be possible to send out information to young people about opportunities if

courses or other placements became available. It is felt that web-casting has a lot of potential; it could make factories more accessible to young people, for example.

There is a desire to use more technology to support various aspects of services, where potential is seen. One Connexions service is currently considering recruiting an e-games maker, to make certain facilities more interesting for young people to use, and to translate current static resources. However, the Connexions service finds that it is ahead of technology development in most schools, where teacher access and use of facilities such as learning platforms and other infrastructure are not always well developed. The service cannot undertake video conferencing currently, because broadband access rates are not high enough. Because of these limitations, the service has tended to use resources on CD-ROM to accommodate low access speeds. The service would like to adopt the use of web-cams to support interviews for young people, although currently there are limitations due to a lack of funding, lack of capacity of the network, and lack of understanding of its potential within educational institutions.

8.13 Data used by Connexions services for tracking and monitoring purposes

Connexions services retain comprehensive data about young people who are NEET, some of which is focused more on data returns to government agencies and departments, and some of which is focused more on support of young people directly. Data is retained on two basic groups of young people: those who are ‘known about’; and those who are ‘not known about’. However, maintaining data can be difficult if young people do not ask for help from Connexions staff. In one Connexions service, a data track is kept on young people, and those in the ‘not known’ group are visited at home at least once. It is felt that some 20 per cent of the young people in the ‘not known’ group may well fall within the NEET group. Data in the table following (Table 29) shows numbers and percentages of young people in the NEET group across the service, recorded each month between April 2005 and August 2007.

Year and month	Number in NEET group across the service	Percentage of NEET group across the service
April 2005	1612	5.3
May 2005	1515	5.3
June 2005	1529	5.5
July 2005	1578	5.9
August 2005	1609	6.3
September 2005	2298	6.1
October 2005	2264	6.2

Year and month	Number in NEET group across the service	Percentage of NEET group across the service
November 2005	2092	6.0
December 2005	2017	5.8
January 2006	1922	5.8
February 2006	1945	6.0
March 2006	1901	6.1
April 2006	1869	6.3
May 2006	1821	6.3
June 2006	1727	6.4
July 2006	1699	6.5
August 2006	1771	7.3
September 2006	2425	6.5
October 2006	2396	6.6
November 2006	2075	5.7
December 2006	1950	5.6
January 2007	1867	5.6
February 2007	1903	5.8
March 2007	1836	5.8
April 2007	1784	5.9
May 2007	1624	5.6
June 2007	1524	5.5
July 2007	1575	5.9
August 2007	1560	6.1

Table 29: Numbers and percentages of young people aged 16- to 18-years in the NEET group across the service each month between April 2005 and August 2007

Connexions services use particular categories to maintain records of young people, which have been provided from the government department. Experience has shown that placing young people within these categories is not always easy or consistent. The category of ‘unemployed’ can be very wide, and this group is registered as unemployed with Connexions. Some will also be registered unemployed with Job Centre Plus (when they are post 18-years of age). Other young people may be grouped in categories of ‘illness’ (which is used for short term illness), ‘unavailable on religious grounds’, ‘not economically active’ (which is used for long-term illness over 12 months or for disability), ‘unavailable for other reasons’ (which is used when it is not clear that any other category is appropriate), ‘young carer’ (which is concerned with those caring for relatives), ‘young parents’, ‘pregnant’, and ‘personal

development opportunity' (which covers voluntary work that is both paid and unpaid). Numbers of young people aged 16- to 18-years in one city in each category are shown in Table 30 following.

Category	Number of young people in the NEETs group
Unemployed	461
Illness	16
Unavailable (religious grounds)	0
Not economically-active	33
Unavailable (other reason)	4
Young carer	6
Young parent	103
Pregnant	31
Personal development opportunity	11
Total	665

Table 30: Number of young people 16- to18-years-old in the NEET group in each category in one city (July 2007)

One Connexions service tracks cohorts of young people when they leave school at the end of Year 11. Data reports, produced at regular monthly intervals, show numbers of young people who fall within specific categories that relate to different forms of employment, education or training. Numbers within these categories between November 2006 and October 2007 are shown in Table 31 following.

Category	Nov 2006	Dec 2006	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Mar 2007	April 2007	May 2007	June 2007	July 2007	Aug 2007	Sept 2007	Oct 2007
At a school sixth form	4289	3942	3966	4042	4038	4011	3994	3987	3882	3821	3381	3376
At a college of FE	5136	5536	5386	5219	5130	5051	4999	4838	4737	4651	5116	4795
In work-based learning (non-employed)	478	476	499	543	548	568	570	578	558	537	486	448
In employment with training	1289	1318	1382	1329	1370	1439	1489	1550	1611	1644	1501	1647
In employment without training	266	295	271	340	355	361	376	386	453	452	368	403
Unemployed	745	575	603	609	587	546	504	465	531	515	446	376
Not known	179	267	303	317	350	388	427	539	563	687	960	656
Known to have left area	221	204	203	204	213	220	223	225	228	233	302	241
Unavailable for work	138	131	132	141	147	154	154	166	170	190	169	171
Assistance not required	13	12	7	8	10	9	9	10	10	10	10	11
Total	**12754**	**12756**	**12752**	**12752**	**12748**	**12747**	**12745**	**12744**	**12743**	**12740**	**12739**	**12124**

Table 31: Destinations of young people in Year 11 leaving school in July 2006 between November 2006 and October 2007

It is clear that the number of young people who are not in some form of employment, education or training (mainly those in the 'unemployed' category) have become less over this 11 month period of time. The Connexions service monitors these changes, and Table 32 shows the quantitative shifts in these categories over this period of time.

Category	Change in number	Percentage change
At a school sixth form	-913	-21.29%
At a college of FE	-341	-6.64%
In work-based learning (non-employed)	-30	-6.28%
In employment with training	358	27.77%
In employment without training	137	51.50%
Unemployed	-369	-49.53%
Not known	477	266.48%
Known to have left area	20	9.05%
Unavailable for work	33	23.91%
Assistance not required	-2	-15.38%

Table 32: Changes between November 2006 and October 2007 in the numbers and percentages of young people leaving school at the end of Year 11 in categories of employment, education or training

From this cohort of young people who left schools at the end of Year 11 in July 2006, numbers in school sixth forms, FE colleges, and work-based learning without employment decreased over an 11 month period (those involved in one year courses or placements would contribute to this number largely). The number of unemployed young people also decreased. However, the number of young people leaving the area or who were unavailable for work increased to some extent, while the number of young people in the 'not known' category increased to a greater extent. Discussions with personal advisers suggested that this latter group was likely to be those who became increasingly harder to contact, harder to reach in terms of employment, education or training, and might well form the group who became longer-term NEET. This group is likely to be guided more by their decisions about lifestyle, rather than being guided by opportunities or advice available to them.

Numbers of young people in the NEET group in different ethnic groups vary. Data shown in Table 33 following shows percentages of young people aged 16 to 18 years in the NEET group across one Connexions area, by ethnic group, in August 2007. Percentages of males and females are shown separately.

Ethnic group	Percentage of male young people 16- to 18-years of age in the NEET group	Percentage of female young people 16- to 18-years of age in the NEET group
Indian	0.8	1.6

Pakistani	5.2	5.4
Black Caribbean	10.8	5.8
Black African	11.4	3.4
Black Other	4.3	10.5
Dual heritage	11.4	16.6
Bangladeshi	0.0	0.0
Chinese	0.0	0.0
Other known	7.5	10.0
No ethic information	1.0	1.5
White	6.3	7.0
All ethnic groups	5.9	6.6

Table 33: Percentages of male and female young people 16- to 18-years of age in the NEET group in each ethnic group across the Connexions area (in August 2007)

The proportions of male and female young people that make up each ethnic group vary. Where the level of male or female percentage varies by more than one per cent, the higher level is shown in yellow. By comparison, in another Connexions area, a local Connexions office reported that 90 per cent of young people who were NEET in the ward were male, of which 65 per cent were Bangladeshi and 35 per cent were Afro-Caribbean and African other

Personal advisers in one Connexions service have ready access to and use a database system and reporting system. Everything is logged and maintained as an IT record. Records of post-16-year-old young people are accessible online. Reports generated each week show those young people where contacts need to be made or where there is a need to make records; the system is said to provide a useful reminder. This is important when a personal adviser may have some 250 to 260 young people as a caseload. The status of any young person is flagged up on this system. Weekly reports are produced by a team leader when a young person is on the live register. The monitoring and tracking systems are found to be generally useful and helpful, and there are many reports that personal advisers can easily access them. One consequence of this is that it is now possible to readily know far more details about every individual, so numbers recognised and reported are perhaps higher than they were some years ago, because more individuals are tracked.

Connexions services generally would find it useful to have access to certain types of data that are not currently necessarily easily accessible. For example, having end of Key Stage 2 and end of Key Stage 3 attainment data with other data would be helpful. Some services have started to look at how to address this need.

8.14 Qualifications of young people who are NEET

It is reported that a skills gap is perhaps the most fundamental issue confronting young people who are NEET. It is recognised that there is now a higher level of skills needed for young people to obtain a job or an apprenticeship. However, it is found that some young people coming out of school have lower skills levels, so their chances of getting a job are decreasing. The background environments of young people in this category does not often provide them with any form of advantage or positive ambition in this respect. Young people who would fall within the support groups that would be considered for highest priority levels of support by Connexions services almost always have low levels of qualifications, low levels of skills, and low self-esteem. Yet a Level 2 qualification is needed to apply for a plumbing course (and not many young people who are NEET have this). E2E is a pre-employment programme, but very few young people who complete it go on to a Modern Apprenticeship. Other national support programmes are being put in place to address the skills gap.

Some Connexions services have actively sought to gather evidence about background qualification levels of young people on their 'live register' (those who are NEET). This evidence is not provided routinely for them. One Connexions service has collected these data since 2005, gathered partly from bulk data transfers from local authorities, and partly from asking young people about their qualifications. The data are taken from the live register data base at the end of each month.

8.15 Training available to young people who are NEET

To offer ways to address a skills gap, a prospectus of courses to support the post-16 year old age group is accessible on the websites of Connexions services. On the website of one Connexions service, courses are divided into a number of categories. These categories, together with numbers of courses available in each, are shown in Table 34 following. Those subject topic areas that are known to have appealed to a range of young people with NEET status are highlighted within Table 34 in yellow (in total this covers 526 courses in 10 subject areas). Additionally, those subject topics deemed to be of particular value to many young people with NEET status are highlighted in blue (in total this covers 92 courses in two subject areas).

Main group	Number of courses available	Sub-group	Number of courses available
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	42	Agriculture	5
		Animal care and veterinary science	21
		Environmental conservation	2
		Horticulture and forestry	14
Arts, media and publishing	301	Crafts, creative arts and design	109
		Media and communication	52

Main group	Number of courses available	Sub-group	Number of courses available
		Performing arts	140
Business, administration and law	189	Accounting and finance	27
		Administration	21
		Business management	122
		Law and legal services	18
		Marketing and sales	1
Construction, planning and built environment	69	Building and construction	69
Education and training	18	Direct learning support	8
		Teaching and lecturing	10
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	91	Engineering	47
		Manufacturing technologies	17
		Transportation operations and maintenance	27
Health, public services and care	184	Child development and well being	34
		Health and social care	102
		Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine	15
		Public services	33
History, philosophy and theology	92	History	44
		Philosophy	14
		Theology and religious studies	34
Information and communication technology	98	ICT for users	64
		ICT practitioners	34
Languages, literature and culture	191	Language, literature and culture of the British Isles	83
		Other languages, literature and culture	108
Leisure, travel and tourism	129	Sport, leisure and recreation	109
		Travel and tourism	20
Preparation for life and work	92	Foundations for learning and life	78
		Preparation for work	14

Main group	Number of courses available	Sub-group	Number of courses available
Retail and commercial enterprise	155	Hospitality and catering	70
		Retailing and wholesaling	19
		Service enterprises	59
		Warehousing and distribution	7
Science and mathematics	256	Mathematics and statistics	60
		Science	196
Social sciences	110	Economics	20
		Geography	43
		Politics	15
		Sociology and social policy	32
Totals			**2017**

Table 34: Numbers and categories of courses available to post-16 year old young people in one Connexions area

For courses that are highlighted in yellow and blue, key features were identified from the linked web pages provided - geographical location and prior attainment needed to register for the course. In total, 711 courses were found in the highlighted areas on the website. Although these courses were offered for a much wider population that those who are NEET, it was clear that many courses were unlikely to fulfil the needs of the NEET group. Many courses were located in specific towns that were distant from those with the highest levels of young people who were NEET, and many required prior attainment for registration at levels well above those for many young people who were NEET. When courses with entry requirements specified at levels unlikely to be attained by young people who were NEET were taken from the list, 452 courses remained. Of these, many were AS or A2 and the level of work involved was unlikely to match the level of work of young people who were NEET. When these were taken from the list (except those where no formal qualifications were stated or where interview or audition was stated), 302 courses remained.

Of these courses, which might be selected from the website by young people who are NEET, there were:

- two courses in animal care and veterinary science (based only in one town).
- five courses in horticulture and forestry (based in three towns).
- 18 courses in performing arts (based in six towns).
- 55 courses in building and construction (based in seven towns).
- 19 courses in engineering (based in 8 towns).
- 27 courses in child development and well being (based in at least seven towns).

- 45 courses in sport, leisure and recreation (based in at least 10 towns).
- six courses in travel and tourism (based in three towns).
- 56 courses in foundations for learning and life (based in 10 towns, and workplaces).
- 14 courses in preparation for work (based in seven towns).
- 55 courses in hospitality and catering (based in 11 towns, and workplaces).

Across this range of courses, 118 indicated that entry included interview, which meant that young people who are NEET were likely to require interview skills and abilities to be able to access these courses. It was recognised that if interview was a main entry criteria for a course, then this was an important aspect to be aware of, as young people who are NEET did not always score very highly in this respect. Preparation for interview was felt often to be the key to accessing opportunities, and this was an aspect where helping young people when they were still at school, working on their confidence and preparation for talking to college tutors and employers, was identified as an important element to include.

Across the range of courses, subjects fell into a range of groups. These are shown in Table 35 following. It is clear that although many courses and opportunities can be provided on websites, there are many reasons that limit the number that young people who are NEET might be able to access.

Potential level of access by young people who are NEET	**Provision based on locality and spread**	**Subject courses**
Low	Very few courses, and those available are in a single location or a small number of specific locations	Animal care and veterinary science Horticulture and forestry Travel and tourism
Limited	A range of courses, based in the main towns in one county only	Performing arts
Limited in some localities	Many courses, based in the main towns in one county only	Building and construction Sport, leisure and recreation
Wide	A range of courses, spread across main towns in both counties	Engineering Child development Preparation for work
High	Many courses, spread across main towns in both counties as well as being supported in the workplace	Foundations for learning and life Hospitality and catering

Table 35: Provision of courses that might support young people who are NEET

8.16 Entry to training courses and the involvement of ICT

A telephone interview survey carried out across a range of training providers in one Connexions service area was designed to gather details about the forms of provision relating to a variety of courses available. Individual tutors were interviewed, and details about the nature of entry methods used and tests undertaken were specifically detailed.

It was clear from responses that entry to courses, and assessment needs for young people varied considerably when they made applications. The details provided by the tutors in Table 36 following indicate that in some cases it was possible for young people to gain support when they wished to gain entry to courses. ICT was also used as a medium for testing for some courses.

Course topic	Entry and assessment test details
Animal care	The Basic and Key Skills Builder (BKSB) online and paper-based testing are used. Connexions personal advisers do not accompany young people for this test.
Apprenticeship in animal care	Young people may be referred from Connexions, or come straight from school. They take the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) test (in literacy and numeracy) to check their levels (which is paper-based), and they also do the BKSB test online. They have an interview 20 minutes long, which assesses what they want to do, why they want to do it, any specific learning needs, and where they want to go after the course. Connexions personal advisers do accompany young people on occasions if they have specific needs or to help find a suitable placement.
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	The BKSB computer-based assessment is used.
Certificate in Health and Social Care, and BTech First Diploma In Health and Social Care	Assessment for everyone is an online test in adult literacy and numeracy. The test gives a score for Entry level 1, 2, or 3, or Level 1, 2, or 3. If the score is Entry Level 3, the student takes the Level 1 course. There are occasions when a Connexions personal adviser accompanies the applicant, for support, or because the student is anxious. All have an interview which lasts 30 minutes, run on an appointment system, but done on the same day. Tutors find out about the young person's background, why they want to take the course, and how they feel about the environment. Tutors consider problems of speaking out in class, socialising, abilities to manage time and how the course will fit in with lifestyle. They are asked to assess their own punctuality.
Childcare	Online and paper-based BKSB tests are used. Connexions personal advisers do not attend with young people
Construction	Assessment is done through the BKSB test online, but a check is made using a paper-based test afterwards. Entrants to the course come from school, or referred by Connexions, as well as 'off the street'; in reality from many sources. Interviews are up to 30 minutes long, to explore attitude, what they want from the course, where they want to go afterwards, and whether they

Course topic	Entry and assessment test details
	have any jobs lined up.
E2E	The assessment tool used is BKSB. This tests a current level of numeracy and literacy, and determines the level at which the young person enters the course. To enter a course, a student needs a referral from a Connexions personal adviser. The young person is invited for interview, and the assessment test (online) is undertaken on the same day. An interview takes approximately 1 hour, to explore the young person's motivation, and previous learning.
E2E	Young people are referred by Connexions. Assessment is undertaken first by Connexions personal advisers, then young people are assessed through Learning Zone (a paper-based test that is being moved to an online form). Each Thursday a semi-inductions day is run, with opportunity for informal chat, to discuss their goals. Courses are tailored for each individual young person, with no predetermined length (they are about 22 weeks long on average). At the moment there are a couple of young people who have attended for 44 weeks, but some will attend for significantly less than 20 weeks.
E2E	Referrals of young people are from Connexions. They have an interview and then the BKSB (online assessment) is used for initial placement. Over-qualified young people are passed on to different areas (those working above Level 2). It is very rare that a young person is not taken on. Connexions occasionally accompany a young person to offer them support. Parents can come to the interviews but the tutors try to speak to young people without parents being present.
E2E	The BKSB online and paper-based testing are used. Connexions personal advisers do not accompany young people for this test.
E2E in horse care, and an apprenticeship in horse care	Young people are assessed over 3 weeks. They have to do a range of practical tasks, and an assessment of key skills and life skills. It is said that young people come on the course because they do not want to use computers.
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	E2E involves an interview, to allow the young people to see tutors involved (particularly set up to support those lacking in confidence). This lasts 25 minutes, and involves completing an application form and an initial assessment using BKSB. An initial induction lasts for 3 days, with a lot of assessments and diagnostic assessment undertaken. The initial assessment for E2E lasts for up to 6 weeks, with work done on the personal development side, working on low confidence, and during this time there is 45 minute interview with the young person. For Work-based Learning there is an interview first, lasting 25 minutes, then application forms are completed, a dyslexia profile, occupational profile and learning styles questionnaire are completed. Occasionally a Connexions personal adviser accompanies a young person (to coax them through the doors). About half the young people are accompanied by parents.
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood	Young people have to show their competence on the appropriate machinery at their place or work before they are

Course topic	Entry and assessment test details
machining	taken on for a training course on that machine. Connexions refer them, and a data base of interested young people is retained. On request by their workplace, applicants are then involved in an interview process. This aims to identify their technical ability, and attitude. At one time school leavers were asking to be wood machinists, but they had little idea of what it involved, so after 3 or four months they often wanted to change from the course. Now a taster day is set up for them, they go for an interview, work in the workshop for half a day. Tutors gain feedback so that appropriate areas of work can be considered.
IT engineering	Courses for young people aged 18- to 24-years are referred by the Job Centre under the New Deal programme. An induction course is given, explaining what will happen and the course structure, there is a short interview and then the young person makes the decision about whether to attend.
Key skills	Referrals come from a variety of sources, including Connexions, personal approaches, and schools. For a number of years now, Year 10 and 11 students have been taken on an engineering course. Entry is by interview and basic assessment (numeracy, number and principles and understanding of engineering). The test is paper–based; it used to be online but is now paper-based, to fit more flexibly (it can be done anywhere). The interview is used to assess suitability and unsuitability. Both the assessment and interview are conducted on the same day.
Land-based operations	Anyone can attend the course; it is the school that chooses. There are specific groups comprised of young people from specific PRUs. Others who are interested in the course are young people keen on practical work, and those interested in land-based employment.
Learn Direct	Young people enrol on these courses because they are flexible, and they can learn from home (in fact anywhere where there is a broadband connection). A profile is prepared on the young person. BSA assessment (paper-based) is undertaken, and then a Word Skills and Number Skills online assessment. Learn Direct is a flexible learning course filling in ‘gaps’. Referrals come from Connexions, the probation service, and other agencies. For Learn Direct courses there is no formal interview, but young people are involved in an information and advice induction. Learn Direct courses can be short duration learning opportunities as short as 2 hours long, filling in gaps for those both in and out of employment.
Understanding retailing	Open evenings are run throughout the year and the college goes into local schools also. Connexions make some referrals. Tutors engage in informal chat with young people at open evenings; they run a series of activities, some paper-based, at open evenings. Examples of work produced by previous students are available for the young people to see. If they are interested, they are invited to fill in an application and then are offered an interview, lasting a minimum of 30 minutes with a

Course topic	Entry and assessment test details
	vocational tutor. There is an initial screening, an initial diagnostic testing of literacy and numeracy skills. Most of these tests are online, but there are also practical tests in the interview, and a range of questions to find out about previous experience, future aims and goals, and to ensure that they are recruited onto the appropriate level. It has been known for a Connexions personal adviser to accompany a young person, but not often. The main reason for this is when a young person seeks support, perhaps not having had good school experiences previously. Often it is found that the student has a better relationship with a Connexions personal adviser.

Table 36: Details about entry and assessment procedures when young people begin courses

While some providers used online tests to identify appropriate initial placement, other aspects of the entry procedures did not appear to use ICT. It is quite possible that showing young people examples through still and video imagery of practice and work produced by other young people might support their understanding of what they will be involved in. Indeed, it is likely that many young people who are NEET need to be able to 'see' what to expect, rather than having to interpret this from a verbal discussion (as evidenced by reasons they give for poor educational experiences). It is clearly important that social interactions are not replaced; they are vitally important. However, ICT would be likely to effectively support some processes concerned with offering information.

8.17 Training providers that focus on practical needs

Many young people who are NEET are likely to engage with courses where the amount of practical work is high, and theory is low. Tutors involved in providing a range of course across one Connexions service were asked about the balance of these elements. Their responses are shown in Table 37 following.

Course topic	Amount of the course considered to be practical
Animal care	80%
Apprenticeship in animal care	80%
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	Not applicable
Certificate in Health and Social Care, and BTech First Diploma In Health and Social Care	At level 2 – 50-65% group discussion At level 3 – more practical, going into the community to run interviews, for example
Childcare	50%
Construction	50%
E2E	50% workshop time
E2E	70% to accommodate any negative school experiences
E2E	70%
E2E	35%
E2E in horse care, and an apprenticeship in horse care	It is a practical course, with 150 hours formal teaching a year
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	Work tends to be practically based, such as using measuring equipment for mathematics, or creating

	presentations to support literacy
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	75%
IT engineering	80%
Key Skills	Basic apprenticeship about 80%, advanced apprenticeship abut 70%
Land-based operations	70%
Learn Direct	All theory
Understanding retailing	40%, but try to get young people involved with real life scenarios. In the past young people have worked on 'live projects' around a local small business, with young people creating and designing a marketing campaign

Table 37: Amounts of practical work involved in courses

It is clear that there are wide variations across the courses in terms of levels of practical content. Many of the tutors of the courses, however, indicated a sensitivity to the needs of young people, and there were clear attempts to involve practical elements as much as possible. On the other hand, it is clear that ICT might well provide some increased 'real life' opportunities in some courses.

Some training providers have focused on providing environments that are practically focused. One such centre was set up some 15 years ago. Initially its focus was on supporting people with specific learning difficulties. It was created by a registered charity, supported financially by the European Social Fund, the LSC, and currently has contracts in place to provide E2E courses. It is not a college, but is a training provider. It provides courses for the 16- to 19-year-old age group, and currently there are four programmes running. The programmes started with E2E courses, then the centre developed Youth Express (Pre-E2E) courses, and has more recently developed Just for You courses (offering 1-to-1 support for the particularly hard to reach). The centre additionally runs a programme (but only for the past year) called Young Mums (for young mothers to be). All referrals for courses come from Connexions staff. Connexions personal advisers contact a tutor in the centre, and the centre talk to individual young people, and they may start immediately on a course, or after further discussion. The tutor will also arrange any work experience that is needed as elements of the course. For an older age range, the centre runs a Transition programme, for 16- to 25-year-old young people, offering a 1-to-1 signposting system to employment (provided for the young people only through an appointments system).

There are about 45 to 50 young people currently on E2E courses, 15 to 20 on Youth Express, and 12 to 15 on the Young Mums course. Across all of the range of bases operated by this training provider, there are over 100 young people on programmes. There are now some 60 staff across all of the centres. The provision differs from that provided by colleges in terms of the context of the learning environment; the centre provision tends to be workshop-focused. It is found that many young people who are referred to them have had negative experiences in their previous learning

environments; the feedback gained suggests that the centre is focusing on the needs and approaches of the young people.

Experience suggests that courses for the young people need to start immediately. Often, their lifestyles are destructive; for example, with use of drugs. All modules are self-standing so that attendance can be accommodated as far as possible. All sessions are discussion based; verbal discussion is found to work for these young people. In a session observed, the tutor was running a drug awareness session with six young people (three girls and three boys). Young people from across the programme (including this group of young people) may have been involved in crime drugs, sexual offences, sexual abuse, emotional issues, or have learning difficulties. One girl agreed to do the writing involved (although she had not done any writing for four years in school). Although the group was difficult to engage, the discussion did allow everyone to say things and to contribute. They were all able to discuss points, and verbal discussion was working for this group. Although the tutor was taking notes, all the young people took their own notes (they wrote things down that had been written on the static whiteboard). The young people attended to the topic and content of the session (fairly well), discussed points, followed ideas and wrote notes (more than sometimes seen in some lessons in schools). Aspects of literacy were being covered and were happening; young people were writing and copying what had been written.

In the E2E courses that this centre runs, young people can pick and choose different options, but they need to engage in those areas that have been identified as weaknesses through initial tests. Literacy and numeracy are the core of these courses. In the centre itself, certain aspects are covered by centre tutors: IT; literacy; numeracy; life skills; team building; employability skills; CV applications; interviews; and telephone skills. External providers come in to covers aspects on health, safety, sexual behaviours, drug, and alcohol awareness. The E2E course is a wide programme covering basic work and life skills. Work experience allows young people to choose from a range of forms of employment. The value of work experience is that it offers the young people ideas about work ethic. An adult learning inspection last year was positive in its report about the work experience provided. It has been found that work experience allows the young people to try out different things with the opportunity for them to change their minds. It is found that some young people get jobs on the basis of their work experience. One successful young person gained employment after a work experience placement in 2006; he lacked self confidence but developed a lot of skills in this respect from the work experience placement. The centre can refer young people to a provider that will help to address specific limitations that young people have to match their employment needs. The centre can also move young people between programmes to best suit their needs.

The workshop is a key focal aspect of the centre. It covers a wide range of practical work aspects, such as construction, plumbing, electrics, motor vehicles, bicycles, welding, patterning of glass, carpeting, concrete products, ceramics and wood

turning. This very wide range of applications offers a taster of possibilities for the young people; all the options are practically focused rather than theoretically focused. When the centre is recruiting trainers, it is their vocational experience that is sought; the centre wants people who can ‘do’. The workshop contains an IT room for research. Achievements are made accessible and recognised; there is a wall that shows the name plates that young people have created in a variety of different forms. Workshop experiences are made ‘real’ where possible. Young people help to service staff cars, for example. The centre also provides opportunities for young people to do practical work on aspects concerned with nail, hair and beauty treatment, so girls have increased in number on this course. From the course, they can gain a level 1 qualification. Workshop tutors encourage young people, to do everything that is involved in the practical aspects covered. The range of aspects, whether it be pottery, woodwork, arts or crafts, are all creatively as well as practically focused. Some young people have built a buggy from scratch; others have created concrete garden ornaments that look effective. It is recognised that the young people do not achieve academically, but they can do so practically. Through this focus and environment, literacy and numeracy are covered in everything that is done. For example, tutors ask: how many bricks will it take to make this wall? Will the item fit this part of the rotor? It is found that the practical areas that the young people work on show them relevance for the mathematics and literacy.

8.18 Training providers that focus on creative needs

Some training providers have focused on the creative approaches and needs of young people who are NEET. One such centre has been created as a ‘not-for-profit’ company. The company is concerned that young people who are NEET have the opportunity to gain accreditation, so the company recognises that it needs to be at the leading edge with regard to qualifications and accreditation. The centre delivers OCN accredited courses (in music technology, for example) and also NOCN courses (for example, in team building, and making a portfolio). Young people who are NEET are given a place at college if they attend and succeed in these courses. Between January 2003 and January 2004 the centre: "provided 1,539 training sessions with a total number of participants of 915".

The centre focuses on the provision of courses and programmes that use technology to engage young people through two forms of expressive media - music technology, and interactive media. "Visual production gives trainees the chance to create products based on their own ideas, such as music video, drama, documentary, comedy, and news. Working individually or as part of a team, students can learn about and gain experience of camera operation, storyboards and scripts, editing and digital effects, music for film, motion graphics and final production for DVD, the internet or CD-ROM". It is reported also that young people have increasingly indicated interest in developing content that would be accessible on mobile devices such as telephones in the form of compressed audio or animated video ring tones. It is recognised that ICT can provide ‘new’ experiences. For example, animation is

currently being seen as quite popular and engaging. It is reported that the reasons for this are likely to be because young people suddenly recognise how animation can be done, they see it is as something they can tackle, they want to try it out, and a few young people pursue it in the longer term. For some young people, ICT is their main medium of engagement, but the focus of use can often be quite specific, and determined by interests and the willingness of young people. For example, young people from a pupil referral unit like to socially interact, but do not like to use a keyboard for writing. However, there are uses of ICT of a more generic nature that are needed to support young people who are NEET effectively. For example, the centre has set up an online portfolio system, which is in its second year of student use, and the intention is for every student to put an entry into it.

It is found that characteristics of the young people supported at the centre vary considerably, according to their areas of interest. For those recruited onto the interactive media courses, they tend to be quiet, lacking in confidence, very intelligent, but not enjoying interaction with people. The centre recognised that it has had successes with this group, but has found that ongoing support can be critically important. One boy, for example, has now enrolled in college to take a BTEC or HNC course, after completing an interactive media course in the centre. Although he had successfully completed the course, and had gained a lot of confidence to the point of being willing to interact with others, he found he had lost the will and an understanding of how to engage with others during the 6 week period of the summer vacation. To support him further, the centre took him back, helped him to re-engage socially, and he is now enrolled in college. This young person is particularly fluent with Photoshop, and it is felt that he could easily support others in terms of artistic edge or graphics.

It is found that the characteristics of those on the interactive media course are very different from the characteristics of those on music technology courses. This latter group is concerned much more with outward expression, and ensuring that, for example, lyrics tell a story. This group uses media in forms such as YouTube and MySpace to distribute music and films – one film on YouTube has had 7,000 accesses and 3,000 on MySpace, for example.

8.19 Preventative approaches in some schools

Some schools are now involved in identifying young people who are not benefiting from the 'traditional' curriculum. They are involved in providing alternative curriculum opportunities, with the intention of supporting the needs of young people who might have moved into the NEET group. One consortium of such schools was created some seven years ago. One of the aspects of concern for the consortium was the focus of responsibility taken by outside agencies for students who were becoming disaffected and disengaged. The consortium took steps to engage collaboratively with outside agencies, but to itself take on a central responsibility for certain features of activity that in other schools were held externally. The consortium now employs an executive officer and a full-time person to run continuing professional development across schools. The consortium has taken on responsibility for all of its 6,000 learners, including a responsibility to the point of ownership of groups who are NEET.

There are some 1,000 students per year group across the consortium of secondary schools. There are some 2,000 students who are 16- to 18-years of age. Young people who were NEET in this group would traditionally have been picked up by Connexions, the local authority or the LSC. Now schools take control for these young people, and up to the age of 16-years, contact is maintained by the schools. It is now agreed across the consortium that students will not be excluded permanently. The development of specialist diplomas arose from an approach concerned with taking this central responsibility.

The development of a multi-agency support team has been central to the initiative. There is an inclusion advocate in each school, and the cases of each individual student are discussed, including discussion with the outside agencies. A major element of the current focus for one school in the consortium is on Year 10 and 11 students who have potential NEET status. The consortium has developed an alternative curriculum programme with accreditation for courses. To support this programme, a curriculum extension co-ordinator and assistant are employed. The programme includes a range of FE courses, work experience, home working, work within a pupil referral unit, and in multi-skills centres.

Inclusion advocates in each school identify young people (through their behaviour patterns) who might in the future become NEET. The inclusion manager for the consortium thinks that the behaviours identified may well be behaviours arising to counter the literacy concerns of the young people. In order to address this aspect, a tutor has been taken on to tackle basic numeracy and literacy needs. Overall, the inclusion manager feels that young people on an alternative curriculum tend to have low opinions of themselves. She feels that the use of technologies such as photography have been important in boosting confidence, as well as having a place in gaining awards, and helping young people to recognise their achievements. A work-experience co-ordinator in one school finds that young people who need an

alternative curriculum tend to truancy, and to exhibit negative behaviours. It appears to her that these young people do not want to be 'tied to a duck' – so the approach taken within schools creates issues, and for this same reason, she feels they do not take readily always to IT work experience. She finds that anger seems to arise often in some cases. Often young people have not travelled widely, and have not gained experiences outside their immediate localities. The inclusion manager feels that there are indicators that can be associated regularly with young people likely to move to NEET status. She suggests the most commonly identified indicators (which may well be causes of the lack of engagement associated with these young people) are:

1 Low levels of literacy.
2 'Feckless' parenting.
3 Kinaesthetic approaches by learners (including dance).
4 One parent or divided families.
5 Drug culture (although it is felt that this could be an effect as much as a cause).

From work already undertaken with Year 10 students who are potential NEETs, one school in the consortium has found that enablers to positive motivation have arisen through appropriate forms of alternative curriculum provision that are focused on individual interests: one day a week at college working with hospitality and food (one boy); opportunities through work experience and college work in customer care (one girl); working on vehicle maintenance (two boys); working in an environment that is separate from the main school where pressure to work within time and lesson constraints is lower (one girl who is a school phobic); working through home study (one girl); and working through an ICT medium and on countryside skills (one boy). It is also recognised that individual interests may not always be generated by local work patterns; in one school, land-based courses have been taken up with a great deal of interest by three young people coming from urban home environments.

Heads of year, in talking about reasons why some students move into the NEET group, highlighted cases where students suffered mental breakdowns at examination times. They reported that this form of impact can lead to a student moving into the 'unknown' status. Heads of year also highlighted the fact that students can behave in a 'different' way when they are working in an adult environment. Adult environments are seen to make a difference for those who can handle the 'adult environment' – and this can itself affect attendance. It is reported that attendance can be affected by three factors:

- distance (having to travel two hours or so to get to and from college).
- 'adultness' (being able to cope with the needs and demands of adult environments).

- difficult home circumstances (being able to separate this away from other experiences).

It is reported by heads of year that work placements have generally worked well (in locations such as garage workshops, builders' yards, market gardens, heritage sites, and factories). It is recognised that adult environments can be authoritative – and that this feature can work positively for some young people in terms of defining the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. It is also recognised that some young people may not benefit from alternative curriculum provision, and that this can occur if they are 'damaged from an early age'; under these circumstances, alternatives may not work for all.

8.20 The role of alternative environments to classrooms

It is clear that school-based learning environments do not match the needs and working patterns of many young people who move into the NEET group. They have built up strong negative views of school-based learning, associated with either the need for them to maintain a high level of attention span over a long period of time, or with a lack of understanding and attention in recognising their personal circumstances. It is clear that some schools have identified issues emerging, and have provided an alternative curriculum that has matched their individual approaches and needs to a far greater extent.

Learning experiences in FE colleges, in work experience, and in work, are clearly regarded much more positively by these young people. Key elements identified in these environments are concerned with the gaining of a greater control over personal time commitment, the feeling of being treated like adults, the ability to exercise aspects that allow their individuality to be expressed, the gaining of what is considered to be practical advice and guidance, the meeting of new people, and the ways that they can learn in an environment where actions are not constrained in ways that they recognise. A key feature of the experiences for these young people is that forms of continuity are built in where possible; they are not one-off or taster courses. A skiing experience offered as a part of an alternative curriculum, for example, was a day course run for eight weeks, rather than a one-off taster.

The work experience co-ordinator in one school providing an alternative curriculum reported that some young people now do not want to go to college; they only want employment. But some courses that are relevant (and seen by young people as being relevant) are liked; courses can include topics such as discrimination, equal opportunities, health and safety.

Students who have alternative curriculum provision in one school are monitored by a range of personnel with different areas of focus: heads of year when they are in school; a co-ordinator when they are on work experience; and the inclusion manager when they are attending courses or sites beyond the school. Heads of year with oversight of students in the school on alternative curriculum provision reported

positively on the outcomes of an alternative curriculum programme (October 2007) in the cases of many students. Their comments on individual cases are shown in Table 38 following (which contains comments only on those students regarded to be at risk of moving into the NEET group, as a small number of students who were not included by the school in this category chose to take an alternative curriculum because of their specific individual interests).

Year and gender	Alternative provision	Observable outcomes
10B	1 day countryside skills course, half day motor vehicle course and 1 mentor session	Not successful so far – struggling. Incredibly immature. Socially immature young person – takes break at alternative times and throws stones around.
10B	1 day hospitality course	Increased provision to seven supervised sessions of home study. Course very successful.
10B	1 day hospitality course and 1 mentor session	Very positive – extended the provision recently to work experience (local café).
10B	Half day motor vehicle course	Great start, hardly any trouble.
10B	Half day motor vehicle course	More appropriate course – no problem in school.
10B	Half day motor vehicle course 10 study leave supervised sessions	Flexibility has helped and appears to be having impact. Back on track now but potentially fragile.
10G	1 day customer care course	Enjoying the course – lively girl, no problem, bit naughty. Keeping her on the straight and narrow.
10G	1 day customer care course and 6 college sessions	College going very well. Still some difficulties in school. Probably due to vocational difference between school and college courses.
10G	1 day customer care course, 1 day key skills course, half day arts course, and 1 day and two sessions of supervised home study	Year 11 age. Going well – shouted and swore on first day. Different environment makes the difference – very grown up so wants to do adult things.
10G	Half day equine studies course and 1 mentor session	Hard to say – mental health problem. Last 2 weeks a problem, before that very good.
11B	2 days multi-skills centre, 2 days pupil referral unit, and 1 day work experience	Not really working. A **very** troublesome student with difficult domestic circumstances. Occasionally runs away and does not attend.
11B	1 day countryside skills course, 1 day work experience, and 2 sessions private study	2 days out of school has had marked effect on his time in school.
11B	2 days multi-skills centres, 1 day work experience, and 2 days in-school	Very successful.

Year and gender	Alternative provision	Observable outcomes
11B	1 day sports course, 1 day work experience, and 1 session supervised home study	Much improved in school time. Sports course very successful.
11B	1 day work experience, 2 sessions supervised home study, 1 session private study, and 6 mentor sessions	Has improved but still 'wobbly' when in school.
11B	2 college sessions, and 2 half days and 2 sessions supervised home study	Much improved but attendance in school is very poor. Difficulties with police.
11B	3 days multi-skills centres, 1 day and 1 session supervised home study, 1 mentor session	Very successful.
11B	2 days pupil referral unit, 2 days work experience, and 1 day sports course	Very successful. A particularly difficult student – poor relations with staff. Pupil referral unit really working.
11B	2 half days and 3 sessions supervised home study, 1 session private study, and 1 mentor session	Very appropriate.
11B	4 days hospitality and catering course, a half day and 1 session supervised home study, and 2 mentor sessions	**Great!** A very mature young man who struggles with confines at school. In trouble with police.
11B	1 day hospitality course, 1 day sports course, 2 days work experience, half day supervised home study, and 3 mentor sessions	Very successful particularly hospitality course. Lack of sustained success due to inconsistent home circumstances. **
11B	1 day key skills course	Very appropriate – very weak academically. **
11B	1 day pupil referral unit, 1 day multi-skills centre, 1 day work experience, 2 sessions supervised home study, 1 session private study, and 3 mentor sessions	Appropriate provision. He is still difficult/uncooperative when he in school. A bright boy but **incredibly** difficult. **
11B	2 and a half days college course, and 2 and a half days supervised home study	College course successful but does not always attend. **

Year and gender	Alternative provision	Observable outcomes
11B	2 days countryside skills course, 1 day growing well course, and 2 days in-school	Brilliant! A student who had real difficulties in lower school. Countryside skills particularly appropriate. **
11B	3 days college course, 1 day work experience, 1 day sports course, and 1 mentor session	Very successful and appropriate. **
11B	3 days work experience, 1 day motor vehicle course, and 2 sessions supervised home study	**Great.** Very appropriate. A very fiery/potentially violent young man. Thriving in adult environment. **
11G	1 day college course	Not really working. Not consistent in terms of attendance. Academically very weak.
11G	1 day customer care course, 2 days work experience, a half day and 2 sessions supervised home study, and 3 mentor sessions	Very appropriate, school refuser.
11G	1 day work experience, 2 half days supervised home study, and 2 mentor sessions (Thursday and Friday not visible)	Very successful, school refuser.
11G	2 days work experience, 2 mentor or counsellor sessions, 1 meeting session, and 1 portfolio or Connexions session	Health difficulties/school refuser. EWS involved. Reduced timetable and work experience has had very positive impact on school experience.
11G	Two sessions college courses, 3 private study sessions, and 1 supervised home study session	Very appropriate. School timetable limited because student is Polish.
11G	4 and a half days work experience, and a half day mentor session	Work experience is good although her attendance is poor. **
11G	4 days college course	**Very** difficult student in lower school – appropriate provision. **
11G	1 day customer service course, 2 days work experience, half day arts course, 3 sessions supervised home study, and 2 mentor sessions	Brilliant – very appropriate. Work Experience in particular very successful. A very difficult student but much better out of school. **

Table 38: Success of the alternative curriculum programme reported by heads of year (October 2007)

From the reports given by the heads of year, the number of cases reported where there were positive impacts was high (although situations can change dramatically and quickly for a range of reasons, and some instances where the situation was fragile have been included within the positive outcomes group as there was no evidence at this stage that the situation is becoming negative). The instances where heads of year reported particularly positive outcomes are shown by two stars in the right hand comment box (these cases have been placed at the bottom of the respective groupings). The instances where reports indicate that the alternative provision is not having an impact are shown in grey, and these number:

- one instance out of 10 in Year 10.
- two instances out of 25 in Year 11.

Heads of year emphasised the effect that the alternative curriculum provision for this group of students had had on the rest of the students also, and how this had in itself been a positive outcome of the provision. As a consequence, heads of year would like to see this provision available to some young people from an earlier age, in Year 9 and earlier. Heads of year indicated that they could now focus on the needs of others more easily. Other students could benefit from calm lessons, without individuals dominating the classroom environment.

At the time data was gathered, the vast majority of students who were regarded as those likely to move into the NEET group were reported to have had an appropriate alternative curriculum provision in place in terms of reported impacts. Only in the cases of one out of ten Year 10 students and two out of 25 Year 11 students, did the alternative provision appear not to be working. With the possibility that only three out of 35 young people might move into the NEET group at the end of Year 11, it is worth looking at a comparative cost analysis of this model of alternative curriculum provision against the estimated costs associated with those moving into the NEET group.

8.21 Access to community-based ICT resources

For those young people who do not have their own technologies, there is a question of whether community-based technologies would offer adequate access and be used regularly. Distance and travel clearly are factors that come into play. Experiences from one community centre that is based in an urban area indicates that such provision could support access for young people to learning and employment information.

Registration and uses of a cybercafe in a main community centre were recorded since the centre opened in 2004. This centre is based in an urban area, with a population made up of a range of different ethnic groups, with some members of the population unable to understand, speak, read or write English. Numbers of young

people aged 16- to 18-years who registered each year are shown in Table 39 following.

Age at registration	Number in 2004	Number in 2005	Number in 2006	Number in 2007	Number with year not known	Total
18 years	7	6	8	4	0	25
17 years	9	6	8	4	2	29
16 years	9	3	9	2	1	24
Totals	25	15	25	10	3	78

Table 39: Numbers of young people aged 18-years and below who registered each year to use the cybercafe facilities

The slightly higher numbers in the 17-year-old age group, although not significantly different from those for the 16- or 18-year-old groups, parallels reports that some young people of this age become more interested in finding employment or engagement with interests beyond those accessible within their own homes. Table 40 following shows the number of young people aged 16- to 18-years who registered across the 2004 to 2007 period, compared to numbers of users registered in other age ranges. It should be noted that these numbers do not show young people with NEET status specifically.

Age range	Number registered
75 years and above	1
65 to 74 years	4
55 to 64 years	10
45 to 54 years	39
35 to 44 years	125
25 to 34 years	317
15 to 24 years	338
5 to 14 years	79
16 to 18 years	78

Table 40: Numbers of people of different age groups registered at a community centre between 2004 and 2007

The numbers of young people of 16- to 18-years who registered was lower than those in age groups above or below this age range. Between May 2005 and August 2007, the centre recorded reasons why people were using the cybercafe facilities. Numbers of recorded usages by month are shown in Table 41 following.

Month and year	Health	Education	Training	Employment/Job search	Community safety	Leisure	Email	Other	Unknown
May 2005	1	11	1	13	1	8	43	24	0
June 2005	13	48	9	42	3	46	168	122	48
July 2005	18	65	11	62	5	50	151	90	126
August 2005	6	46	11	47	1	26	147	74	162
September 2005	6	55	25	74	5	32	146	56	144
October 2005	8	73	25	93	22	31	145	57	213
November 2005	6	72	18	72	8	19	136	54	219
December 2005	3	29	14	39	8	14	100	35	103
January 2006	6	72	24	52	3	14	136	52	132
February 2006	6	69	14	39	2	16	174	54	143
March 2006	7	33	9	44	3	32	106	42	148
April 2006	1	53	14	44	0	9	144	50	98
May 2006	3	60	13	35	4	17	153	44	81
June 2006	1	1	0	7	0	0	30	10	128
July 2006	1	1	3	0	3	0	1	7	28
August 2006	2	11	5	10	1	3	21	6	153
September 2006	6	32	7	34	5	13	53	18	373
October 2006	7	30	9	50	2	7	43	18	338
November 2006	3	16	0	27	0	6	47	12	382
December 2006	2	10	2	6	2	1	18	14	219
January 2007	3	19	5	30	2	4	23	12	348
February 2007	0	29	3	25	0	3	16	5	301
March 2007	0	18	6	27	0	4	28	10	373
April 2007	1	16	3	17	0	2	16	4	364
May 2007	0	32	3	18	2	6	28	4	439

Month and year	Health	Education	Training	Employment/Job search	Community safety	Leisure	Email	Other	Unknown
June 2007	3	33	9	15	1	3	27	5	499
July 2007	3	43	5	21	0	0	20	10	567
August 2007	6	68	8	20	2	6	29	3	492
Total	122	1045	256	963	85	372	2149	892	6621

Table 41: Numbers of recorded uses of the cybercafe facilities between May 2005 and August 2007

(It should be noted that incomplete records were kept for those months shaded in grey.)

Over this period of time, the use of the cybercafe facilities indicated that access for purposes concerned with employment and jobs was higher than access for purposes concerned with training (963 recorded uses for employment and jobs compared to 256 recorded uses for training). Levels of access for email were high, suggesting that this was a commonly used means of communication by many people, including those who did not have access within their own homes necessarily. Levels of access for purposes concerned with education was also high. This suggests that training might not be regarded highly by the community accessing through these routes.

8.22 A consideration of specific groups of young people who are NEET

While ICT is used by young people who are NEET, it is also important to recognise that there are likely to be certain specific uses of ICT associated with specific groups of young people who are NEET. Two specific groups are considered here, but it is clear that exploration across other specific groups is also worthy of further investigation.

It is reported that many deaf people move into the NEET group. This is reported to be due to the communication difficulties they face. In looking at published data, it is reported that this stems from communication difficulties that begin at the end of Key Stage 2, that persist, and indeed build up further over a number of years. This is demonstrated by shifts in results at the end of each Key Stage. It is reported that at the end of Key Stage 1 deaf children are attaining less than other children who are also classified as having SEN, that by the end of Key Stage 2 less than half take SATs, and less than five per cent gain English and mathematics at GCSE level. For most young people who are deaf, the lack of GCSE English is a major problem. Without this, it is not possible for them to complete forms, or to go on to training. It is reported that the main challenges for young deaf children begin when they are between 5- and 8-years-of-age.

It is believed that deaf-only young people have the same ranges of potential ability as non-deaf young people. The fact that so many deaf young people move into the NEET category indicates to key informants that they are not being supported effectively. Some deaf-only young people can be turned into ‘non-deaf’ young people

by intensive coaching, and parents with adequate funds ensure that this happens. However, even for this group, English may still be a problem (some fail when they get to university as a result of their insufficient grasp of English, for example). Some young people who are deaf have other disabilities, and some may have multiple disabilities. For those with brain damage, for example, their potential levels of attainment may not be the same as young people who are deaf-only. Deaf people are not supported nationally by a specific education policy. They are grouped in with other young people as having SEN. This means that children who are deaf can be in the same category as those with cerebral palsy.

It is reported that deaf young people can feel that they never catch up. As a consequence, they wonder why they should go into FE if they have failed at school, and there are limited opportunities available for them to learn practical skills. Although English is felt to be the key, deaf young people cannot hear, so the spoken language is not accessible to them. This potentially has huge implications; they might not, for example, generate 'inner talk' in the same way. It is felt that a greater focus on visual literacy and visual English could support the 'inner talk' that would help deaf people. It is felt that young deaf people need a structure to work in, but not a strong form of control; they need a freedom to engage. It is felt that technology tends to makes things worse at the moment – English is the medium that deaf people cannot read. Deaf young people are often better in mathematics – it appears to be due to the visual aspects of it, but they still cannot necessarily access the English in examination papers.

It is felt that projects for deaf young people in the NEET group should focus on supporting access to the 'written', or 'visual' language, rather than the 'spoken' language. It is suggested that there is a need for projects in the future that are technology based to consider the software being developed and accessible, as well as the technology being used to access the resources. Two projects are currently being considered: the development of a 'visual English learning' resource; and the development of resources that offer very wide ideas about employment and learning.

Connexions services support young people who are NEET across the whole spectrum of special educational needs. Two personal advisers in one Connexions centre work with young people in schools with wide ranges of learning needs. One personal adviser works in three schools that cater for different ranges of learning needs; one focuses on severe learning difficulties (SLD), another on moderate learning difficulties (MLD), and the third on emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

It has been found that access to support and to qualified staff is essential if young people are to use IT effectively in an MLD school. To become familiar with IT applications and use, the young people need regular opportunities to practise IT skills. Many of the young people may well go on to college with specialist provision, where they will have reliable technology provided. Some colleges may provide

specialist IT courses for young people. However, it is felt that there is a gap in training, as young people are not always adequately provided for in terms of IT. In schools and colleges IT is used to support educational needs widely. But 10 per cent or less of the young people (maybe only seven per cent) have their IT needs met when they go into the labour market. Generally it is found that employers are not aware of technologies that are available to the young people or to support certain functions. A partially sighted girl, for example, gained level Cs at GCSE, but training providers did not have the same IT to support her when she took a catering course. As a consequence, she needed to gain support through a specialist agency. Young people need to know about specialist organisations if they are to have access to knowledge and advice to support their needs or queries.

To support some young people in special schools, the technology used is often highly specialised. Some organisations may have it, but training providers tend not to have it (especially those who are small scale providers). Generally, providers lack resources in this respect. If the young people with specialist needs go into the NEET group, then it is found that they find it harder to move into employment, education or training. Young people who have SEN and are NEET are found to be often resistant to change and transition. Many may not have interview skills to gain a job, and some need one-to-one support. The use of IT may also require literacy levels that young people do not have. Technology can be seen as the ‘enemy’ by young people if literacy or other needs are not able to be met. Small providers with limited resources may not have the resources or the approach to support young people with special needs; they may need specific training, they may need support with technology, and resources to allow this to happen.

Young people who have special needs may not be involved with National Curriculum levels as their means to assess attainment; the jump can be too big. It is found that specialised knowledge of special schools is hard to transfer to E2E courses; a great deal of skill and knowledge is needed for this transfer to be successful. Transition issues for young people can be large, and trainers may not recognise this. Kick Start can be an alternative option. Young people who are in SLD schools may be working at levels below those involved in Kick Start courses; they need more time to develop. Young people with SLD can have a lot of technology accessible to support them, but it may not be retained and repaired after they leave school.

It is found that special schools are much more concerned with social and emotional issues, and support young people who are working at low levels of literacy and numeracy. It is felt that mentoring (peer mentoring) in schools could be useful in supporting young people with SEN. Social concerns play important parts in the ways that technologies are adopted and used by pupils with SEN. Pupils who are MLD can be bullied and picked on. They do not easily fit into standard environments and social groupings without adequate and appropriate resources and support.

It is found that young people with MLD 'learn to cope', partly by using the same devices that their peers are using, but they may not understand certain things about their use in depth. One young person with SEN in a mainstream school class, for example, could not read the questions for the theory driving test; this young person was not working at the same level as peers in the class. Socially there are often pressures and necessities placed on young people with SEN; young people with MLD may use a technology and find ways to do so, such as using DVDs. But beyond school such technologies may not have the same social value. Some technologies are concerned with providing social links for young people, such as mobile technologies, so that young people are seen as 'being like other people'. But supported learning courses, such as life skill courses, may not focus on IT as elements of the courses.

In terms of technologies, it is found that young people with MLD may have digital players at home, but that they do not read manuals, and tend to follow others in finding ways of using them. They can use mobile telephones, but need to be shown what to do. Young people in one MLD school tend to use mobile telephones, as do young people who have SEN who are in mainstream schools (especially when their peers have them). However, not so many young people in special schools tend to use mobile telephones.

8.23 The role of ICT courses

For a variety of reasons discussed in previous sub-sections, the uptake of ICT courses by young people who are NEET may well be lower than expected. For example, in one Connexions area, courses likely to be accessible by young people who are NEET that were offered by a list of 31 providers, indicated only small numbers of ICT courses. Details of the width of courses in this area are shown in Table 42 following (a range of providers offer a range of subjects and topics, so the numbers within the table total more than 31).

Subject or topic	Frequency
Animal Care and Land Based	6
Business and Administration	11
Construction	7
E2E	12
Engineering	5
Furniture Trades	1
Hair and Beauty	8
Health Care	12
Hospitality and Catering	5
Information Technology	6
Leisure and Sport	1
Motor Vehicle	2
Printing	1
Retail, Customer Service and Warehousing	13

Table 42: Frequency of subject or topic training provided without specified qualifications for entry

This range of subjects and topics matches the interests that are known to be identified by young people who are NEET. Although the balance of interest might well vary from one geographical area to another, the breadth nevertheless accommodates interests that are being highlighted by young people themselves and those who support them.

However, in certain localities there is good reason to consider looking carefully at the range of ICT courses available, and how these might be provided. With regard to specific IT courses and employment opportunities in one Connexions area where IT is to be major focus for infrastructure development in the future, there is a concern about how young people are finding out about IT opportunities. It is felt likely that many who could inquire are likely to be too busy, and likely to be too busy making money. Yet it is felt that some young people who are NEET could become engaged with IT employment opportunities (where other employment opportunities are low). If the IT industry is to address the issue of finding young people who could become involved in IT opportunities, then it is suggested that they should look at successful approaches that have been taken by other groups, such as The Army. However, there is an issue of who would provide this form of information and advice on behalf of the range of industries involved.

9 Issues highlighted and conclusions drawn

9.1 The development of patterns and attitudes relating to NEET status

What is clear from the evidence gathered by this study is that young people with NEET status have often developed patterns and attitudes to employment, education and training over long, rather than short, periods of time. While young people with NEET status are not a single, homogenous group, and while their attitudes and approaches can vary widely, their experiences have often arisen from and been dominated by certain surrounding circumstances, within their homes or communities, within schools or by their peer groups, and by factors that have unexpectedly arisen.

9.2 The role of home and personal factors

Most people who work with and support young people with NEET status relate how home and personal factors can have a very large influence on the young person. Young people can be influenced greatly by role models and perspectives that they often encounter, and when attitudes become long-standing and ingrained in their own beliefs, then attempts to shift those young persons' perspectives from their own idealised attitudes can be all the more difficult and complex.

9.3 The role of school and learning factors

School and learning for some young people provides a far more positive experience than it does for others. A young person's learning experience is not always driven solely by their own willingness or interest to engage; it is also driven by the experience of being pulled or drawn towards the provision or opportunity. For some young people their interests match those of the educational provision; for others there is a toleration created between interest and provision; for yet others interests do not match provision at all, and, as a consequence, young people may become 'bored' and consequently disengaged, they may not cope with having to try to concentrate and consequently become disenfranchised, they may not be understood and consequently they may not co-operate, or they may be unwilling to try further and as a consequence feel they have been socially excluded.

9.4 The role of 'opportunistic' factors

Opportunistic factors can play a significant role when home and personal factors, as well as school and learning factors impinge on attitude and interest. Young people who lack interest in one area can seek or find it in another; young people who feel they lack aptitude in one area can apply themselves to other areas (which may not always be positive from a social or societal viewpoint). The role that unexpected factors arising in a young person's life can create, can also be significant; the death of a family member can be felt to be disturbing, but for a young person who feels that they may have contributed to that event in some way, it is clear that the impact can

be all the greater if those around them do not appear to the young person to understand why there is not what is considered to be a reasonable readjustment.

9.5 Categorising young people with NEET status

Discussions with young people who have NEET status, or who are believed to be likely to have NEET status, or who have had NEET status, indicate that their ways of thinking about issues, their ways of thinking about learning, and their attitudes to certain issues are often at variance with those around them (including sometimes those who are seeking to support them). Those who are successful in supporting these groups of young people have commonly taken time and opportunity to understand their situations and circumstances, and have been able to offer them alternatives or avenues of interest, but may well have needed to persist with their efforts over a long time period to meet the time scales across which the young person is working. Timeliness in terms of finding an appropriate opportunity is often recognised as a crucial and important factor.

Background factors influence different young people at different times, and in different ways. Both the literature and empirical evidence suggest that there are four distinct categories of young people with NEET status.

Eers: This group would include those who churn in and out of low level jobs and training courses of one kind or another but who need help finding more sustainable employment. It would also include those in periods of transition who have chosen or are mapping out a path (for example, waiting for a course to start, travelling before settling down to a job). Others might be job-ready but geographically isolated and living in locations where there is no work or public transport, temporarily sick, or unable to afford childcare. They are ready for employment or education but unable to achieve it for extrinsic reasons.

Neers: This group are nearly ready for employment or training and may need help with things like application forms, transport, finding a suitable opening, upgrading or improving their skills, gaining confidence, learning to relate to others, improving their behaviour and becoming better at managing relationships at work. It may also include immigrants with good employment skills but poor English language skills, or those with some kinds of disabilities.

Mulps: This group have multiple long-term problems which will include several of the following: mental illness, criminality, drug and alcohol dependence, debt, poor housing, low basic skills, challenging behaviour, disadvantaged family backgrounds, poor neighbourhoods, low expectations, second or third generation unemployment, chronic illness and disability (including special learning needs), being a care-leaver, homelessness. These young people need the intensive intervention of a number of agencies. For this group, lack of employment or education is not the key issue and their other problems need addressing before they will be ready to hold down a job or successfully complete a training course.

Alts: These are the young people who have chosen alternative lifestyles. It will include those who: are concentrating on developing self-employed careers in arts or music; are setting up a business which has not yet proved successful; have chosen motherhood as an option and intend to stay at home while children are small; or are working in the family business and not seeking outside employment.

9.6 What motivation theory tells us about implementing support

Motivation theories, and the literature on motivation and learning, tells us that a number of steps need to be undertaken when considering or implementing interventions if they are to succeed in offering long term benefits:

1. A successful intervention needs to develop a future time perspective in order to encourage individuals to consider carefully the links between present activities and significant future goals
2. The future, distal, goals need to be valued. The successful intervention must therefore either focus upon goals to which a significant positive value is already attached or seek to develop positive values for other goals. Motivation theory would indicate that either of these two alternatives, if successfully carried out, would have an approximately equal likelihood of success. However, given that interventions will be designed with the express intention of drawing young people with NEET status into recognised avenues of education, training or employment, the second alternative is the one that is the more likely to be necessary. Given this, it is likely that the principal component of any effective intervention through the use of ICT will be the development of such positive values
3. As the Miller and Brickman model makes clear, unless the individual has access to relevant knowledge concerning the links between these valued distal goals and current proximal activities the presence of the valued distal goals will serve no effective purpose. As it is likely that the socio-cultural background of young people with NEET status will have failed to provide adequate access to this information, a key aspect of any successful ICT based intervention will be the provision of this knowledge and (or) the development of the necessary information retrieval skills required to enable access to that information
4. The intervention will need to establish a system of proximal sub-goals that will provide the all essential bridge between the proximal activities and the longer term valued distal goal
5. The fourth step in the development of an effective intervention is more likely to be achieved successfully when the individuals engaging in the intervention are able to develop relatively high levels of self-efficacy in relation to the attainments required for successful completion of each of the proximal sub-goals

6 As links are successfully developed between the valued distal goal and a subsystem of proximal goals so the chances of learning goals being established by participants is increased

7 Such a combination of raised levels of self-efficacy and the development of relatively strong learning goals will have the considerable added benefit of reducing the chances of participants developing performance avoidance goals and the consequential use of self-worth protecting strategies.

It is clear that there are three key aspects for any effective ICT based intervention: the development of relevant and valued distal goals; the development of knowledge of the links between the present activities with those valued distal goals; and, perhaps most essentially, the development of high levels of self-efficacy in relation to those activities.

9.7 Young people and decision making abilities

A common factor of some importance across the four categories used to describe young people who are NEET is their ability or aptitude to make and take decisions. Decision making and decision taking for some young people is not possible when they do not have alternatives; for others it is hard when they do not have support and understanding of the variety of alternatives; for yet others their decision making and taking do not appear to fit with the desires or alternatives that surround them or have been offered to them.

9.8 The focus of school endeavour

A part of the issue for some young people who develop behaviours and attitudes that may well mean that they become NEET is that schools focus (legitimately) on cognitive needs, often far more than on social or emotional needs. Many young people who are NEET can confront a severe difference between the needs of their environments at school and out of school. While a school can provide an environment where a young person is expected to focus on cognitive needs, a home can provide an environment where a young person has to focus on more basic survival needs. Some young people appear not to be able to easily shift their focus of attention between these two environments.

9.9 Maslow's hierarchy

Maslow (1943, discussed in Child, 1973) produced a hierarchy of needs, that progressed from personal, to social, to intellectual. He maintained that personal needs had to be satisfied before social needs could be addressed, and that social needs had to be satisfied before intellectual needs could be addressed. For young people who are concerned at levels of personal and social need within their out of school environments, these are not the focus of attention offered within schools. Physiological, safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem needs are not the main

focus of a school's activity; schools seek to offer these in appropriate ways around and beyond the higher level intellectual needs that form their main focus. The hierarchy suggests that if young people's needs are not met in terms of personal and social respects, then concentration on the higher levels of intellectual need will not be easy or possible.

9.10 Classrooms and dynamics in schools

Classrooms in schools are set up to meet educational needs determined by the National Curriculum. In many cases these needs are interpreted by teachers through observational or writing activities. Young people observe a great deal, listen a great deal, read a great deal, and write a great deal. They are often expected to maintain quiet or silence for long periods, stimulated by auditory or visual means, without involvement in direct activity other than writing or responding at specific times. For many young people this works without too many difficulties; but for those who have personal and social concerns, or who do not think centrally from a cognitive perspective, this situation is demanding, difficult or impossible. Add to this the difficulties that dynamics between peers can bring, and the school environment can easily become a place that is (unfortunately), daunting, alien, and unforgiving.

9.11 Addressing NEET status through preventative means

Some schools are beginning to recognise the problems of a largely cognitively focused approach, and see the problems that this approach can bring to young people whom they believe may well become NEET in the future. Some schools are now actively engaged in supporting personal and social needs at a fundamental level, providing in-school counsellor, mentor and support groups to work with families and young people, as well as with multiple support agencies. In addition, some schools are providing an educational provision that offers creative and practical approaches rather than focusing on cognitive approaches. Increasingly, external providers who take particular creative or practical approaches (further education colleges, private company providers, or voluntary sector groups) are being engaged to support young people who are felt to be likely to move to NEET status in the future.

9.12 Addressing NEET status responsively after young people leave school

The needs of young people who have already left school and who are NEET are currently being supported responsively largely through Connexions teams. This responsive approach is often found to be a difficult and time-consuming process. Those involved in this form of support often find that young people require a great deal of personal and social support, and that only through these levels of support can intellectual support also be offered. The direct application of intellectual endeavour to the interest and needs of the young people is often an important

feature in their success, as well as its being offered through a curriculum or alternative provision that is creatively or practically based.

9.13 The roles of social intervention and support

Social intervention and support are found to be crucially important when working with young people who are NEET. Often the young people have speaking skills that are far more advanced than their reading or writing skills. However, communication skills in the wider sense are often limited, and the limiting form of communication skills can limit the potential of the young people in different ways. For example, the limits of communication skills by deaf people who are NEET may be very different from the limits of those who are in local authority care. Social intervention and communication skills have often been positively provided through appropriate mentor approaches, work experience approaches, or provider approaches. However, there is an argument and an increasing focus by some voluntary groups on the development of ICT resources that would support specific communication needs (the development of textual, reading and literacy skills for deaf people, for example).

9.14 Creative and practical modes of thinking

What characterises many young people who are NEET is their form of thinking approaches, which differ from the thinking approaches that might be expected from a more traditionally conceived cognitive framework. There appear to be two prominent thinking approaches involved: creative; and practical. Creative thinking approaches tend to be associated with ‘thoughtful’ or ‘creative’ forms, sometimes where time scales and time is not considered by the young person in a traditional way. Some young people in this category have been supported effectively through the use of creative forms of technology, particularly in the areas of media, drama, art and music. The other thinking approach, practical thinking, tends to be associated with ‘flitting’ or ‘hands-on’ forms, sometimes where social interactions dominate and can direct actions. Some young people in this category have been supported through practical forms of technology, but linked to activities in areas such as hair dressing, catering and hospitality, retailing, vehicle maintenance, or countryside skills.

9.15 Young people and how they use ICT currently

Many young people who are NEET have access to a wide range of technologies. The use of technologies, however, tends to be stratified, so that some are used for certain purposes, and others are used for other purposes. Some young people believe that technologies will support their learning needs and endeavours more, but believing this to be the case, and being able to benefit from the resources that might be offered, are two entirely different prospects. It is clear, for example, that while some young people might benefit from bespoke ICT courses, this may well happen only on a limited number of occasions. For many young people ICT uses will need to be integrated with adequate and appropriate social support and focal interests.

9.16 How ICT is being used to support young people in learning situations

ICT is being used to support young people who are felt to be likely to become NEET in a number of existing ways. Often ICT is used to provide a one-to-one learning experience, using a resource within a specific topic or subject area. Mentors or tutors often support the young people, and the ICT-based activities are often of a highly visual or games-based nature.

9.17 Provider uses of ICT

Providers who support those young people who are NEET offer forms of ICT in a variety of ways. Some provide animation software, music creation software, video recording and editing software, visual manipulation software, or publishing software when they are running courses or sessions. Others provide programming software as part of their courses. Increasingly, providers are seeing the value of using image capture, video reflection, and resources that allow users to create portfolios of work, not just in textual, but in visual and auditory forms too.

9.18 Examples of current innovation and practice

Current innovation and practice is arising from the work of certain providers, Connexions teams, and voluntary sector groups. Increasingly the use of ICT is being focused in terms of creativity by young people for young people, through, for example, the use of:

- video to capture experiences so that young people can reflect meaningfully on them
- portfolios to enable young people to create and maintain up-to-date examples of their endeavours
- websites to enable young people to create and share examples of their endeavours with others
- texts on mobile telephones to maintain contact with young people.

A number of agencies are already involved in the development of innovative practice in ICT. Future policy or national developments should take account of these initial activities, and future development should support existing, rather than spawning competitive, developments.

9.19 Using ICT to monitor more effectively

Maintaining contact and up-to-date details about young people being supported is a crucial need for those who offer support, but is currently a difficult or (for some) impossible task. Some Connexions teams have developed systems that enable effective levels of monitoring, but overall, there is a need for ICT systems to be developed further in this respect.

9.20 Supporting creativity and practical approaches with ICT

The use of ICT to support specific projects has been effective in a number of cases, particularly where the ICT supports a creative form of approach or activity. There is a need for providers more widely to consider how ICT could be used to support engagement in creative or practical areas, without the ICT distorting the creative and practical involvement that the young people value, but enhancing it or enabling engagement in areas where young people find most difficulty (such as writing about their activities, for example).

9.21 Social intervention and ICT uses

The use of ICT with young people who are NEET needs to be focused in ways that match the young peoples' uses of technologies. This might mean that text messaging or other messaging on mobile technologies is used a great deal more to support appropriate interventions, or to alert young people to the experiences of others. Some young people who are NEET live within a tightly closed community; ways to offer these young people ideas, experiences and opportunities that are of a wider nature, which enable them to think outside their immediate domain, would be of potential value.

9.22 Timeliness and opportunity

Timeliness has been identified as a key issue if young people who are NEET are to be positively supported. Often young people come to a point in time when they are ready to embark on employment, education or training. The power of technology in allowing appropriate information and ideas to flow to individual young people or via their mentors could mean that timeliness is a feature that is captured a great deal more. Many young people who are NEET need to experience many different opportunities; they have often had limited previous opportunities to do so. The power of technologies to support their involvement in these wider opportunities, to allow greater communication, would be of potential benefit to all concerned.

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Appendix 1: Evidence base

The evidence base, which supports the findings reported here, consists of:

- 53 young people interviews. These comprised 47 interviews using a single interview schedule, to gather details about types of technology used by young people, what forms of technology they use, and where, their positive and negative reflections about learning and work experiences, their interests, ambitions, current barriers they find to achieving these, and ideas about future uses of technology to support learning and work. Within these 47 interviews, eight were conducted with young people who were supported by an alternative curriculum in two schools and believed to be likely to become NEET in the future, 35 were conducted in a single region, and 4 in another region. These 47 interviews formed the basis of primary evidence in the Background Report. Evidence from another 6 interviews supplemented that from the major group of interviews. This latter group of interviews were undertaken within training provider and work experience settings, and were focused on gathering reflections about the young people's experiences prior to engagement within those settings, and since being in those settings.
- 305 questionnaire returns from young people who are NEET. These responses were gathered from across a single region, and this primary evidence was used to support and add to the evidence from the interviews.
- 50 key informant interviews. This evidence, of a primary nature about the practices reported, and of a secondary nature about experiences and attitudes of young people themselves, was used to support the primary interview evidence, and to provide additional or contrary perspectives where these arose.
- 21 training provider interviews. This primary evidence, gathered by telephone interview in the case of 18 providers, and by face-to-face interview and observation in the case of the other 3, reported aspects concerned with entry procedures to training courses, practices for admission, the nature of training provision, uses of ICT within training courses, and tutor experiences with young people. This evidence was used to support that gathered from interviews with young people.
- Additional evidence, used to support interview perspectives or to provide additional perspectives, was gathered from observations of provider sessions (six), documents provided by key informants (nine), reports from key informants (eight), sources from websites provided by key sources (seven), examples of resources created by young people (five), and an observation of work experience.

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Discussions with young people

Location:
Date:
Gender/age/year group:
Name (if given):

Thank you for the chance to meet, to discuss issues that are relevant to our study. We would like to ask you some questions, about your uses of technologies, experiences with learning, and about your interests. We will take your views seriously, and we want to use them to feed back to a national audience interested in helping young people.

Firstly, about your uses and experiences with technologies:

1. Which technologies do you use? (tick the first column in the grid below)
2. What do you use these for? (include details in second column)
3. Where do you use them? (include details in third column)

Type of technology	**Is it used?**	**What for?**	**Where is it used?**
Mobile telephone			
Internet			
PC or desktop computer			
Laptop or mobile computer			
Games machines or consoles			
Television			

Radio			
MP3 or ipod			

Secondly, about your experiences with learning:

4. Have you had positive experiences with learning? (tick those in the first column in the grid below)
5. What has made it positive? (details in the second column)
6. What has not been very good about it? (details in the third column)
7. Can you tell me one thing that might have made the experience better?

Learning experience	**Positive features**	**Negative features**
School		
College		
Pupil referral unit		
Other		
Something that would have made the experience better		

8. What would you say are your interests in life?

About your experiences with work:

9. Have you tried any work, or work experience? (tick the item in the first column in the grid below)
10. Have you had positive experiences with work or work experience? (put details in the second column)
11. What has not been so good about them? (put details in the third column)

Work experience	**Positive features**	**Negative features**
Job		
Work experience		

12. Do you think technology could help you with work, or learning, in any way?

Many thanks for all your help.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Do you use technology?

And want to be entered in a prize draw? You could win £25! Just by answering the questions below!

A government agency has asked us how young people use technology and whether it might help with learning. We would like to hear from you - we will feed back to those interested in helping young people. All responses will made anonymous - but to enter the prize draw, please give us your name and the Connexions Centre where you completed the form.

Name (to enter the prize draw): Connexions Centre:

Tick the boxes in all the sections below to tell us something about you.

Male	Female	16 years old	17 years old	18 years old	19+ years old

1. Which technologies do you have, and how do you use them?

	I have one	I use it for music	For videos	To send texts	To talk	To email	For learning	To find things	At school, college, work	At home	When I am out	On my own	With friends or family
Mobile telephone													
Computer with internet													
Laptop or palmtop													
Games machine													
Television													
Radio													
MP3 or iPod													

2. Have you enjoyed learning?

	Yes	Not always	No
In classrooms with large groups	√	√	√
In practical sessions	√	√	√
With small groups	√	√	√
Working on your own with a tutor or mentor	√	√	√

	Yes	Not sure	No

3. And some final questions!

Do you have any plans for the future?	√	√	√
Are there barriers stopping you achieving these?	√	√	√
Have you tried work, or work experience?	√	√	√
If so, did you enjoy work?	√	√	√
Or, did you enjoy work experience?	√	√	√
Do you think technology could help you more with work, or learning, in any way?	√	√	√

Many thanks for your help – and good luck in the prize draw!